

Northern Maine National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge
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Limestone, Maine 04750
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<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/arostook>

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<http://www.fws.gov>

January 2016



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Aroostook

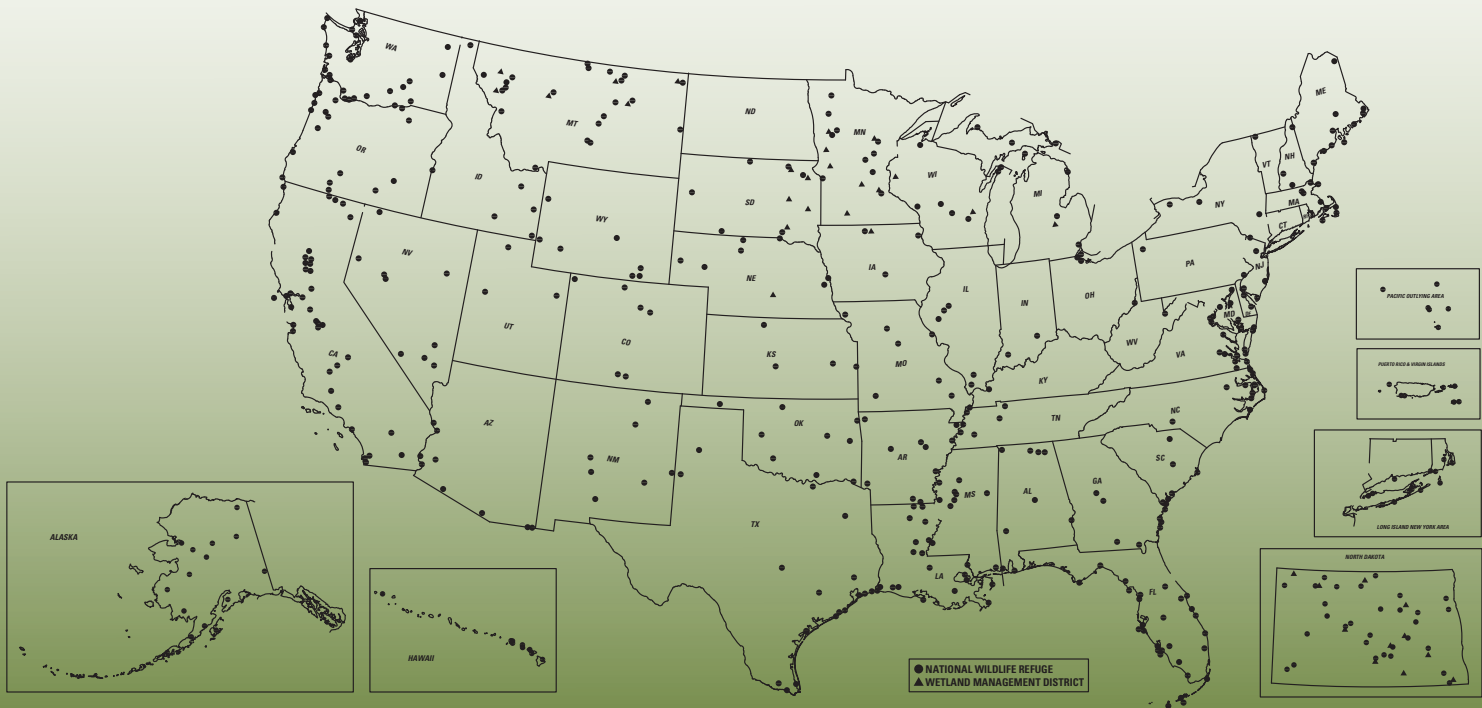
National Wildlife Refuge



Bull Moose
©Paul Cyr

More than 560 National Wildlife Refuges comprising more than 150 million acres stretch across the United States from northern Alaska to the Florida Keys and include small islands in the Caribbean and South Pacific. The character of the refuges are as diverse as the nation itself. The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is 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 the present and future generations of Americans.

