

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Quivira National Wildlife Refuge
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Quivira

National Wildlife Refuge

For State relay service
TTY / Voice: 711

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>

For Refuge Information
1 800 / 344 WILD

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Long-billed dowitchers
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*For untold years,
the Big and Little Salt
Marshes of Quivira
National Wildlife
Refuge have attracted
thousands of migratory
waterfowl and
shorebirds, providing
them with food, cover,
and a place to rest
during their long flights
between breeding and
wintering areas.*

About the Refuge



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

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), located in south-central Kansas, lies in an area where the eastern and western prairies meet and blend. In 1955, the Migratory Bird Commission approved the purchase of land to create the Refuge, thus providing food, water, and nesting areas for migratory waterfowl in this area of Kansas. Quivira NWR is one of over 550 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System – a network of lands set aside and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service specifically for wildlife. The Refuge System is a living heritage, conserving wildlife and habitat for people today and for generations to come.

The name "Quivira" is of Spanish origin, given to this portion of what is now Kansas by explorers during the time of Coronado, who visited the area in 1541. In quest of treasure and the fabled "Seven Cities of Cibola," he instead found fertile grasslands, abundant wildlife, and small settlements.

Both the Native Americans and early settlers hunted waterfowl in area marshes. In the early 1900s, commercial hunting provided wagon-loads of waterfowl to restaurants in the east. With the decline of commercial hunting came the establishment of hunting clubs. The lands bought by these clubs helped preserve valuable waterfowl habitat from further development. Moreover, these hunting clubs worked to improve the habitat to attract migrating birds. Canals and water control structures were later added, providing the entire area with a more dependable water supply. Today, these marshlands remain a major stopover for thousands of migrating birds.

Wildlife Throughout the Seasons

Fall Flights

Quivira NWR's 22,135 acres include two unique habitats: sand prairie and inland salt marsh. These habitats, plus the Refuge's geographical location in the center of the United States, attract birds common to both the eastern and western parts of the country. Over 330 bird species have been observed on the Refuge.

Thousands of Canada geese, ducks, and other migratory birds, such as sandhill cranes and shorebirds, pass through the Refuge from September to December. The shallow west edge of the Big Salt Marsh is a favorite roosting area for sandhill cranes. Endangered whooping cranes may make a brief visit as they move along their migration routes from mid-October through November. This is the best time to view these rare visitors. Whooping cranes may make a return visit in mid-March through mid-April on their way north to nesting areas.



Sandhill cranes silhouetted at sunset

© Bob Gross

A Place Known for Wildlife

Winter and Spring Visitors

Bald and golden eagles winter on the Refuge from November until March. Over 800,000 ducks and geese visit the Refuge from October through December until severe weather drives them southward to winter along the Gulf Coast and in Mexico. During March and April, the Refuge becomes a staging area once again for ducks, geese, shorebirds, American white pelicans, gulls, and other migrants en route to traditional nesting grounds in the prairie potholes of the north-central United States and Canada.



© Bob Gress



© Bob Gress



Barry Jones / USFWS



© Bob Gress

Summer Residents

In summer, the Refuge hosts Swainson's hawks and Mississippi kites, while northern harriers, American kestrels, and red-tailed hawks are common throughout the year. The marshes are alive with the sounds and bright colors of yellow-headed blackbirds, herons, and egrets.

Nesting birds are numerous and diverse on the Refuge. Wetland nesters include snowy plover, American avocet, black-necked stilt, and white-faced ibis. Prairie nesters include upland sandpiper, dickcissel, and grasshopper sparrow. In addition, there is a nesting colony of endangered interior least terns on the salt flats at the north end of the Refuge. Other wildlife frequently seen include deer, black-tailed prairie dog, badger, ornate box turtle, and eastern garter snake. Bird checklists and other more detailed information about the Refuge's flora and fauna can be obtained at the visitor center.

*American white
pelicans in the
marsh (top left);
grasshopper
sparrow
(middle left);
ornate box turtle
(bottom left);
prairie dog (center);
mallards (below)*



Dave Hilley / USFWS

NE 190th St.

Prairie Dog Town

North Lake

Marsh Road

NE 170th St.

Spotting Scope

Big Salt Marsh

Scenic Overlook

To U.S. 281 13 mi.
NE 140 St.

To Sterling 17 mi.

