



# Cibola National Wildlife Refuge

## Welcome: A Birders Paradise

Cibola National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1964 as mitigation for channelization and dam construction on the Colorado River in the 1930s and 1940s. The refuge is located in both Arizona and California along the floodplain of the Lower Colorado River and provides important habitat for migratory birds, wintering waterfowl, and resident species. The refuge contains several miles of historic river channels and backwaters that provide key habitats in a changed environment.

## Refuge Wildlife

288 species of birds have been recorded on Cibola NWR. The refuge provides important riparian and upland nesting areas for a variety of songbirds including blue grosbeak, black-tailed gnatcatcher, and crissal thrasher. The refuge's lakes and ponds hold nesting western and pied-billed grebes, least bitterns, and ruddy ducks, while its moist soil and farm units provide feeding areas for thousands of wintering sandhill cranes, Canada and snow geese, and other waterfowl. Several endangered and threatened species use the refuge including southwestern willow flycatcher, Ridgway's rail (formerly the Yuma clapper rail), and yellow-billed cuckoo. Other resident birds include Gambel's quail, loggerhead shrike, yellow-headed blackbird, American kestrel, greater roadrunner, phainopepla, and burrowing owl. Three species of endangered fish are also present on the refuge, bonytail chub, razorback suckers, and desert pupfish. Desert pupfish can be seen at the visitor center.

Mule deer, coyote, and bobcat are common mammals on the refuge. Visitors occasionally observe beaver, kit fox, gray fox, and badger as well. Many species of amphibians and reptiles are also present including; Great Plains toad, desert iguana, western diamondback rattlesnake, and sidewinder rattlesnake. Please use caution when encountering venomous snakes as they are plentiful. Feral burros are also commonly seen. Remember, although they might look friendly, they are wild, can become aggressive, and should not be approached.

## For More Information Contact

**Refuge Manager**  
**Cibola National Wildlife Refuge**  
**66600 Cibola Lake Road**  
**Route 2, Box 1**  
**Cibola, Arizona 85328**  
**928/857-3253**  
**928/857-3420 FAX**  
**www.fws.gov/refuge/cibola/**



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The refuge actively manages a variety of habitats for wildlife. About 1,000 acres are farmed to provide food for migrating and wintering species. Under a cooperative agreement, farmers harvest some crops and leave others such as alfalfa, corn, and millet for wildlife feed.

## Managing for Wildlife

Management activities include creating and maintaining moist soil units, and restoring and flooding old river meanders and backwaters. Restoration of native vegetation is a primary focus. Dense stands of non-native salt cedar trees are replaced with native species such as mesquite, cottonwood, and willow trees.

## Things to Do at the Refuge

The headquarters and visitor center are located in Arizona at the north end of the refuge just south of Cibola, Arizona. Office hours are 8:00 to 4:30 Monday through Friday. During the winter months, approximately November through March, the visitor center is open 8:00 to 4:30 daily. Please call for summer hours. Refuge brochures are also available in outdoor kiosks.

## Wildlife Watching

The Goose Loop auto tour route starts near refuge headquarters and offers a great opportunity for viewing and photography of cranes, waterfowl, mule deer, and other wildlife. Winter months are the best time for observation. Most migratory birds leave by about mid-March and the fields are typically vacant through September. Please stay inside your vehicle. Wildlife has become accustomed to vehicle traffic, but will flush or flee if people are outside of their vehicles.

A one-mile nature trail located on the north leg of the route is surrounded by a gallery forest of cottonwood, willow, and mesquite trees. The year-round trail leads to a wildlife viewing observation deck overlooking a 40-acre impoundment that is flooded during the winter. This typically holds thousands of wintering geese, ducks, and cranes. A photo blind is nearby. No pets or vehicles (including bicycles) are allowed on the nature trail.

Other popular areas to explore include the Island Unit (between the channelized river and the old river channel), Cibola Lake, Hart Mine Marsh, and Three-Fingers Lake. Upper and lower levee roads parallel the channelized Colorado River on both the east and west sides, providing convenient access to many parts of the refuge (see map).

The Cibola Lake Overlook, on a bluff at the end of the eastern levee road, provides an opportunity to oversee the lake and observe herons, pelicans, and other wildlife. The Overlook is open year round. Caution should be used by low clearance passenger cars as the dirt road becomes rough going up the hill. Because Cibola Lake is used by migratory waterfowl as a roosting and loafing area during the winter, the lake itself is

closed from October 1 through March 14 to provide an undisturbed roosting and loafing area for wintering waterfowl.