The mission of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's first priority on national wildlife refuges is protecting wildlife and its habitat. However, a secondary purpose of refuges is providing opportunities for wildlife-related education and recreation. Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge is part of the Northern Maine National Wildlife Refuge Complex and offers numerous public use opportunities that are compatible with its wildlife management goals.



History of the refuge

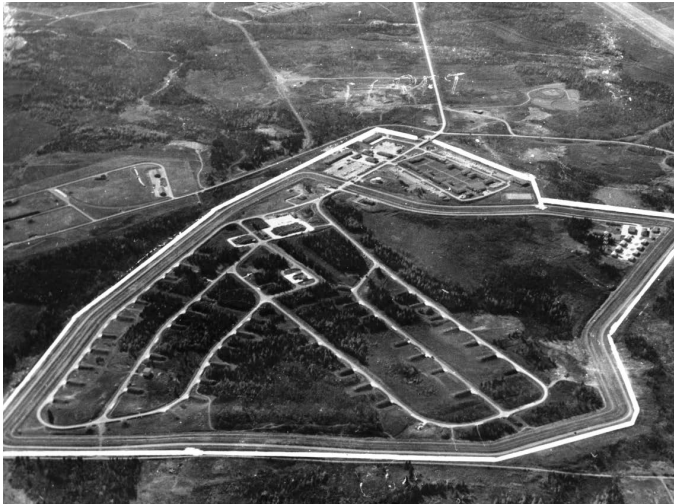
An environmental success story

The Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge is located in northern Maine, on part of the former Loring Air Force Base. The refuge was established in 1998 when land was transferred from the U.S. Air Force to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In addition to lands that were transferred from the military, the refuge manages more than 1,500 acres of conservation easements. The establishment of the refuge in northern Maine highlights the importance of land conservation in an area dominated by industrial logging and agriculture, and provides the potential for additional land protection.

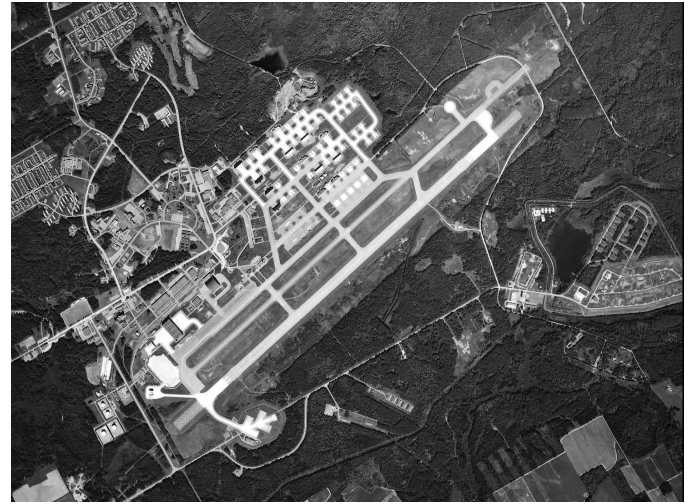
Loring Air Force Base served as a critical military facility throughout the Cold War. The Strategic Air Command was stationed at the base from 1950 to 1994 flying long-range bombers capable of delivering

nuclear weapons. Caribou Air Force Station located in the northeast corner of the site served as a top-secret, self-contained nuclear weapons storage base.

What was once a strategic military base for nearly half of a century, is now being restored to a diverse assemblage of protected lands in northern Maine. Extensive restoration of the site began immediately after the establishment of the refuge. Demolition of military buildings and cleanup of contaminated soils has taken place since the refuge was established. The refuge manages lands to conserve and protect a diversity of native wildlife habitats and species. The Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge is the northern most National Wildlife Refuge in the northeastern United States.



Historic Weapons Storage Area



Former Loring Air Force Base

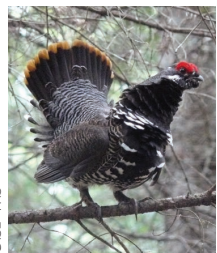
Managing Habitat for Wildlife



This blue goose, designed by J.N. “Ding” Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System

Located close to the Canadian border, Aroostook NWR’s vegetation contains elements of the sub-boreal forest that occurs further to the north and hardwood forests typically found in southern parts of the state. The refuge is comprised of forested habitats interspersed with streams, ponds, wetlands and grasslands. Northern softwood forests dominated by black and red spruce, tamarack, balsam fir, white cedar, aspen, white birch and red maple are the principle trees found on the refuge.

