

Enjoying the Refuge

Although the deer are present on the refuge year-round, the best time to see them and other refuge wildlife is between September and May. The refuge is open daily between dawn and dusk.

Wildlife Observation - The deer and elk are easily observed from Steamboat Slough Road and Brooks Slough Road on the Washington mainland (see map) in early morning and evening. Stay in your car since it makes an excellent blind for wildlife observation and photography. Use binoculars, spotting scopes and telephoto lenses for close-up views and photographs.

Hiking - Public entry on the mainland unit is limited to foot travel on the Center Road. Public entry on Tenasillahe Island is limited to foot travel on the dike. These restrictions are necessary to protect the deer from disturbance.

Boating - Hunting, Price and Tenasillahe Islands are only accessible by boat. Launching facilities are available on the Washington shore at the Cathlamet Mooring Basin, the Washington Department of Wildlife boat launch on State Highway 4 between Cathlamet and Skamokawa, and at Skamokawa Vista Park. Launching facilities on the Oregon shore are available at Aldrich Point.

Hunting - Migratory bird hunting is permitted on the refuge portion of the Hunting Islands in accordance with Washington State and Federal regulations. Birds that may be hunted are geese, ducks, coots and snipe. Temporary blinds may be constructed but they must be available for general use on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Sport Fishing - Waters around the refuge, including the Elochoman River, Steamboat Slough, Brooks Slough and the Columbia River, are open to fishing in accordance with State regulations. Consult pertinent Oregon and Washington regulations for seasons and limits.

Environmental Education - The refuge offers space and guidance to teachers and educational groups to conduct outdoor classroom activities.

Dogs - Dogs and other pets must be kept on leash except during waterfowl hunting. Use of retrievers to recover downed birds is encouraged.

Fires - Fires are prohibited.

For More Information, contact:

Refuge Manager
Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge
for the Columbian White-tailed Deer
PO Box 566
Cathlamet, WA 98612
Phone (360) 795-3915



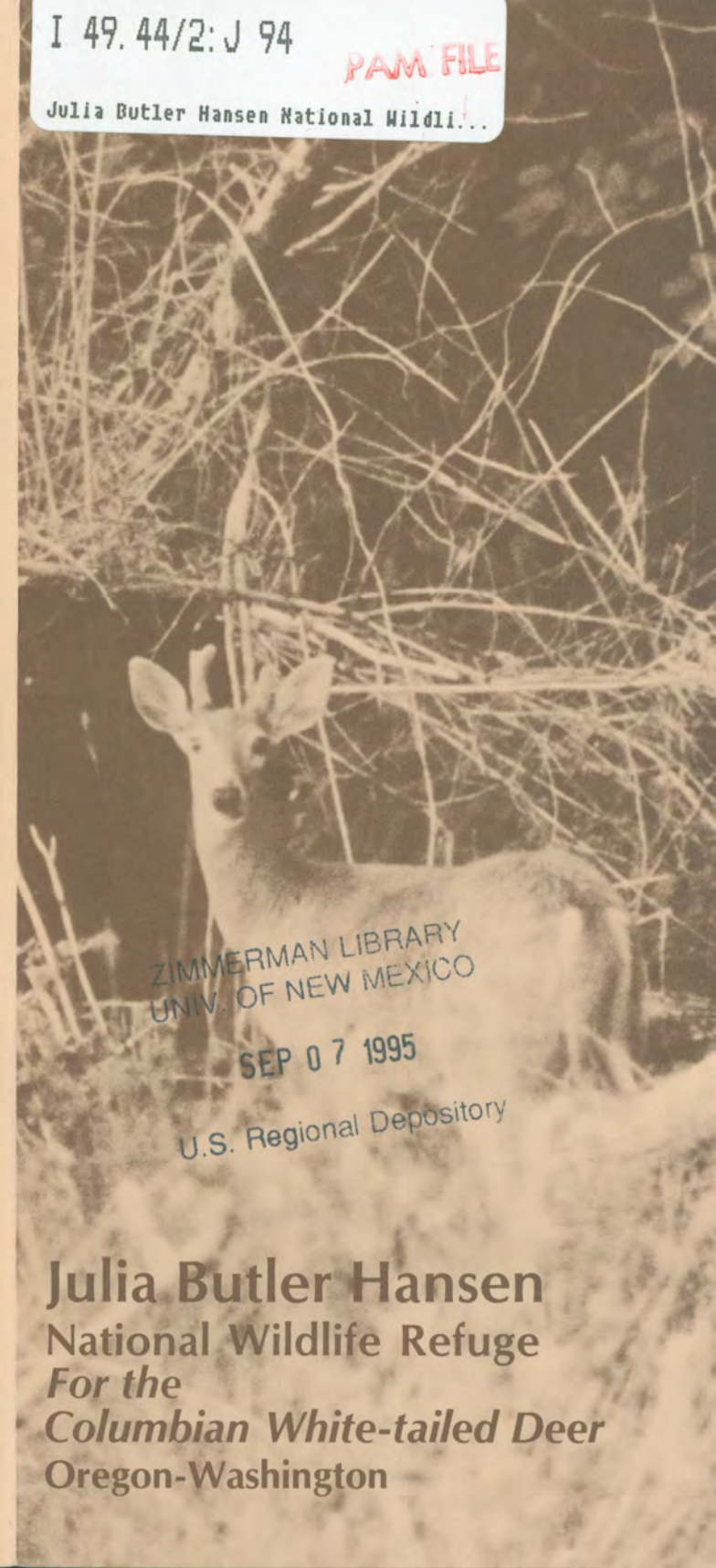
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Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife...






