

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge
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People with hearing Impairments may reach
Tamarac through Minnesota's State Relay Service at
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1-800-344-WILD



Tamarac

National Wildlife Refuge



Bald Eagle & Chick at Nest,
© Paul Christianson

There is a special feeling of wildness about this place, Tamarac, best expressed by the eerie howl of a wolf, mournful wail of a loon or the drumming of a Ruffed Grouse from deep within the forest.



Drumming ruffed grouse, Al Markegard



*Bird's Eye
View of
Tamarac,*

© Dominique Braud



A Look Into the Past

Ten thousand years ago, receding glaciers left behind the rolling ridges and deep depressions that became a woodland complemented by lakes, rivers, bogs and marshes. Lying along the backbone of Minnesota, the Egg and Buffalo Rivers begin here and the Otter Tail starts just upstream. All eventually empty into the Hudson Bay via the Red River of the North.

For hundreds of years Native American Indian tribes have valued the lush beds of manoomin (wild rice) and stands of sugar maple trees. This land has provided an abundance of wild foods, fish and game for the Ojibwe



*Ojibwe Ricers
at Rice Lake,
USFWS*

people and the Dakota before them. Historical sites throughout the refuge chronicle their utilization of these precious resources and the numerous battles fought over them.

More than a hundred years ago, loggers harvested most of the area's giant red and white pines, sending the logs down the Egg, Buffalo and Otter Tail Rivers. Settlers followed the loggers. Attempts to farm met with little success due to marginal soils, many wetlands and dense forests. These activities dramatically changed the landscape.



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

Establishment of the Refuge

In 1938 Congress established the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, its perpetual purpose to serve as a breeding ground and sanctuary for migratory birds and other wildlife. Tamarac's nearly 43,000 acres were purchased with funds from the sale of the Federal Duck Stamps.

In 1934 the first Federal Duck Stamp was designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling. The duck stamp is required for waterfowl hunters, however, it is also a way for conservationists to contribute to protecting habitat. Approximately 98 cents of every duck stamp dollar goes directly to purchase wetlands and wildlife habitat.



2007 Federal Duck Stamp, Richard Clifton

Today, Tamarac is one of more than 545 units in the National Wildlife Refuge System; the most diverse and complete collection of wildlife habitats and wildlands managed by any resource agency in the world.

Early refuge development, such as roads, trails, buildings and water control structures, was accomplished by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1960s a Job Corps Conservation Center assisted with further development. The Young Adult Conservation Corps program made a valuable contribution during the 1970s and 1980s.

Marsh Marigolds

© Dominique Braud





Refuge Wildlife

Tamarac lies in the heart of one of the most diverse vegetative zones in North America, where tallgrass prairie, northern hardwood and boreal forests converge. These transitional habitats provide for a diversity of plant and wildlife species. Some are at the extreme edge of their range in Minnesota. Although all native wildlife is important, priority is given to migratory birds and threatened and endangered species.



The forests and waters of Tamarac are home to a healthy Bald Eagle population and sightings are common. A nesting population of Trumpeter Swans are now present following a reintroduction program that began in 1987. Biologists survey the nesting success of these and other species annually.

The numbers of wild turkey are likewise increasing due to reintroduction efforts. Ruffed Grouse populations are cyclical, yet stable, and a popular species for hunters. Migration of songbirds, especially neotropical migrants, can be spectacular in mid May. Breeding bird surveys are conducted to monitor regional populations. Prescribed burning, plantings, and occasional timber harvests are designed to enhance habitat for these species and more.

Waterfowl migration is best experienced in late fall, when dabbling ducks and geese are passing through and rafts of diving ducks may be seen on Tamarac's larger lakes. Water level manipulations assist in creating productive stands of wild rice which provide food and shelter for these birds.

Photos
from top:
*Trumpeter
Swans, Duck
Banding,
Golden-winged
Warbler,
Prescribed
Burn,*
USFWS

Gray Wolves
© Gary Jacobson



Fall Leaves
© Dominique Braud

Spring



Nature's Calendar

Spring brings a wave of woodland warblers, look for up to 25 species. Marsh marigolds, wild calla lily, and blue flag iris bloom at the edge of wetlands. The woodland floor is carpeted with hepatica, violets, and wood anemone. Along the roads look for yellow lady's slipper, wild geranium and Indian paintbrush.

Summer



Summer is the time to see deer fawns, Trumpeter Swan cygnets, and Bald Eagles feeding their young. Early summer you'll find the showy pink lady's slipper, Canada anemone, wild rose and harebell in bloom. In wet areas look for water lilies, Joe Pye Weed, wild mint, and jewelweed.

