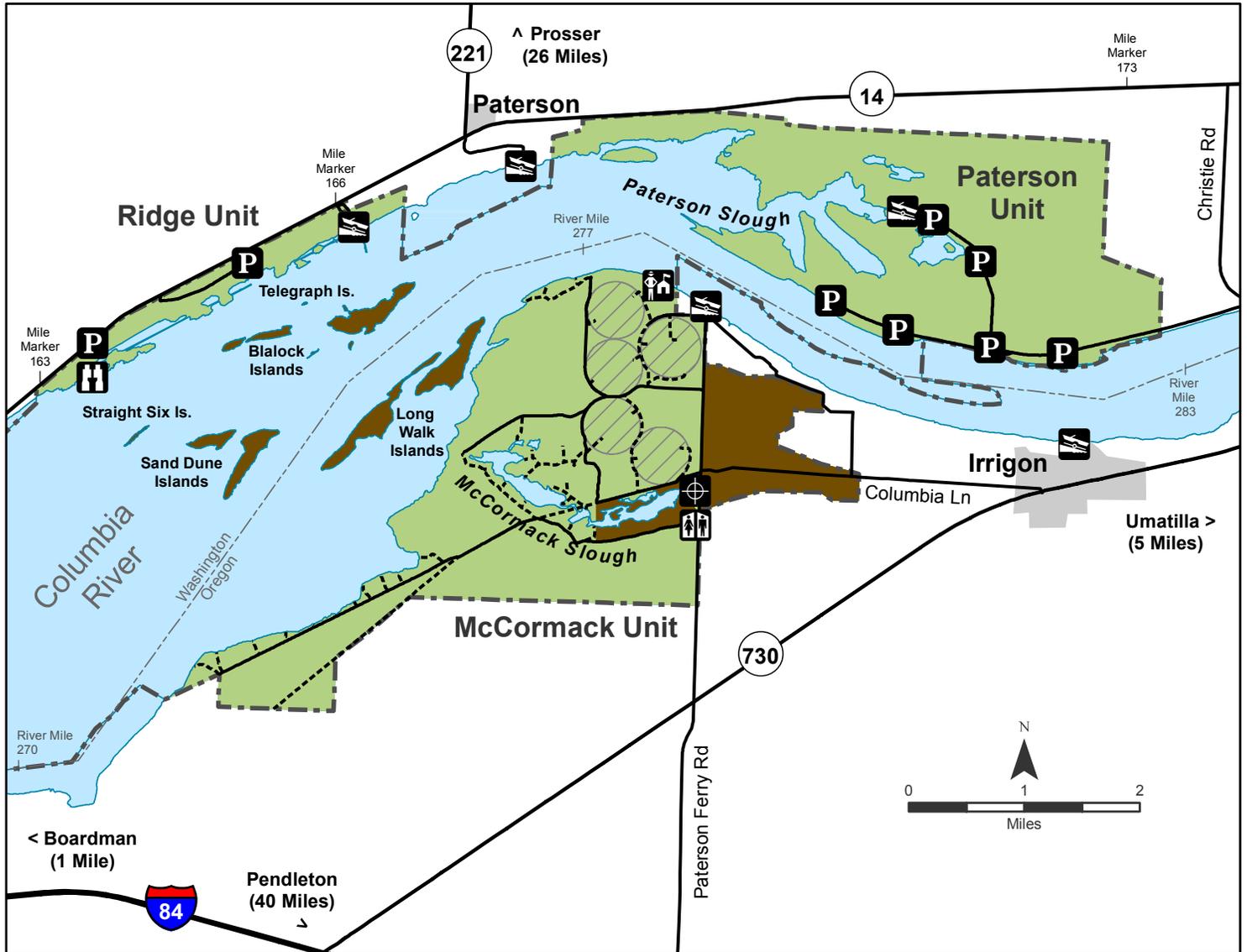




U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge



Visitor Activities on the Refuge



Hiking

Hiking is allowed along roads open to vehicle traffic and other areas open to the public, with the exception of the farming areas; hiking is not allowed there for public safety reasons. Several areas of the refuge are closed to public use, including hiking; sorry, protection of wildlife is our top priority.



Automobile Touring

Umatilla NWR offers an opportunity to see wildlife from the mobility of your car. The gates on McCormack Unit auto tour route automatically open at dawn and close at dusk. The tour route highlights refuge management activities and provides opportunities for viewing both wildlife and habitat types. Vehicle access and designated parking lots are also present on the Boardman Unit in Oregon and on the Patterson, Ridge and Whitcomb Island Units in Washington.



