

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Hatchie

*National Wildlife Refuge*



*Lou Kellenberger*

*Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge encompasses 11,556 acres of bottomland hardwood forests, farmland, moist soils, and oxbow lakes that stretch along the scenic Hatchie River in West Tennessee. Established in 1964, the Refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as an important resting and feeding area for wintering waterfowl and other migratory birds. The Refuge also protects a unique remnant bottomland hardwood ecosystem that once dominated the area.*



*This blue goose, designed by J.N. Ding Darling, has become a symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.*

## **In Years Past**

When the first settlers arrived in the Mississippi River Delta, millions of acres of swamp habitat, dominated by water-tolerant oaks, stretched before them. This habitat provided settlers with many of the necessities to live. Generations have lived to the rhythm of the river—transporting, logging, farming, hunting, and fishing. Today, over 95% of this wetland habitat has been cleared for agriculture and other purposes.

Approximately one million acres of good quality swamp now remain for the fish, wildlife, and people that are dependent on this type of habitat.

Over 9,400 acres of bottomland forest remain at

Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge and still function as a natural forested woodland, much as they did during Pioneer times. The Hatchie River is the only major stream in western Tennessee that has never been impounded, channelized, or otherwise modified by human activity to any major degree. The Refuge provides an excellent example of the 25 million acres of bottomland hardwood forest that once dominated the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley.

## **Bottomland Hardwood Forests**

Bottomland hardwood forests make up roughly 80% of the wildlife habitat on Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge. These nutrient-rich and diverse ecosystems support a vast array of wildlife species. Seasonal floodwaters bring large amounts of sediments and nutrients that settle into the ground. When the floodwaters recede, the leaf litter decays, releasing nutrients and making these nutrients available to other plants. The vegetation in these



*Lou Kellenberger*



bottomland forests has adapted to this type of seasonal flooding over time. Today the forest still slows ravaging flood waters, filters sediment to improve water quality, and produces immense amounts of timber.

Due to the variety and abundance of flowering and fruiting plants, along with its natural cover, bottomland hardwood forests are able to support many species of animals. These forests provide a winter home for migrating waterfowl and a place for people to appreciate and enjoy a part of our great natural heritage. This seasonally flooded, lowland forest ecosystem with its abundant fish and wildlife is one of the many features that makes Hatchie Refuge such a unique place.



### **Wildlife**

The habitat diversity of Hatchie Refuge supports over 200 species of birds, 50 species of mammals, and an amazing assortment of reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates. Bald eagles, red-shouldered hawks, barred owls, wild turkeys, and white-tailed deer, which thrive in the area, can be seen year round. Each season seems to bring something new to view.



