

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge

Wetlands Treasure

There remain only a handful of natural places on this planet that display a vast, timeless landscape, places like the Serengeti, the Everglades, and the Amazon. Named a “Wetland of International Importance” by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge is another of those rare spots. The refuge’s 22,000 acres of salt marsh, wetlands, and prairie allow visitors to experience a landscape little changed from when Coronado camped here.

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge conserves land that has long sustained an astounding abundance of wildlife. Unlike nearby Cheyenne Bottoms, some of the marshes here are salty. In this area, fresh groundwater rests on a layer of salt water. An upthrust in the bedrock forces salt water into Rattlesnake Creek and nearby springs. Evaporation can make the marshes far saltier than the ocean. The salt flats around these marshes are the preferred breeding habitat for increasingly rare birds like the least tern and snowy plover.



Quivira National Wildlife Refuge
Ted Lee Eubanks



Canada Geese/Ted Lee Eubanks

Refuge Birds

Hundreds of thousands of ducks, geese, and shorebirds migrate through these marshes, including sandhill cranes and whooping cranes. Peregrine falcon, Swainson’s hawk, and bald eagle soar over the refuge. Ring-necked pheasant, northern bobwhite (quail), and wild turkey are often seen foraging in the fields.



Mourning Dove/Ted Lee Eubanks



Swainson's Hawk/Ted Lee Eubanks

Motion and Change

Refuge staff mimics natural patterns when managing Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. Bison once roamed these grasslands. Now cattle graze here, carefully managed to replicate the beneficial effects of bison herds. Lightning strikes and native peoples ignited fires that encouraged lush new grasses. Likewise, the refuge uses fire to enhance the prairie.



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