FACILITIES

The Wildlife Center offers the perfect setting for motorcoach tours and school trips. Guided tours are available upon request.

Picnic Area
- 13 picnic tables
- 10 grills
- Pavilion: 8 tables
  Call Wildlife Center Office for reservations

Fishing Pond
- waterfowl viewing
- stocked with bass, bluegill, catfish and trout

Gift Shop
- refreshments
- souvenirs

MAKING TRACKS TO

West Virginia State Wildlife Center
DNR Wildlife Resources Section
P. O. Box 38 • State Route 20
French Creek, West Virginia 26218
304.924.621 • www.wvdnr.gov

This facility is operated and maintained with funds derived from admissions, donations and miscellaneous revenues generated by the Wildlife Resources Section. No tax revenues are used to support the West Virginia State Wildlife Center. We appreciate your support.

Cover photo by Jack Mills

It is the policy of the Division of Natural Resources to provide its facilities, services, programs, and employment opportunities to all persons without regard to sex, race, age, religion, national origin or ancestry, disability or other protected group status.

From the North: Take I-79 to exit 99. Follow U.S. Route 33 east approximately 12 miles to state Route 20 at Buckhannon. Take state Route 20 South approximately 12 miles to the West Virginia State Wildlife Center.

From the South: I-79 to exit 67 (Flatwoods). Follow U.S. Route 19 to state Route 4 east. From state Route 4 take state Route 20 north to the West Virginia State Wildlife Center.

KEY
- Walkway
- Foot Bridge
- Foot Trail
- Animal Enclosure
- Handicapped Access
- Fishing Pond
- Parking Area
- Picnic Area
- Restrooms
- Pavilion

Scale (in feet)

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- **Restrooms**
- **Pavilion**

Scale (in feet) 0 200 400
HISTORY

Although the Wildlife Center is a modern facility, its roots run deep into the annals of wildlife conservation. In the early 1900s, West Virginia’s wildlife populations were in sharp decline due to uncontrolled exploitation and habitat destruction. Conservationists began vigorously promoting game refuges as a means of protecting diminishing wildlife.

The West Virginia Conservation Commission (forerunner of the Division of Natural Resources) began purchasing land for game refuges in the 1920s, using funds derived from the sale of hunting licenses. The French Creek Game Farm was purchased in 1923 and used periodically to pen-raise various species of game birds and animals for restocking projects for the next 29 years. This program was discontinued when it was proven to be biologically unsound. Pen-raised animals do not develop survival skills necessary for life in the wild.

From its beginning, the Game Farm attracted public curiosity. Recognizing its unique recreational and educational value, the Conservation Commission developed several native wildlife species displays for the general public. These wildlife exhibits proved to be so popular that in the fall of 1926, nearly 6,000 people visited the farm.

In 1954, one pair of elk and bison were obtained from Oklahoma. Elk and bison, which had previously roamed West Virginia, proved to be major attractions. Other species of formerly native wildlife, such as the mountain lion, timber wolf and river otter, have been added over the years. The collection of exhibit animals also includes three non-native wildlife species that now occur in our state: the European wild boar, ring-necked pheasant and coyote.

An entirely new exhibit area was designed and built beginning in 1984. Funding was obtained using matching federal monies from the Land and Water Conservation Fund of the U.S. Department of Interior. On September 28, 1986, the new facility was dedicated and renamed the West Virginia State Wildlife Center.

EXHIBITS

Operated by the Wildlife Resources Section of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, the Wildlife Center is dedicated to presenting visitors a realistic and factual understanding of our state’s wildlife. This is accomplished by displaying each animal in its natural habitat. The spacious enclosures allow the animals to interact with their environment and exhibit more natural behavior patterns. Interpretive signs help the visitor to learn more about each animal’s life history, biology and its relationship with humans.

The large grazers, elk and bison, have acres of grass on which to roam. Visitors can enjoy viewing woodland wildlife by walking along a 1.25-mile wheelchair-accessible interpretative trail through a mature hardwood timber stand. The mountain lion and timber wolf, formerly the state’s top carnivores, live alongside their principal prey, the white-tailed deer. The state mammal, the black bear, is a featured attraction. Even the elusive coyote, a recent resident of our state, can be seen. Many of the state’s common and not so common small mammals and birds are displayed in the numerous exhibits.

The Wildlife Center’s most dynamic exhibit showcases the river otter. This display allows visitors to view the powerful and amazing swimming abilities of these aquatic mammals from above as well as below the water’s surface.

River otter were nearly eliminated in West Virginia in the late 1800s. The Wildlife Resources Section of the Division of Natural Resources has successfully reintroduced this animal back into the State.

ADMISSION

Fees are charged from April 1 through October 31 only. Contact the Wildlife Center at 304.924.6211 for current fees and group rates.

Hours

9 am – 5 pm

Weather conditions may alter operating hours.

Regulations

- NO pets
- NO alcoholic beverages
- NO feeding the animals
- Follow all posted regulations
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Steve Shaluta
Jack Mills

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