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MN Valley Trust Debuts *Discover Nature App* for Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

BLOOMINGTON, MINNESOTA (MAY 1, 2018) — Visitors have a new way to explore the [Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge](#) with the introduction of the *Discover Nature App*, a mobile tour guide and scavenger-hunt style trivia game. The debut comes with many firsts, including Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge being the first refuge in the Midwest to offer the app, and the first in the nation to offer Discover Nature in three languages: English, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese.

The *Discover Nature App* guides visitors as they explore three units of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge: Bloomington, Rapids Lake and Louisville Swamp. The app identifies points of interest through virtual signs and provides information about the refuge's diverse wildlife, habitat and history. There is also a family-friendly nature trivia game to play while at the refuge. Interactive features allow users to upload and share their own sightings and photos of refuge wildlife and habitat and see what users sighted at other national wildlife refuges across America.

Ed Crozier, retired from a career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and now serving on the Minnesota Valley Trust board of directors, promoted the development of the app for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

"The Discover Nature App uses technology to connect people with this amazing nature sanctuary right here in the Twin Cities — the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge," said Crozier. "We expect the app will encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to get out, explore the refuge trails, and discover its habitat and wildlife. It makes the refuge more accessible to everyone."

The Minnesota Valley Trust partnered with [Discover Nature Apps](#) on the development of the virtual tour guide and game apps. Based in Chevy Chase, Maryland, Discover Nature Apps has also created apps with other refuges throughout the country — including J.N. "Ding" Darling in Sanibel, Florida, Okefenokee in Georgia and the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge in California. These refuge's modules and many more are available for download, too.

Two apps are available for download free by searching "Discover Nature" in [iTunes](#) or [Google Play](#) (click for direct links to app). Visitors are encouraged to download both the DNA and DNAs apps before they arrive to the refuge for faster access and to not miss out on any of the

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fun. The apps and information will appear in a phone's preferred language of English, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese.

Once the DNA and DNAvs apps on your phone, you can also download individual refuge unit modules from all across the nation, including the three at Minnesota Valley: Bloomington (Long Meadow Lake Unit), Rapids Lake Unit or Louisville Swamp Unit. Users can elect to explore the refuge with DNA App game module or DNAvs, the virtual sign module, or both. Post sightings and photos in both modules and share along with game scores on the user's Facebook page.

Links to individual maps for refuge units are available on the refuge website:
fws.gov/refuge/Minnesota_Valley/map.html.

Rangers and volunteers from the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge will assist users with the *Discover Nature App* as part of World Migratory Bird Day festivities taking place Saturday, May 12, at the Bloomington Visitor Center. Visitors can learn how to use the app and then venture onto the refuge on their own or join a Discover Nature walk. The May 12 event will also include a program by the University of Minnesota's Raptor Center, bird-themed arts and crafts activities, mist netting and bird banding, a bird language program, and more.

"By combining great technology with the great outdoors, we hope this app will enrich the visitor experiences at the refuge," said Sandi Kinzer, Visitor Services Program Manager at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. "With the *Discover Nature App*, Twin Cities residents can explore the diversity of habitat protected here — from floodplain forest to restored oak savanna prairie — and the amazing wildlife that call it home."

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge's Bloomington Education and Visitor Center and Refuge Headquarters is located at 3815 American Blvd. E., Bloomington, MN 55425. Established in 1976, the refuge is part of a corridor of land and water stretching nearly 70 miles along the Minnesota River from Bloomington to Henderson, Minnesota. Ranging from urban to rural, the refuge provides valuable habitat for a diversity of waterfowl and other migratory birds, fish and resident wildlife. Contact the refuge by calling 952-854-5900 / TTV 800-877-8339 or by emailing minnesotavalley@fws.gov.

About the Minnesota Valley Trust

The Minnesota Valley Trust, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that supports the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge through land acquisition, habitat restoration activities and special projects that enhance visitor experiences on the refuge. The Trust works exclusively with landowners who wish to sell or donate their land to become part of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. To learn more, visit mnvalleytrust.org or call 612-801-1935.

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