

Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge
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Holla Bend

National Wildlife Refuge





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

The National Wildlife Refuge System

Introduction

Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge is one of more than 550 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The National Wildlife Refuge System encompasses over 92 million acres of lands and waters from north of the Arctic Circle in Alaska to the subtropical waters of the Florida Keys and beyond to the Caribbean and South Pacific and represents the most comprehensive wildlife resource management program in the world.

Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1957 as a result of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers navigation and flood control project. In 1954, the Corps of Engineers, in an effort to improve navigation and prevent flood damage, straightened the Arkansas River by cutting a new channel across Holla Bend. The resulting island between the old river channel and the new river channel became Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge.

The 7,055 acres of land that the refuge manages has a history steeped in agriculture. In the early 1900's over 65 families lived on and farmed the rich bottomland soil. In 1927, there was a devastating flood that deposited deep layers of sand on this fertile farmland. This flood and others that followed drove most of the farmers off the land.

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A Haven for Wildlife

The refuge's habitat diversity results in a wide variety of wildlife living on and using the refuge. Wildlife includes many species typically found in bottomland hardwood forest. White-tailed deer and small mammals such as squirrels and raccoons can be seen throughout the refuge.



The refuge is also home to wintering waterfowl, migratory songbirds and a number of resident bird species that use the refuge year-round. Due to the refuge's habitat diversity and geographical location near the transitional zone for eastern and western species as many as 235 species of birds have been documented to occur on the refuge annually.

Migratory Waterfowl

The primary purpose of the refuge is to provide a winter home for a portion of the millions of ducks and geese that use the Mississippi and Central Flyways each year. During these spring and fall migrations as many as fourteen species of ducks and four kinds of geese will stop by the refuge for a short visit. During the winter, it is not uncommon for the refuge to host thousands of ducks and geese at once.



The well-known mallard is the most common duck, but others that may also be seen include American wigeon, gadwall, and wood ducks. Other species seen less often include northern shoveler, pintail, blue and green-winged teal.

Migratory Songbirds

The bottomland forested areas and grasslands provide outstanding habitat for an abundance of birdlife, particularly, neotropical migratory birds. Neotropical birds use the refuge as a rest stop during fall and spring migrations to replenish energy reserves for the long journey to and from wintering areas in Central

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and South America. The refuge is also used for breeding and nesting during the spring and summer for many of these species. The prothonotary warbler, swainson's warbler, summer tanager, Kentucky warbler, and white-throated sparrow are among the species of migrants that nest here. Some of the songbirds that are year-round refuge residents are the tufted titmouse, northern cardinal and Carolina wren.

Managing a Home for Wildlife



The National Wildlife Federation ©

Endangered and Threatened Species
Although no longer listed as an endangered species, bald eagles use the refuge each winter as they follow waterfowl migrating to their winter home. The Refuge was once used as a hacking (rearing) site for young bald eagles to help re-establish nesting in the area. Today there are several bald eagle nests in the vicinity of the refuge on nearby federal, state, and private lands. A dozen or more eagles are often seen on the refuge from November through February. Occasionally, osprey and golden eagles are observed here as well.

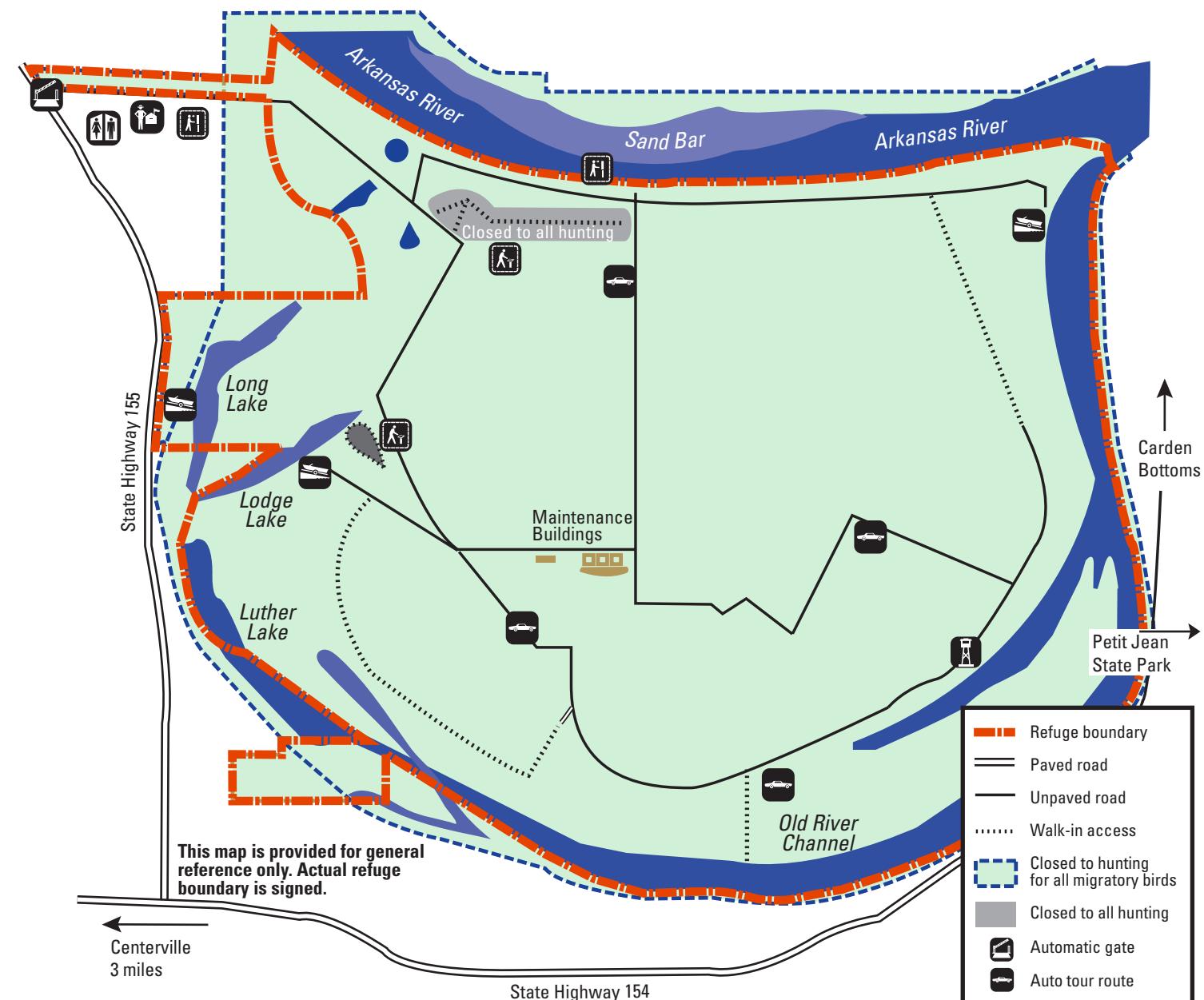
The refuge is located on the northern edge of the American alligator's range. This ancient reptile is listed as threatened in Arkansas and makes its home in the lakes and sloughs of the refuge. Although their numbers may not be great, they are known to nest on the refuge.

