area is part of one of the highest duck production areas in the State of Montana and is beneficial to a wide variety of waterbird and shorebird species. As such, it is a critical component of one of the most important wetland complexes in the State of Montana." The MLWC also provides important habitat for numerous other wildlife species, including Richardson's ground squirrel, tiger salamander, white-tailed deer, least weasel, badger, pronghorn antelope, western leopard frog, white tailed jackrabbit, and coyote.

Franklin's gull

TRADITIONAL LAND USES: Agricultural use of the MLWC area has been mostly limited to grazing and haying due to its remoteness and that much of the area remains wet for a large part of the year. These traditional uses will continue as management tools for the TWR. Hunting also remains available outside of the nesting season.

Least weasel

EDUCATION & RECREATION: While the main focus of the TWR is to manage the area for wildlife, people also benefit from its creation. Partnerships are being developed with local schools to provide environmental education opportunities for students both inside the classroom and out in the project area. Community members also have opportunity to enjoy this wonderful natural resource as well as bird and nature enthusiasts from outside the Fort Peck Reservation. Visitors are encouraged to participate in TWR events such as a Montana Native Plant Society hike or a bird watching field trip during the Glasgow, MT, Chamber of Commerce's annual Feather Fest weekend. Visitors are also welcome to plan their own wildlife viewing experience. Please be considerate of private property intermixed with Refuge lands. Roads leading to the Refuge are often impassable when wet. Please contact Refuge staff for directions and road conditions.

Burrowing owl

Montana Native Plant Society hike

For more information please contact:

Manning Lake Wetlands Tribal Wildlife Refuge
PO Box 211, Poplar, MT 59255
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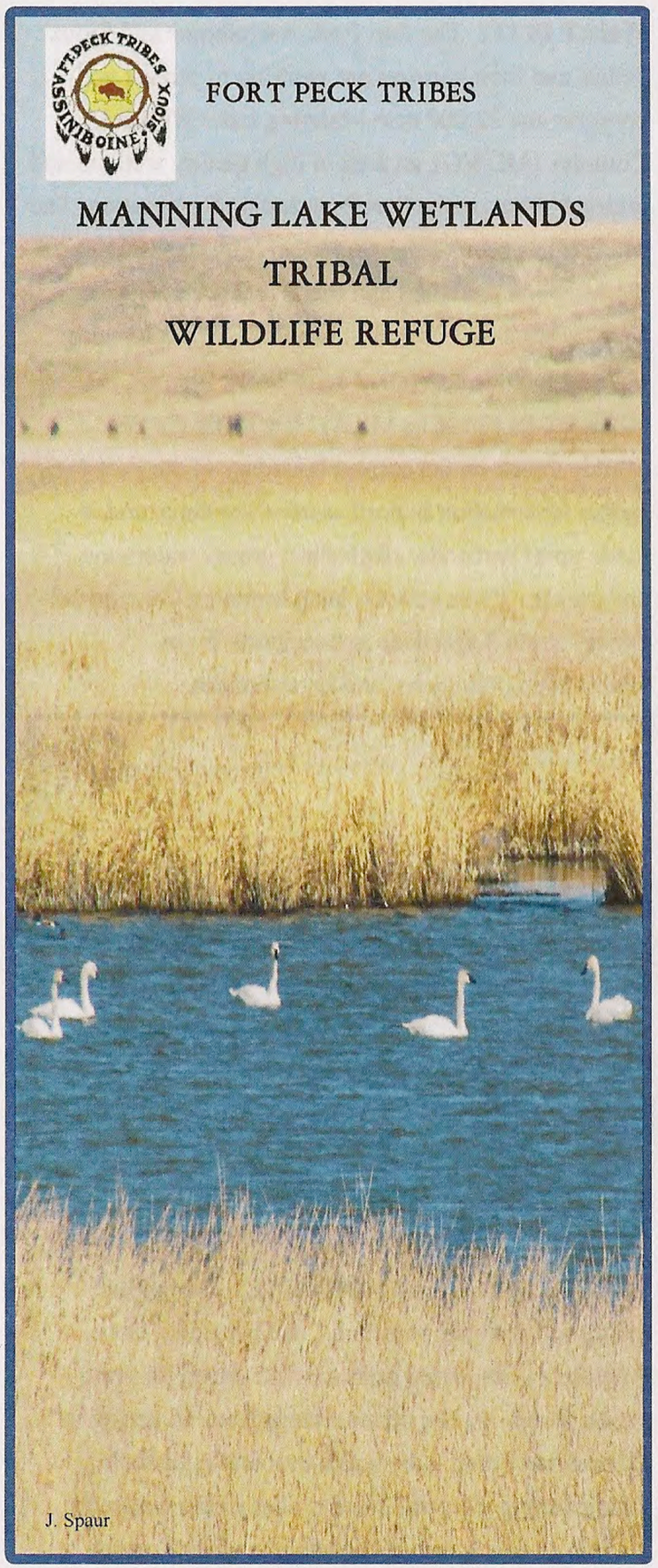
FORT PECK TRIBES

