

PETS - Dogs and other pets must be kept on leash except when waterfowl hunting. A good retriever will help locate and retrieve downed waterfowl that otherwise might be lost.

BOATING - Lake River, Bachelor Slough and the Columbia River offer opportunities to boat along the refuge boundaries. Boat launch facilities are available at the Ridgefield Marina.

BICYCLING AND HORSEBACK RIDING - These activities are permitted on public access roads on the River "S" Unit only.

For more information, contact:

Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 457
Ridgefield, WA 98642
Telephone (206) 887-4106
Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Take Pride in America

The "Take Pride in America" campaign encourages all Americans to become aware of the importance in taking care of their public lands, through the reduction of vandalism and litter by individual citizens and through the motivation of organizations and committees to help care for nearby public land. We encourage all visitors to join in this campaign by taking pride in the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge.



U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service

No person shall, on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, physical or mental restrictions, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination in any program or activity of the Department of the Interior.

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Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Washington



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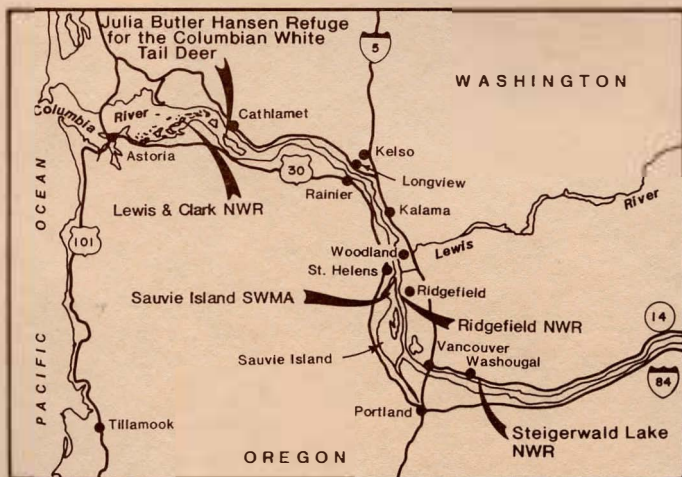
A PARADISE FOR WATERFOWL

Ideal winter climate and environment - The mild, rainy winter climate of the lower Columbia River Valley is an ideal environment for migrating and wintering waterfowl. Each fall, ducks, geese and swans leave their northern nesting areas and migrate down the Pacific Coast to escape the Alaskan winter. They find resting and feeding areas on the many sloughs, ponds and shallow lakes bordering the edges of the lower Columbia River.

Abundant wildlife - Winter is the season of greatest wildlife activity, with up to 200,000 waterfowl wintering between Portland, Oregon, and the mouth of the Columbia River. The most abundant species are mallard, northern shoveler, American wigeon, green-winged teal and northern pintail ducks; the dusky, cackler, western and Taverner's subspecies of Canada geese; and tundra swans.

Long history - The mild climate and abundant wildlife made the Ridgefield area attractive for human occupation long before recorded history. Archaeological evidence indicates that Native Americans were living along the banks of the Columbia more than 2,000 years ago. When explorers Lewis and Clark visited the Ridgefield area on their homeward journey in 1806, they found the prosperous village of Cathlapotle, which contained 14 large wooden houses and some 900 inhabitants.

Lands protected - In addition to Ridgefield Refuge, the Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge near Astoria, Oregon; the Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White Tail Deer near Cathlamet, Washington; the Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge near Washougal, Washington; and the state-owned Sauvie Island Wildlife Management Area near Portland, Oregon (see map), also protect and manage habitat to provide feeding and resting areas for waterfowl.



WHY WAS THE REFUGE ESTABLISHED?

Waterfowl endure hardships - Migratory waterfowl must endure the good and bad years on wintering grounds and summer nesting areas. When either the winter or summer habitat is disrupted, the other becomes much more important. Along the lower Columbia River, diking, draining and filling of the floodplain wetlands are continually shrinking wildlife habitat. One of the significant effects of these activities is the loss of habitat important to the dusky Canada goose. This large, dark-breasted Canada goose subspecies spends its winters only along the lower Columbia River and in the Willamette River Valley of Oregon.

