

Chassahowitzka

National Wildlife Refuge

photo: USFWS



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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1941.
- Acres: 31,000.
- Located in Citrus and Hernando counties, FL.
- Location: the refuge is located 65 miles north of St. Petersburg, FL and is accessible only by boat.
- Administers Crystal River NWR, Egmont Key NWR, Passage Key NWR, and Pinellas NWR as part of complex.

Natural History

- The refuge provides a place for approximately 250 species of birds, over 50 species of reptiles and amphibians, and at least 25 different species of mammals. Endangered and threatened species on the refuge include manatees, sea turtles and bald eagles.
- The refuge consists of marshlands, swamp lands, shallow bays, and tidal streams.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Nine-person staff.
- 35,000 visitors annually.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide habitat for migratory waterfowl and other birds.
- Provide habitat and protection for endangered and threatened species such as manatees, sea turtles, bald eagles.
- Provide wildlife dependent recreation and environmental education for the public.

Management Tools

- Law enforcement.
- Prescribed fire.
- Wildlife population surveys.
- Education/interpretation.
- Refuge hunts.

- Class I Air Quality Area of Chassahowitzka Wilderness.
- Partnerships.
- Designated 23,000-acre Wilderness area.

Public Use Opportunities

- Wildlife observation.
- Sport fishing.
- Commercial fishing and crabbing.
- Nature photography.
- Motorized and non-motorized boating.
- Hunting (waterfowl).

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteer opportunities exist for visitor center operations, manatee watch activities, and refuge maintenance projects.

Calendar of Events

April: Earth Day.

May: International Migratory Bird Day.

October: National Wildlife Refuge Week.

November-January: Waterfowl hunting.

November/December: Arrival of migratory whooping crane flock.

Questions and Answers

Where can I catch fish?

Redfish can be caught in the shallow rocky waters of Chassahowitzka's Coast Line.

Are there any walking trails or observation areas on the refuge?

Currently there are no walking trails or observation areas on the refuge. The refuge is accessible only by boat, and it is necessary to rent a boat or go on a guided tour with a commercial establishment to reach the refuge boundary.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The nearest place to walk trails and birdwatch is the Crystal River State Buffer Preserve located about five miles north of Crystal River.

What will I most likely see on the refuge?

Many different species of birds, including cormorants, great blue herons, ospreys, white pelicans, waterfowl, and songbirds. Other animals include: alligators, otters, raccoons and an occasional black bear, turkey, or bobcat.

Is hunting allowed on the refuge?

The refuge is open for waterfowl hunting. Special regulations apply. Consult manager for current regulations.

Where can airboats go on the refuge?

Airboat use is restricted to Hernando County waters and posted routes in Citrus County. Operators are required to have a refuge airboat permit issued from refuge headquarters.