



Hunting is one of the many popular recreational activities permitted on the refuge.

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Recreational areas have been developed at the Pines and Fort Peck. Camping, picnicking, and boat launching facilities are available at Rock Creek State Park on the eastern part of the reservoir; at Nelson Creek Recreation Area on the Big Dry Arm of Fort Peck Reservoir; at Hell Creek State Park, north of Jordan, Montana; at Crooked Creek Recreation Area on the western part of Fort Peck Reservoir; and at James Kipp State Park on U.S. Highway 191 at the Robinson Bridge. Corps of Engineers recreational facilities are also available at Fort Peck.

Fishing and boating are popular recreational activities on Fort Peck Reservoir and along the Missouri River. Walleye, sauger, northern pike, paddlefish, catfish, ling, and lake trout are some of the fish species present.

Other recreational activities include photography, wildlife observation, hiking, and horseback riding. Both hiking and horseback riding permit exploration of the more remote areas of the refuge.

Big game and bird hunting are permitted in specific areas. All recreational activities are subject to both State and Federal regulations.

A number of roads lead into the refuge. Surfaced, all-weather roads are limited to U.S. Highway 191, crossing the western part of the refuge; a graveled auto tour route; and the highways around Fort Peck. Other roads are passable only in dry weather. High-wheeled or 4-wheel drive vehicles are preferable on roads in the breaks and along the river. Local inquiry should be made if travel is contemplated off the main highways, or into Rock Creek and Hell Creek State Parks.

Hotel accommodations and restaurants can be found at Fort Peck, Glasgow, Malta, Lewistown, and Jordan.

The Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge headquarters is located in Lewistown, Montana, with subheadquarters at the Sand Creek Wildlife Station, the Fort Peck Wildlife Station, and the Jordan Wildlife Station.

For further information, contact the Refuge Manager, Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, Box 110, Lewistown, Montana 59457.



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Department of the Interior



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PAM FILE
**CHARLES
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DEPOSITORY





Mule and white-tailed deer are common refuge residents.



Prairie dogs, a burrowing rodent, are found in towns and are characterized by their barking when alarmed.



Each spring sharp-tailed grouse gather on dancing grounds to begin their courtship rituals to attract a mate.



Coyotes are found throughout the refuge and their howling may be heard during twilight hours.

Introduction to CMR National Wildlife Refuge

Extending 125 airline miles up the Missouri River from Fort Peck Dam in north-central Montana, Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge contains approximately 1,100,000 acres, in addition to the 245,000-acre Fort Peck Reservoir. It includes native prairies, forested coulees, river bottoms, and badlands so often portrayed in the paintings of the colorful, early-day artist for whom this refuge is named.



A CHANGING LAND

The land along the Missouri is rich in history of native Americans, frontiersmen, and wildlife. Big game animals recorded here by Lewis and Clark in May of 1805 included American bison, elk, mule and white-tailed deer, pronghorn antelope, and bighorn sheep. There were also grizzly bears, wolves, mountain lions, bobcats, and coyotes. Ducks, geese, and swans were abundant as were such upland birds as sharp-tailed and sage grouse. Trappers and fur traders were attracted by the beaver along the Missouri and its tributary streams.

Slowly, the country and its wildlife changed. Hide hunters decimated the buffalo herds. Elk were eliminated from the prairies and Audubon bighorn sheep vanished into extinction. As domestic cattle replaced the buffalo, wolves and the plains grizzly bear were destroyed because of their predatory ways. Plows destroyed much of the prairie habitat of many of the smaller birds and mammals. A portion of the Missouri River breaks and badlands, however, escaped many of these influences of settlement because of rough terrain and inaccessibility of the area. Remnant populations of some wildlife species were still present when the area was established as a national game range in 1936. (Charles M. Russell was later converted to a National Wildlife Refuge in 1976.)

INCREASING WILDLIFE POPULATIONS

With protection and management, mule deer have increased to provide many hours of public enjoyment. Where the backwaters of the reservoir have not inundated their river bottom habitat, white-tailed deer have also prospered. Rocky Mountain bighorn have been stocked in Two Calf Creek and Mickey Brandon Buttes to replace the extinct Audubon sheep. Elk were restored to their hereditary range from Yellowstone National Park in 1951 and now inhabit much of the refuge. Pronghorn still find refuge here on their far-ranging movements. During severe winters the refuge provides food and shelter for pronghorn.

About 236 species of birds have been identified in the area since 1936. Double-crested cormorant and great blue heron rookeries occur on islands and in flooded timber along Fort Peck Reservoir. Many species of raptors, such as golden eagles, prairie falcons, ospreys, and American kestrels nest on the refuge. Each spring sharp-tailed grouse gather on traditional dancing grounds or "leks" and begin their courtship rituals. Armed with binoculars and a bird guide, a visit to the refuge will provide a rewarding experience to the novice as well as the expert birder.

Although a highly controversial animal, prairie dogs play an important role in the ecosystem and "dog towns" are an important focal point for many wildlife species on the refuge. These "barking dogs" live in colonies of a few to several hundred acres. Mountain plovers select nesting sites and rear their young in association with prairie dog towns. Burrowing owls use abandoned holes for housing. Coyotes, bobcats, badgers, and raptors feed on prairie dogs throughout the year.