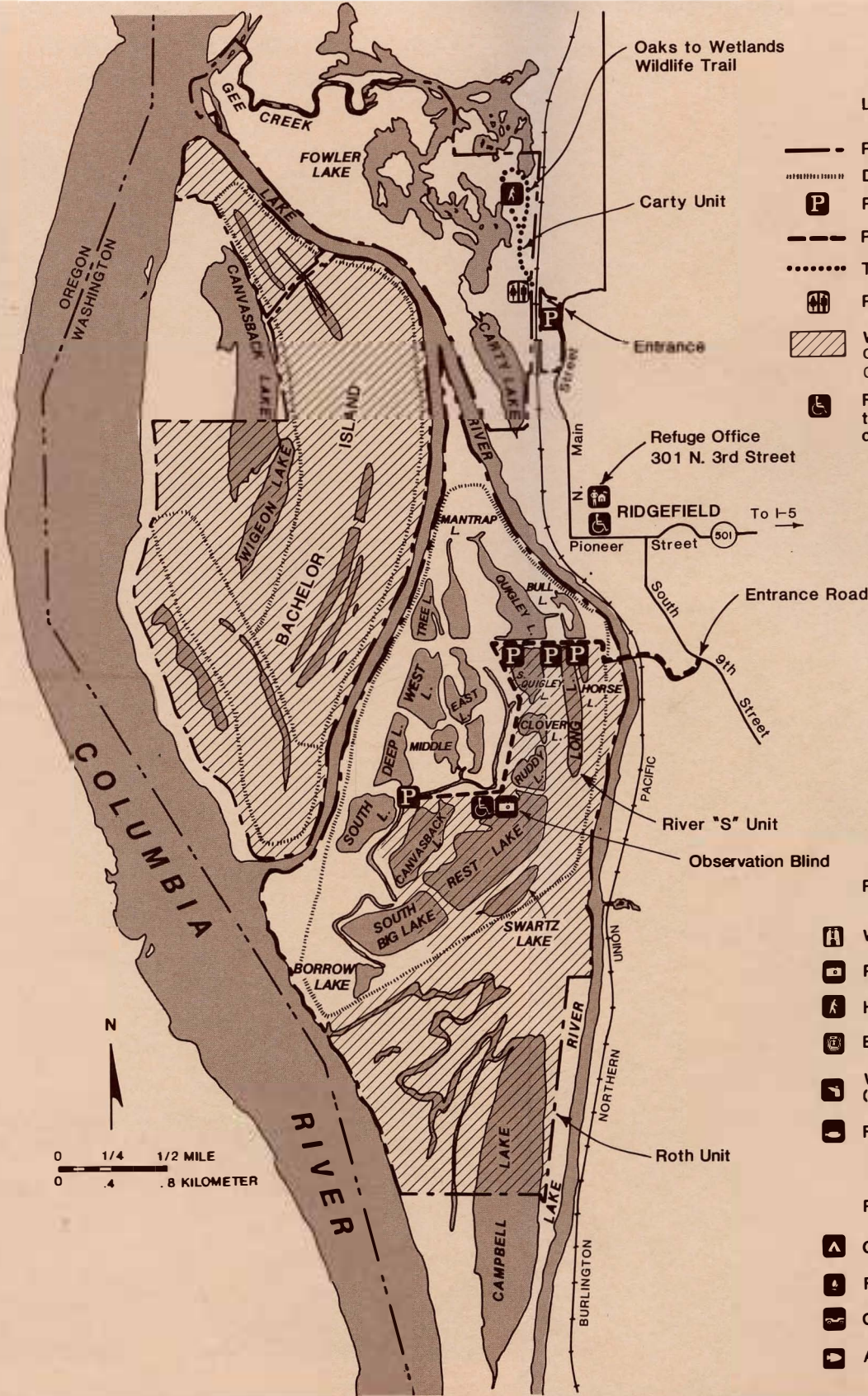
Nature's crisis adds urgency - Nature created a crisis in 1964 when a violent earthquake rocked southern Alaska. Repeated shock waves lifted the Copper River Delta, the only area where dusky Canada geese nest, six feet. In a matter of minutes, the complex environment that had supported nesting geese for centuries was permanently changed.

Willow and alder trees invaded the higher, drier land, replacing the marshy meadows that had once been goose nesting habitat. The resulting shrub thickets provided perfect cover for hungry brown bears and coyotes, allowing them to approach nesting geese unnoticed. The altered habitat and increased predation greatly reduced the geese's ability to successfully hatch and raise their young, resulting in a declining population.

Although concerned people were unable to change the geology of the Copper River Delta, they could ensure that the geese had secure wintering areas. The Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1965, along with three other refuges in the Willamette Valley of Oregon, to protect vital winter habitat.

