

Mingo *National Wildlife Refuge*

Mingo National Wildlife Refuge consists of 21,592 acres of bottomland hardwood forest, cypress-tupelo swamp, marsh, and upland forest ecosystems.

The refuge is managed for wildlife habitat and people. The primary purpose of the refuge is to provide food and shelter for migratory waterfowl and to protect the bottomland hardwood forest.

Management of wildlife habitat at the refuge emphasizes the natural productivity of the swamp. Water levels are manipulated with water control structures and ditches. Water levels are lowered during the summer, exposing the mud flats around the perimeter of the marshes, to encourage seed-bearing plants to grow. The water levels are raised in the fall to flood the marshes to provide food for migrating waterfowl.

Acorns from oak trees are an important food source for dabbling ducks, turkeys, deer, and squirrels. Water levels are adjusted particularly for the proper health and growth of the bottomland hardwood oak trees.

Moist soil units are former farm fields that are turned into flooded impoundments. They encourage growth of native seed production and enhance populations of aquatic insects and other invertebrates.

Wilderness Area

Mingo has nearly 7,730 acres designated as a Wilderness Area. The U.S. Congress defines wilderness as “...an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” This is the most pristine environment on the refuge. Visitors are welcome to walk, canoe, photograph, fish, hunt, and study nature in the Wilderness Area. To keep the area as natural as possible, no motorized vehicles or boat motors are allowed.

Wildlife Observation

The diversity of species and habitats attract year-round wildlife viewing opportunities on the refuge. Early morning and dusk are the best times to observe wildlife. The most popular seasons are spring and fall during the peak bird migrations.

Auto Tours

- Bluff Road (6 miles, open year-round): Southern portion of the refuge edged with swamp and bluffs
- Red Mill Drive (7 miles, open year-round): Public hunting area, ditch roads, and wetlands, including Rockhouse Marsh
- Ozark Highlands (17 miles, open March-November): West side of the refuge, uplands, Wilderness Area, and Monopoly Marsh

Hiking

Mingo National Wildlife Refuge’s trails, Wilderness Area, and roadways provide many great hiking opportunities. Most hiking areas are available year-round, except those located within waterfowl sanctuary areas and the area between Ditch 4 Service Road and Ditch 6 Service Road, which are closed to access October 1-February 28. Note: A good way to gauge general distances on the map is by looking at the north-south ditches, which are generally one mile apart.

- Swampwalk Nature Trail (0.8 miles - Low Intensity): meanders through bottomland hardwood forest alongside historical Ditch 11 near Rockhouse Marsh just below the Visitor Center; wheelchair and stroller accessible
- Bluff Trail (0.14 miles - Moderate/High Intensity): Connects the Visitor Center and the Swampwalk Nature Trial; a short, steep hike in upland hardwood forest
- Hartz Pond Trail (0.16 miles - Low/Moderate Intensity): a small pond just south of the Visitor Center parking lot.
- Sweet Cabin Trail (0.4 miles - Moderate Intensity): Backcountry hiking on the edge of the Mingo Wilderness Area just north of Stanley Creek leading to a Great Depression-era cabin

Photography

Refuge auto tours and trails provide access to countless nature photography opportunities. Portable observation/photography blinds may be used in open portions of the refuge, but must be removed daily. There are designated photography blinds on the refuge. Users must reserve blinds and can only access them with a free Special Use Permit. Contact the Refuge Office for more information.

Water Access

All refuge waters are open to fishing and boating March 1-September 30. Fishing and boating is allowed year round on Red Mill Pond, Mingo River (South of Ditch 6 Road), Stanley Creek, May Pond, Fox Pond, Ditches 1, 2, 3, 10, and 11, and Binford Pond.

Boats/Motors

The use of gasoline powered boat motors is prohibited on all refuge waters. Gas powered motors may be possessed outside of the Wilderness Area, but not used. The use of electric trolling motors is permitted outside the Wilderness Area. Boats may not be left overnight. An approved personal flotation device is required for each person in a boat.

Paddling

Kayaking and canoeing on the Mingo River, Stanley Creek, Monopoly Marsh and in the many miles of ditches is a unique way to experience the swamp from the water. A canoe trail map is available at the Visitor Center and on the refuge website.

Fishing

Fishing is permitted in designated areas of the refuge in accordance with State of Missouri impounded waters’ regulations with some exceptions. Please refer to current publication of the Summary of Missouri Fishing Regulations. From March 1st until September 30th, non-game fish may be taken for personal use by nets and seines. Anglers must attend trammel and gill nets at all times and plainly label all nets and lines with the owner’s Conservation ID number. Anglers must remove all fishing lines and nets at the end of each day’s fishing.

