

## **Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge**

Alabama's largest national wildlife refuge is located in north Alabama along the banks of the Tennessee River near [Decatur](#) in north-central [Morgan County](#). The refuge was established in 1938 to provide habitat for wintering and migrating birds. It lies on the eastern edge of the Mississippi flyway, a major bird migration route, and its 34,500 acres attract thousands of wintering waterfowl each year. The state's largest duck population and significant populations of geese and sandhill cranes overwinter here, and in recent years, visitors have sighted the extremely endangered whooping crane. In addition to migratory waterfowl, the refuge hosts 47 species of [mammals](#), 74 species of [reptiles](#) and [amphibians](#), 115 species of fish, and 285 different species of birds. The refuge's bottomland hardwoods, open backwater, wetlands, and fields are home to 10 federally listed endangered or threatened species as well as to American alligators, bobcats, wild turkeys, white-tailed deer, beavers, and bald eagles. The Beaverdam Creek Swamp, a National Natural Landmark, is part of this refuge and was so designated for its unique inland tupelo gum tree plant community.