

Evan Hirsche

PRESIDENT, NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE ASSOCIATION;
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Protecting some of America's most important lands and waters is an enormous undertaking, but thanks to Southwest Airlines it has become much more manageable for Evan Hirsche, president of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWR). Because there are nearly 550 National Wildlife Refuges in all states and territories, Evan must travel far and wide to implement wildlife conservation strategies across the country. He works to bring together diverse federal, private, and state partners to protect America's wildlife heritage.

Evan first flew with Southwest in 1993 but adopted it as "his" airline seven years ago when he became president of the NWR. When it comes to traveling for work, Evan appreciates the number of Southwest destinations near wildlife refuges. He often must fly to cities near refuges in California, Florida, Texas, and New England. Southwest's low fares are an important factor for Evan and the nonprofit NWR.

"On the last count, I've flown to more than 40 Southwest cities!" says Evan.

"Our top priority is implementing wildlife conservation programs, so for our funding to go as far as it can, we have to keep expenses to a minimum. With Southwest, we can keep travel costs down while ensur-

ing a smooth, hassle-free journey."

Evan says he prefers Southwest over other airlines because of the "low cost, friendly people, flexibility, and greater knee room." Southwest's cabin comfort and straightforward pricing practices get high marks from him, and he was recently reminded not to take those benefits for granted.

"I recently had to fly a competitor, and went to curbside checkin. When told it would cost \$17 to check my bag, I said, 'you have got to be kidding!' They said, 'Hey, this isn't Southwest!'"

Southwest gives Evan the freedom to "go where I need to go, when I need to go, and at a great price." For him, this means flying with Southwest to get to amazing places like Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge near Orlando to help protect the habitat of the endangered West Indian manatee. Thanks to Southwest, Evan can focus on saving habitats for manatees, migratory birds, and other incredible creatures protected by wildlife refuges without worrying about having to sit in a cramped seat or pay hidden fees on another airline just to get there.

To learn more about the NWR and their efforts to protect America's 100-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, visit refugeassociation.org.



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