## Hunting and Fishing

The refuge provides extensive hunting opportunities for deer, waterfowl, dove, rabbit, and quail. Fishing is open throughout the year on the old and main river channels. Cibola Lake is open for fishing from March 15 to September 30. Typical species include smallmouth and largemouth bass, crappie, bullhead and channel catfish. Federal and applicable State (Arizona or California) hunting and fishing licenses and stamps are required. The refuge has additional special regulations provided in the hunting brochure.

## Refuge Regulations

All applicable federal, state, and local regulations apply within the refuge. For a complete list of regulations, refer to Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Federal Register, and applicable state regulations.

## Vehicles

Mechanized vehicular traffic is limited to official roads designated by the refuge on kiosks or current brochure maps. All drivers and motorized vehicles including (but not limited to) ATC's, ATV's, UTV's, and motorcycles must be currently licensed and insured for highway driving. The refuge-wide speed limit is 25 mph. Other State and local traffic laws apply.

## Firearms

Persons may possess, carry and transport firearms in accordance with all Federal and State hunting laws. Unauthorized discharge of firearms or target practice is not permitted.

## Pets

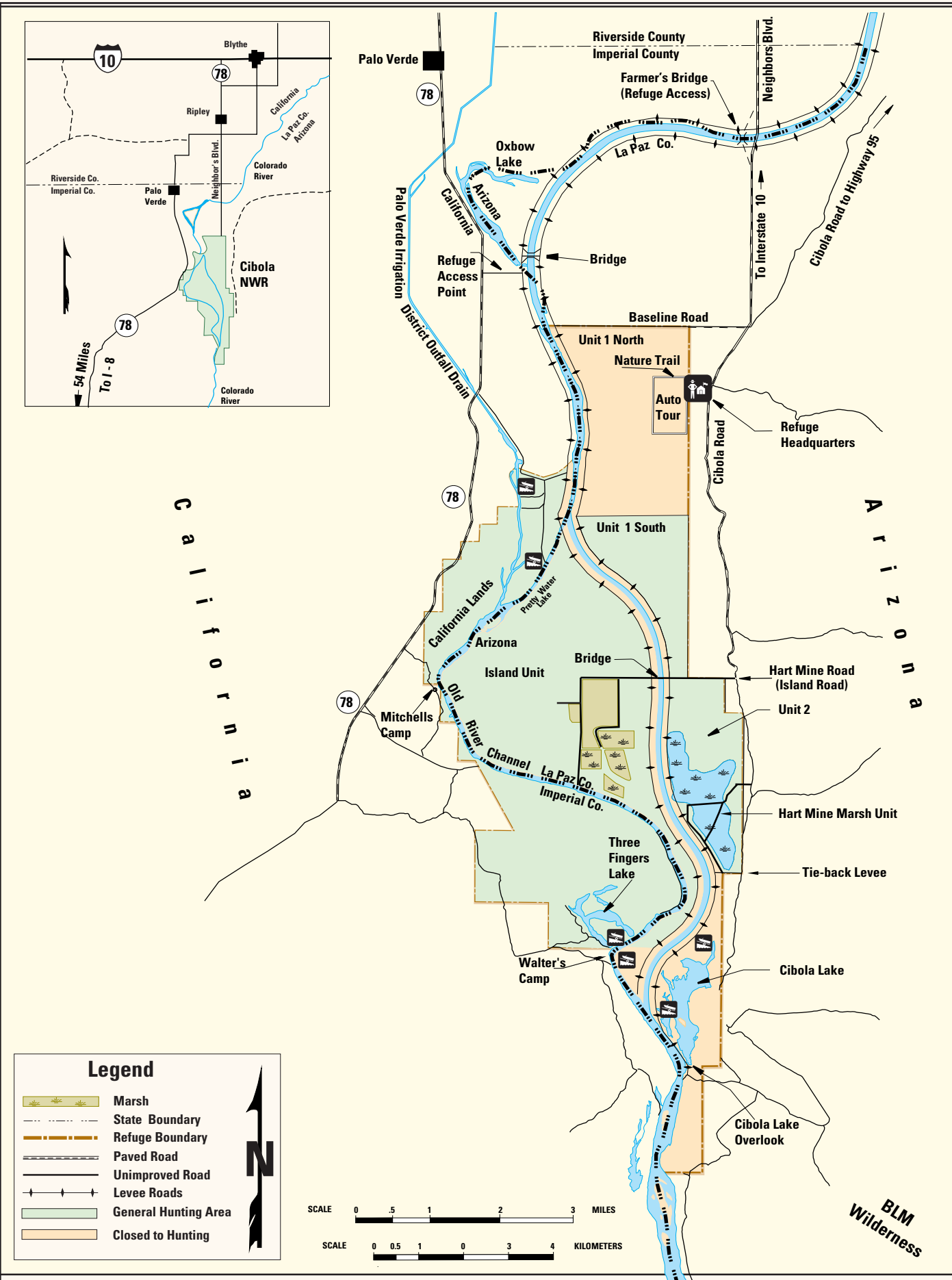
Dogs may be off leash when actively participating in legal hunting activities, otherwise they must be confined or leashed. No pets are allowed on the nature trail.

