

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Sacramento

National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Environmental Education Program Guide



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Sacramento NWR Complex

Welcome!

“To administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans”

*National Wildlife Refuge System
Mission Statement*



*The “blue goose” is the symbol of the
National Wildlife Refuge System*

Welcome and thank you for your interest in Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex’s Environmental Education Program! This guide is designed to enhance your visit and ensure a positive field trip experience. By becoming familiar with available classroom and field trip activities, you will have the best opportunity to discover and enjoy the wildlife and beautiful scenery of the Refuges. We will do all we can to make your visit a rewarding and educational experience.



Great Blue Heron

Welcome!

What is the Sacramento NWR Complex?

The Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Complex is part of a network of nearly 540 NWRs managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to protect over 95 million acres of habitat. Created in 1937, Sacramento NWR is the headquarters for the Complex of six refuges: Sacramento NWR, Delevan NWR, Colusa NWR, Sutter NWR, Butte Sink NWR, and Sacramento River NWR (map on back page).

Why is the Sacramento NWR Complex Important?

For thousands of years, the Sacramento Valley has been a major wintering area for migratory waterfowl (ducks, geese and swans) along the Pacific Flyway. California is the winter destination of more than 60% of the waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway.

Unfortunately, the wetlands upon which these birds depend have been drastically reduced over the years. It is estimated that 90 – 95% of the wetland acres that existed in California during the late 1800's have been lost. Most have been converted to other land uses, such as agriculture and urbanization. In view of this drastic decrease, it has become imperative that the Sacramento NWR Complex habitats are managed in the most intensive and productive manner possible.

The Refuges also provide habitat for rare and endangered species and contain examples of other disappearing habitats such as vernal pools and riparian forests.

Located on Pacific Flyway

Wetland Habitat Lost to Other Uses

Home for Rare and Endangered Species

The American avocet is one of the 269 species of birds that benefit from the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex habitats.



American Avocet

Nature is the Best Classroom

Let the wetlands become your outdoor classroom as you experience nature firsthand. Watch a coyote hunting rodents or shorebirds probing the mud for snails and worms. Cup your hands behind your ears and listen to the beautiful sounds of red-winged blackbirds. Watch a heron or egret silently stalk fish, frogs, and invertebrates. Gently feel the spongy stem of a bulrush. Observe red-tailed hawks swoop and circle as they hunt rodents. Watch and listen to warblers, woodpeckers, and other songbirds as they feed and move among cottonwoods and willows. Search for animal tracks in the soft mud along waterways and the creek.

Peak Time to View Wildlife

Though the ideal time for wildlife viewing is October through March, you may see a diversity of wildlife year-round. The peak time to see migrating waterfowl is November through January. The auto tours at Sacramento and Colusa NWRs meander through a variety of habitats where large concentrations of waterfowl may be seen during peak migration.

Facilities

Sacramento NWR (Complex Headquarters)

- Visitor center with large wildlife exhibit and interpretive kiosk is open daily October through March and weekdays only April through September. Hours are 7:30 am to 4:00 pm
- Large paved parking lot at the visitor center accommodates all vehicles including buses
- Public restrooms, drinking fountain, and picnic benches located at the visitor center
- Graveled six-mile auto tour and two-mile self-guided walking trail
- Three-tiered wildlife viewing platform with spotting scopes and self-contained restroom nearby
- All public facilities are accessible to people with disabilities

Colusa NWR

- Interpretive kiosk
- Parking area and portable restroom
- Graveled three-mile auto tour and one-mile self-guided walking trail

Sacramento River NWR, Llano Seco Unit

- Interpretive kiosk
- Graveled parking area with self-contained restroom accessible to people with disabilities
- Two-thirds of a mile walking trail
- Two wildlife viewing platforms

All auto tour routes and trails are open year-round from sunrise to sunset.



Green-winged Teal

Field Trip Activities

Planning Ahead For Your Visit

The Complex headquarters, visitor center and the main Environmental Program activities are located at Sacramento NWR, six miles south of Willows. Field trips may include, but are not limited to, guided wetlands walks, scavenger hunts, hands-on learning in the Discovery Room, wildlife viewing, auto tour routes and viewing platforms.

Discovery Pack

A Discovery Pack with five self-guided activities and dip nets, field guides, plant mounts, bug boxes, lenses, and other materials is available by reservation. Program activities are also available at Colusa NWR and Sacramento River NWR, Llano Seco Unit.