MANNING LAKE WETLANDS TRIBAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



WHAT IS IT? The Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes and their partners are working to protect and conserve the 22,000 acre Manning Lake Wetland Complex (MLWC), an area of high quality wetland and prairie habitat on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. The MLWC has been designated as an Important Bird Area by Montana Audubon and the Tribes are managing 4,000 acres as a Tribal Wildlife Refuge (TWR) with plans to include additional acres in the future.

WHERE IS IT? The MLWC lies along the Big Muddy Creek on the eastern boundary of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in northeastern Montana, and is made up of wetlands, alkali flats, grassy waterways, and prairie. While called a lake, Manning Lake proper is only about 3 feet deep and supports frogs, salamanders, minnows, and invertebrates.

Approximate location of the Manning Lake Wetland Complex

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT IT? During the spring and summer Manning Lake is a noisy place. Franklin's gulls, eared grebes, white-faced ibis, and marsh wrens, among others, return from wintering in Central and South America to nest and raise their young among the sedges and rushes of the wetlands. Manning Lake is one of the few places in Montana that Franklin's gulls (a species of high national conservation concern) have nesting colonies and it is the only known nesting site of the white-faced ibis in eastern Montana. The wetlands are also an important foraging and loafing site for the nearby Medicine Lake white pelican nesting colony (one of the largest in North America). Additional species of concern using the area include the long-billed curlew, Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow, Baird's sparrow, Sprague's pipit, and the marbled godwit.

Bee on white beardstongue

The prairie surrounding the wetlands is a carpet of native grasses dotted with wildflowers such as purple coneflower, bee balm, and yarrow. Its grasses provide nesting opportunity and safety for ground nesting birds such as sharp-tailed grouse, upland sandpiper, blue-winged teal, mallard, and a host of songbirds. Having a vast amount of prairie to nest in is crucial to nest and chick survival as it allows the birds to space out nest sites, making it harder for predators to find them. During fall migration tundra swans, snow geese, and sandhill cranes pass through Montana as they head south from nesting grounds in Canada, Alaska, and Siberia. Being able to stop at MLWC to rest and feed helps make it possible for them to continue on their long journey south.

Aerial photo of Manning Lake Wetland Complex.

Juvenile long-billed curlew

PRAIRIE POTHOLE REGION: This productive landscape, as well as the entire Great Plains region, was formed more than 10,000 years ago as glaciers from the last ice age melted, leaving behind shallow depressional wetlands known as prairie potholes. Prairie potholes are often referred to as "duck factories," as they provide important habitat for migrating and breeding waterfowl, as well as shorebirds and songbirds. Formerly seen as "wasteland," 53%, or about 104 million acres, of original wetland habitat in the lower 48 states was drained between 1780 and 1980 for agriculture and urban development. During this time Montana lost about 25% of its original wetland habitat. According to Robert Sanders, Duck Unlimited's Montana Conservation Program Manager, "The Manning Lake