Fishing

While not known as a fishing destination, fishing for salmon, steelhead, sturgeon walleye and bass is popular on the Columbia River portion of the refuge. A boat ramp is available on the Patterson Unit. Boats are allowed on most of the Columbia River portions of the refuge and backwaters, but are not allowed on McCormack Slough, except to retrieve birds during the legal hunting season.



Boating

Boats of every shape and size go through the refuge, from heavy barges carrying wheat to pleasure boats out for an afternoon. Boating is allowed on most of the Columbia River portions of the refuge and backwaters. Boats are not allowed on McCormack Slough except to retrieve birds during the legal hunting season. A boat ramp is available on the Patterson Unit.



Wildlife Observation and Photography

Umatilla is all about seeing wildlife, and there are endless opportunities to see wildlife for those with the patience to watch, wait and explore, from the smallest songbirds to the grandest mule deer. A wildlife observation tower, photo blind, nature trail and auto tour route are available on the McCormack Unit in Oregon.



Bicycling and Horseback Riding

Bicycling and horseback riding are allowed on roads open to motor vehicles. They are not allowed on trails or roads closed to vehicles.



Hunting

Hunting for waterfowl and select other bird species is allowed on certain areas of the refuge. For regulations and areas open to hunting, visit: www.fws.gov/mcriver/regulations/

Map Legend

- Refuge Office*
- Hunter check station
- Public Restrooms
- Overlook
- Parking
- Boat Launch
- Footpath
- Road
- Agricultural field
- Refuge boundary
- Open Year-Round
- Closed Year-Round

*The Umatilla Refuge office is periodically staffed in the early morning and late afternoon hours.

Contact the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters in Burbank, WA at (509) 546-8300.



Wildlife Observation Throughout the Year

Fall

In early fall, songbirds migrate through the area en route to Mexico and Central America. Large populations of migrating mallards, pintails and Canada geese begin showing up. Raptors and marsh birds, including eagles, hawks, herons, gulls, egrets and terns, also visit the refuge in fall. This is also the best time of year to view the well-known Umatilla mule deer.

Winter

The largest numbers of many wildlife species—especially waterfowl and raptors—appear on the refuge in winter. From December through February you can see large numbers of waterfowl as they spend part of their day resting on the refuge. Thousands of birds feed on the refuge farm fields, so look for magnificent flights of ducks and geese departing or arriving early in the morning or late in the afternoon. Wildlife observation is best after mid-January, at the end of the hunting season.

Spring

Spring also brings an influx of bird species that migrate to the refuge to nest. The marsh habitats are also popular nesting grounds for song sparrows, marsh wrens and yellow-headed and red-winged blackbirds. Spring is also a good time to look for herons and egrets wading in the slough waters as they hunt. Many other birds nest in the uplands, including long-billed curlews, burrowing owls, western meadow larks and eastern and western kingbirds.

Summer

Summer is the quietest time on the refuge as the heat pushes many species into the shade, and some do not even come out until dark! A surprising amount of wildlife is around, but you have to be patient to find it. Mule deer does and their spindly-legged, spotted fawns emerge from the thickets to feed. Bats emerge to feast on insects hatching from the water. At dusk, watch for short-eared and burrowing owls hunting for rodents along field edges.

Viewing Tips

Increase your chances of seeing wildlife by adopting the following tips.

- Study and learn more about wildlife. Many good bird and other books are available to assist you in determining what species are common to the area you are visiting.
- Visit the refuge early in the morning, or just before sunset. Animals are usually more active then, especially during the warmer times of the year, and can often be seen coming and going to feeding and resting areas.
- Watch for wildlife in areas where two habitat types meet. Animals are attracted to the variety of food and shelter found in these transitional zones.
- Use spotting scopes and binoculars to get a closer look without leaving your car. In fact, many animals don't equate cars with predators, so cars can make effective blinds.
- If on foot, use visual obstructions, such as trees or tall vegetation, as a barrier to being seen, similar to a blind.
- Move slowly, speak softly, and avoid all other loud noises.
- Please do not use recordings to locate animals, and if you record their calls, please do not play the sound back until you get home.
- Maintain distance between you and the animal. Don't try to get close for photography. If an animal starts to act nervous (e.g., burrowing owls will start to squat down), back slowly away immediately.
- No dogs!
- Please respect landowner's rights by staying off their land and respecting their private property.

The next visitor will appreciate you not scaring the animal into hiding.

Map Legend

- Overlook
- Parking
- Public Restrooms
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- Closed Year-Round

The refuge is open from sunrise to sunset, except for hunting, which has slightly different hours of operation. To protect nesting birds and wintering waterfowl, most refuge islands are closed to public entry year round.

Most areas of the refuge are very remote with no restrooms or drinking water facilities. Refuge visitors should plan their trips accordingly. Please access the refuge only from designated public access areas.

For more information, contact the Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters in Burbank, WA at (509) 546-8300.