

VISITOR OPPORTUNITIES

Photographers, birdwatchers and other visitors will find Red Rock Lakes an unforgettable outdoor experience. Picnicking and camping facilities are available on or near the refuge. Fishing, hunting and boating are permitted on specific areas of the refuge during certain seasons. Consult refuge headquarters in Lakeview, Montana as to special refuge regulations concerning these activities. Accommodations are available at two resorts near the refuge, and at other resorts along the shores of historic Henry's Lake about 25 miles east of the refuge. Hotel and motel accommodations can be found in Lima and West Yellowstone, 50 miles east and west of the refuge.

The best time to visit the refuge is May through September. Headquarters can be reached by turning off Interstate Highway 15 at Monida, Montana, and driving 28 miles east over a dirt road, or by traveling west from Highway 87 or 20, past Henry's Lake, over 30 miles of dirt road, which is usually not open until mid-May. The road from Monida on the west side of the valley opens about mid-April, but can be difficult for passenger cars until mid-May. These roads are often closed again in November. Summer rains can make these routes all but impassable, so local inquiry as to road conditions is advisable at any time of the year.

Trumpeter swans are extremely sensitive to human disturbance. Please do not approach nesting swans any closer than 400 yds.

For further information write:

Refuge Manager
Red Rock Lakes NWR
Monida Star Route, Box 15
Lima, Montana 59739
Telephone: (406) 276-3347

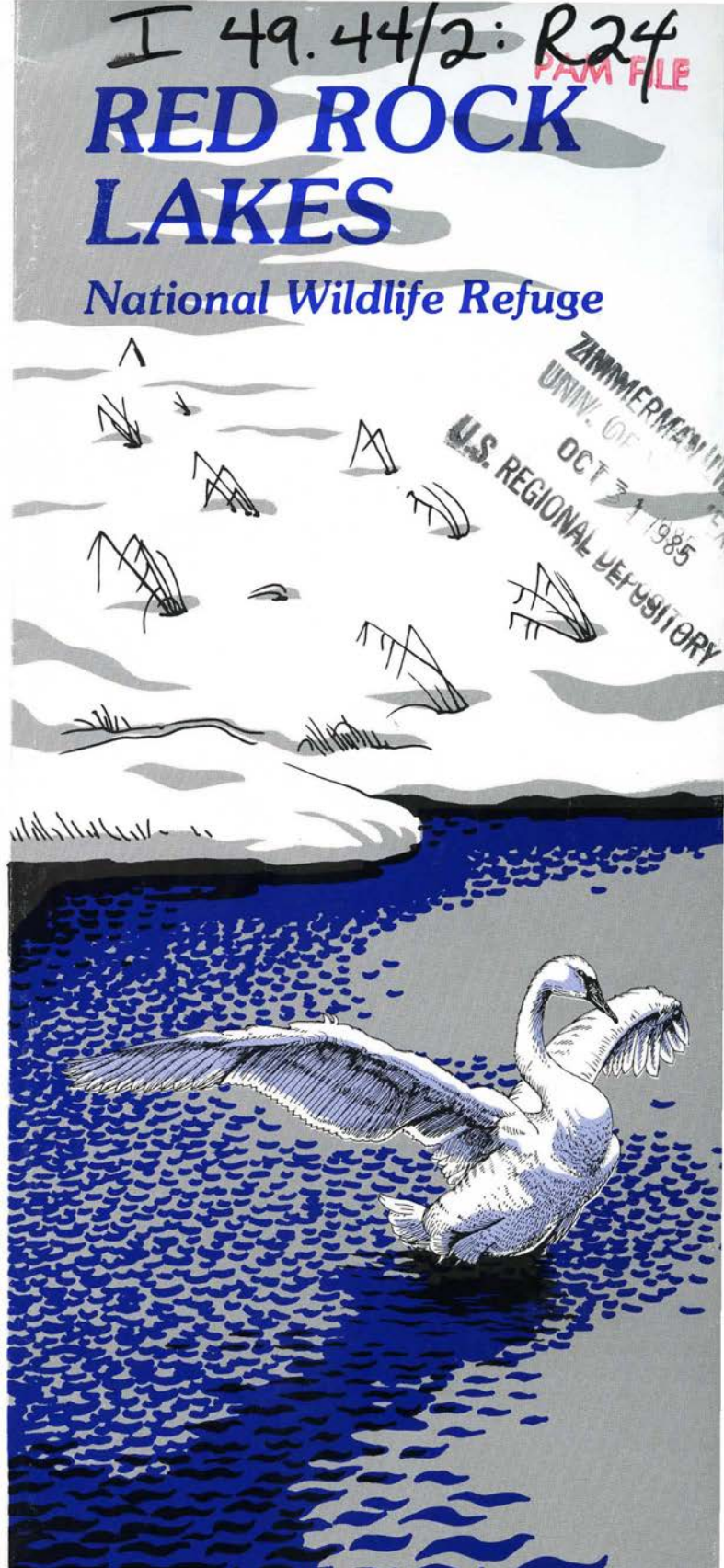
**U.S. Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

