

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES:

A HUNTING AND FISHING PERSPECTIVE



REFUGES PROFILED SEEDSKADEE / BOSQUE DEL APACHE / DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL / SHELDON-HART MOUNTAIN



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HUNTING, FISHING, AND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

SANCTUARY FOR FISH, WILDLIFE, ANGLERS & HUNTERS

Originally set aside to conserve habitat, these landscapes provide more than a haven for fish and wildlife—they provide equitable outdoor opportunities for all Americans

+ National Wildlife Refuges span every corner of the United States and its territories—from Selawik NWR in northwest Alaska to Vieques NWR in Puerto Rico, and from Aroostook NWR in northeast Maine to Guam NWR in the western Pacific. Today, there are 567 refuges, totaling more than 150 million acres—larger than the states of Washington, Nebraska, and South Dakota combined. Every state and U.S. territory has at least one refuge, ranging from the half-acre islands of Mille Lacs NWR in central Minnesota to the massive Arctic NWR at more than 19 million acres.

These vast public lands have been set aside to prioritize the conservation of fish and wildlife, and refuges provide habitat for more than 220 species of mammals, 700 species of birds, and 1,250 species of fish, reptiles, and amphibians. Among these are numerous game species, plus nearly 400 endangered and threatened species for which these places are critical to recovery.

Like our national parks and monuments, the National Wildlife Refuge System was the brainchild of concerned hunters and anglers in the early 20th century. Instead of setting aside places because of their unique geology like Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon, these conservation-minded sportsmen set aside areas of essential habitat for wildlife, both terrestrial and aquatic.

Historically, the vast majority of refuges have been created by executive or



THE BIG SIX
The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 specifies six refuge-compatible recreational uses: hunting, fishing, wildlife watching, photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

administrative action, while the rest were established by acts of the United States Congress. Each individual refuge is established for a specific purpose, and managing these places for that purpose is the responsibility of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency of the Department of the Interior. While the system's main priority is the conservation of our fish and wildlife, many units allow other uses like crop production, livestock grazing, and—perhaps most notably—wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting and fishing.

In fact, more than 75 percent of national wildlife refuges are open to the public with 50 million Americans visiting annually, participating in what are known as the “Big Six” refuge-compatible recreational activities of hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation. Currently, 427 refuge units are open to hunting and 376 are open to fishing.

To some, it might seem counterintuitive to allow hunting and angling within refuges for fish and wildlife. But these activities have been an important part of the system from its very inception. When compatible with the primary purpose of a refuge, hunting and fishing are important tools for managing wildlife populations, connecting people to nature, and generating local economic revenue.

Looking ahead, strategic and locally supported expansion of the National Wildlife Refuge System would help to provide all Americans with increased access to nature regardless of their income or background, to conserve biodiversity, and to sustain fish and wildlife habitat connectivity. Sportsmen and sportswomen have been the system's earliest champions, its strongest advocates, and its most generous contributors; no doubt they will continue to have a central role in its future.

AS OF 2020, 427 NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM UNITS ARE OPEN TO PUBLIC HUNTING AND 376 ARE OPEN TO FISHING.



A HISTORY OF OUR REFUGES

For more than a century, America's strongest advocates for the future of fish, wildlife, and healthy habitat have been hunters and anglers

+ For America's fish and wildlife, the late 1800s and early 1900s were a pivotal time. Populations of many species plunged due to exploitation, including commercial harvest and loss of habitat, and from this crisis arose early efforts—led by hunter-conservationists such as President Theodore Roosevelt, George Bird Grinnell, and others—to protect and restore these and other natural resources.

In 1900, Congress passed the first fed-

erated Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge along the Indian River on Florida's central Atlantic coast. Roosevelt would go on to set aside 55 more refuges and preserves during his time in office.

In the following years, other lands were designated with special protections to save iconic American wildlife, such as waterfowl at the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge along the Oregon-California border (1908) and elk at the National

"WHILE THE SYSTEM'S MAIN PURPOSE IS THE CONSERVATION OF OUR FISH AND WILDLIFE, HUNTING AND FISHING ARE SO CENTRAL TO ITS FRAMEWORK AND SO INTEGRAL TO ITS HISTORY THAT IT WOULD TAKE AN ACT OF CONGRESS TO ALTER THE PRIORITY THESE ACTIVITIES ARE AFFORDED ON REFUGE LANDS."

eral legislation on behalf of wildlife, the Lacey Act, prohibiting interstate commerce in illegally taken fish and game. But conservationists knew that laws curtailing excessive harvest would not be enough; diminished populations needed secure and functional habitats to recover.

