



*This blue goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, is the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.*

# National Elk Refuge

## Winter Wildlife Viewing Guide

### Winter Wildlife Viewing

Welcome to the National Elk Refuge, a popular destination for viewing elk, bighorn sheep, and other wildlife during the winter season.

Winter presents an excellent opportunity to view wildlife on the Refuge, but it is also a stressful time of year for wildlife. Their survival is dependent upon conserving energy. Wildlife may not display visible signs of stress that indicate they are being affected by human interactions, but repeated disturbances from the presence of humans can significantly impact their overall health and survival.

To decrease stress to wildlife, please keep a minimum distance of 25 yards from most wildlife and 100 yards from wintering elk. Wildlife should not be surrounded or cut off from their direction of travel.

For the protection of wildlife, habitat, and other visitors, please observe all regulations and wildlife viewing guidance.

### Visitor and Wildlife Safety

#### *North Highway 26/89*

North Highway 26/89 runs along the western boundary of the National Elk Refuge.

- Several pullouts are located along the highway, providing safe opportunities to observe elk.
- Stopping a vehicle or parking on the shoulder of the highway is discouraged because of safety considerations on the busy road.
- To reduce disturbance to migrating and wintering elk and other wildlife, the North Highway 89 pathway that runs parallel to the highway from Flat Creek to the Gros Ventre River is closed from November 1 through April 30.

- Crossing the pathway and approaching the Refuge fence to take photographs or view wildlife violates the closure and its purpose. The presence of humans at or near the fence often causes nearby elk to bolt and leave the area. Continual disturbance throughout the winter can have a cumulative effect on the elk, adding to their weakened condition brought about by the rigors of the long season.

#### *Refuge Road*

Elk, bighorn sheep, and other wildlife are frequently seen close to the Refuge Road. To accommodate the number of visitors on this road and to protect wintering animals, the following regulations are in place.

- The speed limit on the Refuge Road is 30 mph. Travel speeds should be adjusted to accommodate for winter driving conditions that may include ice, fog, drifting snow, and limited visibility.
- Vehicles should use an established pullout when viewing wildlife in order to keep the Refuge Road open to moving traffic. This road is also used by large vehicles including delivery trucks, service vehicles, snow plows, and Refuge equipment which cannot easily maneuver around other vehicles stopped in the road.
- Drivers must not stop in the road when other vehicles are present. When traffic is approaching in either direction, vehicles must continue moving or use an established pullout to keep the road clear.
- Road shoulders drop off dramatically. Please use caution as ditches and uneven surfaces may be hidden by snow.
- Off-road travel by vehicle or on foot is prohibited.
- Spotting scopes and tripods should not be set up in the road.

- Visitors traveling on the Refuge Road should watch for and respect all posted road closures and restricted routes. Some roads or driveways may be open for administrative traffic only or for permitted hunters accessing hunt areas during designated periods.

### Bighorn Sheep

Bighorn sheep are frequently seen on or near the Refuge Road.

