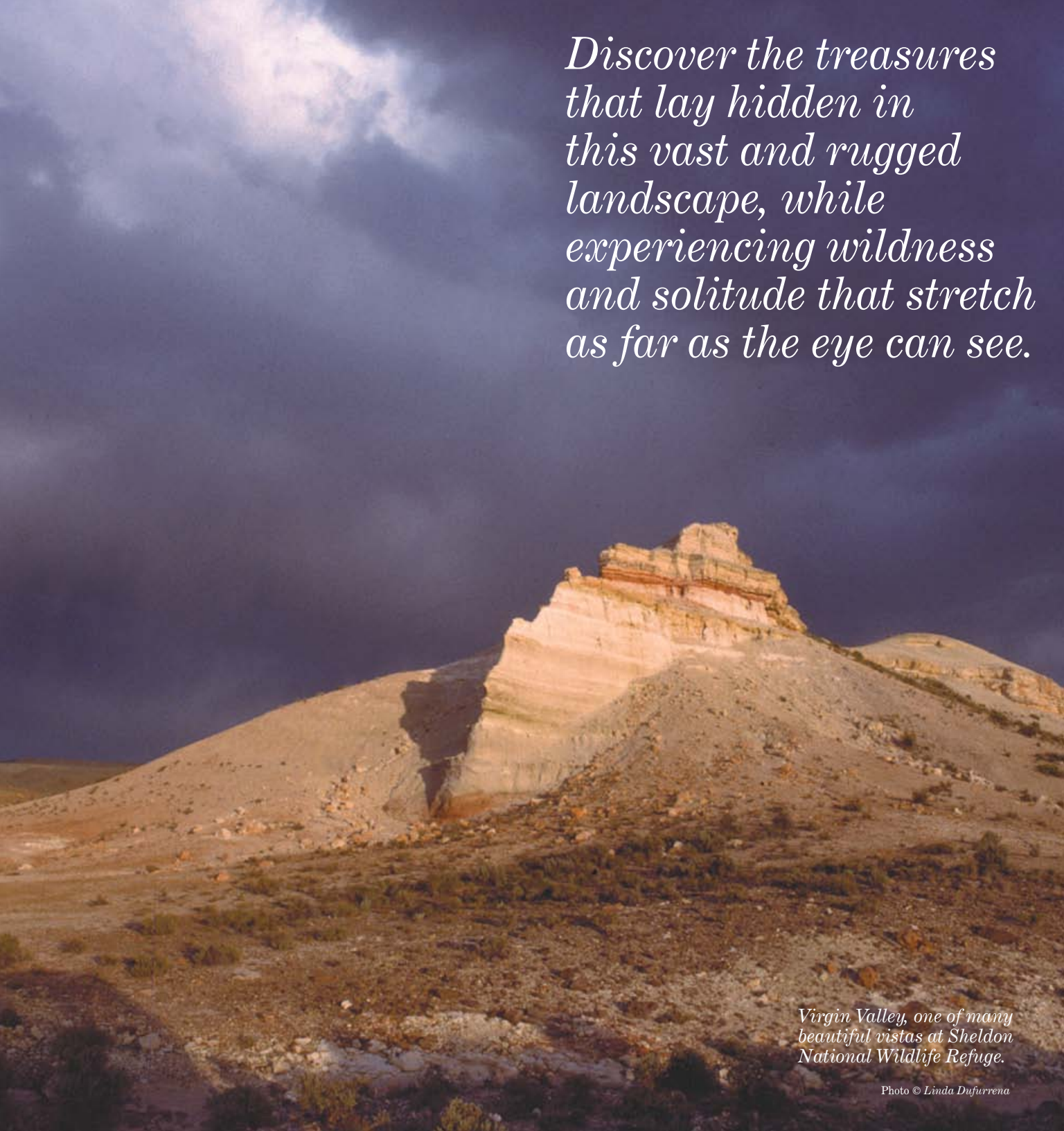


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Sheldon

*National Wildlife
Refuge*



A photograph of a rugged, layered rock formation in a desert landscape under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The rock formation is the central focus, showing distinct horizontal layers of different colors, from light tan to dark brown. The sky is filled with dark, heavy clouds, with a bright patch of light breaking through near the top left. The foreground is a dry, rocky desert floor with sparse, low-lying vegetation.