Select Exceptions:

- Only pole & line method may be used in Fox Pond & May Pond
- No bow fishing or gigging is allowed on the refuge
- Alligator Snapping Turtles and Alligator Gar must be immediately released
- Collection or harm to mussels, crayfish and other species of aquatics is prohibited

Hunting

Hunting for squirrel, turkey, deer, and waterfowl are permitted on designated portions of the refuge. For specific information, consult the Hunt Brochure, which must be read, signed and carried while hunting.



When the last of the glaciers retreated over one million years ago, the mighty Mississippi River carved its way through the area we now call Mingo National Wildlife Refuge.

The Mingo Swamp Basin formed as the Mississippi River flowed south within a narrow peninsula of hard rock called Crowley’s Ridge. Eighteen thousand years ago, scientists believe an earthquake caused the river to cross Crowley’s Ridge and join the Ohio River near the present-day town of New Madrid, Missouri. As the river shifted east, it abandoned its original channel and left behind the Mingo Basin.

Native Americans were attracted to the basin’s habitat, rich and abundant with wildlife resources. This is evident by cultural resources discovered on the refuge. Settlers also exploited the Mingo Basin. By 1890, the vast cypress and tupelo forests fueled a booming lumber industry that ultimately led to the harvesting of nearly all the trees within the refuge’s present boundary. In the wake of disappearing forests, large drainage ditches were etched throughout the swamp to prepare the land for farming. The expensive undertaking proved only partially successful and sharply contrasted with other drainage projects in southeastern Missouri, which effectively drained hundreds of thousands of acres of hardwood swamplands. The combination of a depressed economy, expensive drainage attempts, poor farming practices, over-grazing, and numerous fires quickly brought economic and ecological bankruptcy to the Mingo area during the Great Depression.

By the 1930s, the long-term, improper land use of the basin’s natural resources prompted renewed interest in preserving the swamp. Purchase of land for the refuge began in 1944. Through diligent and careful management, the land and wildlife began to recover.

Horseback Riding and Recreational Biking

Equestrian use and biking is permitted year-round on the Ozark Highlands Auto Tour and roads open to vehicular traffic. From March 1 to September 30, horseback riding and biking is allowed on the 6 mile loop of road between Ditch 3 and 4, and the Ditch 6 Service Road. All other roadways, dike tops, nature trails and levees are closed to equestrian and bicycle use.

Wild Edibles

From March 1 to September 30, gathering of mushrooms, berries, and pokeweed is permitted for personal use only in the area south of Ditch 11, west of Ditch 6 and north of the Ozark Highlands Auto Route to Ditch 4. Harvesting outside this area is prohibited. No ground disturbance is permitted. Harvest

limit: two gallon per day of mushrooms and berries and five gallons per day of pokeweed.

Pets

Leashed pets are allowed on the Refuge.

Select Prohibited Activities:

- Feeding, injuring, disturbing, or removing wildlife, plants, or natural items
- Searching for or removing any object of antiquity including arrowheads, pottery or other artifacts
- Camping
- Open fires
- Overnight parking
- Shed antler hunting
- Use of ATVs, UTVs, golf carts, or electric bicycles

Any commercial use of a national wildlife refuge, including hunting guides, commercial fishing and filming are prohibited except as may be authorized by a refuge Special Use Permit.

In addition to these provisions, all state laws, county codes, and Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations apply on the Refuge. If you have any questions about the legality of any activity, please contact the Refuge office.

Entrance Permits

An entrance permit is required year-round for each vehicle entering the refuge. Vehicles are defined as motor vehicles, persons on bicycles, horses, foot, or other forms of transportation.

One of the following must be used as a permit:

- Daily Permit-\$3.00
- Mingo Specific Annual Pass-\$12.00
- Federal Duck Stamp-\$25.00
- Interagency Annual Pass-\$80.00
- Interagency Annual Senior Pass-\$20.00
- Interagency Lifetime Senior Pass-\$80.00
- Interagency Annual Military Pass-free
- Interagency Access Pass-free
- Every Kid in a Park Pass-free

