

White River

National Wildlife Refuge

General Brochure



*Buck Lake in November,
by Richard Hines/USFWS*

White River National Wildlife Refuge is one of over 540 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, the restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats with 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 for people to enjoy.

This unique system encompasses over 92 million acres of lands and waters from north of the Arctic Circle in Alaska to the subtropical waters of the Florida Keys and beyond to the Caribbean and South Pacific. The lands managed as the White River National Wildlife Refuge are a part of this system.

Introduction

Established on September 5, 1935, White River National Wildlife Refuge lies in the floodplain of the White River near where it and the Arkansas River meet the mighty Mississippi River. Long and narrow, three to ten miles wide and almost 90 miles long, White River National Wildlife Refuge contains one of the largest remaining bottomland hardwood forests in the Mississippi River Valley. The refuge's landscape, covered by fertile forest and more than 300 lakes, is interlaced with streams, sloughs and bayous. The resulting habitat is a haven for a myriad of native and migratory wildlife.

History

The area which is now White River National Wildlife Refuge has a long and colorful history. Fernando DeSoto landed near what is today St. Charles. At that time it was an Indian village and later became a trading post as goods moved up and down the White River to the Mississippi River. Not until the late 1800s and early 1900s did the population grow. Settlers began to live along and on the river. Timber harvest, commercial hunting, fishing, trapping and digging

of freshwater mussels for their shells were the primary means to make a living. People working and living along this portion of the White River continued in this manner until and after the refuge was established.

Visitor Center

White River NWR has a 10,000 square foot office and visitor center located off of Hwy. 1 in St. Charles, AR. The facility houses an auditorium, environmental education classroom, an exhibit hall, and the Friends of White River Bookstore. The interpretive displays educate visitors about the human and ecological histories of the area, the hydrology of the White River, and the ecology of the bottomland hardwood forest ecosystem.

Migratory Waterfowl

Established primarily to protect habitat for migratory birds, White River National Wildlife Refuge has long been known to provide wintering waterfowl habitat. Arriving in early autumn and usually peaking in late December, Mallards along with Gadwalls, American Wigeon, and Green-winged Teal find their way along that highway in the sky—the Mississippi Flyway. During some years, up to 350,000 birds will winter in these flooded bottomland forests.

Migratory Songbirds

Approximately two-thirds of the bird species found in Arkansas can be seen at White River National Wildlife Refuge. Many of these are neotropical migratory songbirds that use the refuge as a stopping point on their journey to and from central and south America. Among these small travelers are Acadian Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warblers, Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. All but the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nest on the refuge.



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The refuge's bottomland forest is a wonderful place for these birds to nest and raise their young during the spring and summer months. Some of the songbirds that are year-round refuge residents are the Tufted Titmouse, Northern Cardinal and Carolina Wren. Because of places like White River National Wildlife Refuge, the music of the songbirds continues to trumpet.

Species of Interest

No longer on the endangered species list, the majestic Bald Eagle nests on the refuge. When eagles were found nesting here in 1982, it was the first place they had nested in Arkansas in almost 30 years! The number of yearly nests has increased to at least four, each producing one or two eaglets. White River National Wildlife Refuge is located on the northern edge of the American alligator's range. Although their numbers may not be great, they can be seen throughout the refuge's wetland and oxbow lakes and are known to nest here also. The largest native population of American black bear in the Mississippi River Valley is found on and around White River National Wildlife Refuge. This remnant population has recovered from a low of about 30 bears at the beginning of the twentieth century to about 500 at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Other Wildlife

White River National Wildlife Refuge is also home to a wide variety of upland game, small mammals, and other birds. The more abundant animals found on the refuge include raccoons, mink and river otters. The refuge also is home to a large population of white-tailed deer and eastern Wild Turkeys. During most of the year, graceful long-legged wading birds such as Great Blue Herons and Egrets can be seen feeding in the shallow waters along lake and stream beds. Although not overly abundant, this inland refuge does provide a resting and feeding area in the spring and fall for a variety of shorebirds such as Least and Pectoral Sandpipers and Killdeer.

