

Yazoo

National Wildlife Refuge



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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1936; activated and staffed in 1956.
- Acres: 12,941.
- Land acquisition began in 1936 with purchase of 2,166 acres.
- Acquisition continued with latest purchase of 470 acres in 1992.
- Currently no visitor center or public rest room facilities.
- Directions: From Greenville, MS, take Highway 1 South for approximately 26 miles to refuge sign.
- Located in southern Washington County four miles east of the Mississippi River.
- Yazoo NWR is headquarters for a five-refuge complex including Panther Swamp, Hillside, Morgan Brake, and Mathews Brake refuges totaling 77,000 acres.
- The Complex also administers 12,800 acres of FmHA transfer properties comprised of 42 fee title tracts and 12 easements.

Natural History

- The refuge includes and surrounds Swan Lake, a Mississippi River oxbow lake which has silted in and contains mature cypress/ash woodlands.
- Soils range from heavy gumbo (clay) to silt loam and limited sand ridges.
- Elevations range from 90 feet in the main drainage (Steele Bayou) to 113 feet in agricultural areas.
- The refuge is noted for its numerous numbers of wintering ducks and geese as well as the largest white-tailed deer in Mississippi.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Staff of 11 permanent and two full-time temporary employees.

- Annual visitation: 144,710.
- FY01 budget for five-refuge complex: \$1,700,000.
- Cooperative farming program makes available 3,942 acres for local farmers to utilize.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide resting, nesting and feeding habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds.
- Provide habitat for resident wildlife.
- Provide public use opportunities including hunting, fishing and wildlife observation.
- Provide environmental education opportunities.
- Protect threatened and endangered species.

Management Tools

- Wetland restoration.
- Moist soil management.
- Timber management.
- Reforestation research and survey.
- Water management and manipulation.
- Cooperative farming.
- Controlled public hunts for population management.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships with government, private enterprise and landowners.

Public Use Opportunities

- Hunting.
- Wildlife observation and photography.
- Environmental education and interpretation.

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Calendar of Events

April: turkey hunting.

October: National Wildlife Refuge Week.

October-January: public hunting for deer, squirrel, rabbit and raccoon.

Year-round: birding and wildlife observation.

Questions and Answers

Why don't you have a visitor's center like a lot of other large refuges?

We have a great demand and need for one and have requested one for years but have never received funding to build and staff it. With over 140,000 visitors a year we can't even offer them a water fountain, restroom, wildlife display or conservation education facility.

Why don't you have fishing on Yazoo Refuge?

Pesticide levels in the fish, including DDT, exceed minimum federal standards. We allow fishing on Panther Swamp, Hillside, Morgan Brake and Mathews Brake refuges. If and when conditions improve we could then entertain opening the refuge to fishermen. Fish are tested periodically. We are currently developing a youth fish pond on the refuge.

Can I camp and or picnic on the refuge?

Camping and picnicing are prohibited due to lack of facilities and manpower to properly support it. Our staff provides supervision, administrative support, manpower, law enforcement and technical support for five national wildlife refuges and one of the largest private lands programs in the Service.

What does "Yazoo" mean and what is the history of the area?

It is an Indian word meaning "river of death." Actually, Yazoo Refuge is much closer to the Mississippi and Sunflower rivers than to the Yazoo. Steele Bayou, which begins on Yazoo Refuge, actually had Union gunboats travel it during the Civil War siege of Vicksburg.