

Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Lacassine

National Wildlife Refuge
Southwest Louisiana National
Wildlife Refuge Complex



Mission: to protect, restore, enhance, and manage a representative portion of freshwater wetland and associated habitats for the benefit of wintering waterfowl, other migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, and people.



This blue goose, designed by JN “Ding” Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Introduction

Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1937 to preserve a portion of the vast marshlands of Louisiana and to provide habitat for wintering and migrating waterfowl. The refuge, located in Cameron and Evangeline Parishes in southwest Louisiana, supports one of the largest concentrations of wintering waterfowl of any refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Most of the 35,000 acre refuge is freshwater marsh, characterized by dense emergent growths of maidencane and bull tongue with only a few natural ridges, spoil banks and



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*Cover photo: Jeff Cole;
photo at left:
Bobby Brown/USFWS*

levees. The dominant feature of the refuge is the Lacassine Impoundment, locally known as “The Pool.”

The impoundment was created by enclosing a 16,000 acre marsh with a low levee. The largest waterfowl concentrations on record in the Lacassine Impoundment included nearly 800,000 ducks and geese. The Impoundment serves as a daytime sanctuary for waterfowl, with large concentrations flying out to feed at sunset and returning by dawn.

Wildlife

Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge, located at the southern end of the Mississippi and Central Flyways, preserves one of the major wintering grounds for waterfowl in the United States. During the winter months, the refuge supports peak populations of over 300,000 ducks and 80,000 geese.

Large wintering concentrations of white-fronted and snow geese can be found here. Pintails, blue-winged and green-winged teal, mallards, ring-



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necked ducks, gadwalls and American wigeons are the common migratory ducks. Nesting waterfowl include wood ducks, fulvous and black-bellied whistling-ducks, mottled ducks and occasionally blue-winged teal.

A variety of wading birds are common on the refuge, particularly during the breeding season. The first American nesting colony of cattle egrets outside of Florida was found here. One of the few roseate spoonbill nesting rookeries in Louisiana is located in Lacassine Impoundment.

Other common marsh and water birds include neotropic cormorants, anhingas, least bitterns, great blue, tricolored and little blue herons, great and snowy egrets, black-crowned and yellow-crowned night herons,



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both: Diane Borden-Billiot/USFWS



white and white-faced ibis, king rails, American coots, common moorhens, purple gallinules, and black-necked stilts.

Rice fields surrounding the refuge are well known for supporting large populations of migrating shorebirds in the spring and fall, and waterfowl and yellow rails in the fall and winter.

The refuge also provides suitable habitat for armadillos, swamp rabbits, fox squirrels, nutria, mink, muskrats, skunks, opposums, otters, raccoons, coyotes, white-tailed deer and a large population of American alligators.

Sightings of the federally-listed threatened Louisiana black bear have been rare since 1990, when the refuge last captured and radio-collared a bear after it had destroyed several local beehives. Sightings of this elusive animal are very rare.

Management Activities

Refuge habitat is managed for use by all wildlife, with special emphasis on waterfowl. Management techniques used at Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge include burning, managing for moist soil plants, planting food crops and water level manipulation.

Approximately 2,129 acres are managed for moist soil plants and agricultural crops to provide desirable waterfowl foods.

Marshlands continually undergo a natural process called succession, the development of different plant communities over time, eventually reaching a dry land stage. The refuge uses different management techniques to slow succession within Lacassine Impoundment in order to provide optimum conditions for waterfowl.

Lacassine

National Wildlife Refuge





Special Habitats

Wilderness - A 3,345 acre wilderness area has been designated in the refuge. This area is relatively unimpacted by man's activities. Most of the marshes outside of this area have been influenced to some extent by petroleum exploration activities.



Duralde Prairie - The 345 acre Duralde Prairie, located in Evangeline Parish, north of Eunice, Louisiana, was transferred from the Farmer's Home Administration (FmHA) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in 1993. A coastal prairie restoration project was initiated in 1994 to restore the former farmland back to a coastal prairie mixture of grasses and forbs. This project was lead by Service Refuge biologists until 2005 when management of the site was transferred to the Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society through a cooperative land management agreement.

Prior to the advent of farming, southwestern Louisiana prairie encompassed as much as 2.5 million acres of land. Today, the few remaining remnants of original prairie are found only on narrow strips of land along railroad tracks and road right-of-ways.



Office

Visiting the Refuge

Located at the end of Highway 3056. If traveling west on Interstate 10, take Exit 64 (Jennings) and travel south on Highway 26 to Highway 14 in Lake Arthur, west on Highway 14 for seven miles to Highway 3056, then south 4.5 miles. If eastbound on Interstate 10, take exit 54 (Welsh) and travel south on Highway 99 to Highway 14, east on Highway 14 for three miles to Highway 3056, then south 4.5 miles. The office is only open when staff is present, 7 am to 3 pm. It is best to make an appointment prior to arrival. The office is closed on weekends and federal holidays.

Lacassine Impoundment

Located at the end of Illinois Plant Road. Travel west from Lake Arthur on Highway 14 for 15 miles or east from Hayes on Highway 14 for three miles to Illinois Plant Road, then south 4.5 miles. Access is permitted year round from one hour before legal sunrise to one hour after legal sunset. Boat and bank fishing are permitted March 15 through October 15. Although admittance is permitted from one hour before legal sunrise to one hour after legal sunset; fishing activities are prohibited until legal sunrise and after legal sunset.

Unit B

Located at the end of Streeter Road near the refuge office. Travel 3.5 miles south of Highway 14 on Highway 3056 to Streeter Road, then west two miles. An observation platform, wildlife observation hiking trail, and bank fishing area are open year round from legal sunrise through legal sunset.

Other Units of the Refuge

Access is permitted in other units of the refuge from March 15 through October 15 from legal sunrise through legal sunset. Certain areas may be closed for management purposes and are identified by closed area signs.

Activities to Enjoy

Hiking

Although few designated trails have been developed, hiking is permitted on about 30 miles of levees and service roads at the Lacassine Impoundment and Unit B.



Wildlife Observation/Photography

The best opportunities for waterfowl observation and photography are during the fall and winter months at either Unit B or at the Lacassine Impoundment. In addition to waterfowl, many other types of wildlife may be seen on the refuge throughout the year.



Boating

Refuge canals, bayous and waterways are open to boat travel during most of the year. Three public boat launches are available in the Lacassine Impoundment. Only off refuge commercial (fee) boat launching facilities are available for access to portions of the refuge outside of the Lacassine Impoundment. Consult the SW Louisiana NWR Complex fishing brochure for additional boating regulations.



Fishing

Recreational only. Fish include bass, bowfin (choupique), bream, crappie, catfish and gar. The refuge has fishing piers available for use at the Lacassine Impoundment and at Unit B. Consult the Refuge Complex fishing brochure for specific regulations.



Hunting

Waterfowl hunting is permitted on the 10,434-acre waterfowl hunting area. Archery deer hunting is permitted on most of the refuge. Consult the Refuge Complex hunting brochure for specific regulations.



Before doing any activity not listed here, ask if it is permitted.



Diane Borden-Billiot/USFWS

Prohibited Activities and Items

- Overnight parking
- Littering, including bait packaging
- Feeding or harassing wildlife
- Disturbing or collecting plants, animals, or artifacts
- Pets without a leash
- Swimming or wading
- Camping
- Glass containers/bottles
- Portable grills, campfires, and cooking fires
- Horseback riding

Take pride in your refuge!
Protect and enjoy its wildlife.