The first step toward a system of wildlife refuges took place on March 14, 1903, when Roosevelt created the three-acre

Elk Refuge in Wyoming (1912).

In 1934, Congress passed a law requiring that all waterfowl hunters purchase a "duck stamp," generating revenue to acquire vital habitat and conservation easements. Since its inception, the wildly successful program has produced more than \$1 billion, resulting in the protection of six million acres of wetlands.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

was established as an agency under the Department of the Interior in 1940, but it wasn't until 1966 that the habitat previously set aside for fish and wildlife conservation received official recognition as the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Four years earlier, the Refuge Recreation Act had established what would become one of the system's underlying principles: that any recreational use of a refuge must be compatible with its management plan.

Yet in 1989, a federal report outlined the need for major reform in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Mining, off-road vehicles, airboating, waterskiing, and military aviation exercises within refuges were having an adverse effect on fish and wildlife. Local pressures and a lack of jurisdiction over many refuge resources hampered the Fish and Wildlife Service from addressing these issues.

In response, a bipartisan group of lawmakers and various stakeholders worked toward a solution. With a primary sponsor and seven co-sponsors in the House—five Democrats and three Republicans—the bill passed with only one dissenting vote. The bill passed the Senate unanimously.

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 established a management framework for the system as well as comprehensive guidance on how refuges should be managed and used by the public. It recognized hunting and fishing as among six priority uses for these lands and waters, and the Act's committee report published in the Congressional Record reaffirmed that "it is the policy of the United States that where a proposed wildlife-dependent use is determined to be compatible on an individual refuge, the activity should be facilitated."

MAN: B. M. Hazeltine_USFWS; LAKE: John Willbrecht_USFWS; TENETS SPREAD: FISH: Dan Parsons; SNOW: Lori Iverson_USFWS; SUNSET: Tom Koerner_USFWS

THE SPORTING COMMUNITY'S SIGNIFICANCE

From hunting and fishing licenses to excise taxes on their equipment, hunters and anglers have always paid their way, including more than \$1 billion in Duck Stamp purchases alone



+ Sportsmen and sportswomen pay for the vast majority of wildlife conservation in the U.S. They buy licenses and permits, with revenues going to state agencies to pay for the management of game and non-game species alike. Waterfowl hunters purchase federal duck stamps, which support wetland conservation.

In addition to these fees, hunters and anglers pay excise taxes on ammunition, rifles, archery equipment, fishing tackle, trolling motors, and boat fuel. This money—amounting to nearly \$1 billion in 2020 alone—is then allocated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to state conservation programs. These funding sources, known as Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson, have contributed nearly \$23 billion to state-directed conservation efforts.

No different than on other federal, state, and privately held lands, people hunt-

ing and fishing on national wildlife refuges must purchase state licenses and permits. While individual licensing fees are generally affordable for most Americans, these funds are critical to conservation. And the outdoor opportunities afforded by the National Wildlife Refuge System are key to the continuation of this revenue.

And it's not just animals and landscapes that benefit from these activities—communities do too. Hunting and fishing are two cogs in the outdoor recreation engine, which itself is a major economic driver. Consider a 2020 Bureau of Economic Analysis report that found the economic output of outdoor recreation at \$788 billion, exceeding more traditional sectors such as mining, utilities, and farming and ranching. Outdoor recreation sustains 5.2 million jobs annually and comprises 2.1 percent of GDP. These benefits also have a strong local impact: a 2016 study, for example, showed hunters in Montana spent nearly \$100 million in the state, contributing to gas stations, sporting goods stores, and small-town hotels and restaurants.

BRIGHT FUTURE
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rule changes in 2019 and 2020 boosted hunting and fishing opportunities on a combined 4 million acres within the refuge system.

WATERFOWL PRODUCTION AREAS AND THE DUCK STAMP

Waterfowl Production Areas are chunks of protected wetlands and grasslands where waterfowl build their nests, lay their eggs, and raise the next generation of ducks, geese and swans. They range in size from less than an acre at Medicine Lake WPA in North Dakota to 3,733 acres in Montana at Kingsley Lake WPA. Most are between 200 and 300 acres.