In addition, these wet areas are also home to many of the refuge's smaller and more elusive creatures including a vast array of frogs and turtles. The hot, humid summer months can bring out a wide assortment of insects including ticks and chiggers. Preparing is important for a pleasant visit.

Managing the Habitat

Good, effective forest management is the key to quality wildlife habitat on the refuge. Forest management practices such as the selective harvesting of trees allows for light gaps to the forest floor which, in turn, encourages the growth of shrubs and other small plants that are beneficial to wildlife.

In addition to forest management practices, refuge staff also manage water levels in the wetland areas located throughout White River National Wildlife Refuge. Managing the water levels throughout the year stimulates the growth of wetland plants. Wetlands and their plants provide an excellent home for crustaceans, insects and mollusks all year long. During the winter months these same plants provide an abundant food source for wintering waterfowl.

The White River itself has its own version of water management, especially during the winter months. Every year the White River floods about 75% of the refuge during the winter months. Most of the habitat that is flooded is bottomland hardwood forests, creating one of the largest greentree reservoirs in the world, an excellent place for wintering waterfowl to feed and roost. During the spring months these flooded areas then become a nursery for millions of fish and other aquatic creatures.

Access

There are a number of roads and trails located throughout the refuge. Most are opened March through October, though that can vary depending on water levels. Parts of the refuge are closed to all entry November 1 through February of each year to provide a sanctuary area for wintering waterfowl.

Hunting

The refuge is open for hunting of white-tailed deer, Turkey, small game and waterfowl in designated areas. Consult the refuge's user permit brochure for additional information.

Fishing

Fishing is permitted year round in many areas of the refuge. All fishing is in accordance with state regulations. Popular species are bluegill, crappie, largemouth bass, and catfish. Contact the refuge for additional information.

Wildlife Observation/ Photography

There is a large variety of wildlife to be observed on the refuge. Vehicles are allowed on designated roads only. Foot traffic is also permitted year round on road and trails, except in closed areas.

Environmental Education

Environmental education is an important program on the refuge. Groups are welcomed and arrangements can be made by contacting the refuge office in advance.

Fires

Fires are permitted only in designated camping areas and must be attended. Only downed wood may be used for fires.

Camping

Camping is permitted in designated primitive camping areas located throughout the refuge. Camping is permitted only when participating in another wildlife recreation activity such as hunting, fishing, or wildlife observation.

All-terrain Vehicles

All-terrain vehicles are allowed only for wildlife dependent activities. Consult the user permit brochure for complete details.

Firearms

Firearms are permitted only during refuge hunting seasons. See refuge user permit brochure for more information.

Collecting

Surface collecting or digging for archeological, historical or Native American artifacts is prohibited. Collecting or damaging plants or wildlife is prohibited.

Pets

Pets on a leash are permitted.