*Discover the treasures
that lay hidden in
this vast and rugged
landscape, while
experiencing wildness
and solitude that stretch
as far as the eye can see.*

*Virgin Valley, one of many
beautiful vistas at Sheldon
National Wildlife Refuge.*

Photo © Linda Dufurrena



Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge protects over 900 square miles of wildlife habitat in the northwestern corner of Nevada that can easily be accessed on Highway 140. It is home to large herds of pronghorn antelope, scattered bands of bighorn sheep and a rich assortment of other wildlife.



© Linda Dufurrena

Right:
Meadow South
of Badger

The landscape is vast, rugged and punctuated with scenic treasures. Waterfalls, narrow gorges and lush springs lay hidden among the rimrock tablelands and rolling hills of sagebrush and mountain mahogany.

This is the heart of the high desert. Elevations on the refuge range from 4,100 to 7,200 feet, while annual precipitation rarely amounts to more than a dozen inches. It is a harsh environment where a wide variety of wildlife manages to thrive.

Features of Interest

Although established for the protection of wildlife and habitat, the refuge encompasses many other features of interest. The remains of old homesteads and ranches intrigue visitors, fire opals draw miners and rock collectors to the Virgin Valley, and geothermal warm springs piped into a pool at Virgin Valley Campground create a refreshing oasis.

Photo: FWS, D.B. Marshall

Over 270 wildlife species are found in the varied landscape of Sheldon Refuge. This diversity is an indicator of the health of the environment. Each species is important because it fills a niche in this complex and fragile natural system.

Mammals



Pygmy rabbit

Nearly all of the mammals found on the refuge are year-round residents. Many hibernate or move about the refuge as the seasons change. The pigmy rabbit and its habitat are being studied because of population declines in recent years.

Snakes



FWS-R. Blacker

Western rattle snake

A small number of lizard and snake species are attracted to the numerous rocky outcroppings, bluffs and canyons. The western rattlesnake is the only venomous reptile of which visitors should be aware.

Fish



Lahontan cutthroat trout

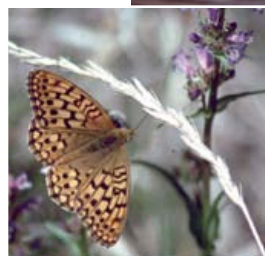
Only two species of native fish (chubs) swim in refuge waters. The sport fish found on the refuge, including the Lahontan cutthroat trout, were introduced in fairly recent times.

Birds to Butterflies

Bluebird



Fritillary butterfly



Various brightly colored butterfly species can be seen on the refuge in the spring and summer.

Distinguished Species

Through the history of the refuge, a few species have been distinguished due to their cultural and biological significance.



Pronghorn

Around the turn of the 20th century, pronghorn (antelope) populations were dwindling in North America. Conservation efforts, such as the establishment of refuges, have helped them rebound. Large numbers of pronghorn gather at Sheldon Refuge perimeter in late summer and fall to water and feed on greenery around Swan Lake. They spend winters on Big Springs Table. Pronghorn rely on keen eyesight and remarkable speed for safety.

Greater sage-grouse

Greater sage-grouse prefer habitat with gentle hills and valleys where openings of low sage intersperse big sagebrush patches. In the spring, they gather on traditional mating ground (called leks) and perform elaborate courtship dances. Males strut and thump their unique air sacks to impress prospective mates.



California bighorn sheep



Background Photo FWS-Ron Lange

Managing Habitat

Refuges do more than just preserve open space. Habitat on the Sheldon Refuge is being restored and managed for the greatest benefit of the wildlife that call this wild area home.

Fire



Fire is the primary management tool used to revitalize refuge habitat. While burned areas may look devastated immediately after a fire, grasses and flowering plants quickly recover as the habitat is reborn, leading to improved biological diversity.



Sheep and Cattle

Historically, sheep and cattle grazed on refuge lands, a practice that continued until the mid 1990s. Removing the demands and impacts of livestock is an important part of refuge habitat restoration today.

Feral Horses and Burros

Free-roaming horses frequent refuge waterholes and streamsides between the Badger and Catnip Mountains. Just like livestock, they impact the environment and compete with native wildlife for water and food. Burros are also common to the refuge, especially the flats east of Thousand Creek. Horses and burros are periodically relocated off the refuge to keep their numbers in check.



FWS-Bryce Wiseman

Wildlife Observation

Viewing wildlife in its native environment is a richly rewarding activity. Here are some tips that will help you see and enjoy refuge wildlife.

