

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Sequoyah

National Wildlife Refuge



The 20,800-acre Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge is one of more than 500 refuges throughout the United States managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service. The National Wildlife Refuge System is the only national system of lands dedicated to conserving our wildlife heritage for people today and for generations yet to come.

**Welcome:
Where Two Rivers
Meet**

Nestled in gently rolling foothills of the Ozark Mountains, Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge is home to wildlife as threatened as the bald eagle and as elusive as the bobcat. Fertile bottomlands at the confluence of the Arkansas and Canadian Rivers make this east central Oklahoma refuge a terrific wildlife viewing destination.

Bald eagles that had once all but vanished here, now nest on the refuge. In winter, you might see as many as 60 roosting in cottonwoods or swooping over the waters in search of fish or waterfowl.

Listen to the din of quacking mallards and honking geese in winter. Mallards by the thousands choose Sequoyah NWR as their seasonal home along the Central Flyway. They're joined by gadwall, pintail, teal, wigeon, shoveler, and wood ducks, along with the largest flocks of snow geese in Oklahoma. Snow geese populations reach about 20,000 in late November and early December.

Mornings and evenings are best for spotting armadillos, peculiar mammals protected by armored plates. Quiet observers might be rewarded with a glimpse of a bobcat in the woodlands.

Armadillo.

Photograph by John and
Karen Hollngsworth



Ties to the Past

The refuge name honors Sequoyah, a Native American who invented a Cherokee alphabet consisting of syllables that allowed his tribe to preserve their traditions and history in writing. You can visit Sequoyah's homesite 20 miles away, north of Sallisaw.

Caddoans to Cherokees

Imagine tracking deer by these rivers a thousand years ago. Three ancient campsites within the refuge serve as reminders of the generations of native cultures who lived in harmony with the natural landscape. The camps give clues to the Caddoan Indian culture that flourished from 1100 AD to 1400 AD. By the 1800s, the Arkansas and Canadian Rivers served as borders between the Cherokees to the north and the Chickasaw and Choctaw tribes to the south.

Civil War Showdown

During the Civil War, the Arkansas River formed a natural barrier between Union and Confederate forces. Where today bird songs grace these woodlands and fields, over a century ago, gunshots from skirmishes shattered the stillness.

Outlaw Hideout

By the close of the century, outlaws found the hardwood forests and rivers ideal for their wild lifestyle. Belle Star, Frank and Jesse James, the Daltons, the Youngers, and "Pretty Boy" Floyd roamed the area. The infamous "Hanging Judge," Isaac Parker, showed no mercy to outlaw behavior, hanging 79 men in nearby Fort Smith, Arkansas, between 1875 and 1896.

Wildlife Watching Tips

Dawn and dusk are the best times to see wildlife.

Little is moving on hot summer afternoons or on windy days.

Observe from the sidelines. Leave “abandoned” young animals alone. A parent is probably close by waiting for you to leave. Don’t offer snacks; your lunch could disrupt wild digestive systems.

Cars make good observation blinds. Drive slowly, stopping to scan places wildlife might hide. Use binoculars or a long camera lens for a closer look.

Try sitting quietly in one good location. Let wildlife get used to your presence. Many animals that have hidden will reappear once they think you are gone. Walk quietly in designated areas, being aware of sounds and smells. Often you will hear more than you will see.

Teach children quiet observation. Other wildlife watchers will appreciate your consideration.

Look for animal signs. Tracks, scat, feathers, and nests left behind often tell interesting stories.



Things to do at the Refuge: Start at Headquarters

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher.

Photograph by John and
Karen Hollngsworth



Where do the scissor-tailed flycatchers perch? Where and when can I see bald eagles? How's the fishing? For the latest wildlife sightings, news, and a refuge overview, drop by the headquarters, open from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Best Bets for Finding Wildlife

Scan field edges and explore dense wooded areas for white-tailed deer, armadillos, bobcats, and opossums.

Flooded fields and wetlands harbor great blue herons, snowy egrets, pied-billed grebes, and wood ducks.

Large open fields of soybeans and winter wheat attract clouds of grazing snow geese winter mornings and late evenings. During the day, they rest on Kerr Reservoir. Best vantage points are from the tour road in Sandtown Bottoms.

The Arkansas and Canadian Rivers attract white pelicans, gulls, and shorebirds.

Diamondback watersnakes, southern leopard frogs, gray treefrog, and numerous varieties of turtles can be seen regularly during the warmer seasons in wetlands. Look for them from the tour road. Please note that snakes are beneficial to the environment and deserve our respect.

Take a Wildlife Drive

*(Right and
Below) Wintering
Mallards.*

Photograph by John and
Karen Hollngsworth



Autos make great wildlife viewing blinds. Allow plenty of time for stops to best enjoy the scenic drive through Sandtown Bottoms. Webbers Bottom refuge unit offers another shorter driving option, but is not as easy to reach as the popular Sandtown Bottoms.

*Sandtown
Bottoms:
Your Best Bet*

Drive slowly along the 6 miles of graveled roads for excellent chances to see wildlife. Winter weekends draw visitors to witness bald eagles, waterfowl and magnificent white-tailed deer bucks.