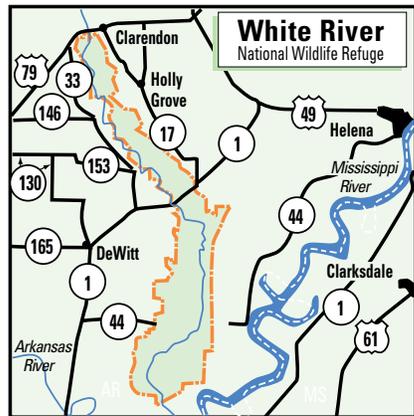
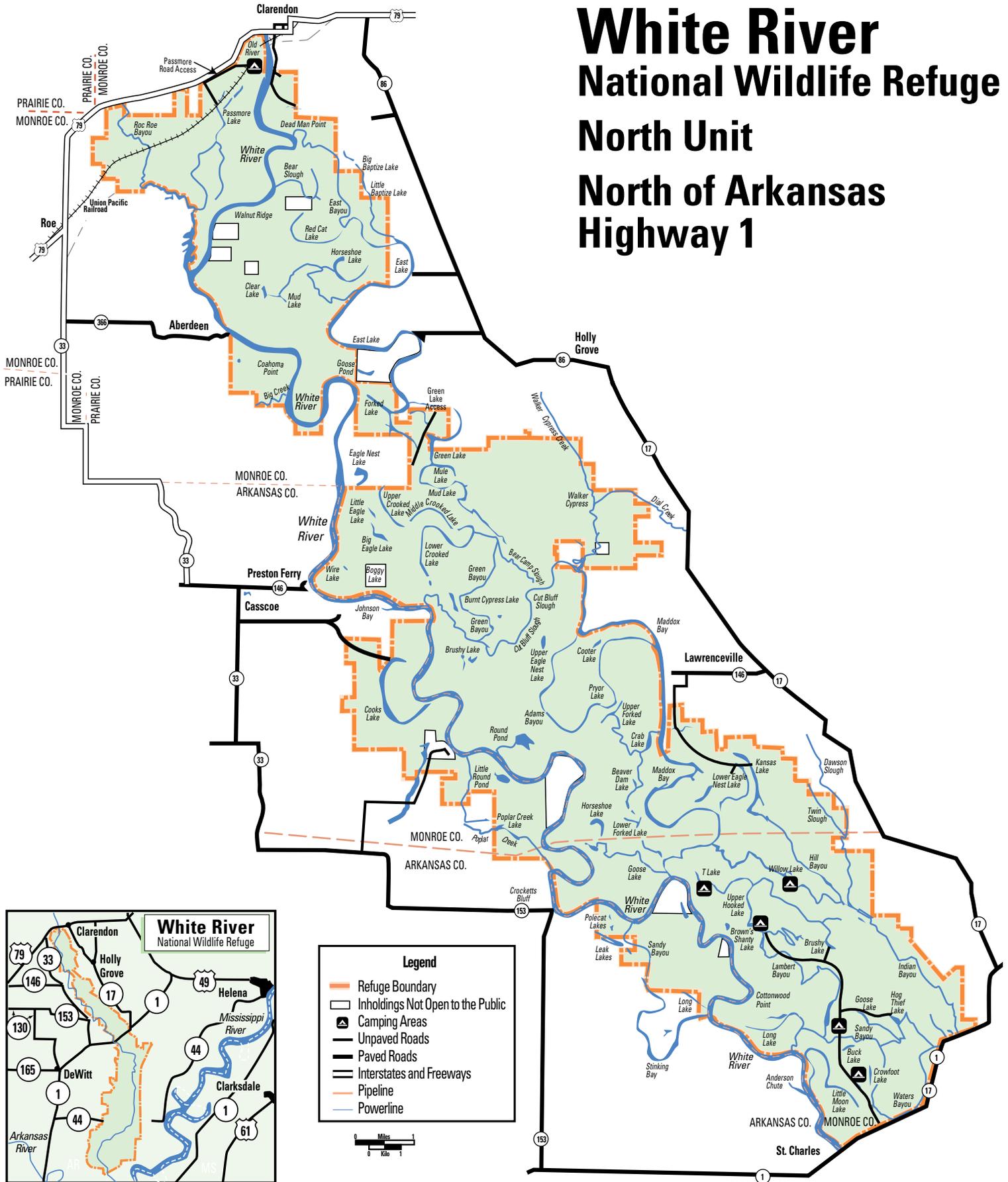
Other

Disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace (including the operation of generators in campgrounds past 10 pm) is prohibited. Also, feeding or baiting of wildlife is prohibited.

White River National Wildlife Refuge

North Unit

North of Arkansas Highway 1



Legend	
	Refuge Boundary
	Inholdings Not Open to the Public
	Camping Areas
	Unpaved Roads
	Paved Roads
	Interstates and Freeways
	Pipeline
	Powerline



White River National Wildlife Refuge South Unit South of Arkansas Highway 1