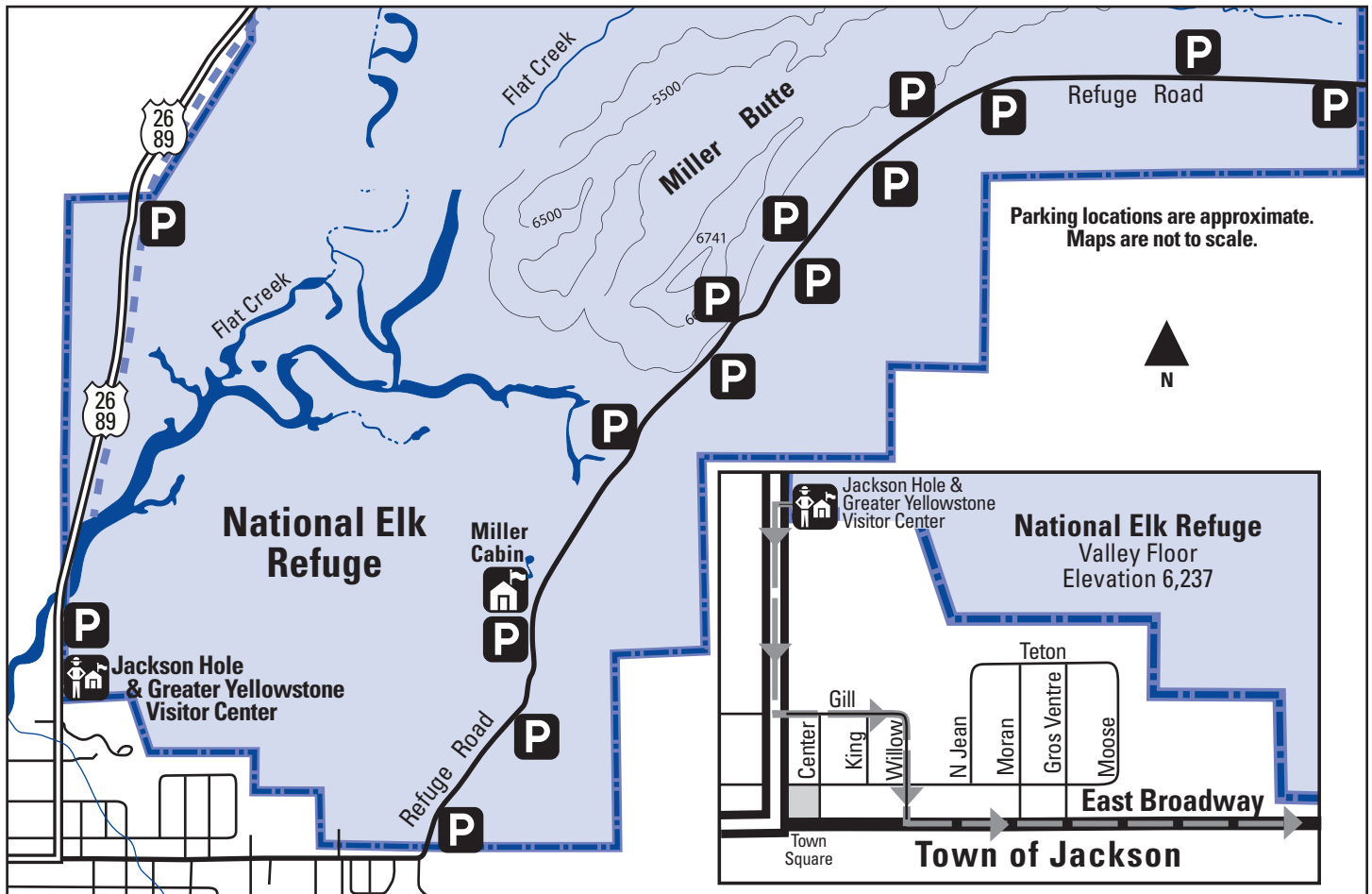
Bighorn sheep are identified as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) by the Wyoming Game & Fish Department. SGCN are species whose conservation status warrants increased management attention. Local populations of bighorn sheep, along with other herds across the Rocky Mountain west, have experienced significant declines in population due to pneumonia outbreaks.

The bighorn sheep near the Refuge Road often boldly approach vehicles to lick and ingest the salts and minerals found on the vehicle's surface. This can have a harmful effect on sheep health, and it increases the potential for spreading diseases such as pneumonia.





While viewing bighorn sheep, visitors may notice some animals with GPS collars. These collared animals help wildlife managers identify migration corridors between winter and summer ranges, increasing knowledge about the potential scope of future pneumonia outbreaks.

### Photography

We invite you to view and photograph the wildlife on the National Elk Refuge and enjoy the experience. Note, though, that photographing and sharing images of inappropriate human interactions with wildlife is discouraged as it can further promote or encourage these detrimental practices.



## National Elk Refuge

-  Refuge boundary
-  Route to Refuge
-  North Highway 89 pathway
-  Visitor center
-  Historic site
-  Parking area

### Accessibility Information

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. Dial 711 for a free connection to the State transfer relay service for TTY and voice calls to and from people with hearing and speech disabilities. For more information or to address accessibility needs, please contact the Refuge staff at 307 / 733 9212, or the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

**Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center**  
**532 N. Cache Street**  
**Jackson, WY 83001**

**National Elk Refuge Administrative Office**  
**675 E. Broadway Avenue**  
**Jackson, WY 83001**  
**307 / 733 9212**  
[http://www.fws.gov/refuge/national\\_elk\\_refuge](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/national_elk_refuge)

**For State transfer relay service**  
**TTY / Voice: 711**

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
<http://www.fws.gov>

**For Refuge Information**  
**1 800 / 344 WILD**

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