## Boating and Water Skiing

General boating and water skiing are permitted on the main river channel. All backwater areas, including Cibola Lake, Hart Mine Marsh, and Three Fingers Lake are "no wake"

*Photographs from left to right,  
 Ridgway's rail./ Curt Kessler/USFWS  
 Ross's and snow geese.*

*Sandhill crane./ USFWS  
 Gambel's quail.  
 Roadrunner.  
 All other photographs © George Jameson*



zones and only electric trolling motors or manually powered vessels may be used. Cibola Lake is closed between October 1 and March 14. .

In addition, the following are *not* permitted:

- fires
- overnight camping
- overnight mooring of any watercraft and mooring of any watercraft to vegetation
- fireworks
- littering or dumping
- disturbing, destroying, or removing plants or animals
- searching for, damaging, or removing rocks, mineral specimens, or objects of antiquity.

### Cibola NWR Facts

*Where is it?*

Refuge headquarters is located 17 miles south of Blythe, California. Office hours are from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Monday through Friday.

*When was it established?*

In 1964.

*How big is it?*

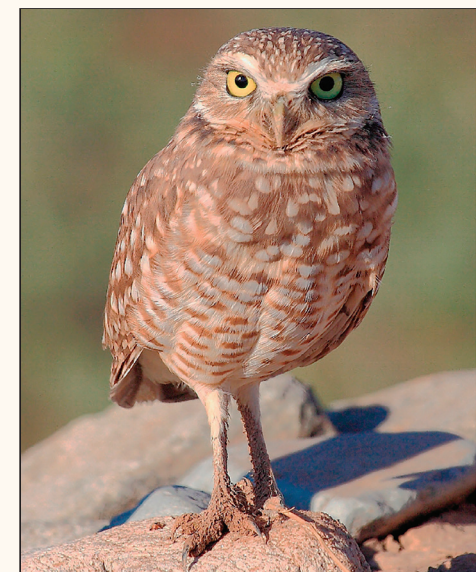
Over 18,500 acres.

*How was it paid for?*

The refuge was established from existing federal land as well as through purchases from willing sellers.

*Why is it here?*

To preserve and enhance wintering grounds for waterfowl and other migratory birds.



Top, Cactus wren.  
Middle, Western tanager.  
Bottom, Burrowing owl.  
Top two photographs © George Jameson  
Bottom photograph © Joe Anderson

### Wildlife Watching Tips

Dawn and dusk are the best times to see wildlife.

This is a warm climate, so little is moving on hot summer afternoons or on windy days.

Observe from the sidelines. Leave “abandoned” young animals alone. A parent is probably close by waiting for you to leave. Don’t offer snacks; your lunch could disrupt or affect the digestive system of wild animals.

Cars make good observation blinds. Drive slowly, stopping to scan places wildlife might hide. Use binoculars or a long lens for a closer look.

Try sitting quietly in one good location. Let wildlife get used to your presence. Many animals that have hidden will reappear once they think you are gone. Walk quietly in designated areas, being aware of sounds and smells. Often you will hear more than you will see.

Teach children quiet observation. Other wildlife watchers will appreciate your consideration.

Look for animal signs. Tracks, scat, feathers, and nests left behind often tell interesting stories.