From Your Car

Your car makes an excellent observation blind. Many types of wildlife can be approached more closely in a car than on foot.

Hike a Remote Area

Because road access is very limited on the refuge, hiking into more remote areas may provide excellent opportunities to view animals, take in the beautiful scenery and experience the solitude and wildness of the refuge. Hike quietly to improve your odds of wildlife encounters.

Get a Closer View

Binoculars or spotting scopes are very important for viewing wildlife across the great expanses of refuge habitat.



Best Times of Day

Wildlife are most active and easiest to spot in the early mornings and late evenings, especially in the heat of the summer.

Pronghorn



Pronghorn are commonly seen in large numbers near Swan Lake in the late summer and fall. During spring and early summer, they disperse throughout the refuge in small bands. During winter, look for them on remote tabletops where the wind prevents snow from accumulating in great depths.

Bighorns



FWS-R. Blackler

You may catch occasional glimpses of bighorn sheep along the rocky, steep walls above Thousand Creek, Hell Creek and the IXL Ranch, and near the west approach to old refuge headquarters at Little Sheldon. These illusive

animals are difficult to see with the naked eye; use binoculars to spot their white rump patches.

Sage-grouse

Grouse have excellent camouflage, which makes them challenging to see. Watch for them along the road from Catnip Reservoir to Last Chance Ranch where they may flush when approached by humans.



FWS Gary Kramer

Waterfowl



Dufurrena Ponds and Big Springs Reservoir host a wide variety of water birds that are easily viewed from car or on foot. Swan Lake and Catnip Reservoir are popular destinations for Canada geese. The water at the IXL Ranch is being carefully managed to benefit waterfowl.

Mule deer



Mule deer seek the protection of the juniper and mountain mahogany patches in the higher elevations of the refuge. Look for them in the early morning and late evening near Badger Mountain, Catnip Reservoir or Little Sheldon.

Echoes of the Distant Past



As you gaze around the arid and rugged landscape of Sheldon Refuge, it is difficult to imagine Native Americans living a life of relative comfort here. But ten thousand years ago, lakes, marshes, creeks and large springs were abundant, providing ideal sites for villages. Forests also grew

here, as evidenced by petrified logs found on the refuge. The *Kidutokado* band from Surprise Valley and the *Tsoso'odo tuviwarai* band from Oregon both used the area.

