



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### PUBLIC USE OF FEDERAL WILDLIFE REFUGES REACHES 10 MILLION

National Wildlife Refuges administered by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife attracted a record-breaking total of almost 10 million visitors in 1959, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross Leffler announced today.

The 1959 total of 9,936,000 visitors represents an increase of 882,000 over 1958 and sets a new public-use record for the ninth consecutive year. In 1951, when visitor records were started, only  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million persons found their way onto refuge areas.

Visitors to the refuges are attracted by such recreational activities as sport fishing, hunting, picnicking, swimming, boating, bird watching, and picture-taking. Very few areas have conditions suitable for camping.

Assistant Secretary Leffler points out that recreation on refuges has to be 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. "Despite this big public use," he said, "recreation is still only a byproduct of the refuge system."

Sixty-three percent of 1959's visitors enjoyed photography, picnicking, swimming, and nature studies. The second most popular type of use was fishing, indulged in by 32 percent of the visitors. This activity, however, showed a decline in use from the previous year because of drought conditions.

Hunting of waterfowl, upland or big game, constitutes five percent of public use on the refuges and was permitted on 138 areas in 1959. Some of the country's best bow and arrow hunting for deer can be found on the national wildlife refuges. The 481,500 days recorded for hunting on refuges in 1959 is an increase of 129,500 days in 1958.

The most popular area in 1959 continued to be the 195,000-acre Upper Mississippi River Wild Life and Fish Refuge which had 2,860,000 visitors, of which about 1,300,000 were sport fishermen. This area extends for 284 miles along the river from Wabasha, Minn., to Rock Island, Ill. A similar area, the 23,000-acre Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge, which extends intermittently from Rock Island southward nearly to St. Louis, Mo., had an additional 52,000 visitors.

The Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in southern Illinois recorded the most diversified recreational use. The 1,308,000 visitors to this 44,000-acre area included 23,800 for hunting, 70,300 for fishing, and 1,213,900 who enjoyed picnicking, camping, swimming, dog trials, and nature observations.

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife administers a system of national wildlife refuges in the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Included in this system are migratory waterfowl refuges, migratory bird and general wildlife refuges, big game refuges and game ranges. This last listed group is administered jointly by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and the Bureau of Land Management. All the refuges are managed on a multiple-use basis, insofar as this can be accomplished without defeating the primary objective for which each was established. This has permitted increased public use of refuges for recreational purposes.

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