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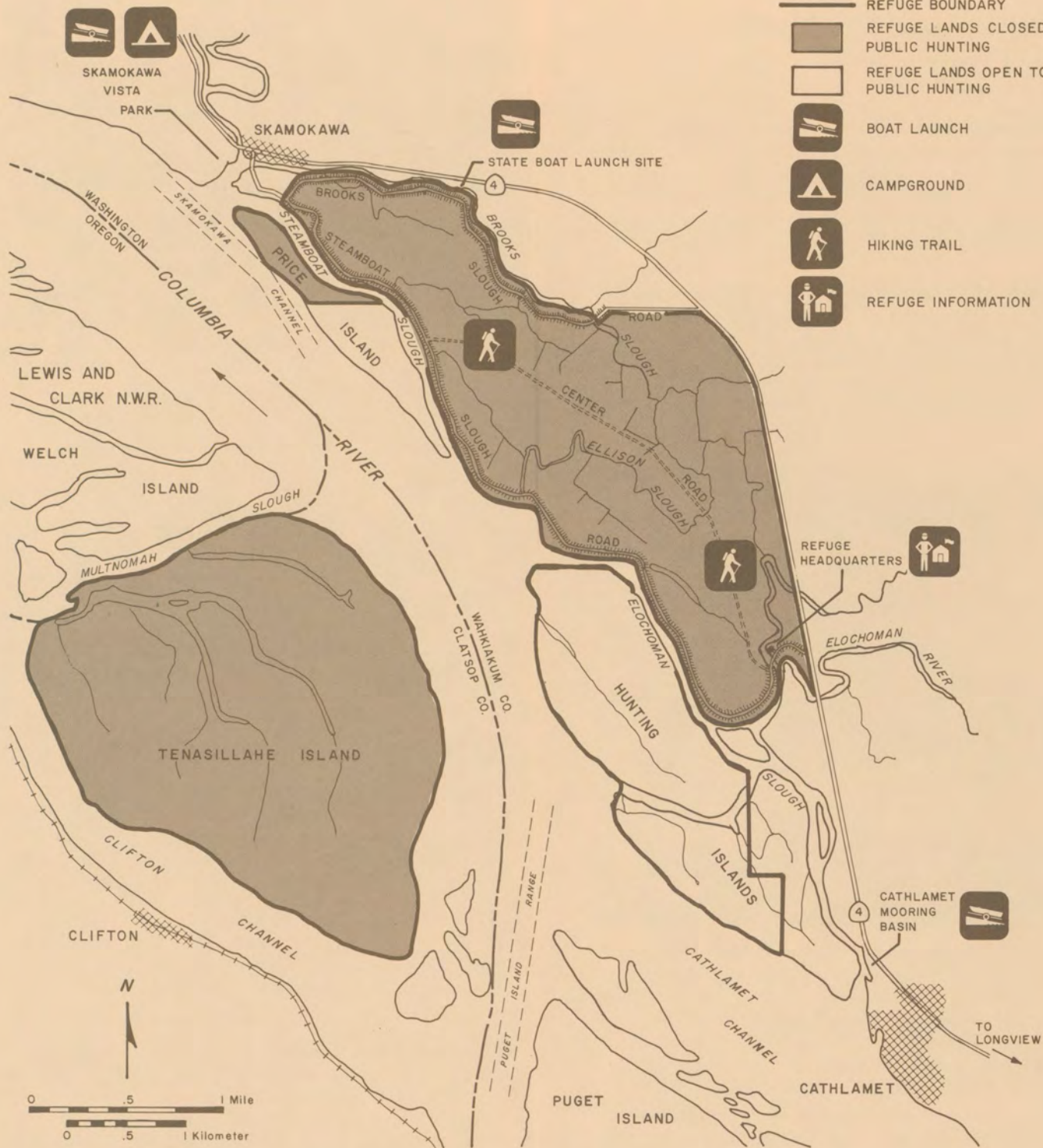
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Julia Butler Hansen
National Wildlife Refuge
For the
Columbian White-tailed Deer
Oregon-Washington