Many other wildlife species present - Stately sandhill cranes, shorebirds and a great variety of songbirds stop on the refuge during spring and fall migrations. A few waterfowl and some shorebirds and songbirds remain on the refuge to nest. Year-round residents include mallards, cinnamon teal, great blue herons and red-tailed hawks. Black-tailed deer are the largest mammal on the refuge. Coyote, fox, raccoon, skunk, beaver, otter and brush rabbit are occasionally seen. Nutria, a rodent native to South America and introduced into the Columbia River drainage in the 1930's, are abundant. Their burrowing activities damage dikes and ditch banks.





LEGEND

- Refuge Boundary
- Dike
- P Public Parking
- Public Access Roads
- Trail
- ♂ ♀ Restrooms
- Wildlife Sanctuary - Closed to all public entry October 1 - April 15
- ♿ Facility is accessible to the physically disabled.

PERMITTED

- 👁 Wildlife Observation
- 📷 Photography
- 🚶 Hiking
- 🎓 Environmental Education
- 🦅 Waterfowl Hunting (by permit only)
- 🎣 Fishing

PROHIBITED

- ⛺ Camping
- 🔥 Fires
- 🚗 Off-Road Driving
- 🔍 Artifact Collecting

MANAGED ENVIRONMENT AIDS BIRDS

More birds to the acre - The refuge's 4,627 acres of marshes, grasslands and woodlands are characterized by two types of management - natural and agricultural. Preservation of the natural Columbia River floodplain is the management objective on the Carty and Roth Units (see map). When snow melt from the mountains swells the Columbia each spring, these units are flooded until the river level drops again.

Basalt outcroppings on the Carty Unit form knolls above the high water level. These knolls are wooded with ash, oak and Douglas-fir trees and are covered with brilliant wildflowers in the spring. The knolls become extremely dry in summer, in contrast with the lush greenery of surrounding marshes. The Roth Unit is flatter and forested with cottonwood, ash and willow. Cattle graze on parts of these units to maintain grasslands in suitable condition for wintering waterfowl, especially Canada geese.

The River "S" Unit and Bachelor Island, on the other hand, are protected from flooding by dikes around their perimeters. Crops such as corn, barley and potatoes are grown to provide food for waterfowl. Pumps provide the proper amount of water to each pond and lake to foster the growth of aquatic waterfowl food plants and to create resting areas for the birds. Grasslands are grazed by cattle, and grass, clover and alfalfa are cut for hay or silage. This leaves behind the short green browse preferred by Canada geese and wigeon ducks when they arrive in the fall.

With the combination of natural and agricultural environments, waterfowl populations on the refuge have peaked at 25,000 geese and 40,000 ducks.



ENJOYING THE REFUGE

Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge invites you to explore and enjoy its environment and wildlife. The best time to visit and see large numbers of ducks, geese and swans is during the winter months.

WILDLIFE OBSERVATION - See and photograph wildlife in their natural habitats. More than 180 species of birds have been seen on the refuge. An observation blind overlooks Rest Lake, and waterfowl hunting blinds are available for wildlife observation and photography use on days when they are not in use by hunters.

HIKING - Much of the refuge is restricted to foot travel only. The two-mile **Oaks to Wetlands Wildlife Trail** on the Carty Unit follows the shoreline of floodplain wetlands and passes through oak and Douglas-fir woodlands to provide opportunities to see many species of wildlife.

Although formal trails do not exist, during late spring and summer you can walk along the banks of Bower Slough on the River "S" Unit or cross over the River "S" dike to Campbell Lake for views of wildlife away from roads.

Bachelor Island is accessible only by boat. Visitors to the island are restricted to foot travel BY PERMIT ONLY when not closed to public access during the winter.

CLOSURES - The River "S" Unit is closed to non-hunter access on waterfowl hunting days from October through December. Contact the refuge office for a calendar of hunting days.

A portion of the River "S" Unit, the Roth Unit and Bachelor Island are seasonally closed to all public entry to protect wintering waterfowl from disturbance. THE CLOSURE OF THESE AREAS EXTENDS FROM OCTOBER 1 THROUGH APRIL 15.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION - The refuge offers space and guidance to teachers and educational groups to conduct outdoor classroom activities. Groups planning to visit the refuge should make advance reservations.

HUNTING - Part of the refuge is open to waterfowl hunting in accordance with State and Federal regulations. Advance permits are required. Handicapped access is available. Contact the refuge office for current regulations.

FISHING - Fishing is permitted during daylight hours from March 1 to September 30 in accordance with State regulations. Areas on the River "S", Roth and Bachelor Island Units closed during the winter months to protect wildlife are open to fishing from April 16 to September 30. Carp, catfish, crappie and bluegill sunfish commonly are caught.

CAMPING - The refuge is open for **DAY USE ONLY**. Paradise Point State Park and several private campgrounds offer nearby camping facilities.