

NEWS RELEASE



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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October 2, 2002

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CELEBRATE NEARLY A CENTURY OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION DURING NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE WEEK, OCTOBER 13-19

Celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week, October 13-19, by taking advantage of the hundreds of events happening at national wildlife refuges across the country. With at least one refuge in every state and one near most major cities, the National Wildlife Refuge System offers something for everyone as it approaches its Centennial anniversary on March 14, 2003.

At the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, two miles south of Boynton Beach Blvd off of US441, join refuge staff and volunteers for several exciting activities. On Sunday, October 13, at 10 AM there will be a Butterfly Walk leaving from the Visitor Center. At 2 PM on Sunday, October 13, there will be a Swamp Stroll also leaving from the Visitor Center. On Wednesday, October 16, bring your thinking caps and join a refuge staff member for the Centennial Timeline Game at 1 PM in the Visitor Center auditorium. On Saturday, October 19, there will be a bird walk leaving from the Marsh Trail at 7:30 AM, a guided canoe trip leaving from the boat ramp area at 9 AM and a 2 PM powerpoint presentation on the National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial. Reservations are required for the canoe trip. To register for the canoe trip or for any other information, please call the Visitor Center at (561) 732-3684.

“National Wildlife Refuge Week is a great opportunity to get outside and enjoy outdoor recreation on one of our

national wildlife refuges,” said Steve Williams, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which oversees the

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National Wildlife Refuge System. “If you’re not familiar with the refuge system, we hope you’ll take this opportunity to explore these wonderful places.”

Go on a nature walk or a birding tour, participate in a fishing derby or a special hunt, enter a photography or wildlife art contest, or simply enjoy the splendors of nature at one of the nearly 540 national wildlife refuges.

In the nearly 100 years since President Teddy Roosevelt established the first refuge, Florida’s Pelican Island, the National Wildlife Refuge System has evolved into a 95-million acre network of lands and waters protecting many of America’s--and the world’s--most unique natural areas as habitat for an amazing variety of wildlife. As the refuge system prepares to celebrate its centennial anniversary, refuges from Maine to Hawaii and Alaska to the Caribbean are gearing up--hosting special events, partnering with conservation organizations and private corporations, bolstering volunteerism and reinforcing public support for their wildlife conservation mission.

National wildlife refuges form a series of stepping stones for ducks, geese, caribou, and thousands of other birds, mammals, fish, reptiles and plant species. Many national wildlife refuges were established along the four migratory bird flyways to provide crucial stopovers for birds to feed, breed and recharge during migration.

More than 400 national wildlife refuges are open to the public, offering a variety of outdoor activities—including fishing, hunting, environmental education, wildlife observation and photography—and making them special places for Americans to discover the wonders of nature. Many refuges offer additional opportunities for nature hikes, bird tours, wildlife drives and other activities.

To find National Wildlife Refuge Week events near you, go to <http://refuges.fws.gov> and click on “Special Events.”

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses nearly 540 national

wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal

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wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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*For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov>*

Reporters: An "online almanac" of refuge information most frequently requested by journalists, including the history of the system, a timeline of recent events and a wide variety of background information, is available at <http://refuges100.fws.gov>.