

Lake Ophelia

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1988.
- Acres: 17,500.
- Location: Avoyelles Parish, central Louisiana.
- Other lands managed: FmHA conservation easements and fee-title transfers; 21 tracts, 2130 acres.
- Directions to headquarters: follow Louisiana Hwy 1 north from Marksville to Fifth Ward; turn left onto Louisiana Hwy 1194 at caution light; stay on Highway 1194, following signs, to headquarters building.
- Directions to refuge: follow Louisiana Hwy 452 northeast from Marksville, 22 miles to refuge.

Natural History

- Lake Ophelia NWR was once part of a large contiguous Mississippi River bottomland hardwood forest. During the seventies, much of the area that would become Lake Ophelia NWR was cleared for agriculture.
- Habitat management objectives are centered around restoring hardwood forests and providing a complex of shallow flooded habitats for waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds.
- Topography on the refuge is characterized by ridges and swales that create a great diversity of plant and animal communities. The refuge is named for Lake Ophelia, a 350-acre permanently flooded swale.
- Major habitat types found on the refuge include: 8,400 acres bottomland forest, 4,200 acres reforestation, 3,400 acres cropland, 500 acres of managed moist soil wetlands and 1,000 acres of lakes and bayous.

Financial Effects of Refuge

- Nine-person staff.
- 25,000 visitors annually.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide wintering habitat for migratory birds — particularly waterfowl.
- Provide habitat for threatened and endangered fish and wildlife.
- Restore and protect habitats capable of supporting a high diversity of native fish and wildlife.
- Provide opportunities for compatible fish and wildlife-oriented education and recreation.

Management Tools

- Water level manipulation.
- Cooperative farming.
- Bottomland hardwood reforestation.
- Mechanical/chemical control of noxious plants.
- Education/interpretation.
- Hunting.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships.

Public Use Opportunities

Refuge is open daylight hours year-round.

- Wildlife observation.
- Photography.
- Hunting: small game, deer and waterfowl.
- Fishing.
- Walking trails.

Calendar of Events

January: archery deer hunting.

February: small game hunting with dogs.

May: Migratory Bird Day.

August: Bowhunter Safety Course.

September: Bowhunter Safety Course.

October: National Wildlife Refuge Week, small game hunting.

November: archery deer hunting, youth gun deer hunting.

December-January: Christmas Bird Count, muzzleloader deer hunting, waterfowl, woodcock, and snipe hunting

Questions and Answers

Are there hiking trails available on the refuge?

Yes. The refuge has over 20 miles of hiking and ATV trails. These trails are shown on a refuge brochure map available at the refuge headquarters.

Do I need a special permit to hunt or fish on the refuge?

Yes. A hunting, fishing and ATV use permit is required of all hunters and anglers 16 years old and older. Permits sell for \$15.00 and are valid March 1 through February 28. Permits may be purchased at the refuge headquarters or by mail.

Do you allow camping on the refuge?

The refuge has no camping facilities and does not allow camping. There are other public and private campgrounds nearby.