LEGEND

-  REFUGE BOUNDARY
-  REFUGE LANDS CLOSED TO PUBLIC HUNTING
-  REFUGE LANDS OPEN TO PUBLIC HUNTING
-  BOAT LAUNCH
-  CAMPGROUND
-  HIKING TRAIL
-  REFUGE INFORMATION





Columbian white-tailed buck enjoys early morning feeding.



Historical range of the Columbian white-tailed deer.

Refuge Name Honors Late Congresswoman

In 1988, Congress changed the name of the refuge to the Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer.

Julia Butler Hansen (1907-1988), the daughter of a pioneer Cathlamet family, served in public office for 43 years, beginning with the Cathlamet City Council in 1937. She spent 22 years in the Washington Legislature and 14 years in Congress. She was the first woman to chair an appropriations subcommittee in Congress.

As head of the Appropriations Subcommittee for Interior and Related Agencies, she exerted tremendous influence on Federal natural resource agencies, including the Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Columbian White-tailed Deer: Endangered but Improving

Endangered Species - The Columbian white-tailed deer, one of thirty-one subspecies of white-tailed deer in North America, is an endangered species. It is found only along the lower Columbia River near Cathlamet, Washington, and Westport, Oregon, and along the Umpqua River near Roseburg, Oregon.

Once Common - The Columbian white-tailed deer once ranged throughout the river valleys west of the Cascade Mountains from the Umpqua River in Oregon northward through the Willamette Valley to Puget Sound, and westward down the lower Columbia River. Explorers Lewis and Clark recorded the first observations of this deer in 1806, reporting it as abundant from The Dalles to the mouth of the Columbia River.

Habitat Loss Reduced Numbers - Pioneer settlers cleared trees and brush from the floodplains along the rivers to convert the land to agriculture. The deer were forced into smaller and smaller areas as their habitat was altered. By the turn of the century, the Columbian white-tailed deer had disappeared from nearly all of its range, and in the 1930s it was thought to be extinct. Remnant populations later were discovered at the places where the deer are now found.

Refuge Established to Help Save Species - The 4,400-acre Columbian White-tailed Deer National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1972 as a sanctuary for approximately 230 of the remaining deer. The current population along the lower Columbia River, both on and off the refuge, is about 900 animals. The management goals of the refuge are to provide secure habitat and a stable population so the deer, listed as "endangered" since 1975, can be reclassified to "threatened" or removed from the Endangered Species list.

Refuge Management Aids Deer

Cover Reestablished - The deer prefer an interspersed woodland and grassland. They will not travel far from the security of cover when feeding in the grasslands, so trees are being planted and brush is being allowed to return to some of the larger cleared areas to encourage greater deer use.

Grasslands Maintained - Livestock grazing and haying are used to keep fields in short, green forage for deer feeding. Height of grasses and legumes is critical since new growth has the greatest nutritional value and palatability for the deer. Crops sometimes are grown in some fields to help control weeds and provide wildlife food.



Deer habitat-clearing near brush cover.

Off-Refuge Habitat Important Too

The refuge alone cannot preserve enough habitat to save the deer from extinction. Deer habitat on private lands on Puget Island and on the Oregon side of the Columbia River is vital to reestablishing this species and maintaining viable populations.



Swans and American wigeon feed on grasslands.



Bald eagles are seen occasionally.

Other Wildlife Benefit

Elk Compete With the Deer for Habitat - Roosevelt elk also like the food, cover and protection from disturbance provided on the refuge. Unfortunately, elk are large, herd animals that trample shrubs in the woodlots which are important food sources for the deer.

The presence of elk in the woodlots also prevents the deer from using them for cover. Consequently, when the elk population on the refuge grows too large, some of the animals are trapped and moved to remote areas of the county.

Birds Use Refuge Habitats - Swans, Canada geese and ducks, which spend the winter on the lower Columbia River, also like to feed on the short grass and the crops left in the fields. Bald eagles use refuge trees as perches, while red-tailed hawks and black-shouldered kites hunt rodents in the fields. Refuge sloughs and shorelines attract great blue herons, grebes, loon, cormorants, snipe, and other birds.