



photos: Larry Pace

# Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge

Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was established in 1991 to provide habitat for migratory birds and to protect wetlands. The refuge is located in Bolivar County, approximately 10 miles west of Cleveland. Totalling nearly 10,000 acres, the refuge has approximately 8,100 acres of mature bottomland hardwood forest, making it the largest block of forest in northwest Mississippi, outside of the mainline levee.

The refuge is located within the Mississippi Alluvial Valley in the Yazoo River drainage basin, a portion of the historic floodplain of the Mississippi River. Prior to the construction of the Mississippi River mainline levee, much of this area experienced seasonal, and possibly prolonged, flooding. Native vegetation over this area was bottomland hardwood forests with a dense understory of vines and cane. Tree species present included cypress, water tupelo, various oak species, bitter-pecan, sweet gum, cottonwood, and sugarberry. Waterfowl overwintered in the flooded forest, feeding on the mast produced by these species.

Most of these species are still present in the forest today. The “ridge and swale” topography visible throughout the forest is a reminder of former floods and river meanders. During the winter, much of the forest will shallowly flood, providing temporary wetlands used by various species of amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates. Several beaver-created lakes provide deep water habitat. Flooded agricultural fields provide important feeding areas for overwintering waterfowl.

Dahomey NWR is open to public use year-round, including wildlife viewing, nature photography, environmental education and interpretation, hunting, and fishing. (Hunting and fishing are by permit only.) The recent additions of a photo blind on Paw Paw Trail and a boardwalk with viewing tower on the Herbert Nature Trail, provide enhanced opportunities for the public to view wildlife.

The National Wildlife Refuge System is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and includes over 550 refuges throughout the United States. The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to “administer a national network of lands for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.”

Unmatched anywhere in the world, the National Wildlife Refuge System is an extensive network of lands and waters protected and managed especially for wildlife and its habitat, and available for people to enjoy.

This unique system encompasses over 150 million acres of lands and waters from north of the Arctic Circle in Alaska to the subtropical water of the Florida Keys and beyond the Caribbean to the South Pacific.

For more information, contact the North Mississippi Refuges Complex headquarters in Grenada at 662/226 8286

**Please observe the following while enjoying the Refuge:**

- Please stay on designated trails and roads.
- Pets are not allowed on the refuge. Please leave them at home.
- Do not harm or harass any wildlife, including snakes. You are visiting their homes.
- Wear hunter orange when visiting the Refuge October - April

**Prohibited activities:**

- Camping
- Building fires
- Possession or use of alcoholic beverages
- Disturbing, feeding, or collecting wildlife or plants
- Searching for or removing any object of antiquity, including arrowheads and pottery shards.





# Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge

## Where we are and what to do...

### Getting here...

From Cleveland: From the intersection of Hwys 8 and 61, go south on Hwy 61 approximately 3 miles. Turn right onto Hwy 446. Proceed west approximately 10.5 miles. The headquarters should be on your right.

From Greenville: From the intersection of Hwys 1 and 82, go north on Hwy 1 approximately 24.5 miles. Turn right onto Hwy 446. Proceed east approximately 4.6 miles. The headquarters should be on your left.

### Maintained Hiking Trails

- 1 Herbert Nature Trail – 0.9 mile loop, includes fishing pier, viewing tower overlooking a meadow and reforestation area.
- 2 Paw Paw Trail – 0.5 miles (one-way), terminates at photo blind overlooking small slough.

### Unmowed Hiking Trails

- 1 Stokes Trail – 1.4 miles
  - 2 Bear Trail – 1.3 miles
  - 3 Gobbler Trail – 1.4 miles
  - 4 Belman Trail – 3.1 miles,
  - 5 Painted Bunting Trail – 0.5 miles
  - 6 Beaver Dam Trail – 0.8 miles
  - 7 Coyote Trail – 1.1 miles
  - 8 Pipeline Trail – 2.5 miles
  - 9 Stillwater Trail – 1.1 miles
  - 10 Bobcat Trail – 1.1 miles
  - 11 Cottonmouth Trail – 0.1 miles
- (Trails may be inaccessible at times due to flooding.)

### Once you're here...

#### If you have 1 hour or less ...

- Explore the butterfly garden at the Refuge Office.
- Hike Herbert Nature Trail or Paw Paw Trail.
- Drive Headquarters Road to Bear Road to Neblett Road.
- Drive down Well Road and hike Cottonmouth Trail.

#### If you have 2 hours...

- Hike Stillwater Trail or Bear Trail.
- Drive Headquarters Road to Bear Road to Neblett Road, then hike Herbert Nature Trail to the Viewing Tower.

#### If you have half a day...

Begin on Headquarters Road and hike Gobbler Trail to Bear Road. Hike along Bear Road back to the east to Headquarters Road.

**Trails are open year-round. Visitors must wear hunter orange during hunting season (October – April) when hiking trails. Herbert Nature Trail and Paw Paw Trail are located in areas closed to hunting.**