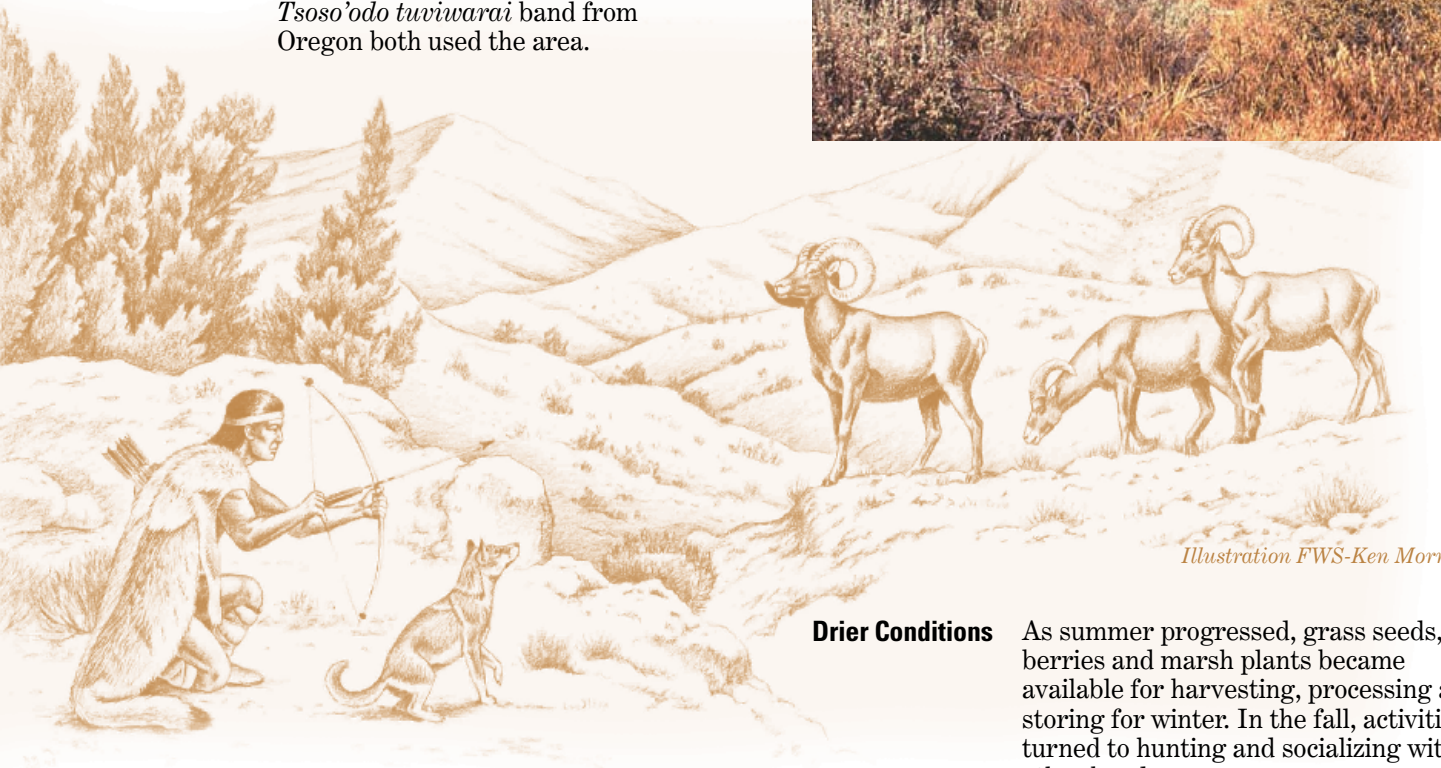


Illustration FWS-Ken Morris

Food Sources

Pronghorn antelope and big horn sheep were available during all seasons. Pronghorn would have been especially abundant in the winter. Ducks and geese were hunted during their spring and fall migrations. Eggs from sage-grouse and nesting waterfowl were collected in spring and early summer.

Drier Conditions

As summer progressed, grass seeds, berries and marsh plants became available for harvesting, processing and storing for winter. In the fall, activities turned to hunting and socializing with other bands.

Over time, drier conditions prevailed. Lakes and marshes shrank and most eventually disappeared. Springs and creeks continued to be important seasonal campsites, but winter villages were relocated to large valleys to the west. Hunters traveled into the area to harvest large game animals, but collected plant resources elsewhere.

Echoes of the Recent Past

Cowboys and Sheepmen

In the 1870s, a whirlwind of men, women, and their livestock swept into the dry sagebrush country of southeastern Oregon and northern Nevada. Cowboys and sheepmen drove their herds from horizon to horizon, displacing the Indians. Ranches and line camps sprouted beside creeks and springs. With luck and hard work, a home could be had on the range.

The End of an Era

But the whirlwind soon turned to mostly dust. The Great Depression, drought and the evolving economy blew away most of the settlers' little empires as well as some of the big ones too. Gone are the cattle barons, homesteaders and lonesome cowboys, but the places where they lived remain, providing a testament to the struggle and romance of life on the range.

Kinney Camp



© Linda Duferrera

*Where the air is so pure, the
zephyrs so free,
the breezes so balmy and light,
I would not exchange my home
on the range
For all the cities so bright.*

Brewster Higley 1873



FWS-V. Ruppert



Last Chance Ranch

When the disastrous winter of 1880 put many ranchers out of business, a businessman named George began acquiring property in the area, eventually founding Last Chance Ranch. The ranch house later became headquarters for Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge and home to the first resident refuge manager, Ernest Greenwalt. His son, Lynn, who spent the first years of his life on Sheldon, became director of the Fish and Wildlife Service in the 1970s.

Historic Buildings

Near the turn of the century, stonemasons from Cedarville created enduring structures of sandstone



FWS-R. Kuehner

blocks and basalt cobbles at Kinney Camp, Thousand Creek Ranch and Gooch Camp. The unique pink sandstone, quarried near Duferrera, gives these historic buildings an uncommon warmth and character.

Building the Refuge

Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1931 when the Audubon Society and Boone & Crockett Club purchased over 34,000 acres of the Last Chance Ranch. Later, they designated the land a National Antelope Refuge. In 1936, over 540,000 adjacent acres were set aside as the Charles Sheldon Antelope Range. The two areas were then combined into one National Wildlife Refuge.

Civilian Conservation Corps



Fastening bolts in "Portal" structure 1936.

