

Welcome to Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge

Tensas River

National

Wildlife

Refuge was

established in

1980 to conserve

the largest

privately-owned tract of bottomland hardwood

forest remaining in the Mississippi River

Valley. This rich forest land supports a wide

variety of animals and plants, including

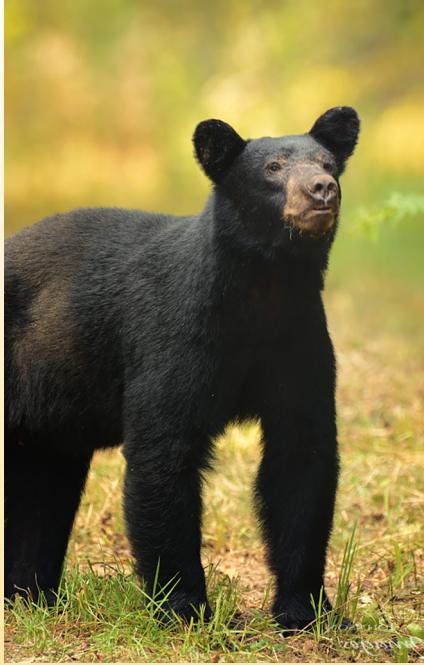
over 400 species of mammals, birds, reptiles,

amphibians, and fish. Visitors are welcome to

participate in wildlife observation, photography,

hiking, paddling, hunting, fishing, and many

other activities!



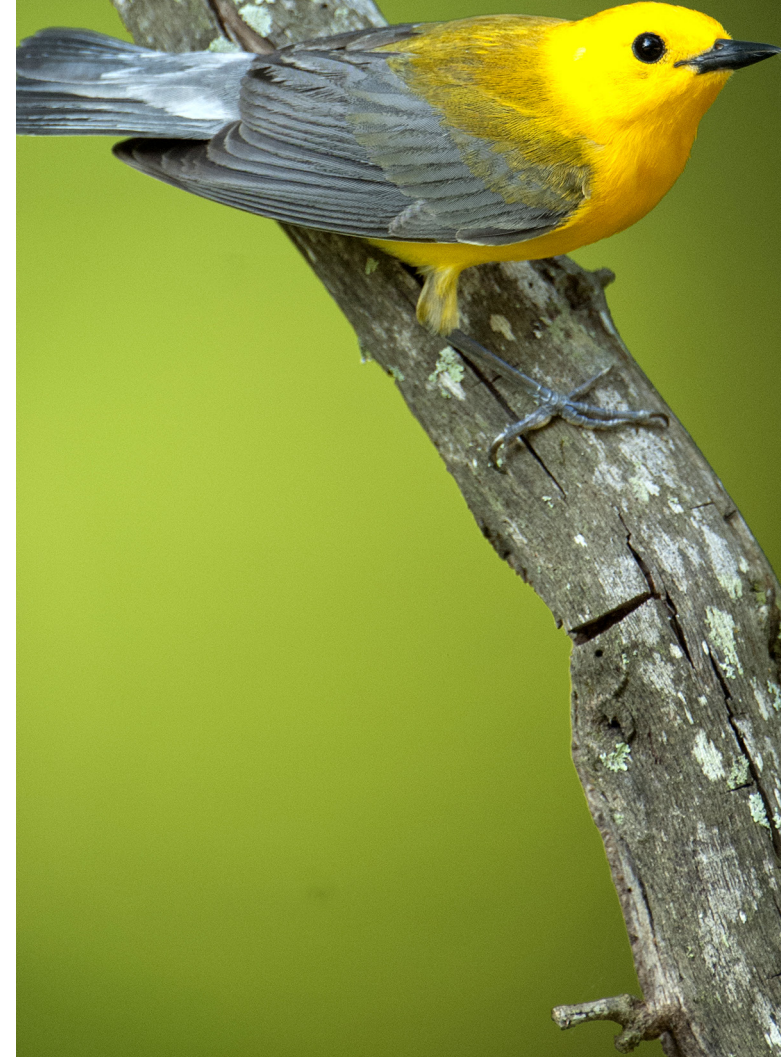
*Louisiana black bear;
credit Danny Johnson*

Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge
2312 Quebec Road
Tallulah, LA 71282
Office: 318/574 2664
Email: tensasriver@fws.gov
Internet: http://www.fws.gov/refuge/tensas_river/



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge



Prothonotary warbler; credit Danny Johnson



Painted bunting, credit Danny Johnson



Northern parula, credit Danny Johnson



Swamp rabbit, credit Danny Johnson

History

Bottomland hardwood forests once carpeted the Mississippi River Valley. Of the 25 million acres of forest that were once present in this area, only about seven million acres remain today in scattered locations. One of the largest remaining pieces of this forest lies in and around the Tensas River NWR.