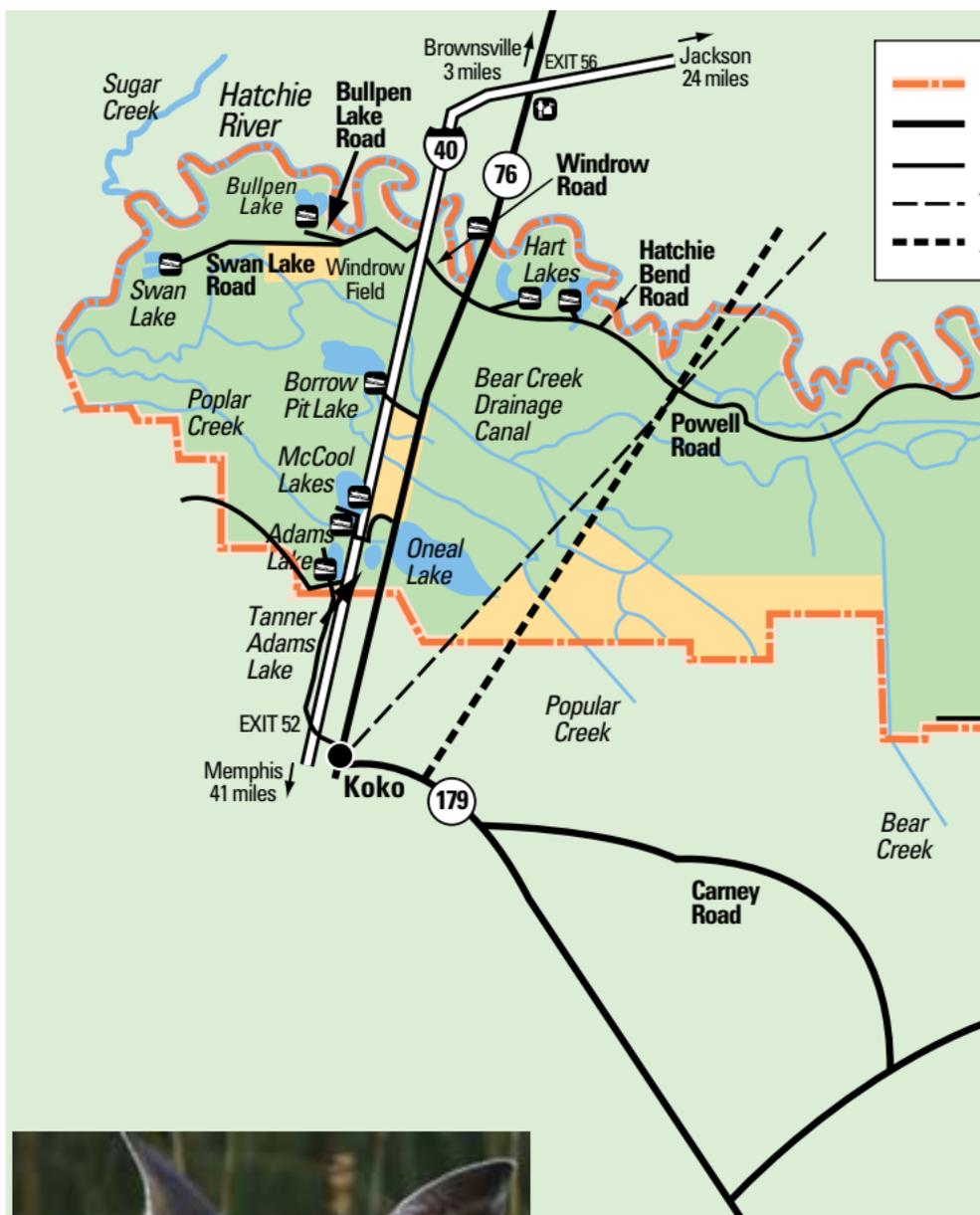
### *Spring*

The woods swarm with songbirds of every color. Scarlet tanagers, ruby-crowned kinglets, yellow warblers, goldfinches, green herons, blue jays, red-headed woodpeckers, and indigo buntings paint the woods with their vivid colors. Broods of wood ducks can be seen feeding on insects along the shore.

### *Summer*

As the days get longer and hotter, many of our cold blooded species are more active and easily viewed. A variety of snakes and turtles can be spotted basking in the sun. Frogs can also be heard for miles this time of





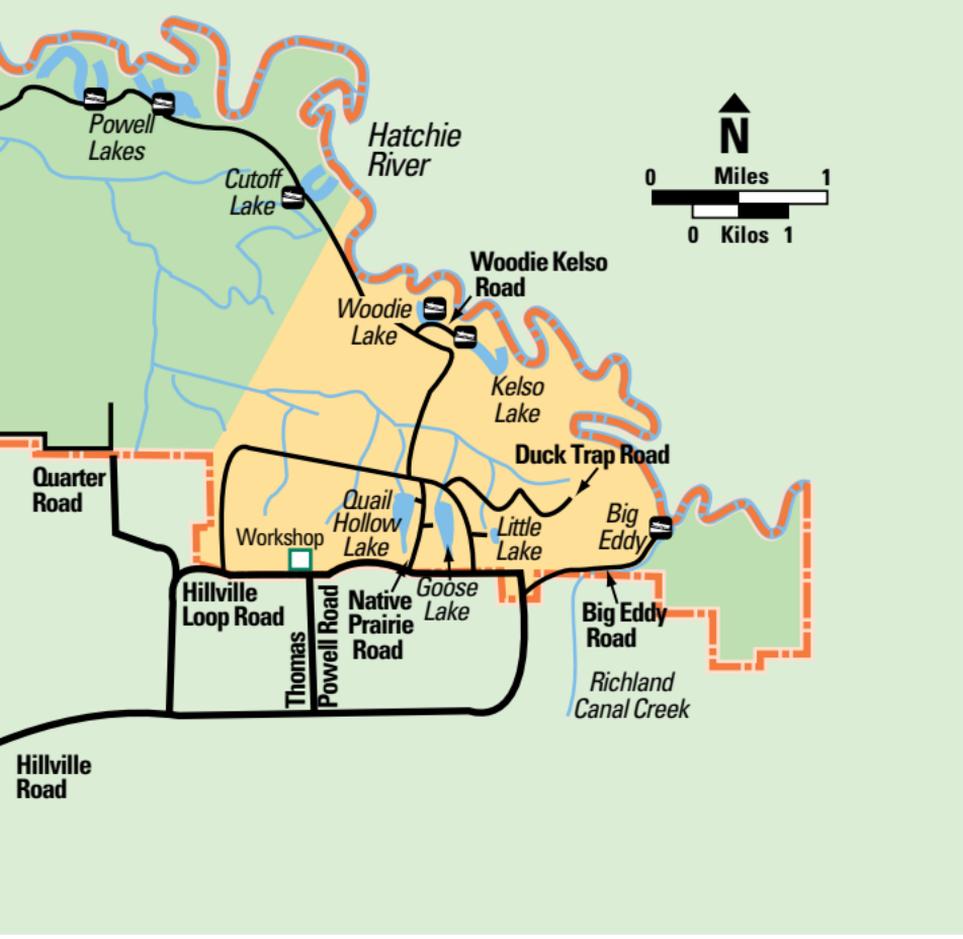
USFWS

year. A few frogs you may recognize would be the bullfrog which has a low baritone *jug-a-rum*, cricket frogs which sound like two marbles clicking together, and chorus frogs which sound like your thumb running along the edge of a comb.