Two years after Sheldon Refuge was established, President Franklin D. Roosevelt conducted a bold and wildly successful experiment to curb Depression-era unemployment. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was born and enrolled over three million young men during its nine years in operation. Over one thousand of these men served at Camp Sheldon between 1936 and 1942.

Sheldon's remote location required workers to come from as far away as Georgia and Texas. These young men, many of whom had never experienced life in the desert, graded roads, erected fences and telephone lines, built cabins, dug ponds and essentially created the infrastructure that still serves the refuge today.

Dragging 20 ton boulders for the "Portal" pictured on background of this page.



CCC Sites



FWS-R. Kuehner



Color picture as it appears today and inset of construction of the Overnight Cabin in August 1937.

Evidence of CCC handiwork can still be seen all over the refuge. At the

west entrance (Road 34A), huge boulders weighing 20 tons were transported over a mile to form the "Portal." The Overnight Cabin near the Portal, Hobbles Springs

Dam, the Badger Overnight Cabin and Swan Lake Road are a few examples of sturdy CCC craftsmanship.

Building a refuge built character in young men. The effect of Sheldon's beautiful and wild landscape on the enrollees is summed-up most profoundly in the report of a biological aide who led a crew into the back country to manage rodents and catalog wildlife:

CHARLES SHELDON
ANTELOPE REFUGE
U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

"The presence of deer, antelope, sage hen and other forms of wildlife which appear along the route of our work causes momentary distractions among the boys which might be referred to as serious were it not for the fact that this situation offers a wonderful opportunity to plead the cause of conservation as well as education in the habits of these animals and birds."

J.A. Allen, August 1936

Refuge Recreation

Wildlife-dependent recreation is a priority use of National Wildlife Refuges. At Sheldon, public uses are managed to protect wildlife and maintain the rugged, remote and undeveloped character of this wild land.

Virgin Valley hot springs and camping area.



FWS-R. Kuehner

Camping



Camping is permitted only at designated camping areas. Virgin Valley campground is open year-round. There you will find pit toilets, drinking water, a warm springs pool and a rustic shower house. All other camps are primitive; none have potable water and only some have pit toilets.

You are welcome to camp on the refuge for up to 14 days. Observe quiet hours between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Plan to pack out what you pack in. Garbage collection and septic dumping facilities are not provided on the refuge. Winter snows and muddy road conditions in the spring limit access to remote camps.

Campfires



Campfires and charcoal barbecues are permitted only in times of low fire danger. Bring your own firewood. Propane stoves may be used year-round.

Background Photo: FWS-R. Kuehner

Wildlife Observation and Photography



Observing and photographing wildlife are the most popular recreational activities on the refuge. (See Wildlife Viewing section for more information)

Hiking



Hiking is encouraged throughout the refuge where open terrain provides ample cross-country hiking options. No designated trails are maintained, but game trails may be followed up many drainages and onto plateau tabletops. Please exercise extreme caution when entering rocky and rugged terrain.

Horses



Horses are allowed on the refuge. Corrals are located at Badger Camp and Fish Creek. Pelletized feed is required to avoid introducing weeds from hay.



Transportation and Roads



Motorized vehicles and bicycles must remain on established roads. Off-road riding is prohibited. Please respect all road closures. Most refuge roads are not maintained for passenger vehicles. Those who wish to travel off the main thoroughfares need high clearance and four-wheel drive. Small amounts of precipitation can make roads very muddy. During the winter and spring, most refuge roads are impassable due to snow or wet conditions. Please avoid driving on muddy roads for your own safety and the protection of fragile resources.

Refuge Recreation

Pets



Pets must be leashed except dogs used for hunting during the waterfowl or upland bird hunts. Hunting dogs must remain under strict voice control.

Rock Hounding

This activity is limited to rocks on the surface only. Up to seven pounds may be collected per day for personal use only.



Virgin Valley and example of Hodson's opal.

© Linda Duferrera

Artifacts



Please enjoy artifacts in place. Collecting, possessing or damaging arrowheads, petroglyphs or any form of artifact is strictly prohibited.

Weapons



Weapons possessed for purposes other than in-season hunting must be unloaded and dismantled or cased. Discharge of firearms for target practice is not allowed.

Boats



Boats may be used on Big Springs, Catnip Reservoir and Duferrera Ponds. Only canoes or boats with electric motors are allowed.



