



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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WILDLIFE REFUGES REPORT MORE VISITOR USE IN 1958

There were over nine million visitor-days of public use on the National Wildlife Refuges in 1958, according to Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross Leffler. This represents about a five percent increase over 1957.

Wildlife observations, picnicking, swimming, and photography were the most popular with nearly five and one-half million, or about 60 percent of the total. Fishing accounted for about 36 percent, or 3,330,000 persons. This sport showed nearly a 15 percent increase. Hunting was enjoyed by 352,000 persons on 69 refuge areas in 1958. This included big-game hunting primarily for deer where these animals were abundant.

The most intensive public use continued to be on the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge, which extends for 284 miles along the river from Wabasha, Minn., to Rock Island, Illinois. Nearly three million persons were on the scattered parts of this refuge. The intensity of use dropped slightly on the 44,000-acre Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in southern Illinois, with 1,108,000 persons, and on 59,000-acre Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in southwestern Oklahoma, with 747,000.

Heavily used refuges are those superimposed on Bureau of Reclamation, Corps of Engineers, and T.V.A. reservoirs and flood control projects. These 24 areas had over half of the nine million visitors. Some of these included the Kentucky Woodlands, Wheeler, and Tennessee Refuges along the Tennessee River; the Havasu Lake and Imperial Refuges on the Lower Colorado River; and Fort Peck Game Range on the headwaters of the Missouri River.

On the 21,000-acre Horicon Refuge in east-central Wisconsin, thousands of persons drove out to see the tremendous concentration of over 50,000 Canada geese. Similar sights were enjoyed on refuges in all parts of the country.

Fishing pressure increased along the Mississippi River, and southward on Mingo Refuge in southeastern Missouri, on Big Lake and White River Refuges in northeastern and eastern Arkansas, on Reelfoot Lake Refuge in northwestern Tennessee, and Wheeler Refuge on the Tennessee River in northern Alabama. Fishing on Kirwin Refuge in north-central Kansas also showed a tremendous increase. On these seven areas, there was an increase of 400,000 visitor-days of fishing.

On many areas, special archery hunts were permitted. This reached unprecedented proportions on the Necedah Refuge in central Wisconsin. About a third of the 40,000-acre refuge was opened for a 60-day bow-hunt. It was estimated that 8,000 bowmen were present on opening day. They secured 230 deer. No shooting accidents were reported. Less hunting along the Mississippi River and on the 44,000-acre Crab Orchard Refuge in southern Illinois accounted for much of the nine percent decrease in hunting on national wildlife refuges in 1958.

Recreation on National Wildlife Refuges is limited to designated areas where such activities can be accommodated without interfering with the primary function of the refuges in propagating and protecting wildlife resources.

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, administers a system of about 270 national wildlife refuges in the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. They are managed on a coordinated-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 in areas where recreational facilities are at a minimum.

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