

## FWS Proposed Wilderness Descriptions

The following descriptions of the refuges generally apply to the proposed wilderness contained within them.

### Anaho Island

(Anaho Island NWR, Nevada; Proposed wilderness acres: 748); Anaho Island Refuge is a rocky island that rises from the waters of Pyramid Lake in Washoe County, Nevada. The refuge was established for the benefit and protection of colonial nesting species and supports breeding colonies of American white pelicans, double-crested cormorants, California gulls, Caspian terns, great blue herons, black-crowned night-herons, and snowy egrets. The pelican colony is one of the two largest in the western United States. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages Anaho Island National Wildlife Refuge under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe.

### Back Bay

(Back Bay NWR, Virginia; Proposed wilderness acres: 2,165); Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge was established to provide feeding and resting habitat for migratory birds and is a critical segment in the Atlantic Flyway. Back Bay NWR includes a thin strip of barrier island coastline typical of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, as well as upland areas on the west bank of Back Bay. Habitats include beach, dunes, woodlands, agricultural fields, and emergent freshwater marshes. The majority of refuge marshes are on islands within the waters of Back Bay and provide habitat for other wildlife, including such threatened and endangered species as the loggerhead sea turtle, piping plover and recovered species like the brown pelican and bald eagle.

### Bombay Hook

(Bombay Hook NWR, Delaware; Proposed wilderness acres: 2,000); Bombay Hook protects one of the largest remaining expanses of tidal salt marsh in the mid-Atlantic region. The refuge is mostly marsh, but also includes freshwater impoundments and upland habitats that are managed for other wildlife. Bombay Hook is a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance and is designated a Globally Important Bird Area.

### Charles M. Russell

(Charles M. Russell NWR, Montana; Proposed wilderness acres: 158,619);

The proposed wilderness acreage is divided into 15 separate proposed wilderness areas. Pronghorn antelope are known to migrate across the refuge and cross the Missouri River via the neighboring UL Bend Wilderness (USFWS) and through the Burnt Lodge and West Seven Blackfoot wilderness study areas (managed by the Bureau of Land Management). Winter sage grouse tracking found that grouse migrating from northern Montana and Canada use habitat within the Burnt Lodge proposed wilderness area and surrounding areas in the winter.

## Chincoteague

(Chincoteague NWR, Virginia and Maryland; Proposed wilderness acres: 1,740 (1,300 acres NWR and 440 acres NPS)); The Assateague barrier island off the Maryland and Virginia mainland is managed, in part, by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (CNWR), the U.S. National Park Service as the Assateague Island National Seashore (ASIS), and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources as Assateague State Park.

The proposed Island wilderness supports a continuum of habitats that include beach, dunes, shrub lands, maritime forest, and salt marsh. The refuge and seashore value recreation opportunities that include hunting, fishing, birding, hiking and swimming.

## Crescent Lake

(Crescent Lake NWR, Nebraska; Proposed wilderness acres: 24,502); Crescent Lake NWR lies on the southwestern edge of the 19,300 square mile Nebraska Sandhills. The Sandhills are characterized by rolling, vegetated hills and inter-dunal valleys which are oriented in a northwest to southeast direction. Many shallow lakes and marshes are interspersed in the lower valleys. Native grasses predominate.

The Crescent Lake NWR is home to migrating bird species as well as several non-migratory bird species. Thirty-two species of waterfowl use Refuge lands during some portion of the year, and 15 species nest on the refuge. The Refuge is also home to several species of marsh and water birds, as well as shorebirds, gulls, and terns. The Refuge is home to white-tailed deer, mule deer, and pronghorn.

Visitors are often looking for a unique bird-watching experience, in a place where 279 different species of birds migrate or nest year-round. They also come to hunt white-tailed or mule deer in the Wilderness.

## Desert

(Desert NWR, Nevada; Proposed wilderness acres: 1,332,900); The Desert NWR proposed wilderness contains 6 mountain ranges and portions of the intervening valleys, ranging in elevation from 2,600 feet to nearly 10,000 feet. As a result, the Refuge contains nearly every ecological community that occurs in southern Nevada. Desert NWR encompasses 1.6 million acres of the diverse Mojave Desert and the southern Great Basin located in northern Clark and southern Lincoln Counties.

Desert NWR was originally established for the conservation of desert bighorn sheep, and a bighorn hunt has occurred annually since the refuge was established in 1936.

## Hart Mountain

(Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge, Oregon; Proposed wilderness acres: 20,390); Within Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge, the Service proposed two units for wilderness designation; Poker Jim Ridge (17,464 acres) and Fort Warner (32,743 acres).

The western, rocky portion of the Poker Jim Ridge proposed wilderness has historically provided a natural sanctuary from fire and allowed fire sensitive western juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*) to thrive. Large stands of old growth juniper are common along the ridgeline. The flatter plateau areas of the proposed wilderness tend to be dominated by sagebrush shrubs and some herbaceous forbs and grasses. Sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), iconic to sagebrush habitats, can be found and seen displaying at mating leks.