### *Fall*

Waterfowl start arriving at the refuge. The squirrels, beavers, and variety of other mammals are almost finished preparing for the cold winter. While some animals may be getting ready to hide out for the winter, others can be spotted easily as the leaves start to fall from the trees.

Refuge boundary	Refuge headquarters
Paved road	Boat ramps
Unpaved road	Closed to all public access November 15-March 15
TVA transmission line	
ANR pipeline	



*Winter*

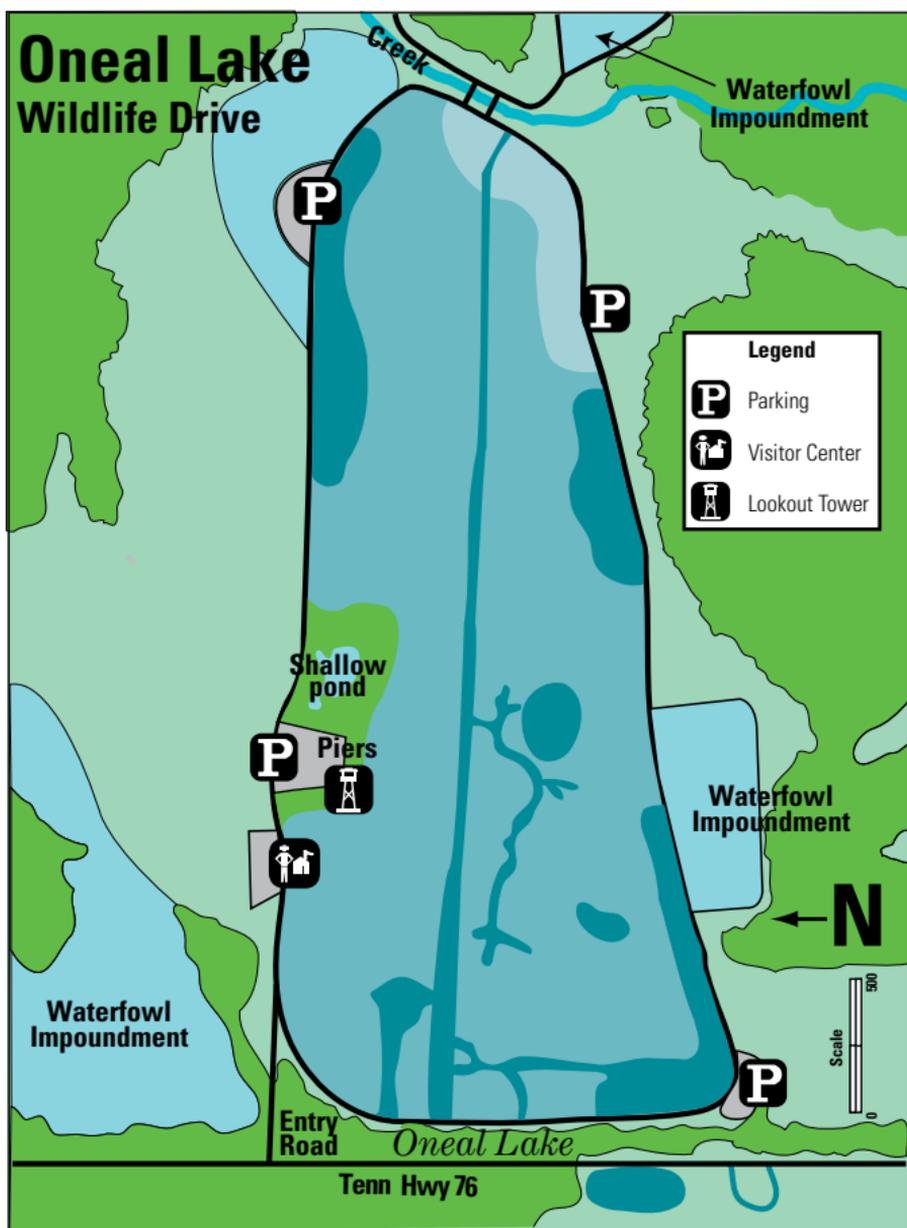
Mallards, black ducks, blue-wing teal, and other waterfowl are attracted to the Refuge's extensive feeding and resting areas. Thousands of ducks and geese call Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge their temporary home for the winter season. Bald eagles are common winter visitors around Oneal Lake while ospreys are rare visitors to the Refuge during the winter months.