Quivira

National Wildlife Refuge

- | | |
|--|---|
| Refuge Boundary | Wetlands and Wildlife National Scenic Byway |
| Paved Road | Restroom |
| Gravel Road | Accessible Site |
| Auto Tour Route | Photo Blind |
| Wildlife Drive | Hunting Blind |
| Foot Path | Viewing Area |
| Refuge Headquarters and Visitor Center | Fishing Area |
| Parking | |

Environmental Education Classroom

Migrants Mile Nature Trail

Rattlesnake Creek

Little Salt Marsh

Little Salt Marsh Photo Blind

Wildlife Observation Tower

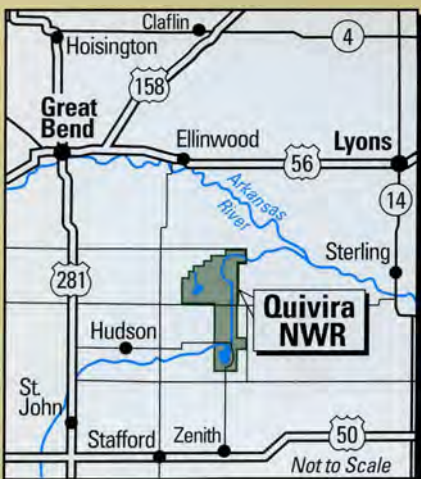
Kids' Fishing Pond

To U.S. 281 & Stafford

70th St.

4th Ave.

To Hutchinson 28 mi.



Managing Land for Wildlife – the Work of the Refuge

One major focus of habitat management at Quivira NWR is to provide migratory waterfowl with food, water, and shelter. A wide variety of wildlife benefit from habitat management techniques such as prairie restoration, prescribed burning, grazing, and water control. Many other migratory birds, endangered species, and resident wildlife such as deer, pheasant, bobwhite quail, and wild turkey also benefit from these management practices.

Prairie Restoration

Historically, Quivira NWR and the surrounding area were dominated by sand prairie, a unique ecosystem of prairie grasses and other herbaceous plants growing on once-active sand dune formations. Efforts are being made to restore the plant community to its historic state.

Refuge staff conducting prescribed burn



Dan Severson / USFWS

Prescribed Burning

Fire was a natural element in the historic landscape of what is now Quivira NWR. Periodic fires help stimulate the sprouting and growth of many species of plants in the prairie. Fire also turns over nutrients into the soil that otherwise would be tied up in dead vegetation, allowing new growth to benefit. In addition, fire helps to reduce stands of woody vegetation and maintain grassland health. Prescribed fires are conducted throughout the year at Quivira NWR. Formal burn plans determine the areas to be burned and the proper timing.

Grazing Now and Then

Historically, great herds of bison grazed the grasslands of the area. They would graze an area and then move on, thus allowing the native grasses to regrow and continue the cycle. Since bison no longer roam the Great Plains, the Quivira NWR staff imitate this natural cycle with cattle. Through this management program, local ranchers are permitted to graze their cattle in specifically chosen areas of the Refuge, using high intensity, short-term, rotational grazing. Grassland birds and animals feed, nest, and rest in these areas.

Water for Wildlife

Twenty-one miles of canals and numerous water control structures divert water to over 34 wetlands ranging in size from 10 to 1,500 acres and totaling over 7,000 acres. Through the use of these canals and water control structures, water management, either flooding or removing water from an area, allows the Refuge staff to influence the types of plants that grow in the wetland. For example, by manipulating the water levels, large stands of cattails, which have limited value to wildlife, can be replaced by waterfowl food plants.

Enjoying the Refuge Visitor Center

Restrooms

Located in the Refuge headquarters building, the visitor center contains interpretive exhibits focusing on the wildlife and habitats of the Refuge. A variety of wildlife mounts and hands-on attractions are also on display.

There are restrooms at the visitor center, the Kids' Fishing Pond, inside the environmental education classroom building, and just outside the classroom building. All restrooms are fully accessible.

Wildlife Observation

Spring and fall are the best seasons to visit Quivira NWR since wildlife, especially waterfowl, is abundant and more easily viewed at these times. Try to schedule your visit early or late in the day when wildlife is most active and more frequently seen.

Interpretive Nature Trails

A 1.2-mile nature trail, the Migrants Mile, is located south of the environmental education classroom. It loops along marshy edges and through native grasslands. An elevated boardwalk takes you across a large marsh. A surfaced, accessible ¾-mile loop is also a part of the nature trail.

A 1,000-foot accessible trail, located on the south side of the visitor center parking area, provides views of a restored prairie. In addition, a ½-mile trail leads from the Kids' Fishing Pond to the observation tower.

Auto Tour Routes

The 14-mile auto tour route through the Refuge provides visitors with many opportunities to pull over and view wildlife.

