

## Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

### National Wildlife Refuge Week

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

National Wildlife Refuge week is October 11-17. In the Southern Appalachians, where public lands are likely National Forests or National Park Service lands, it's important to remember wildlife refuges, administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, for they are the only system of federal lands devoted to wildlife.

Across the nation, there are 550 national wildlife refuges, protecting more than 150 million acres, more land than the entire national park system. The refuge system was established in 1903 when President Theodore Roosevelt set aside Florida's Pelican Island in an effort to protect birds from poachers and plume hunters, and has grown, providing habitat for migratory waterfowl, endangered species, and a host of other important wildlife.

National Wildlife Refuges are scarce in the Southern Appalachians, however, north Alabama is home to a handful. Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge is a 34,500-acre refuge on the Tennessee River and is home to Alabama's largest population of wintering ducks. Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge was part of a former military base and protects stands of longleaf pines, a forest type more typical of the coastal plain. Fern Cave, Sauta Cave, and Key Cave National Wildlife Refuges are all important habitats for federally protected bats, including Indiana and gray bats.

For more information about these and other National Wildlife Refuges across the nation, visit [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.