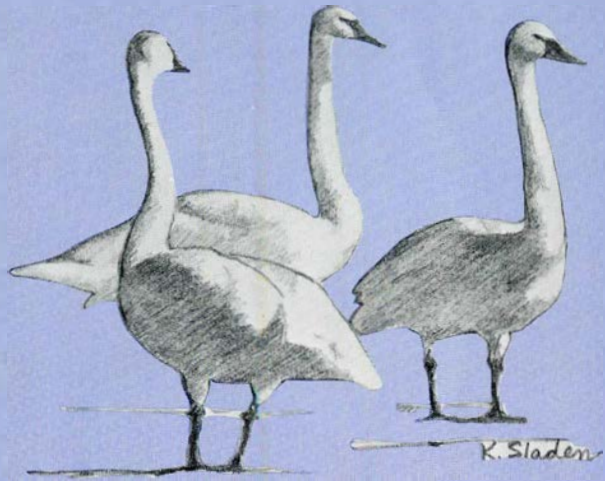


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August 1985





WELCOME TO RED ROCK LAKES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1935 to protect the rare trumpeter swan. Today, this 40,300 acre refuge continues to be one of the most important nesting and wintering areas in North America for these majestic birds.

Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge lies in the eastern end of the Centennial Valley, near the headwaters of the Missouri River. The rugged Centennial Mountains border the refuge on the south and east and catch the heavy snows of winter, providing a constant supply of water that replenishes the refuge's 14,000 acres of lake and marsh. The flat, marshy lands of the valley floor merge into the rolling foothills of the Gravelly Range to the north. This is the habitat that provides the solitude and isolation so essential to the trumpeter swan.



Above: Lakeview, Montana was the center of activity in the Centennial Valley during the pioneer days. Right: Undeveloped marshes provide the seclusion and solitude required by the breeding trumpeter swans.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The valley was well known to the Bannock Indians as a favored travel route between the headwaters of the Big Hole River and the Yellowstone country. Settlement by the white man did not occur until 1876. With settlement, herds of livestock were driven into the valley and homesteads sprang up at scattered locations. In the early days, market hunting for waterfowl and big game brought some revenue to local residents, but most settlers concentrated on livestock and sporadic lumbering. The long winters, great distances to market and small land parcels combined to make subsistence difficult. Few survived the depression of the 1930's.

Moose are often seen in late fall and in winter on the refuge.



RETURN OF THE TRUMPETERS

The trumpeter swan once ranged over much of the interior of the United States, but their numbers decreased as their habitat diminished. By the early 1900's, only a remnant population was left in the tri-state area of southwestern Montana, southeastern Idaho, northwestern Wyoming, and in parts of Canada and Alaska. Less than 100 swans were in the tri-state area in 1935 when the refuge was established. The refuge provided protection and solitude, and the swans increased. Their slow, steady build-up continued until the nesting population peaked in the early 1960's. Current trumpeter swan summer population figures for the tri-state area range from 400-500 swans. Due to the influx of migratory trumpeter swans from the northern latitudes, the wintering tri-state population figure is approximately 1,400-1,500 individuals.

During the winter, the birds are limited to the confines of the open water on the refuge and elsewhere within the tri-state area. In the earlier years, wildlife managers believed that natural foods were insufficient to maintain the growing population. Therefore, grain was provided for the swans at MacDonald and Culver Ponds during the severe winters. Winter feeding continues to be conducted carefully at Red Rock Lakes NWR. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has also introduced swans from the refuge to repopulate their former habitats. As a result, wild flocks of trumpeters are now reestablished in Oregon, Nevada, South Dakota, Nebraska and Minnesota. Zoos and parks throughout the United States, Canada and Europe exhibit trumpeter swans originating from Red Rock Lake birds.

WILDLIFE AND WATERFOWL OF THE REFUGE

The refuge's lakes, marshes and creeks also provide attractive habitat for a multitude of ducks. Eighteen different kinds of waterfowl, including the Barrow's goldeneye, raise their young here each year.