Due to the buffered pH in the soil from limestone deposits, many unique plants occur on the refuge. Lady slipper orchids, Canada lily, trout lily, pitcher plant, sundew, variegated scouring rush and many other plants are found here.



Spruce grouse

Aroostook NWR provides long term conservation of important upland and wetland habitats for migratory birds and the federally threatened Canada lynx and Northern long-eared bat. The refuge manages and enhances habitats for wildlife, thereby contributing to biological diversity and providing wildlife oriented public uses. Refuge staff are working to restore important habitats that were altered by previous military use of the land.



Canada lynx



East Loring lake

Habitats of the refuge

Mid to late Successional Forest

From pole timber to mature forests, various stages of forest succession may be found throughout the refuge. Spruce/fir and hardwood forests provide critical breeding and wintering habitat for many species of wildlife. Pine marten, fisher, ermine, woodpeckers, thrushes and warblers frequent the refuges mature forests.

Early Successional

Previously disturbed lands and overgrown fields on the refuge are transitioning to young hardwood and softwood stands. These regenerating forests offer Neotropical migratory birds habitat to nest and raise young. Early successional forests are an ideal habitat for snowshoe hare, Canada lynx, woodcock, warblers and flycatchers.

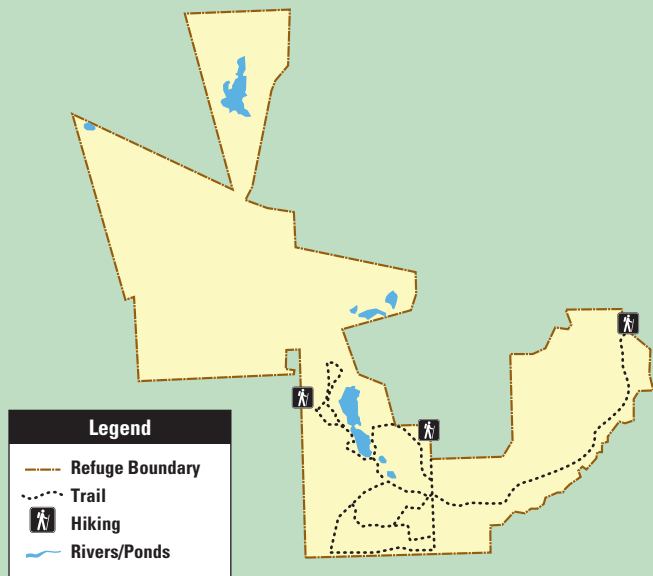
Grasslands

Through the practice of mowing and burning fields, the refuge provides breeding habitat for many grassland dependent bird species including upland sandpiper, bobolink and savannah sparrows. Moose, deer and bear frequent many of the fields around dawn and dusk.

Wetlands

From peat bogs to cedar swamps to vernal pools, numerous wetland

Greenlaw Brook Unit



East Loring Unit



Little Madawaska Stream Unit



habitats are scattered across much of the refuge. The diversity of wetlands offer numerous waterfowl species optimal nest sites and amphibians, like frogs and salamanders, a safe place to lay eggs.

Lakes & Ponds

Aquatic habitats are interspersed throughout the refuge and are influenced by seasonal beaver activities. Many species of waterfowl, bald eagles, brook trout, river otter and muskrat can be found in or around refuge lakes and ponds.

Rivers & Streams

Many of the refuge's habitats are influenced by seasonal water level changes. Rivers and streams allow for the movement of many of the refuges aquatic species including landlocked salmon, brook trout, reptiles, amphibians and birds.



