

Chapter 5

REFUGE AND WILDLIFE INFORMATION

COMMON REFUGE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. **Question:** Where am I? Why am I here?

Answer: You are at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. This is one of over 551 national wildlife refuges managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The primary purpose of a national wildlife refuge is to protect habitat for wildlife. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to view wildlife in a natural area.

2. **Question:** Why can't we take our dogs out of the vehicle?

Answer: Ridgefield is a national wildlife refuge, set aside for migrating and nesting waterfowl and other wildlife. Dogs are predators by nature. Not only do they chase wildlife, but wildlife often will avoid an area where dogs are present. Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge has a 'No Pets' regulation. Direct visitors with dogs to the county park trails or other dog friendly parks in the area. Certified Guide dogs for the disabled are allowed but must be clearly marked and be in use by a disabled person.

3. **Question:** Why can't I jog, ride a bike and walk the auto tour route at certain times of the year?

Answer: An environmental assessment found that several public activities were not compatible with wildlife use on the Refuge so those uses are not allowed. The Refuge enforces these regulations that help protect wildlife and habitat while still accommodating visitors engaged in wildlife dependent recreational uses. Jogging and bike riding is impermissible year round. Visitors must remain in their vehicles on the auto tour route on River S from October 1st to April 30th to limit disturbance to wintering waterfowl. Direct visitors to parks in the area where they can engage in these activities.

4. **Question:** Where can we launch a boat, kayak, and canoe?

Answer: There is no place to launch a boat on the Refuge. The Ridgefield Boat Launch is located on Mill Street at Lake River. The Boat Launch provides two launches, one day-use dock, paved parking lot, restroom facilities upland, ADA accessible facilities and a grassy picnic area. The Ridgefield Kayak

Launch offers paddlers and non-motorized boaters a great place to float a boat to take in views of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge and Bachelor Slough and Island. The Kayak Launch is located at Division Street and Lake River. The Kayak Launch provides dock launching or gently sloped beach launching, picnic area, gravel parking area and portable restroom facilities. There are facility use fees for both kayaks and boats. Call the Port of Ridgefield at 360-887-3873. Launch is close to the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, which offers tremendous wildlife viewing opportunities, including great blue heron, river otter, osprey, bald eagle, and the occasional coyote. Be advised that foot access to the Refuge is prohibited except at specified locations.

5. **Question:** Is the Refuge accessible to those with disabilities?

Answer: The Kiwa trail on the River S Unit offers a generally level grade and is constructed of compacted gravel and boardwalks. The trail is well suited for wheelchairs, wheeled walkers, and baby strollers. The Oaks to Wetlands trail on Carty Unit is not accessible for wheelchairs. The Plankhouse is accessible; however, arrangements need to be made in advance to cross the railroad tracks.

6. **Question:** Can we pick flowers, berries or other plants on the Refuge?

Answer: No. Refuge policy dictates that nothing be removed from Refuge lands. All resources here are for the use of wildlife. Eating berries or other plants may be hazardous to your health as herbicides are used to control invasive plants such as blackberry. There is also the risk of accidentally spreading invasive plants if removed from the Refuge and transported elsewhere.

7. **Question:** "I have locked my keys in my car. What do I do?" "My car won't start! Can you help me?"

Answer: Visitors with car problems need to call a locksmith or a mechanic.

8. **Question:** Can we feed the animals?

Answer: No, this is a National Wildlife Refuge, not a public wild animal park. The Refuge maintains a healthy wildlife habitat that produces a natural food web. Feeding wildlife creates a great health and safety risk to both animals and people.

9. **Question:** Why do you allow hunting on a Wildlife Refuge?

Answer: Hunting is another way for people to connect to the land and their food source. While some buy meat at a grocery store, others prefer to hunt and gather

their own food while spending quality time in the great outdoors. Many Refuges allow hunting as one of their wildlife dependent recreation activities. This is dependent on the species present and sensitivities of the land. Here at the Ridgefield NWR hunting was something that was promised to the public when purchasing this land and designating it a refuge. Because of this very popular use there is much support for refuges around the country and much money being put into them through hunting fees, passes, and private clubs. Hunters not only pay into the system that purchases and sustains refuges, they also volunteer their time on the Refuge and for clubs that donate much time and money for habitat.

Did you know?

- Over \$750 million dollars have been raised through the selling of Duck Stamps (a must have for those wanting to hunt on Federal land) since 1934 and that money has helped to purchase over 5.3 million acres of land that benefit more than just ducks and geese! If it weren't for this group of Refuge users there could be a lot less Refuge and a lot more strip malls on wetlands!
- When someone buys hunting or fishing gear part of that money is given back to State Fish and Wildlife Agencies for habitat and wildlife conservation.