Much of the Refuge is made up of what was historically known as the Singer Tract, the location of the last universally accepted ivory-billed woodpecker sighting in 1944. This land was purchased by Singer Sewing Machine Company in the early 1900s because of the large trees that could be used to make sewing machine cabinets. Eventually, Chicago Mill and Lumber Company acquired the land and harvested the timber. The land remained in private ownership until the Refuge was established in 1980. Currently, the Refuge contains approximately 80,000 acres and manages the forests for wildlife.

Wildlife of the Tensas

Some of the most recognizable residents of the Refuge include the American alligator, white-tailed deer, bobcat, wild turkey, wood duck, raccoon, and otter. The Refuge is also home to the largest population of Louisiana black bears, which were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in the early 1990s. Although

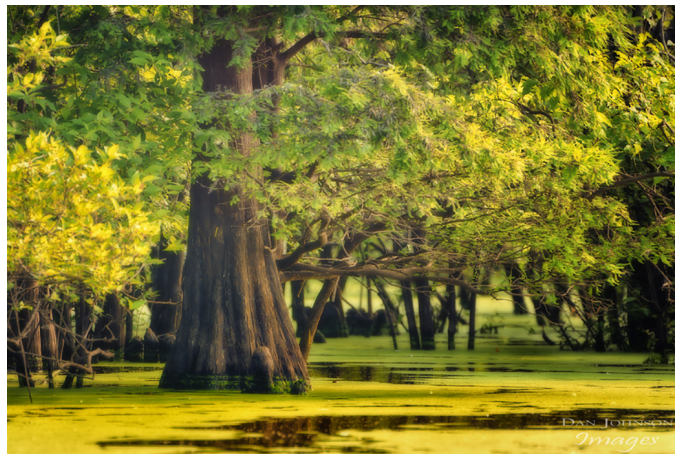
they are still protected, bears are now plentiful throughout the Refuge and on adjacent lands. While visitors have excellent chances of observing Louisiana black bears in the wild, please be “bear aware!” Do not approach the bears, consider carrying bear spray, and always properly dispose of trash.



Five-lined skink, credit USFWS/ Erin Cox

Forested land with trees at different ages, heights, and densities also provides habitat for migratory songbirds including prothonotary warblers, Swainson’s warblers, hooded warblers, summer tanagers, painted buntings, indigo buntings, and many more. These migratory songbirds spend their winters in South and Central America and return to Tensas River NWR in the summertime to breed and raise young, making the Refuge a hotspot for birdwatching and photography.

The Wildlife Drive and other Refuge roads and trails provide excellent birdwatching opportunities because of the diversity of habitats. While most bird species use the Refuge in the summertime, there are still opportunities in the colder months to see resident songbirds like Northern cardinals. Migratory waterfowl species like mallards, gadwall, Northern pintail, American wigeon, buffleheads, and canvasbacks all make their home on the Refuge during the winter and are visible from the Wildlife Drive.



Cypress brake, credit Danny Johnson



Wildlife observation, credit Pope-Johnson Video Productions



Barred owl, credit Danny Johnson

Refuge Hours

Visitor Center:
Monday – Friday
8 am – 4 pm
Closed federal holidays

All other refuge lands (unless marked as closed):
Seven days a week, daylight hours only

Contact Information and Driving Directions

Visitor Center
318/574 2664
tensasriver@fws.gov
2312 Quebec Road
Tallulah, LA 71282

Do not use a GPS and/or phone to navigate to the Visitor Center! Please call ahead or follow the driving directions below.

Directions from I-20 Eastbound:

Exit at Waverly (exit 157). Turn left onto Highway 577 North. After 1.5 miles, turn right onto Highway 80 East. After 6.5 miles, turn right onto Quebec Road. Follow Quebec Road for approximately 11 miles and the Visitor Center is on the left.

Directions from I-20 Westbound:

Exit at Tallulah (exit 171). Turn right onto Highway 65 North and drive approximately 1.5 miles into Tallulah. Turn left between the courthouse and Popeyes onto Highway 80 West. After eight miles, turn left onto Quebec Road. Follow Quebec Road for approximately 11 miles and the Visitor Center is on the left.



Hooded warbler; credit Danny Johnson

Planning Your Visit

Visitor Center and Hollow Cypress Boardwalk and Observation Tower

Come visit with Refuge staff at the Visitor Center during weekday working hours to learn more about the history and management of the Refuge and the best places to visit. Watch the Refuge video and walk through our new exhibits, including an interactive theater showing night-life on the Refuge. The Hollow Cypress Boardwalk winds through the woods behind the Visitor Center and offers beautiful views of Greenlea Bend from the Observation Tower at the end of the trail. The Visitor Center is also the perfect starting point for exploring the Wildlife Drive or hiking the Rainey Lake walking trail. Refuge staff can also provide information for adventurous visitors on photography, paddling, hunting, fishing, and many more activities.