Each spring, greater sandhill cranes nest in the refuge meadows and marshes. These long-legged birds are most easily observed in the open areas near Upper Red Rock Lake from April through September. Their courtship display and dance takes place in April and May.

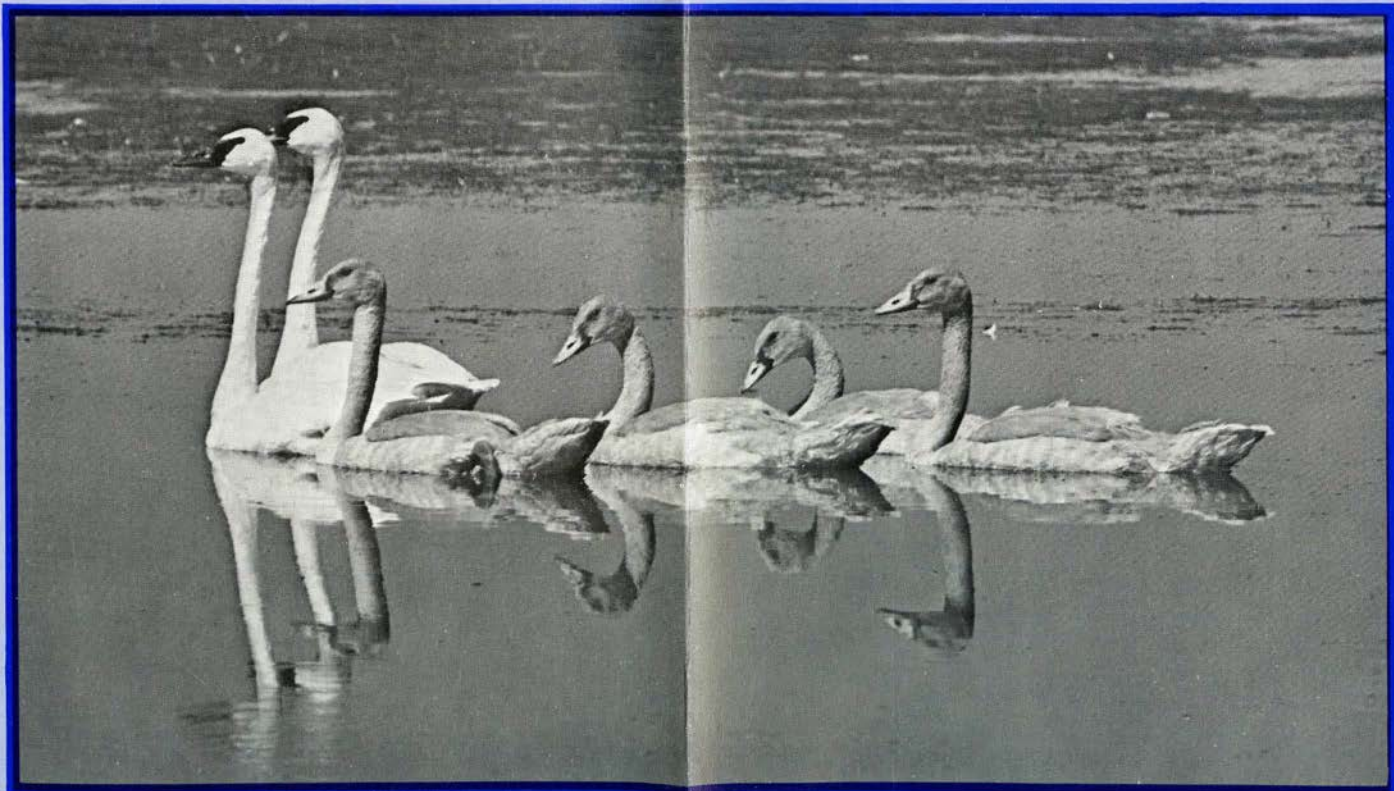
In August and September, thousands of ducks and geese congregate on the refuge before their southward migration. Tundra swans often make their appearance on the refuge in October and November.