Fishing and Hunting

Fishing



Fishing for rainbow and cutthroat trout is enjoyed at Big Springs Reservoir. Cutthroat may be caught during a very limited season at Catnip Reservoir. The Duferrera Ponds have bass, crappie and several other species of warm water fish.



All fishing is regulated by Nevada State law and a fishing license is required. Please check current regulations for seasons, limits and other guidelines.

Hunting



Hunting is permitted in accordance with state and federal regulations. A very limited number of tags are offered for deer, pronghorn and bighorn sheep hunts in the late summer and fall. Several species of upland birds may also be hunted. Waterfowl may be hunted except at Catnip Reservoir, Big Spring Reservoir and the no hunting areas listed below.

No hunting is allowed in the Duferrera area or on the portion of the refuge west of Swan Lake known as "Little Sheldon."

Keep in Mind

The high desert is a beautiful and harsh environment where conditions can be extreme. Please take the time to be well prepared before visiting the refuge.

Summer Necessities

During the summer, plenty of drinking water, sun screen, insect repellent and first aid supplies should be kept on hand.

Temperature Extremes

Nighttime temperatures can dip below freezing any time of year, so pack accordingly.

Supplies and Services



Gasoline and groceries are available in Denio (14 miles from east boundary). Lakeview, Oregon (68 miles west from boundary on 140), Cedarville, California (46 miles from west boundary) and Winnemucca, Nevada (100 miles from east boundary) are the nearest full-service communities with overnight lodging, auto repair, retail stores and tourist information.

Emergencies



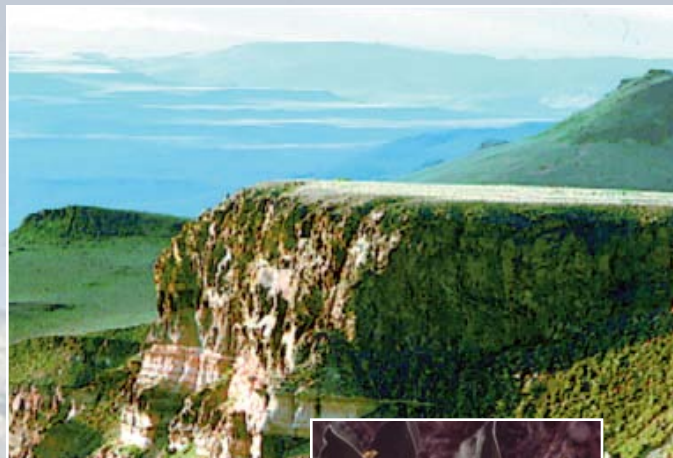
Emergency services and roadside assistance are not readily available on the refuge. Cellular phone coverage is extremely limited. Refuge staff are not able to provide or sell gas, phone access, towing or auto repair service.

Garbage

Plan to pack out what you pack in. Garbage collection and septic dumping facilities are not provided on the refuge.

Water

Drinking water is available at Virgin Valley Campground.