Greenlea Bend Wildlife Drive

The Wildlife Drive is a 4.5 mile loop that offers great opportunities to see white-tailed deer, Louisiana black bears, bobcats, migratory



Great egrets, credit USFWS/Erin Cox



Photography, credit Pope-Johnson Video Productions



Summer tanager; credit Danny Johnson

songbirds and waterfowl, and many more species that call the Refuge “home.” Interpretive signs help explain some of the management activities used by managers, including cooperative farming which provides valuable food for wildlife.

Rainey Lake Walking Trail and Rainey Brake Rookery Observatory

A quick left turn off of the Wildlife Drive will take you to the Rainey Lake Walking Trail and Rainey Brake Rookery Observatory. The Walking Trail follows the shoreline of beautiful Rainey Lake and winds

through enormous baldcypress and oak trees. Bring your fishing pole and cast a line off of the fishing pier, located approximately 0.2 miles up the trail.

The lake is also a popular paddling destination leaving out from the fishing pier. A second observation boardwalk and pier is located approximately 0.7 miles up the trail and offers views of the north end of the lake. Pay attention as you are walking the trail and you may glimpse some of our more elusive woodland residents like wood thrushes, Swainson’s warblers, and Kentucky warblers.

The Rainey Brake Rookery Observatory is a photography hotspot in the late spring and early summer. Take a left at the first split in the walking trail and you will find a rookery full of egrets and other wading birds. The Observatory itself is set up for photographers, with camouflage mesh curtains and up-close and personal views of adult and juvenile wading birds, prothonotary warblers, and American alligators.

Bring your camera and a folding chair and prepare to be amazed!

Regulation Reminders

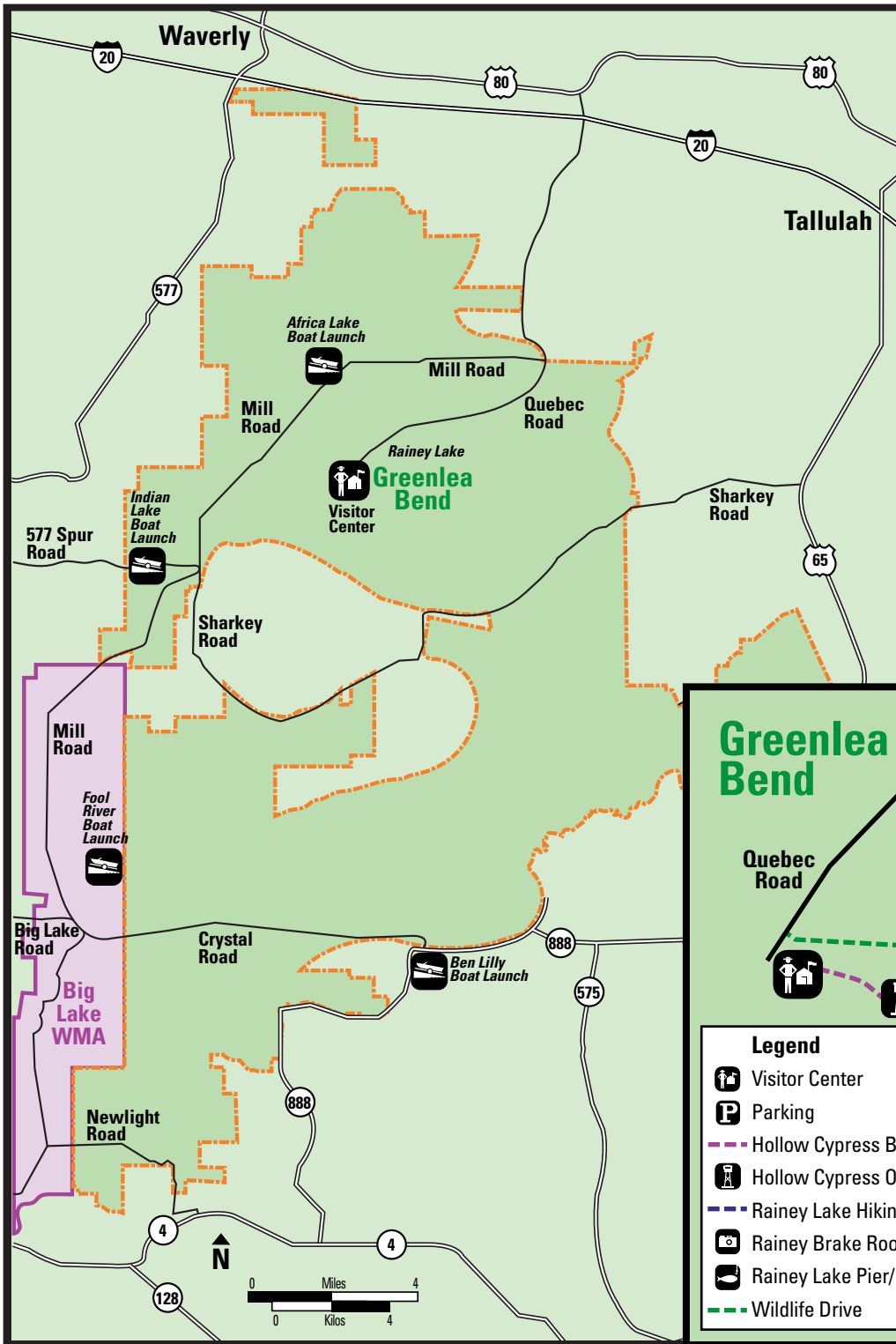
- Pets must be on leashes
- Camping is prohibited
- Littering is prohibited
- Artifact and antler shed hunting/collecting is prohibited
- Feeding, capturing, or harassing wildlife is prohibited