Spread across the northern Great Plains are "prairie pot-holes" of wetlands, left behind by retreating glaciers. Known

today as the "Duck Factory," this area accounts for nearly half of North America's waterfowl, but over time agricultural practices and other development have drained this vital habitat.

In 1958, Congress amended the Duck Stamp Act to allow the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect wetlands and uplands identified as WPAs. Today, there are nearly 3,000 WPAs covering 670,000 acres of vital waterfowl habitat. And every acre was paid for by duck hunters.



HUNT-FISH TENETS FOR REFUGES



National wildlife refuges are integral to the conservation of America's fish and wildlife. They also provide a place for Americans to relax and recreate—from birding and hiking, to hunting and fishing. **To continue these traditions, new or expanded refuges need a framework to garner broad support from the fishing and hunting community.** The following tenets must be followed to secure the sporting community's support for additions and expansions.

1 Proposals for new or expanded national wildlife refuges should be developed through a public process—one that includes hunters and anglers, state fish and wildlife agencies, agricultural producers, as well as appropriate State, Tribal, and local governments, and the general public.

2 For refuges created out of public lands administered by a separate land management agency, state fish and wildlife agencies should retain authority over the management of fish and wildlife populations to the maximum extent allowed by law.

3 The input of hunters and anglers should inform all applicable management plans for national wildlife refuges.

4 Protection of important fish and wildlife habitat should be the highest priority of any refuge.

5 Proposals for new or expanded national wildlife refuges will require support from the public, including hunters and anglers.

6 Hunting and fishing opportunities should be prioritized as "wildlife-dependent recreational uses" to the maximum extent, and public access should be enhanced or expanded where compatible with the objectives of any new or existing refuge to ensure no net loss of hunting and fishing opportunities across the refuge system.



ABUNDANT FISH & WILDLIFE



HABITAT CONSERVATION



PUBLIC ACCESS



7 Reasonable public access should be established or retained to enable continued hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities, as compatible with refuge objectives.

8 Funding should be dedicated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to secure the resources, staffing, and expertise required to effectively manage the refuge system, including any new or expanded refuge units.

9 New or expanded refuge units should bolster ecosystem health by conserving year-round, seasonal, and migratory habitats for both game and non-game species, including "species of greatest conservation need" that have been identified by state fish and wildlife agencies.

10 Consistent with National Wildlife Refuge System policies, cooperative agriculture such as haying and grazing on refuge lands should continue to the extent that it meets specific wildlife or habitat management goals and objectives.

11 New or expanded refuges should prioritize opportunities to add unique fish, wildlife, or ecological values and hunting and angling opportunities that are underrepresented in the refuge system.

12 To the maximum extent practicable and consistent with refuge purposes, regulations governing hunting and fishing on new or expanded refuges should remain consistent with state regulations and limit additional restrictions on hunting and fishing opportunities.

SEEDSKADEE



LOCAL VOICE

DAN PARSON

Teacher, coach, father and big fish wrangler

THERE'S SOMETHING FISHY about Dan Parson. Maybe it's because he was struck by lightning once while guiding clients on the Green River as they waited out a storm under a cliff. He still has a melted wader boot to prove it. Or maybe it's because he's been teaching biology and anatomy to high school kids for nearly three decades. In reality, the 52-year-old school teacher and fishing guide lives to fish and loves to teach people how to fish. And there's no place he'd rather be than fishing on the Green River while floating through the Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge.

In addition to being an educator and guide, Parson is a father, a volunteer with Trout Unlimited, and a speech and debate coach. He also just organized the Green River School Fishing Club. For most people, this is a recipe for burnout. Yet there is something about spending time outdoors in and around Seedskadee that energizes Parson.

"Seedskadee is a place where people can come and connect with the landscape. You don't just watch wildlife; you can do that on TV at home. You can really be a part of it here," Parson says. "This place is windy and wild. Everything is prickly and bites and stabs you. It's beautiful in its own way. The only people who come here want to fish and hunt and take photos. I'm so lucky that I live in this place because after a full day of teaching I can head to the refuge to catch big trout and see golden eagles."



