

A full-page photograph of a person rock climbing a massive, textured rock face. The rock is covered in patches of yellow-green moss or lichen. A small waterfall flows down the left side of the rock. The climber is positioned in the lower right, wearing a blue tank top and black pants, with a rope attached to their harness. The sky is a clear, deep blue.

ROCK CLIMBING

WICHITA
MOUNTAINS
WILDLIFE
REFUGE

THE REFUGE

Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge was established in 1901 as a Forest Preserve. In 1905 President Theodore Roosevelt increased its mission to include preserving native American wildlife and big game. Rugged granite mountains, oak forests, and mixed grass prairies dominate this remarkable area in southwest Oklahoma. These unspoiled lands provide excellent habitat for herds of bison, elk, and other native and migratory wildlife. Conserving this unique system of grasslands and prairie herds is part of the mission of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.

VISITOR USE

The 22,400 acre public use portion of the Refuge offers visitors with the opportunity to broaden their knowledge and appreciation of the natural environment. Direct exposure to wildlife and wildlands abounds. Wildlife observation, wildlife photography, hiking, fishing and rock climbing provide visitors with an opportunity to gain a renewed commitment to environmental stewardship. The 5,700-acre Charons Garden Wilderness Area, which received special designation and protection under the Wilderness Act of 1964, lies within the public use area. This pristine environment offers Refuge visitors a chance to experience the solitude of wilderness lands. In order to maintain the wilderness character of this area, more stringent guidelines apply to visitor uses in the Charons Garden Wilderness Area.



STATEMENT OF NON-LIABILITY FOR ROCK CLIMBING AND FIXED ANCHORS

The FWS, WMCC, and ABC review fixed anchor applications and make recommendations concerning fixed anchors based upon aesthetic and natural resource criteria. The FWS, WMCC and ABC make no representations or warranties regarding the safety, reliability or suitability for use of any fixed anchors or other hardware, currently existing or installed in the future, on any climbing route in the WMWR. Moreover, the FWS, WMCC and ABC make no representations or warranties regarding the degree of hazard or danger involved, or lack thereof, on any rock climbing route in the WMWR. Rock climbing is a dangerous activity and the individual climber must personally make all decisions regarding his or her safety while climbing.

CLIMBING REGULATIONS

The Refuge allows technical rock climbing during daylight hours throughout the public use portion of the Refuge with the following exceptions:

- The Refuge Manager through the Advisory Bolting Committee approves and permits placement of all fixed anchors (bolts, pitons, etc) including replacement of existing bolts.
- Commercial guides must purchase an annual special use permit from the Refuge Manager.
- The “Narrows”, defined as the area along West Cache Creek downstream of Boulder Cabin, is closed to sport rappelling.

FIXED ANCHORS

Refuge Management must approve the placement, removal, or replacement of fixed anchors, including bolts, pitons, rivets, cold-shunts, fixed slings, and chains prior to the action.

Any climber desiring to add, remove, or replace any fixed anchor must submit a “Fixed Anchor Application” for review by Refuge Management and the Advisory Bolting Committee (ABC) of the Wichita Mountain Climbers Coalition (WMCC). Applications are available at Refuge Headquarters. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) and the ABC review applications based upon aesthetic and natural resource criteria.

GENERAL REFUGE REGULATIONS

- Disturbing, collecting, or destroying any plant or animal on the Refuge is prohibited.
- Keep your pets on a leash at all times.
- General camping and campfires are permitted only at Doris Campground.
- Backcountry camping is by permit only and in designated areas.
- All alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- No swimming in any Refuge waters.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

In case of serious injury, call 911. Emergency medical treatment can be obtained at the Comanche County Memorial Hospital in Lawton. Report all accidents involving significant personal injury to Refuge personnel.



FACILITIES

Refuge Headquarters - Open Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm for general information and backcountry camping permits. 580-429-3222

Visitor Center - Summer Hours: Open 7 days a week from 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Winter Hours: Open 7 days a week from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. General information, backcountry camping permits, exhibits, tours and book sales.