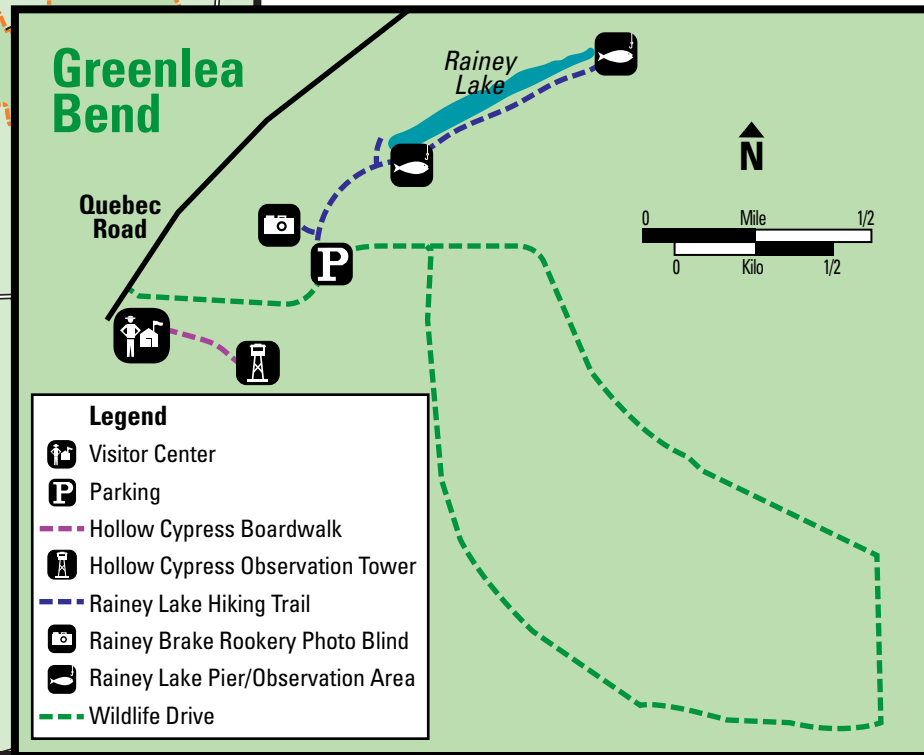
Paddling in Rainey Lake, credit Pope-Johnson Video Productions

Safety Considerations

During warm months especially, watch out for snakes, stinging/biting insects, and poison-ivy. We recommend wearing bug spray and drinking plenty of water, especially in the summertime when temperatures are regularly in the 90s. During hunting season in the winter months, please be alert and consider wearing hunter orange when venturing into the woods. There are also a few days each winter when the Refuge is closed to public visitation due to special deer hunts. Please consult with Refuge staff if you are planning to visit during the months of October – January. Also remember that cell phone service is limited over much of the Refuge so always tell a friend or relative where you are and when you expect to return.



White-tailed deer at sunrise, credit USFWS/Erin Cox



How Can You Help?

There are many ways that you can help out at Tensas River NWR! First and foremost, please always obey regulations and respect wildlife and other visitors. You can also volunteer your time or join the Tensas River Refuge Association, a non-profit group of volunteers who help with Refuge projects and outreach activities. But most importantly, you can tell others about how much you enjoyed visiting Tensas River NWR!