Kirk Rogers

White-winged crossbill



USFWS

Sandpiper

Wildlife Highlights *A haven for wildlife*

The refuge abuts the northeastern edge of the 'Northern Maine Forest', an expanse of land encompassing millions of acres of forestland in northern Maine. The area is well known for its abundance of boreal bird, mammal, reptile, amphibian and rare plant species. Boreal



Kirk Rogers

Bald eagle



Kirk Rogers

Bay breasted warbler

chickadees, spruce grouse, black-backed woodpeckers, Blackburnian and bay breasted warblers, hermit thrush and many other migratory songbirds can be seen and heard in the forest of the refuge. Waterfowl, ruffed grouse, American woodcock, northern goshawk and bald eagle are commonly observed. A variety of mammals such as moose, white-tailed deer, snowshoe hare, beaver, lynx, river otter, mink, ermine and coyote occur on the refuge.

Wildlife Watching Tips

Dawn and dusk are the best times to see wildlife.

In warmer climates, little is moving on hot summer afternoons or on windy days.

Observe from the sidelines. Leave “abandoned” young animals alone. A parent is probably close by waiting for you to leave. Don’t offer snacks; your lunch could disrupt wild digestive systems.

Cars make good observation blinds. Drive slowly, stopping to scan places wildlife might hide. Use binoculars or a long lens for a closer look.

Try sitting quietly in one good location. Let wildlife get used to your presence. Many animals that have hidden will reappear once they think you are gone. Walk quietly in designated areas, being aware of sounds and smells. Often you will hear more than you will see.

Teach children quiet observation. Other wildlife watchers will appreciate your consideration.

Look for animal signs. Tracks, scat, feathers, and nests left behind often tell interesting stories.

Visitor Activities

Connecting people with nature

Visitor Contact Station

Displays, brochures, and films are available. Refuge staff is also available for visitor questions and comments. The Friends Group provides a seasonally volunteer staffed nature store and environmental education programs.

Trails

A system of 13 miles of trails are available year round to explore the various habitats that are found in northern Maine. Many of the trails are groomed for cross country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter.

Bicycling

The refuge road and auto tour route are open to bicyclists on a seasonal basis.

Boating

Canoeing and kayaking on the Little Madawaska Stream offers excellent opportunities for viewing wildlife.

Fishing & Hunting

Fishing and Hunting are not permitted on the refuge at this time.

Historic Area

The historic weapons storage area, including more than 40 bunkers is open to the public seasonally.

Auto Tour Route

The auto tour route provides an accessible opportunity to explore the refuge and experience wildlife in natural setting. The auto tour route is open on a seasonal basis.



USFWS

Birdwatching and Fishing derby



Moose Marsh

Regulations

*Protect visitors
and wildlife*

The staff at Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge strives to maintain the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mission to conserve, protect and enhance wildlife and their habitats. It is the visitor's responsibility to ensure that wildlife has a place to grow and survive for future generations by respecting and obeying refuge regulations. In all cases, public access, use, or recreational activities not specifically permitted are prohibited. All visitors to Aroostook NWR are expected to comply with local, state, and federal laws as with the following activities:

- The refuge is open from ½ hour before sunrise until ½ hour after sunset
- The refuge speed limit is 20 mph unless posted otherwise
- Pets must be kept on a leash and under control at all times
- Please do not litter. Take trash with you and dispose of it properly
- Plants and animals (living or dead) may not be disturbed, introduced or removed
- Camping, open fires and overnight parking is prohibited
- ATV's, off-road vehicles and snowmobiles are not allowed on the refuge

Volunteers

Volunteers are an important part of the refuge. They assist with public use programs, wildlife management activities, environmental education programs and trail maintenance. Visit the refuge Website or visit the refuge for additional information.

Friends Group

The Friends of Aroostook NWR is a non-profit advocacy group established in 1998 to provide support and services to the refuge. The Friends group hosts environmental education and outdoor recreational programs every month. For more information or to join the Friends group, please contact:



Friends of Aroostook NWR
P.O. Box 554, Limestone, ME 04750
207/328 4634

email: <https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Aroostook-National-Wildlife-Refuge/>

Refuge Hours

The Refuge office is open from 8 am to 4 pm, Monday through Thursday. The office may be closed from time to time due to limited staff availability.



Informational kiosk