Commercial vans and buses

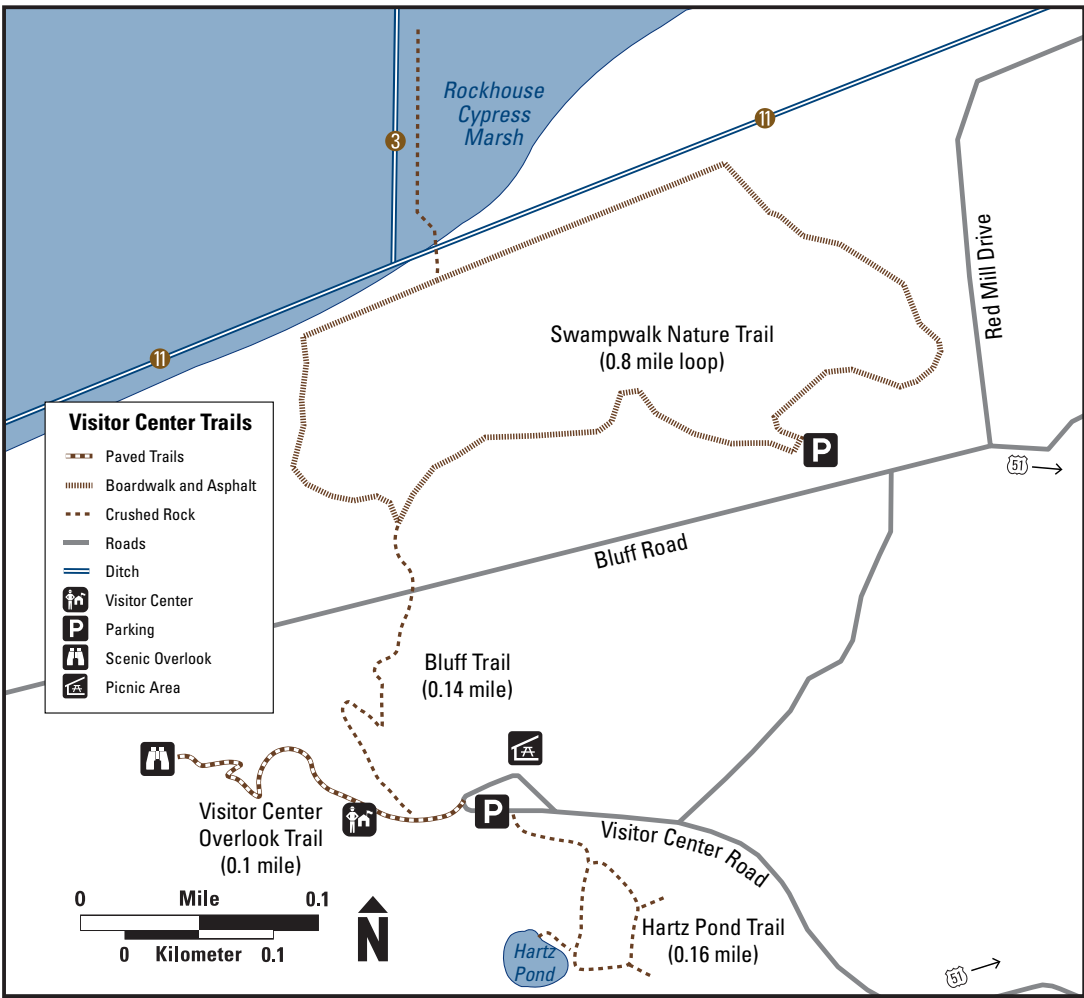
- 1-24 people—\$15.00
- 25 or more people—\$25.00

Access

Entering the refuge by vehicle is only allowed at the following designated entrances: Visitor Center Entrance Road, Bluff Road at Highway 51, School House Access, Mingo Job Corps, and Rabbit Ridge Road (County Road 518).

Non-motorized entry is allowed at McGee Gate (County Road 513), from Duck Creek CA into Pool 8, and from Highway 51 into select fields, levees, and access points north of Bluff Road.

The speed limit on all roads is 25 mph, unless otherwise posted. Only licensed drivers may operate properly registered and licensed vehicles on the refuge. Motorized vehicles must remain on designated refuge roads. All other portions of the refuge, including side roads and levee tops, are closed to vehicles at all times.



Mingo National Wildlife Refuge

Visitor Center and Headquarters
24279 State Highway 51
Puxico, MO 63960
573/222-3589



Visitor Center Hours

March-November:
Monday-Saturday 8:30 am-4:00 pm
December-February:
Monday-Friday 8:30 am-4:00 pm
Closed most Federal Holidays

Refuge Hours

Visitors are permitted on the refuge from ½ hour before sunrise until ½ hour after sunset. See Hunt Brochure for hunting hours.

You can help!

By obeying regulations.
By respecting this unique place.
By volunteering your time.
Contact Volunteer Coordinator at 573.222.3589 x110.