Other Wildlife

The lakes, wetlands, bottomland forest, and grasslands that comprise the refuge provide a variety of wildlife a place to call home. Some refuge inhabitants include cottontail and swamp rabbits, beaver, river otter, coyote, wild turkeys and bobcats. During most of the year, wading birds such as great blue herons and egrets can be seen feeding in the shallow waters along refuge lakes and wetlands.

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Although not overly abundant, this inland refuge does provide a resting and feeding area in the spring and fall for a variety of shorebirds such as least and pectoral sandpipers, greater yellowlegs and the occasional sandhill crane.

The bottomland forest habitat and wetlands also hosts a wide array of reptiles and amphibians. Common species that occur are the common snapping turtle, cottonmouth, green treefrog, and broadhead skink.



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Managing the Habitat
The primary goal of the habitat management programs at Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge is to provide feeding and resting areas for wintering migratory waterfowl. A farming program provides wildlife with foods such as milo, corn, soybeans, and winter wheat. A technique known as moist soil management is used to supplement the farming program. During the spring and summer, as water disappears from the shallows of several impoundments various natural wetland plants germinate and crops such as millet and milo are planted in some of the impoundments. After these plants have matured and produced an abundance of seeds, the impoundments are flooded in the fall to make this habitat available to waterfowl and other marsh birds. This combination of natural foods and planted crops equips the birds with the nutrients needed to survive the

winter months and return to spring breeding grounds in good condition. Shorebirds also benefit from this type of management in spring and fall.



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Reforestation is part of the overall management scheme of the refuge. Prior to settlement in the area, the landscape was dominated by bottomland hardwood species such as water and willow oak; native pecan; and shellbark hickory. As the area was settled, it was cleared for farming which resulted in the lost of prime wildlife habitat that supported important wildlife species, including waterfowl and neotropical songbirds.



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Enjoy Your Visit

The refuge headquarters is located just inside the main refuge entrance road off of Arkansas State Highway 155, south of Dardanelle, Arkansas. The headquarters is open Monday through Friday, 7 am to 3:30 pm. Refuge lands are open seven days a week during daylight hours. Information regarding the refuge, activities, regulations and a bird list are available.

Access

The primary access to the refuge is via the auto tour route. This road leads to two boat ramps, an observation tower, and foot trails.



All-terrain vehicles (ATV's) and all-terrain cycles are not permitted unless with a special use permit. Parts of the refuge are closed to entry at different times of the year to provide sanctuary for wintering waterfowl and nesting bald eagles. Holla Bend National Wildlife Refuge is a designated fee area and a vehicle entrance pass is required. Contact the refuge office for more information regarding entrance fees.

Hunting and Fishing

The refuge is open to hunting and sport fishing. Consult the refuge public use regulations for more information.

Auto Tour

The eight mile auto tour is the best way to learn about the refuge, its management programs, and wildlife. The tour route is open year-round and there are a series of informational panels located along the route to assist you in enjoying your visit.

Wildlife Observation and Photography

There is a large variety of wildlife to be observed on the refuge. Mornings and early evenings are when wildlife is most active. An observation tower, and foot trails are located on the refuge to improve your chances to see wildlife. For best results and to avoid disturbing wildlife, remain in your vehicle.



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Drive slowly, look carefully, and bring your binoculars.

Environmental Education

Environmental Education is an important program on the refuge. Groups are welcome and arrangements may be made by contacting the refuge headquarters in advance.

Other Refuge Regulations

Fires are prohibited.

Camping and overnight parking are not permitted.

Surface collecting or digging for archeological, historical or Native American artifacts is prohibited.

Dogs on a leash are permitted.

Horses are not permitted on the refuge.

Disturbing, feeding or collecting wildlife or plants is prohibited.

Cutting firewood or trimming any vegetation is prohibited.

Consumption or use of alcoholic beverages while on the refuge is prohibited.

Disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace, and shooting fireworks on the refuge is prohibited.

Shop and maintenance areas are closed to the public.