The 4-mile Wildlife Drive at the north end of the Refuge offers wildlife watching opportunities and views of the Big Salt Marsh and surrounding habitats. An accessible spotting scope is provided to assist visitors in watching wildlife.

The Wetlands and Wildlife National Scenic Byway passes through the center of the Refuge and features a Scenic Overlook along NE 140th Street. More information can be found at <http://www.kansaswetlandsandwildlifescenicbyway.com>.

Observation Tower

An accessible wildlife observation tower is located on the south edge of the Little Salt Marsh. This tower allows visitors to get a better view of Refuge wildlife.

Wildlife Photography

Photography blinds are located at the Little Salt Marsh and on the Migrants Mile nature trail. The photography blind on the Migrants Mile nature trail is accessible. Both blinds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Environmental Education

Guided tours are available for schools and other groups. Educators are encouraged to investigate one of the many different educational activities for field trips available at the Refuge. Please call the Refuge staff for more information or to schedule guided tours, field trips, and/or teacher workshops.

Nearby Accommodations

Gas, food, and lodging can be found in the nearby communities of Stafford, Sterling, Hutchinson, and Great Bend.

Accessibility

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. Dial 711 for a free connection to the State transfer relay service for TTY and voice calls to and from the speech and hearing impaired. For more information or to address accessibility needs, please contact the Refuge staff at 620 /486 2393, or the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Refuge Regulations

The following regulations are necessary for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat, and for the safety of visitors. Observance of these rules will help make the Refuge a better place for visitors and the wildlife they come to enjoy. The Refuge Manager reserves the right to close all or part of the Refuge to hunting and/or public access at any time. Specific regulations will be posted. The Refuge is also subject to Federal, State, and local laws and regulations.

Visiting Hours

The Refuge is open daily from 1½ hours before sunrise to 1½ hours after sunset. The visitor center is open from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday, except during Federal holidays.

Access and Parking

Motorized vehicles are permitted only on developed roads and parking areas. Driving off-road or on roads closed by signs or barriers is prohibited. Parking in front of gates, on bridges, or on water control structures is also prohibited.

Hunting

Hunting is permitted on 8,000 acres of the Refuge. The hunting program is managed in accordance with Federal and State regulations. Only waterfowl, pheasants, quail, dove, snipe, rails, squirrels, and rabbits may be hunted on Quivira NWR. Special Refuge regulations also apply, as listed in the Quivira NWR hunting and fishing leaflet available at the Refuge visitor center. An accessible waterfowl hunting blind is available by reservation only.

Firearms

Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuge System lands must comply with all provisions of State and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific refuge regulations

in 50 CFR Part 32). Discharge of a firearm for any reason other than the legal taking of game animals is prohibited.

Fishing

Fishing is permitted on the Refuge. The fishing program is managed in accordance with Federal and State regulations. Special Refuge regulations, listed in the Quivira NWR hunting and fishing leaflet, also apply. An accessible fishing area is located on the north end of the Little Salt Marsh. The "Kids' Fishing Pond," located west of the visitor center, is open for kids 14 years and younger. An accompanying adult may fish with the youth. An accessible pier is also located at this pond.

Boating

The use of boats and canoes is not allowed on the Refuge.

Hiking

All of the Refuge is open to hiking.

Bicycling

Bicycling is permitted on the Refuge, but is restricted to established roads. Bicycles are prohibited on all hiking trails.

Horseback Riding

Horseback riding is permitted, but for safety purposes, Refuge staff must be notified before any riding activities take place. Horses are restricted to established roads and are prohibited on all hiking trails.

Camping

Overnight camping is not permitted. All visitors must leave the Refuge at the end of each day.

Fires

No fires of any type are permitted within the Refuge.

Littering

Littering is prohibited on the Refuge. Please remove all trash from the Refuge.

Pets

Dogs and other pets must be under the owner's control. From March 1 through July 31, all dogs and other pets must be leashed.

Refuge Signs and Their Meaning



Refuge Boundary –
Authorized entry only



Public Hunting Area –
Area behind this sign
open to hunting.



No Hunting Zone –
Area behind this sign
closed to hunting.



Non-toxic Shot Zone –
Non-toxic shot must be
used for all hunting.

Would You Like to Help?

The Friends of Quivira is a nonprofit group established in 1998 to assist the Refuge staff with their environmental education and stewardship goals. This group sponsors and volunteers at educational events held at the Refuge throughout the year. For more information about the Friends of Quivira, contact:

Friends of Quivira
c/o Quivira National Wildlife Refuge
1434 NE 80th Street
Stafford, KS 67578-8818

Gary Meggers / USFWS