The Poker Jim Ridge proposed wilderness area supports a number of large mammal species including pronghorn or American antelope (*Antilocarpa americana*).

Despite its remoteness, recreational hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities, along with an inviting patch of hot springs, attracts a number of visitors to the Refuge.

### Hawaiian Islands

(Hawaiian Islands NWR, Hawaii; Proposed wilderness acres: 1,742); The Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge is part of the Pacific Remote Islands National Wildlife Refuge Complex and consists of a chain of islands, reefs, and atolls. The many small islands provide bare rocky, lowland shrub and grass, sand, and wetland habitat for over 30 species and 14 million breeding sea birds, wintering shorebirds, and endangered endemic songbirds and waterfowl. These islands and reefs also provide breeding and foraging habitat for the endangered Hawaiian monk seal and the threatened Hawaiian green turtle.

### Malhuer

(Malhuer NWR, Oregon; Proposed wilderness acres: 30,000); The USFWS proposed wilderness in the Harney Lake unit of Malhuer NWR. Harney Lake can fluctuate between a vast lake of over 30,000 acres and completely dry. When dry, the entire bed of Harney Lake is a large flat playa. Due to the alkalinity of the soil little to no vegetation grows on the Harney Lake playa itself. The dunes surrounding the playa contain widely spaced shrubs, grasses, and forbs.

Harney Lake provides habitat for a number of animal species. Jackrabbits can often be seen hopping through the sparse vegetation, leaving zigzagging tracks on the dunes. Some uncommon mammals, such as the Malheur and Merriam's shrews and the northern grasshopper mouse, can also be found wandering the dunes.

Perhaps the most significant user of the proposed wilderness is the brackish water loving snowy plover. These plovers flock, often in the hundreds, to Harney Lake to breed and lay eggs in shallow scrapes on the playa.

### Mattamuskeet

(Mattamuskeet NWR, North Carolina; Proposed wilderness acres: 590); Mattamuskeet NWR lies in the middle of the Atlantic Flyway and provides valuable migration and wintering habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds. The refuge's most significant feature is Lake Mattamuskeet, the largest natural lake in North Carolina. The lake is 16 miles long, five to six miles wide,

encompassing approximately 40,000 acres, but averages two feet in depth. Mattamuskeet NWR also provides habitats for a significant fishery resource, numerous pairs of nesting osprey, wintering bald eagles and peregrine falcons, deer, bobcats, otters, gray foxes, an occasional black bear or red wolf, 240 species of birds, and numerous other species endemic to the area.

### Mille Lacs

(Mille Lacs NWR, Minnesota; Proposed wilderness acres: 0.57); The 0.57-acre Refuge consists of two islands, Spirit (.23-acre) and Hennepin (.34-acre), within Mille Lacs Lake. Mille Lacs NWR hosts one of only five common tern breeding colonies in Minnesota. Management on Hennepin Island focuses on the colonial nesting bird, the common tern (*Sterna hirundo*). Spirit Island has nesting ring-billed and herring gulls, and double-crested cormorants.

Mille Lacs Lake lies inside the “bottom” of the horseshoe shaped glacial moraine that extends south from Rice Lake NWR, and is a classic example of a moraine-dammed lake. Spirit and Hennepin Islands are made of glacial boulders and gravel pushed up by ice action.

### Missisquoi

(Missisquoi NWR, Vermont; Proposed wilderness acres: 620); The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge was established to provide habitat for migratory birds. It consists of mostly wetland habitats, which support a variety of migratory birds and other wildlife. The 900 acre Maquam bog is designated as a Research Natural Area and the refuge was designated as an Important Bird Area in partnership with the Audubon Society. A mosaic of wetland habitats offers opportunities to see more than 200 species of birds. Fall migration features 20,000-25,000 migrating ducks. Nesting bald eagles, osprey, and a great blue heron colony numbering more than 300 nests are present on the refuge.

### Parker River

(Parker River NWR, Massachusetts; Proposed wilderness acres: 3,110); Parker River National Wildlife Refuge is comprised of diverse habitats including sandy beach and dune, cranberry bog, maritime forest and shrub land, and freshwater marsh but the most abundant habitat on the refuge is salt marsh. The refuge provides pristine coastal habitat for over 300 species of resident and migratory birds, as well as a large variety of mammals, insects, fish, reptiles and amphibians. The refuge also provides critical habitat for the federally threatened piping plover.

In addition to its mission of wildlife conservation, the refuge provides a variety of excellent wildlife-dependent recreational activities, including surf fishing, wildlife observation and photography, a variety of interpretive programs, and seasonal waterfowl and deer hunting opportunities.