The main tour road is fine for buses and recreational vehicles. During wet and icy weather, the refuge staff may restrict tour road travel to prevent damage to roads. You'll find fuel and services in the nearby towns of Vian, Webbers Falls, Gore, and Sallisaw. The tour road is open year-round from sunrise to sunset.



*Webbers
Bottom:
See the
Arkansas River*

You'll find wildlife viewing and fishing access along a 2-mile drive in this refuge unit, west of the Arkansas River. Boat ramp access to Dirty Creek and the Arkansas River offers a chance to enjoy refuge waters as the waterfowl do.

Take a Hike



Feel free to hike on designated roads, trails, and woodlands. Be aware of closed area signs, poison ivy, and poisonous snakes. It's a good idea to wear insect repellent during warmer months. Deer ticks, chiggers, and mosquitos especially favor the wooded areas.

*Horton
Slough Trail:
Swinging
Bridge
Adventure*



Stroll along a 1-mile trail featuring wood ducks and their broods, migrating warblers, herons, and egrets. The Horton Slough Trail leaves from the information kiosk at the refuge headquarters. You'll follow the north shore of Horton Slough to a small swinging bridge and return along the south side. Watch out for poison ivy and be prepared for insects during the warmer months.

*(Above) Snow
Geese feeding
on farm field
(Left) Sunset at
Sequoyah NWR.'*

Photographs by John and
Karen Hollngsworth



*Sandtown
Woods Trail:
Bald Eagle
Success Story*

Along this winding, 1-mile trail, you'll see a wooden tower, once the release sight for bald eagles into the wild. During the 1980s, every bald eagle that flew free from here represented hope for our once-endangered national symbol. Today, bald eagles commonly nest along the shores of the Arkansas and Canadian Rivers. The trail starts at the Sandtown Woods Parking Area (# 21 on map).

*Girty Bottom
Unit: Walk
Along the
Canadian River*

You're welcome to walk, but not drive in this western part of the refuge by the Canadian River. Meander through woods and small farm fields. Please be respectful of the local cemetery gracing a nearby hill.

**Looking for
more places
to explore?**

Check with refuge headquarters to find out about access to Cook Bottom, Shelby Bottom, Haskell County, and other units of Sequoyah NWR.

**Boating:
Shallow Waters**



The refuge provides five boat ramps and is open to boating all year long. You'll find plenty of places to boat on the northern reaches of Robert S. Kerr Reservoir, within the refuge boundary. The Arkansas and Canadian Rivers' delta also falls within refuge borders. Please be careful navigating all waters. Watch for tree stumps and submerged objects in the shallow lake. A portion of the Reservoir east of Tuff Ramp is closed to all entry from October 1 through February 15 as a roosting area for waterfowl.

**Fishing:
Catfish to Crappie**



The refuge offers excellent fishing opportunities for catfish, crappie, white bass, striped bass, black bass, and sunfish. Anglers can fish year-round, following state regulations.

Hunting: Waterfowl and Upland Game



The refuge permits waterfowl and upland game hunting in designated areas, including Sandtown Bottom, Webbers Bottom, and Girty Bottom. Contact refuge headquarters in the fall before each hunting season for current hunting regulations and maps.

Help Us Protect the Refuge

To safeguard the abundant wildlife that call this refuge home, we do not allow any of the following: off-road or off-trail driving or biking; camping or overnight parking; disturbing or collecting wildlife, plants, or historic objects (including Native American artifacts); firearms (except legal hunting); alcoholic beverages; fireworks and campfires.



Motor vehicles are welcome on refuge roads only. Observe the 30 mph speed limit. Park in designated parking areas.



Bicycles are welcome on refuge tour roads.

Pets are permitted on a leash.

Meeting Your Needs



You'll find restrooms at the refuge headquarters during regular office hours, at the fishing bridge near the tour road entrance, and at Moody Boat Ramp.



We do not have drinking water available, so please bring a good supply with you.



Camping is not allowed on the refuge but is available at Tenkiller State Park, Brushy Lake State Park, and Greenleaf State Park. The towns of Vian, Gore, Webbers Falls, and Sallisaw offer motels.

For Your Safety



Chiggers, ticks, cottonmouth and copperhead snakes inhabit woodlands. Be cautious, especially off trail. Prepare for hot days with plenty of water and sunscreen. Insect repellent is a good idea.

A Chance to Volunteer

Volunteers are welcome at Sequoyah NWR. Please contact the refuge headquarters or call 918/773-5251.



Mallards.

Photograph by John and Karen Hollngsworth

Sequoyah NWR Facts

Where is it?

From Fort Smith, Arkansas, take Interstate 40 west to Vian exit and south three miles on the county road.

When was it established?

In 1970 with the completion of Robert S. Kerr Reservoir.

How big is it?

20,800 acres

Why is it here?

To provide wetland and wooded habitat for resident and migratory wildlife, including waterfowl in the Central Flyway.

Snow Goose.

Photograph by John and Karen Hollngsworth



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Cover photograph of Red-bellied Woodpecker
by John and Karen Hollingsworth

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