WYOMING

A TROUT OASIS IN THE DESERT

Tucked between two dams in southwest Wyoming, the habitat here is a boon for wildlife and a playground for anglers



Described by many as an oasis in the desert, the 27,230-acre Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge in southwest Wyoming serves as a haven for wildlife and people alike. Bordered to the north by Fontenelle Dam and to the south by Flaming Gorge Dam, the habitat nestled in between and on either side of

the Green River is home to greater sage grouse and iconic big game species such as pronghorn and Shiras moose. In fact, the refuge takes its name from the Shoshone language and translates to "river of the prairie hen."

In 1965, Seedskadee was established to mitigate the impacts of reservoir

development on wildlife habitat in various drainages of the Colorado River. Thirty-six miles of the Green River, a Colorado River tributary, flow through the heart of Seedskadee and comprise the lifeblood of the refuge. Waterfowl and wetland birds such as Canada geese and common goldeneye nest here, while golden eagles, mountain bluebirds, and countless other avian species call the refuge home. In short, it's a birder's paradise.

Hunting, too, is encouraged on the refuge. Waterfowl hunters ply the marshes for ducks, coots and geese, while big game hunters stalk the plains and coulees for elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, moose, and pronghorn. As is

TROUT: Josh Duplechan

the case on refuges, hunters and anglers must comply with regulations set by the state wildlife agency, as well as those established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the specific refuge.

While birders and hunters recreate here, the fishery is a major lure because it's nothing short of unreal. Here, the Green River is considered a tailwater fishery, meaning the waterflows and subsequent water temperature are controlled by the dam. The refuge features a variety of sportfish, including Snake River and Bonneville cutthroat, and rainbow

and brown trout—all of which can grow insanely large. In the fall, Kokanee salmon migrate into the waters of the refuge from Flaming Gorge Reservoir to spawn.

While it may be tucked away in a far corner of Wyoming's high desert, Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge is a special place. For the migratory birds, massive fish, big game, and upland birds that call this place home, and for the people who depend on this place for its sporting opportunities, it is an oasis in every sense of the word.

SOUTHWEST WYOMING

SIZE:
27,230 ACRES

WHY:
DAM MITIGATION,
GREATER SAGE GROUSE,
MASSIVE TROUT

DEER & GROUSE: Tom Koerner_USFWS

NEW MEXICO

HISTORICAL HABITAT RESTORED

A restored landscape once again harbors healthy fish and wildlife



For thousands of years, the area we now call the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge was shaped by the cyclical flooding of the Rio Grande. Each spring, the river would swell with snowmelt from the mountains, then recede, and then swell again with summer rains. The ebb and flow of the water level created ponds, marshes, and other habitat for tens of thousands of migratory birds and other wildlife. The fertile soil sustained many centuries of indigenous settlement in pueblos along the river.

As early as the 1700s, however, the face of the river and floodplain began to change. The Rio Grande was dammed, diked, and diverted until it was just a shallow stream. The dynamic nature of the river had been reduced to a trickle.

Prior to this development, the area of the Bosque del Apache, only 95 miles south of Albuquerque, was the winter home for an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 migrating sandhill cranes. By 1940, though, sandhill crane populations were thought to total only around 1,000 birds with only 17 spotted wintering in the Bosque. Without the floods, food for sandhills and other bird species disappeared.

In an effort to restore this habitat, the Civilian Conservation Corps worked to emulate what nature had perfected. They built canals, gates and ditches, allowing managers to manipulate water levels as a means of recreating the flooded fields and marshes. It worked, and in 1939, President Franklin Roosevelt officially designated the refuge. Now, tens of thousands of sandhill cranes and snow geese as well as hundreds of other bird species depend on those human-made marshes



and ponds.

In addition, the refuge and surrounding lands provide recreational opportunities for birders, hunters, and anglers. Rio Grande turkeys attract sportsmen and sportswomen in the spring, while fall brings opportunities to pursue mule deer, javelina and oryx. Anglers fish for catfish and carp, while gigging American bullfrog—which offer excellent table fare—is encouraged as they are a non-native species.

Change has been a constant on the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. It's what has defined the area, and what continues to shape it. Looking to the future, those who care about this landscape—sportsmen and sportswomen in particular—will ensure that whatever changes may come will be for the benefit of fish, wildlife, and the habitat on which they depend.

CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

SIZE:
57,331 ACRES

WHY:
FLOODPLAIN RESTORATION,
SANDHILL CRANES,
MIGRATORY WATERFOWL



Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge

WHITE SANDS MISSILE SITE

2 MILES



TREE: Robert Dunn; USFW/S; GEESE: Larry Lamsa; SUNSET: Robert Larranaga



MIGRATION MAGNET

Located between the Chupadera Mountains to the west and the San Pascual Mountains to the east, the Bosque del Apache provides habitat for tens of thousands of cranes, geese, and ducks each winter.



LOCAL VOICE

MATT MONJARAS

Founder of Impact Outdoors in New Mexico

Matthew Monjaras moved a lot with his family when he was a kid. The one constant in his life was fishing and the outdoors. "The river's been a big part of my life," he says. "Fishing and the outdoors have always been my safe harbor."

Now, at 35, Monjaras has found his calling in life as an educator. He's closing in on a degree in elementary education and hopes that places like Bosque will still be a haven for fish and wildlife when his son Carter is old enough to hunt. The outdoors is the perfect classroom, he says.

Sharing his knowledge of the landscape with others is important to Monjaras. He founded the non-profit organization Impact Outdoors in New Mexico, which helps military veterans get out in the field and on the water, while also teaching them about conservation. "If you can take someone out for the day, if that's what they need, and they have a great day, then that's a win. If they come back and want to do it again, that's another win and a win for the community. It's just a big thank you."

Monjaras and his guests don't hunt the refuge much. Rather, they hunt the adjacent lands, but he says the waterfowl and turkeys depend on the habitat the Bosque provides. And if he and a couple veterans get to take home a few for the freezer, all the better.

An educator at heart, Monjaras isn't one to pass up an opportunity to explain the conservation model responsible for this incredible resource. "On the Bosque, I see birders and photographers the most," he says. "I ask them if they bought their Duck Stamp. And nine out of 10 have never heard of it."

DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL

MICHIGAN & ONTARIO

SMOKESTACKS AND HABITAT

Against the backdrop of cooling towers and barge traffic, fish and wildlife thrive in an oasis of opportunity for hunters and anglers



Surrounded by industry and nuclear and coal-fired power plants, while only an hour's drive from 7 million souls, there is a place where people and wildlife can get away to nature. Only 20 miles south of Detroit and 50 miles north of Toledo, Ohio, visitors to the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge can bird, kayak, hunt, and eat most of the fish they catch. That wasn't always the case.

Rapid industrialization in the early twentieth century polluted the area's waterways with waste and sewage. Killing thousands of birds and fish, these toxins

SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN	
SIZE:	6,202 ACRES
WHY:	URBAN WILDLIFE HABITAT, MIGRATORY BIRDS, FISHING

made the water unsafe for human consumption and even recreation. In 1961, Michigan lawmaker John Lesinski Jr. worked to create the 394-acre Wyandotte National Wildlife Refuge, establishing a model for future protections in the area.

In 2000, Michigan Congressman John Dingell spearheaded a movement to protect an even larger swath of habitat on the Detroit River. Bringing together local stakeholders, as well as regional, state, and federal agencies, Dingell introduced legislation that would usher in a new era for the sporting community, fish, and wildlife. In 2001, President George W. Bush signed it into law.

The refuge is the first wildlife refuge to boast international management status as it shares a border with Canada. More than 6,200 acres owned and cooperatively managed by the Refuge extend along 48 miles of shoreline, and the

refuge's islands, wetlands, marshes and waterfront are an angler's diamond-in-the-rough. Eight different management units are open to hunters. Opportunities for white-tailed deer, turkey, ring-necked pheasant, and small game, rabbits, squirrels, and migratory birds are managed cooperatively by state and federal agencies.

Recently, the Detroit River made national headlines when a fisheries survey crew caught a 6-foot 10-inch, 240-pound lake sturgeon from its waters. Estimated to be more than 100 years old, the prehistoric fish was measured and released back into the river to live out the rest of her days. With proper management and protections for the area's fish and wildlife, chances are she won't be the last century-old sturgeon to break the surface.

ACCESS FOR ALL

Situated in close proximity to densely populated urban centers, the refuge plays an important role in providing access to outdoor recreational opportunities for the surrounding communities, thanks in large part to significant pollution reduction and habitat restoration efforts on the Detroit River and western Lake Erie.