Reservations

To reserve a visit, please fill out a Reservation Form. Early reservations will help us to prepare for your visit. Activities vary at each Refuge. We will do our best to accommodate your group's needs. Field trips will occur in wind and light rain, so please come prepared.

Resource Materials

To assist you in your pre- and post-visit classroom activities, a collection of resource materials is available by reservation. Due to a high demand, all items listed on the following pages *must be returned within seven working days of receiving them*. To request any of these items, please fill out the “Materials For Classroom Activities” section of the Reservation Form.



Mourning Doves

Federal Junior Duck Stamp Program

The Federal Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program is an integrated art and science curriculum developed to teach environmental science and habitat conservation. Available online: www.calwaterfowl.org or <http://duckstamps.fws.gov>
Kindergarten - 12th grade

Habitat Fun Pack

Provided by the California Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture, this collection of activities, background information and games will create an awareness of waterfowl and a sense of value for birds and their habitats. Available online: www.calwaterfowl.org
Kindergarten - 12th grade

Discovery Pack Information

This background information will help you become familiar with the five Discovery Pack activities before you come to the Refuge.

Coloring Book and/ or Slides

The slides portray common birds and mammals of the Refuges, which are depicted in the coloring book. A color key is provided. (20 slides)
Kindergarten - 2nd grade

America's National Wildlife Refuge System

Resource Videos

Wildlife plays the starring role on a stage of stunning habitats in this captivating story of America's National Wildlife Refuge System.
11 minutes, Kindergarten and up

California's Tule Elk

This documentary of the California Tule Elk's near demise and remarkable recovery program has an accompanying instructional guide.
26 minutes, 4th grade and up

The Canada Goose Story

From downy goslings to regal adults, enjoy the story of Canada geese.
20 minutes, Kindergarten and up

Conserving America's Heritage

This fast paced video, with gorgeous wildlife photography, depicts the need for habitat protection and how the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service meets this need.
4 minutes, 4th grade and up

Coots, Coots Everywhere

Discover the quirky secrets of one of the marsh's most common birds.
30 minutes, Kindergarten and up

Endangered Species Act/ Endangered

Beautiful wildlife photography gives your class an overview of the Endangered Species Act and why endangered species are worth saving.
25 minutes, 4th grade and up

Fabulous Wetlands

Join Bill Nye the Science Guy for a fast paced, wacky, and entertaining video which introduces wetlands and their value.
7 minutes, 4th grade and up

Fish in the Web of Life

Explore the efforts that are underway throughout the Pacific Northwest to restore salmon and steelhead populations.
22 minutes, 4th grade and up

A Home for Pearl

An instructional video about wildlife needs and their habitat. The video and instructor's guide are divided into four 15-20 minute parts.
70 minutes total, 3rd grade and up

In Celebration of America's Wildlife

Dramatic wildlife photography depicts wildlife management in America from a historical perspective. A teacher's guide accompanies the video.
28 minutes, 4th grade and up

America's Most Amazing Stamp

Resource Videos *(continued)*

An amazing stamp is helping to turn the tide in the battle to preserve the remaining wetlands - The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp - better known as The Duck Stamp.

10 minutes, Kindergarten and up

Rare and Endangered Plants of California

Explore California's unique habitats, discover reasons for habitat decline, and learn the importance of biodiversity. This video can also be used with the Curriculum Guide to California's Vanishing Flora.

18 minutes, 4th grade and up

Wetland Homes

Take a "jet field trip" to discover different types of wetlands and the wildlife which live in them.

20 minutes, Kindergarten and up

Wetlands – We Need Them

Learn about the remarkable plants and animals which depend on wetlands for life.

20 minutes, Kindergarten and up

Wild About Life!

Concerned teenagers and professional biologists use good science and common sense to restore biodiversity.

55 minutes, 6th grade and up

Wild Things

Curriculum-centered electronic field trips investigating the natural wonders of the world highlighting National Wildlife Refuge Week and Refuges. Several topics with educator's guides available.

20 minutes, 3rd grade and up

Other videos available upon request.

Resource Animal Mounts

Arrangements must be made to pick up and return mounts.

Mounts may be borrowed for no longer than one week.

Availability of mounts is subject to demand.