Camp Doris - 90 campsites, drinking water, restrooms, showers and group sites. Seasonal hours. Fee Required.

Parking - Parking is designated at picnic areas and trail heads. Please do not block gates or other vehicles.

Kiosks - Informational kiosks are located at the following areas: Quannah Parker Dam, Treasure Lake Parking Area, Sunset Parking Area, and Boulder Picnic Area.

For more information call 580-429-3222.

CLIMBING OPPORTUNITIES

Technical climbing at the Refuge dates back more than 50 years to the establishment of the historic route “Great Expectations” on Elk Mountain in the late 1940’s. Since that time, the Refuge has become one of the most valuable climbing areas in the Southwest, with hundreds of one and two pitch climbs established on high quality granite in a fabulous wilderness setting. Every year, hundreds of climbers from around the region and across the country visit the Refuge to experience the outstanding climbing opportunities found at such classic areas as the Narrows, Elk Mountain, Lost Dome and Crab Eyes.

The majority of the Refuge’s routes were established during Oklahoma’s “Golden Age” of climbing during the late 1970’s and early 1980’s. That period involved high standards of free climbing, ground-up first ascents, and minimal use of fixed anchors. Today, most of those lines remain in their original style, as the local climbing community has chosen to preserve the Refuge’s traditional climbing values. Please respect local climbing ethics and traditions when visiting the Refuge.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

While most climbers are committed to protecting the climbing environment, over time, climbing and other recreational activities can still result in negative impacts to Refuge resources. All climbers should practice “minimum impact” climbing techniques and support a “leave no trace” outdoor ethic.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Commit yourself to “minimum impact” and “leave no trace” ideals by adhering to the following principles:

- Use established trails to reach climbing areas. Short cuts cause plant damage and erosion.
- Dispose of human waste properly. Whenever possible use restrooms; otherwise bury your waste and carry out toilet paper in a plastic bag. Do not leave human waste within 200 feet of any water source or at the base of a climb.
- Pack out what you bring in. Do not leave tape, cigarette butts, food wraps, leftovers, or other litter. Leave the area cleaner than you found it.
- Pick up after your pets and keep them on a leash.
- Gardening, chipping, gluing, removing vegetation, cutting trees and prying off rocks is prohibited. Bolting is not permitted without prior approval. Be “resource sensitive” when developing new routes. Use good judgment! Tread lightly and be aware of environmental impacts.
- Minimize chalk use and brush off heavily chalked holds.
- Keep your distance from wildlife. Bison and longhorn cattle are dangerous.
- Know and respect environmentally sensitive areas. Fragile plants and soils, wildlife habitat, riparian zones, and wilderness areas require special attention.
- Disturbing, collecting, or destroying any plant or animal on the Refuge is prohibited.
- Please be considerate of other visitors. Loud noise detracts from the wilderness setting and disturbs others. Do not tie up routes you are not using.
- Climb and travel in small numbers. Disperse your activities.
- Support conservation by taking part in organized clean-ups, trail rehabilitation, and other volunteer projects at the Refuge. For more information on what you can do to help, contact the Wichita Mountains Climbers Coalition or the Access Fund.

CLIMBING IS DANGEROUS

Stack the Odds in Your Favor!

Double check your knots and harness buckle!

Inspect your gear and replace as necessary!

Fixed gear is unreliable - back it up!

Know your partners and their habits!

Check your belay - are you sure you're on?

Read all warnings - they can save your life!

Keep an eye on the weather!

Rock breaks - check your holds!

Always double check your rappel system!

Wear a helmet - it can save your life!

Remember, safety is your responsibility!

U.S. Department of the Interior

Fish and Wildlife Service

Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

32 Refuge Headquarters

Indianapolis, IN 46202

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wichitamountains.fws.gov

Wichita Mountains Climbers Coalition

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Access Fund

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