### Pea Island

(Pea Island NWR, North Carolina; Proposed wilderness acres: 180); Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge was established "as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife", including the greater snow goose and other migratory waterfowl. Pea Island is a much-used feeding and resting area for many species of wintering waterfowl, migrating shorebirds, raptors,

wading birds, and migrating songbirds. The 13 miles of ocean beach provide nesting habitat for loggerhead sea turtles, piping plover and several species of shorebirds. Peregrine falcons occur regularly during migration and bald eagles are occasionally seen.

### Rice Lake

(Rice Lake NWR, Minnesota; Proposed wilderness acres: 1,406); Rice Lake NWR is a mosaic of lakes, marshes, forests, and grasslands that provide a variety of habitats for migrant and resident wildlife. The proposed wilderness portion of Rice Lake NWR is characterized by glacial moraines, rolling hills with small short rivers and large lakes. The vegetation for the area is aspen-birch forest and Northern hardwood forest. A significant portion of the proposed wilderness is classified as an open bog, or a flat expanse of poorly drained organic soils known as peat.

A suite of wetland birds also nest and feed in wild rice beds during the summer, including common loon, American bittern, trumpeter swan, northern harrier, yellow rail, greater yellowlegs, marbled godwit, stilt sandpiper, and the black tern. Other wildlife species that commonly feed on, or utilize wild rice include 25 species of ducks, geese, sora, American coot, blackbirds, deer, beaver, and muskrats.

The entire proposed wilderness is within a permitted hunting area within the Refuge. Deer and grouse hunting are the most common activities occurring within the proposed wilderness.

### Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee

(Noxubee NWR, Mississippi; Proposed wilderness acres: 1,200); The Noxubee proposed wilderness is flat and composed of seasonally flooded and timbered bottomland

hardwoods. The mostly un-channelized Noxubee River, 11.4 miles of which is included in the Noxubee proposed wilderness boundary, is a complex floodplain river system that has remained a naturally meandering river. There are two federally listed threatened or endangered animal species, associated with the refuge: the red cockaded woodpecker (endangered) and the wood stork (threatened).

The Noxubee proposed wilderness and the refuge provide habitat for white tailed deer, turkeys, squirrels, raccoons, otters, bobcats, wood ducks, wintering waterfowl, and forest breeding birds, as well as for a variety of other birds and small mammals.

### Santee

(Santee NWR, South Carolina; Proposed wilderness acres: 163); The Santee NWR wilderness proposal includes island habitat, namely Plantation Islands and Little Pine Island.

Several bird species that nest or roost within the Santee proposed wilderness rely on Lake Marion and adjacent marshes for foraging habitat. Within the proposed wilderness, upland forest and marsh dominate. The forests are comprised of solid stands of pine, mixed hardwoods (oak species, gum, etc.), and mixed pine and hardwoods. Wading birds, osprey, songbirds, and alligators are likely to be seen around the Plantation Islands.

## Sheldon

(Sheldon NWR, Nevada; Proposed wilderness acres: 349,798); This high desert refuge sits within the Columbia Plateau Ecoregion, a subdivision of the larger Great Basin Ecosystem. This region is defined by the dryness associated with being in the rain shadow of the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountains. The majority of Sheldon NWR is covered by sagebrush-steppe habitat, a habitat that has been called one of the most imperiled of North America.

The refuge and its range of habitats plays host to a number of Nevada Species of Conservation Priority such as Greater sage-grouse, American pika, mule deer, and bighorn sheep, as well as other iconic species like pronghorn.

## Valentine

(Valentine NWR, Nebraska; Proposed wilderness acres: 16,317); The proposed wilderness is part of the Sandhills region which consists of a series of sandhill ranges called “choppies” with smooth valleys in between. The combination of mixed grass prairies in the uplands coupled with wetter habitats in the lowlands provides for a truly unique ecosystem that is home to a variety of mammal, avian, and reptilian species. Both mule and white-tailed deer abound, as do jackrabbits, coyotes, foxes, skunks, and raccoons. Raptors, sandhill cranes, and the greater prairie chicken live in the uplands while the approximately 2,000 acres of open water and wetlands support a variety of aquatic and waterfowl species such as mallards, gadwalls, blue-winged teal, redheads, and canvasbacks.

Boating and camping are not permitted, but visitors may hike in the uplands at any time. The proposed wilderness allows hunting of several species of birds and mammals--sharp-tailed grouse, prairie chickens, and pheasant during the designated state seasons.

## White River

(White River NWR, Arkansas; Proposed wilderness acres: 975);

The Proposed Wilderness consists of bottomland hardwood and Cypress swamp within the refuge in a section known as the Sugarberry Research Natural Area. The Sugarberry RNA has not been logged in over 130 years, and currently is considered to be primarily in ‘old growth’ condition.

In 2006, the refuge was designated as a globally important bird area by The American Birds Conservancy and was designated as a RAMSAR site as a Wetland of Importance in 1997. It is also one of six flagship areas of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and has been designated as an Audubon Important Bird Area. There are three endangered species on the refuge: interior least tern, pink mucket mussel, and fat pocketbook mussel. Additionally, the wood stork uses the refuge in the early fall months.