Ducks

- Northern Pintail
- American Wigeon
- Northern Shoveler
- Mallard
- Bufflehead

Geese

- Snow Goose
- Ross' Goose
- Cackling Canada Goose
- White-fronted Goose

Mammals

- Muskrat
- Black-tailed Jackrabbit



Belted Kingfisher

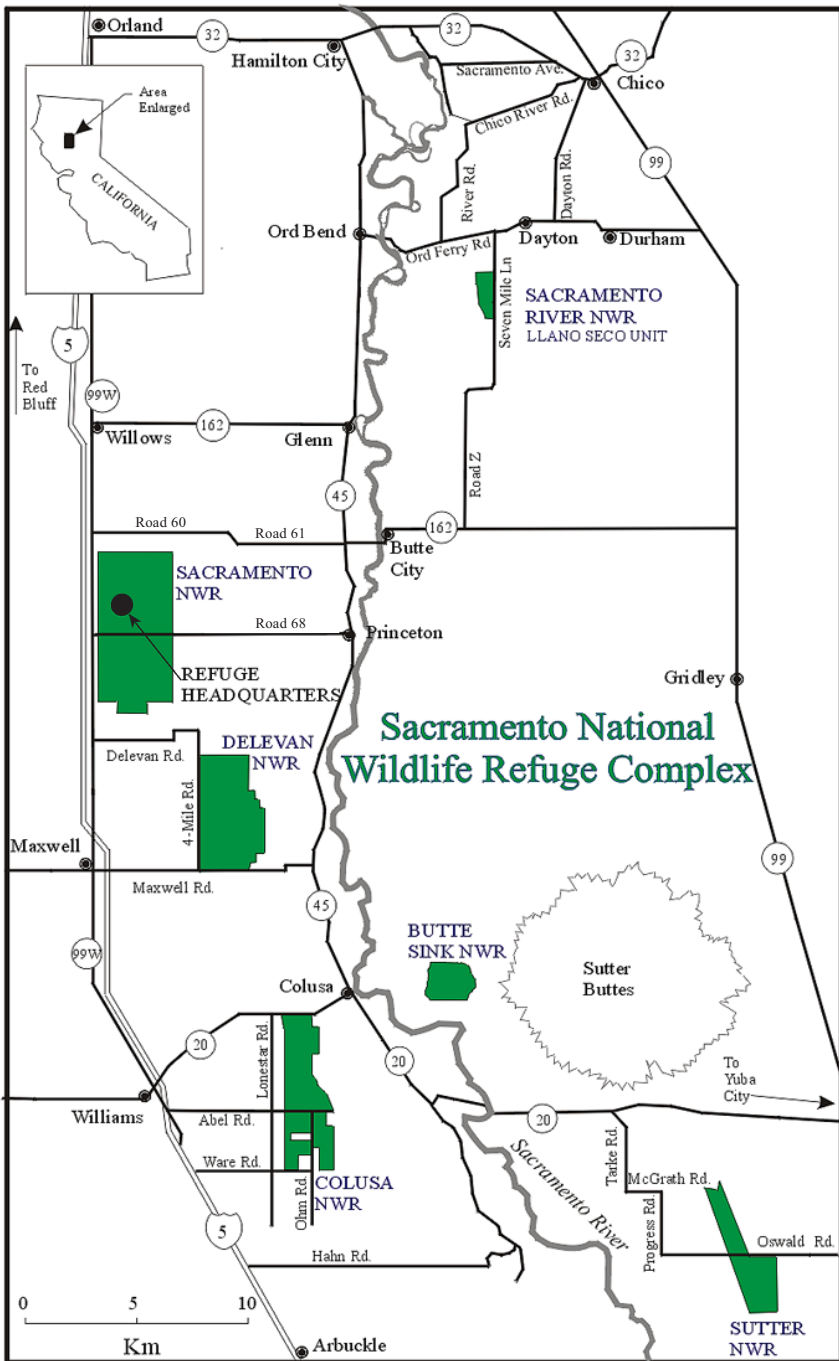
Preparing For Your Visit

- It is your responsibility to provide ample discipline and assist the tour guide. A 1:10 student to adult ratio is recommended for a smooth visit.
- The viewing platforms at the Sacramento NWR and Sacramento River NWR, Llano Seco Unit are approximately 20 feet high. For your safety, we ask that you not climb up on the railings or stand on benches.
- Wildlife are frightened away by loud sounds – talk quietly, walk softly and gently close vehicle doors.
- Weather varies daily – please come prepared for all conditions.

Field Trip Check List

- Lunch, snacks, water
- Trash bags (three or four, depending on group size)
- Binoculars
- Layers of clothes, old tennis shoes
- Any videos or mounts that need to be returned

We look forward to seeing you!



Map



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<http://SacramentoValleyRefuges.fws.gov>