*Mesas North
from Summit
Lake Mountains*



*Arrowleaf
balsamroot*



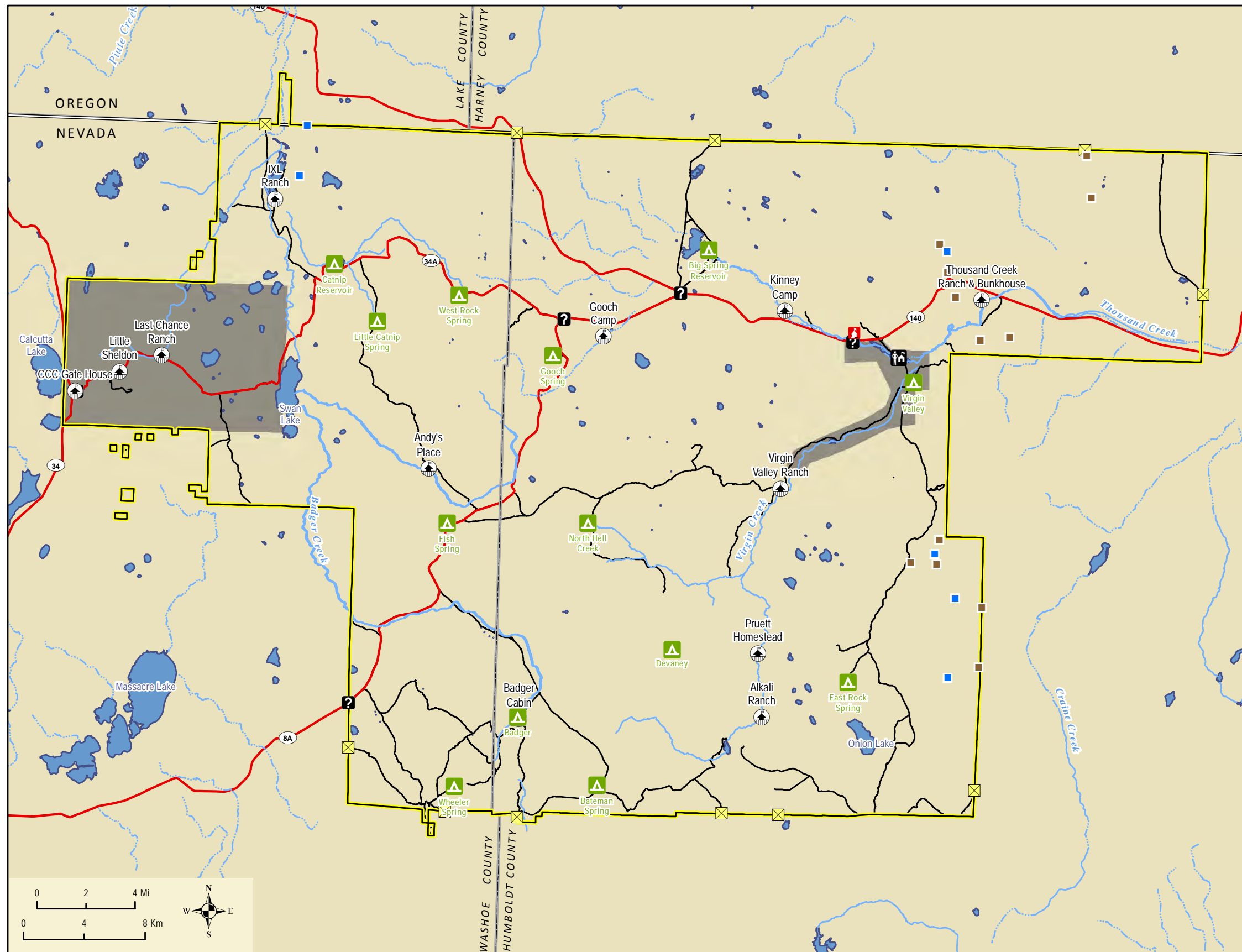
*This blue goose,
designed by J.N.
“Ding” Darling,
has become the
symbol of the
National Wildlife
Refuge System.*

Sheldon NWR is one of over 530 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Managed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this system is a vital living heritage, conserving wildlife and habitat for people today and generations to come.

“Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental disability. For more information please contact the U.S. Department of the Interior; Office of Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240

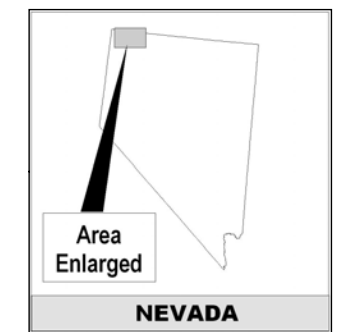
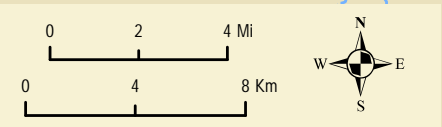
Photos FWS unless otherwise credited.

Figure 5.1
Public Use and Facilities



LEGEND

- Approved Refuge Boundary
- Refuge Headquarters
- Planned Visitor Contact Station
- Campgrounds
- Historic Structures
- Wildlife Guzzler (big game)
- Wildlife Guzzler (small game)
- Kiosk
- Sign
- Hunting Not Allowed
- Lakes
- County Boundary
- State Line
- Public Vehicle Routes (clipped to refuge)
- Highway
- Intermittent Stream
- Perennial Stream



Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 111
Lakeview, Oregon 97620
Phone 541/947 3315
Fax 541/947 4414

Oregon Relay Service
TTY 1 800/735 2929
ASCI 1 800/735 0644
SP 1 800/735 3896

National Wildlife Refuge
Information: 1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov>

Visitors with disabilities may
be reasonably accommodated
upon request, and/or receive an
alternative format publication.

July 2010