BRIAN PRESTON

Veteran and frog leg connoisseur

BRIAN PRESTON LIKES TO COAT HIS FROG LEGS with a little olive oil, sear them on both sides, and then add a little white wine, before steaming them to perfection. "They just fall off the bone," he says. Preston loves to catch frogs with his sons in the marshes of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge.

Preston acknowledges that the refuge's industrial surroundings might seem strange to some. "And yet we shot eight duck species one opening day off Woodtick Peninsula."

Preston, 60, was raised five miles from the refuge. In cut-off shorts and an old pair of tennis shoes, he'd fish for crappie as a kid and later took up waterfowl hunting. After 40 years in the military, he now works as a healthcare consultant looking forward to retirement. The refuge, he says, provides vital habitat for an amazing array of wildlife, as well as the hunting and fishing opportunities that come with it.

"It ain't going to win any beauty contests," Preston admits. "But it's a wonderful place that gives all kinds of people access to the outdoors. And the great thing is that no one has to buy a plane ticket. You put the kids in the car, grab a picnic lunch, and go fish for bluegill!"



DEER: Tom Kachelmeyer_USFWS; TOWERS: Tandem_USFWS

WHERE THE ANTELOPE PLAY

This refuge complex in the Northern Great Basin provides a home for America's fastest land animal and outstanding big game hunting



Comprised of two separate refuges managed as one individual administrative unit, the 851,000-acre Sheldon-Hart National Wildlife Refuge Complex in the high desert of south-central Oregon and northern Nevada is one of more than 100 so-called complexes managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Hot springs remind visitors of the area's geologic roots, and petroglyphs offer a glimpse of the more recent past.

Located within the Great Basin, the Sheldon-Hart complex features rugged canyons and sagebrush flats, providing habitat for hundreds upon hundreds of plant and animal species, including greater sage grouse, California bighorn sheep, and mule deer. The refuge complex may be best known for its star attraction and North America's fastest land animal, the pronghorn.

Three hundred years ago, 30-40 million pronghorn were estimated to roam from southern Canada to northern Mexico. By 1924, the population had plummeted to only 20,000 animals. While pronghorn can reach speeds of up to 60 mph, they are hesitant to leap over barbed-wire fences, which can impede their ability to move across the landscape. But thanks to conservation measures like the 1936 establishment of Hart Mountain NWR to protect seasonal habitats for migratory pronghorn, the species' numbers are now up to 1 million across the West.

Roughly 4,000 pronghorn summer on Hart's shrub steppe ecosystem, enough animals for managers to hold a popular, carefully managed hunt in the fall. Refuge managers work with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to ensure that these herds continue to thrive. Recently, chukar and quail hunting seasons were opened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Like a handful of other National Wildlife Refuges—including the National Elk Refuge in Wyoming and the Charles M. Russell NWR in Montana—the Hart and Sheldon refuges represent a type of refuge that is sometimes referred to as a "game range" refuge. These refuges were originally created for the conservation of large mammals like deer, elk, bison, bighorn sheep, and pronghorn. Among their many similarities to state wildlife management areas, game range refuges have served as an effective tool to conserve migratory big game habitats and winter range.