USFWS

**Managing for Wildlife**

The Refuge's primary purpose is to provide habitat for migratory birds with a specific emphasis on providing food and sanctuary for wintering waterfowl. One method the Refuge uses to provide food is through a cooperative farming program which allows local farmers to plant



agricultural crops on Refuge lands on a crop share basis. The Refuge's share, normally corn, milo, or millet is left unharvested in the field and then flooded to provide optimum feeding conditions for wintering waterfowl.

The Refuge also manages moist soil impoundments for the production of natural foods including smartweeds and wild millet. The seasonal manipulation of water levels within these impoundments stimulates the growth of natural seed bearing plants which are important for providing a balanced nutritional diet necessary for the spring reproduction process. An added benefit associated with these moist soil impoundments is their role in the production of tiny

USFWS



invertebrates which are extremely important in supporting the nutritional health of wintering waterfowl.

### *Recreational Opportunities*

Recreational activities include hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretive opportunities. Contact the Refuge office for information on tours for schools and other organized groups.

### *Wildlife Observation and Photography*

The Refuge offers a variety of opportunities to view wildlife. The Oneal Lake Wildlife Drive, located near the Refuge headquarters, extends over two miles around the shoreline of Oneal Lake. Visitors can expect to see migratory waterfowl, bald eagles, shorebirds, wading birds, as well as resident wildlife along this drive. An interpretive kiosk and observation tower provide information and a spectacular view for observing and photographing the Refuge's abundant wildlife. A drive down the seven mile Powell Road provides an excellent opportunity for viewing neotropical migrant song birds as well as resident deer, turkeys, and raccoons. Visitors are encouraged to bring binoculars, cameras, and field guides to fully enjoy the Refuge's wildlife.

USFWS



USFWS



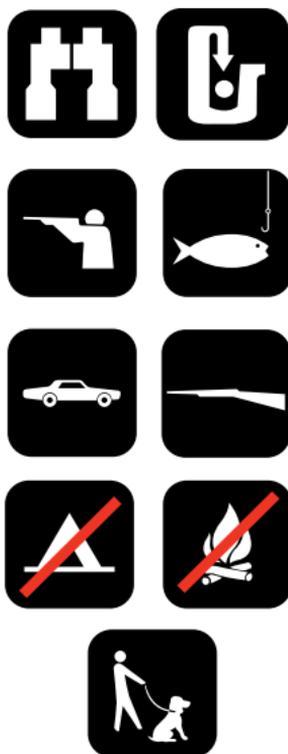
USFWS



### *Hunting and Fishing*

Hunting is permitted for big game, small game, and migratory birds within established seasons. Sport fishing is allowed on all Refuge waters year-round, except for Oneal Lake and a few other waters noted on the leaflet map. Make sure you obtain a copy of the Refuge hunting and fishing leaflet for additional hunting and fishing information.





## Refuge Regulations

While everyone is encouraged to visit Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge, there are regulations in effect to protect not only the wildlife, but also the visitor.

The public is allowed on the Refuge during daylight hours only. Certain areas are closed to all public access from November 15 through March 15 to provide sanctuary for wintering waterfowl. Only legally licensed vehicles are allowed on the refuge. All ATV's, UTV's, and off-road motorized vehicles are prohibited. All vehicles are required to stay on established roads, which may be closed at any time due to adverse weather conditions or management needs.

A Refuge permit is required for hunting and is available at the Refuge office or online at [fws.gov/hatchie/brochures.html](http://fws.gov/hatchie/brochures.html). Refer to the regulations leaflet to verify Refuge hunting seasons and fishing regulations.

### Further information

may be obtained at the Hatchie NWR office, which is located at Oneal Lake on Hwy 76.

From Memphis, TN take I-40 east to Exit 52. Exit north onto Hwy 76, then go 1.5 miles to the Refuge Office on the right.

From Nashville, TN take I-40 west to Exit 56. Exit south onto Hwy 76, go 3 miles to the Refuge Office on the left.

The following uses are prohibited on the Refuge - swimming, camping, fires, and the consumption or possession of alcoholic beverages. Pets must be on a leash or confined. Dogs under verbal control are allowed during certain Refuge hunting seasons. The taking of any object, such as arrowheads, antlers, vines, pottery, or other artifacts, is prohibited.

Contact the Refuge Headquarters for a complete list of Refuge Regulations.

Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge  
6772 Highway 76 South  
Stanton, Tennessee 38069  
731/772 0501  
<http://www.fws.gov/hatchie>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
1 800/344 WILD  
<http://www.fws.gov>

August 2012