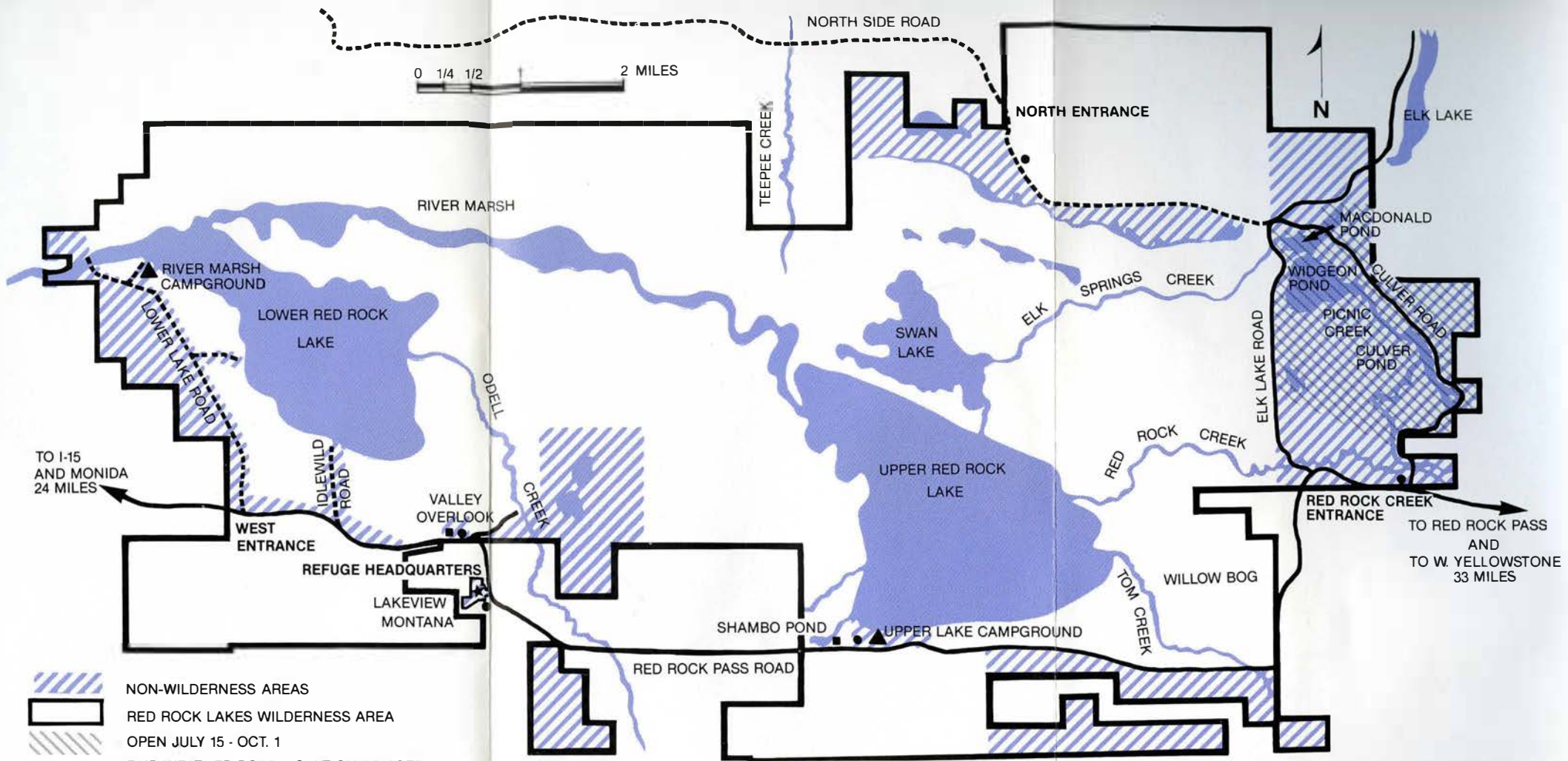
Great blue herons, willets, avocets and long-billed curlews are other conspicuous waders and shorebirds that frequently nest on the refuge. The timber covered slopes and aspen stands on the south side prove attractive to blue and ruffed grouse and many different songbirds and raptors. Brewer's sparrows are among the more common sagebrush residents north of the marsh.








Moose are year-round residents, but most elk, deer and pronghorn antelope are forced to migrate out of Centennial Valley due to the severe winters. Refuge visitors will encounter other familiar mammals such as the red fox, badger, striped skunk and Richardson's ground squirrel.

Beginning in May a myriad of wildflowers begin to appear on the refuge. By July, the refuge becomes a wildflower paradise. Shooting stars, buttercups, sticky geranium, lupine and loco weed paint the grasslands in multicolor hues of reds, pinks, blues and yellows.

A trumpeter swan family group.





-  NON-WILDERNESS AREAS
-  RED ROCK LAKES WILDERNESS AREA
-  OPEN JULY 15 - OCT. 1
-  FAIR WEATHER ROAD, CAUTION ADVISED
-  CAMPGROUND
-  INFORMATION
-  INTERPRETIVE SITE

A trumpeter swan family group.