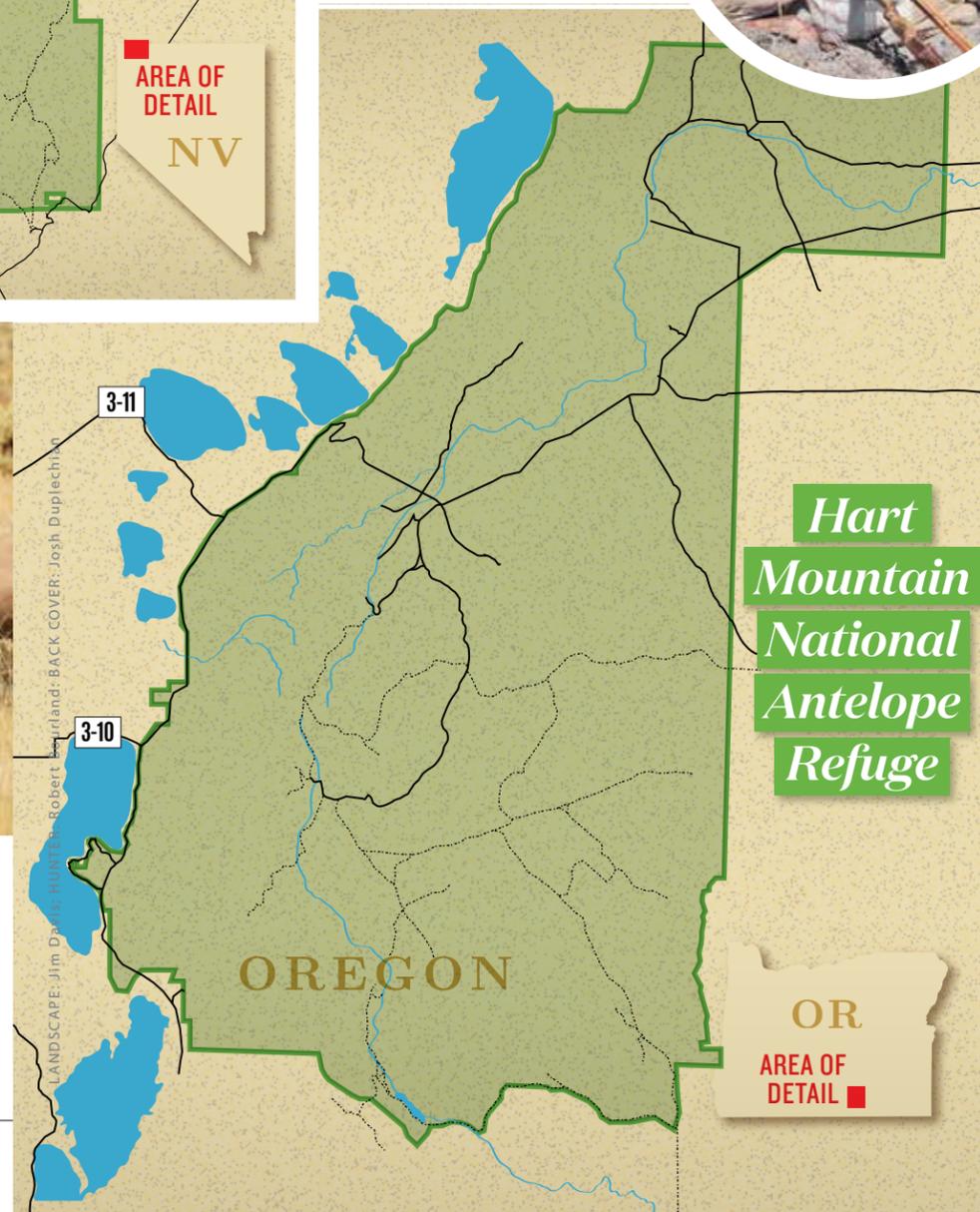


SOUTHERN OREGON/NORTHERN NEVADA

SIZE:
851,000 ACRES
COMBINED

WHY:
PRONGHORN, BIGHORN
SHEEP, HOT SPRINGS

SHEEP: Zachary McCoy



A successful Hart Mountain antelope hunter



LOCAL VOICE

NANCY DORAN

Traditional archer and dedicated hunter

WHEN NANCY DORAN'S HUSBAND Dave finally drew an antelope tag for the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge in 2014 they weren't going to let Dave's cancer stop them. Nancy drove him around the refuge to scout during the preseason and, when the time finally came, they packed the truck with hunting gear, complete with a generator for Dave's dialysis machine.

Each morning, the 200 yard hike from the truck to the blind would take them the better part of an hour. While they hunted every day of the season and had a few pronghorn come within range of Dave's longbow, they left without filling the tag. Nancy says that's okay. It's the memory of the hunt that she appreciates.

"Each night when we'd drive back to camp in the dark, there were owls and wildlife everywhere," she says. "Hart is a special place because of the pronghorn population. I love the desert, especially there. The geology and the landscape is so unique with the hot springs and the sage. There's so much to see."

Dave passed away in 2017, but not before teaching Nancy how to hunt with a traditional bow. In turn, she taught him how to hunt with a muzzleloader. A board member of Traditional Archers of Oregon, Nancy embraces the added challenge of getting close to her quarry. "I like to practice. I like being invested in it," she says. "There's a passion and dedication in that."





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