



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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VISITOR-USE OF NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES SETS NEW RECORD

More than 7½ million persons sought recreation on national wildlife refuges during 1956 to set a new public-use record, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross Leffler announced today.

The 1956 total of 7,555,334 visitors represents an increase of 580,887, or about eight percent, over 1955's record of 6,974,447 visitor-day's use.

Sport fishing attracted 2,765,611 of the refuge visitors. Some type of hunting, including archery, was provided on 71 refuges for 435,046 persons.

Picnicking, swimming, boating, photography, and nature study were the principal categories into which the remaining 4,354,677 visitors were classified.

Drouth conditions in the Midwest and South were once again responsible for either a drop, or a smaller increase, in visitor-use, particularly in the category of fishing, in several of the refuges in those sections.

An increase of more than 100 percent in public use occurred on Malheur in Oregon, Ruby Lake in Nevada, National Elk in Wyoming, Okefenokee and Blackbeard in Georgia, and the Carolina Sandhills in South Carolina.

Recreational use through the Mississippi Valley continued to soar. More than one million persons visited the Crab Orchard Refuge in Illinois, 220,000 were recorded on Horicon in Wisconsin, while the Upper Mississippi Refuge units below Rock Island were listed separately. These include Calhoun and Batchtown with 104,000 visitors and Louisa-Keithsburg with 64,500.

On certain refuges, such as Aransas and Santa Ana in Texas, all of the visitors were attracted by the opportunities afforded for wildlife observations. Many of the 15,000 visitors on Aransas made use of the new observation tower in order to see whooping cranes near at hand.

The Fish and Wildlife Service administers a system of about 270 national wildlife refuges in the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. They are managed on a multiple-use basis, insofar as this can be accomplished without defeating the primary objective for which each was established, thus making possible a vast amount of recreational activity.

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