Fall



Fall berries such as raspberry, chokecherry, and gooseberry attract an abundance of wildlife. Watch for groups of Cedar Waxwings or the occasional black bear. The ripening of the wild rice brings scores of migrating waterfowl, including thousands of Ring-necked Ducks. Beaver and muskrat are busy creating a cache of food for the winter. The tamarack trees turn gold just after the explosion of color in the hardwood forests.

Winter



Winter tracks and tunnels can tell you much about an animal's daily activities. Watch for river otter, mink, weasels, porcupine, and red fox. The open view into the woods may also give you a glimpse of a gray wolf. Birds are less shy now than during the breeding season. Owls begin their courtship and hoots can be heard during evening hours.

Photos
from top:
Wood Frog
© Dominique Braud

*Showy Pink
Lady's Slippers*
Betsy Beneke,
USFWS

Fall Leaves
© Dominique Braud

Winter Frost
© Dominique Braud



Visitor Center
Kelly Blackledge, USFWS



Visitor Center

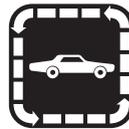
The center features exhibits of local wildlife, history and habitats. A large screen theater showcases a short film on the life and legends of Tamarac. An observation deck and hiking trail offer spectacular views of the habitats typical to the refuge. Hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday year round and 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. summer and fall weekends. The center is closed on federal holidays. Consult the activity schedule or website for special programs that are offered. Visitor center gates are locked at closing.

Visitor Opportunities

While the needs of wildlife are our first priority, Tamarac also provides many opportunities for visitors to enjoy and learn more about our natural world through wildlife compatible activities.

Wildlife Observation & Photography

The refuge abounds with wildlife viewing opportunities. Over 250 bird and 40 mammal species have been recorded here since 1938. A bird checklist is available. Lakes, rivers and wetlands provide homes for countless species of fish, reptiles and amphibians. Near woodlands and grasslands you will find butterflies, moths, insects and



other creatures. Leaf color during the fall season is spectacular! Hiking trails and the auto tour route allow quick access to scenic areas. Check at the visitor center for recent wildlife sightings.

Blackbird Auto Tour Route

This drive is a self-guided interpretive trail which winds through the forest and follows the edges of lakes, marshes and bogs. An observation platform overlooks Blackbird Lake. The tour route is open April through November, road conditions permitting. Pick up a copy of the guide leaflet at the visitor center or information kiosks.

Sanctuary Area

The Sanctuary Area includes lands and trails north of County Road 26. This area is closed to the public from March 1 through August 31 to give resident wildlife a sanctuary during the breeding season. The Visitor Use Area south of County Road 26 is available for public use year round to all permitted activities.

Hiking Trails

A short interpretive trail can be found at the visitor center. The Old Indian Hiking Trail on County Road 29 winds through an old maple-basswood forest for approximately 2 miles. All the roads and trails in the Visitor Use Area are also open for hiking year round and snowshoeing during winter months. Roads and trails in the Sanctuary Area are open for hiking or snowshoeing from September through February only.



Picnic Area

Along the banks of the Otter Tail River, the Chippewa Picnic site offers accessible tables, grills and restrooms. Please pack out your trash.





Cross-country Skiing,

Bill Bergquist



Fishing

Several lakes are open for fishing throughout the year. Two sites along the Otter Tail River are also open for bank fishing. Consult the refuge's Fishing Map & Regulations leaflet and Minnesota's Fishing Regulations booklet, or White Earth Reservation regulations for more information.



Hunting

The refuge offers opportunities for hunters during the fall and winter months. Consult the refuge's Hunting Map & Regulations leaflet and Minnesota's Hunting and Trapping Regulations booklet, or White Earth Reservation regulations for detailed information.



Bicycling & Horseback Riding

These activities are permitted only on county and township roads, the Refuge Service Road and the Blackbird Auto Tour Route.



Cross-country Skiing

The Pine Lake Ski Trail is open seasonally and offers two loops of 2 miles and 6 miles. The trails are occasionally groomed by volunteers. A parking lot and trailhead map are located on County Road 29. Roads and trails in the Visitor Use Area are also open to skiing. Roads and trails in the Sanctuary Area are open through the end of February only.

Mushroom, Nuts & Berry Picking

These activities are authorized year round in the Visitor Use Area and in the Sanctuary Area September through February.



Environmental Education

Schools and civic groups are welcome. To make group arrangements please contact the refuge office. Interpretive programs are offered year round. Check the activity schedule or website for special programs.