



This goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, is the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Swan River National Wildlife Refuge

Public Use Opportunities

Welcome

Swan River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was acquired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1973 to be managed for the benefit of migratory birds. This 1,568-acre Refuge is part of the Benton Lake NWR Complex and is administered by the Refuge staff at Benton Lake NWR located just north of Great Falls, Montana.

Nestled between the Swan Mountains to the east and the Mission Mountains to the west, the Refuge lies within the Swan River flood plain south of Swan Lake. The Swan River valley was formed when glacial ice poured down the steep slopes of the Mission Range into Swan Lake. The valley floor is generally flat, but rises steeply to adjacent forested mountain sides. Swan River once meandered widely through the floodplain, but silt deposits gradually forced the river to flow along the west side of the valley, leaving a series of oxbow sloughs within the Refuge floodplain.

Approximately 1,254 acres of the Refuge consists of wetland/grassland habitat. Dense stands of reed canary grass are mixed with native reeds and sedges. Every spring, when snowpack begins to melt, run-off from Bond Creek, Yew Creek, and Spring Creek merge with the inundated Swan River and Swan Lake to flood large portions of the Refuge. The remaining Refuge acreage consists of forested uplands dominated by old growth fir, spruce, cedar, and larch. In places, large cottonwood trees shade the banks of the Swan River.

Wildlife Viewing Opportunities

- The Refuge provides nesting habitat for 23 species of waterfowl with the most common species being mallard, cinnamon teal, blue-winged teal, and common goldeneye. Other common species include: wood duck, ring-necked duck, bufflehead, common merganser, and lesser scaup.
- Bald eagles have successfully nested on the Refuge for many years. The eagles arrive in February to begin nesting and usually fledge one or two eaglets in mid-May. Transient eagles also use the Refuge; up to eight eagles have been spotted at one time.

- Canada geese nest on the Refuge. Spring and summer populations increase when broods hatched within the Swan River/Lake system migrate to the Refuge in search of food and loafing sites.
- Annual flooding of the Refuge in the late spring and early summer provides excellent habitat for marsh and water birds. Careful observers may spot sandhill cranes, American bitterns, great blue herons, or pied-billed, red-necked, or horned grebes.
- Shorebirds, gulls, and terns that can be observed on the Refuge include black terns, Wilson's phalaropes, common snipe, American avocets, killdeer, and several species of sandpipers.
- Coniferous and deciduous forests on the Refuge offer excellent resting and loafing sites for many raptor species. Northern harriers, Swainson's hawks, red-tailed hawks, and great horned owls are commonly observed.
- The Refuge provides excellent seasonal and year-round habitat for white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, and moose. Other resident and transient wildlife include coyote, beaver, muskrat, black bear, and raccoon.
- The Swan and Mission Mountain Ranges have been designated as critical habitat for the grizzly bear. The Refuge serves as an important corridor between these two ecosystems. Grizzly bears are occasionally observed on the Refuge in the spring and summer.

Authorized Public Uses

- Visitors are allowed to observe or photograph wildlife, hike, cross-country ski, or snowshoe on Bog Road Trail year-round and in the hunt area during waterfowl hunting season.
- Bicycles are permitted on Bog Road Trail and on roads open to motorized vehicles.
- Discharge of a firearm for any reason other than the legal take of waterfowl is prohibited.
- Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuge System lands must comply with all

- provisions of State and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific refuge regulations in 50CFR Part 32).
- Fishing is allowed per State regulations on Swan Lake and Swan River. Fishing is only permitted on the portion of Spring Creek north of Bog Road Trail and only during the waterfowl hunting season.
- Boating is allowed through the Refuge on Swan River; this section of the river is classified as a "No-Wake Zone."
- Motorized vehicle use is restricted to Forest Service Road 9714. Bog Road is closed west of the parking area to all motorized vehicles.
- Horseback riding is not permitted on the Refuge.
- Pets must be on a leash and attended at all times, except dogs are permitted off-leash in the hunt area during waterfowl hunting season.
- Collecting, injuring, disturbing, destroying, or harming animals, animal parts (including antlers) or plants is not permitted.
- Open fires are prohibited.
- Overnight camping is prohibited.

Hunting

- Portions of the Refuge are open to waterfowl hunting following Montana State Regulations (see map for hunt area). All other hunting and trapping is prohibited on the Refuge.
- Hunters may possess only approved non-toxic shot.
- Temporary portable blinds or blinds constructed of natural dead or down vegetation may be used.
- All blinds are available on a first-come, first-served basis, regardless of who built the blind.
- Blinds may not be built on the Refuge prior to the opening day of waterfowl hunting season.
- All boats, decoys, portable blinds, other personal property, and any materials brought onto the Refuge for blind construction must be removed at the end of each day.

Accessibility Information

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. Dial 711 for a free connection to the State relay service for TTY and voice calls to and from the speech and hearing impaired. For information or to address accessibility needs, please contact the Refuge staff at 406 / 727 7400, or the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge Complex**
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Great Falls, MT 59401
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<http://www.fws.gov/bentonlake/swanriver>

For State relay service
TTY / Voice: 711

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>

For Refuge Information
1 800 / 344 WILD

July 2013



Swan Lake

Lime Creek

Spring Creek

Bog Road Trail

Swan River National Wildlife Refuge

-  Refuge boundary
-  State highway
-  Gravel road
-  Unmaintained trail
-  Wetlands
-  Waterfowl hunting area
-  Accessible site
-  Parking
-  Wildlife viewing platform
-  Boat launch
-  US Forest Service campground

USFS Road 9714

Swan River

Porcupine Creek Road

