

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Breton

National Wildlife Refuge



*The mission of the U.S.
Fish and Wildlife
Service is working with
others to conserve,
protect, and enhance
fish, wildlife, plants, and
their habitat for the
continuing benefit of the
American people.*





This blue goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become a symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Introduction

Breton National Wildlife Refuge was established on October 4, 1904 by an executive order of President Theodore Roosevelt and is the second oldest refuge of over 540 currently in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The President took the action to set aside lands the day after receiving a report that market hunters and others were seriously depleting the islands' wildlife resources. It is the

only refuge known to have been visited by President Roosevelt, on a five-day voyage in 1915 with members of the National Audubon Society and soon to be Governor of Louisiana John Parker.

photo: Harvard College Library



Breton NWR consists of a series of barrier islands located in the Breton Sound off the southeast coast of Louisiana. The island chain starts sixteen miles northeast of Venice, Louisiana and extends northward toward the Mississippi Gulf Coast for a distance of seventy miles. The Federally owned lands are the Chandeleur Islands and the Breton Islands, but through an agreement with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also oversees the management of state-owned North Island, Old Harbor, New Harbor, South Gosier, Grand Gosier, Freemason, and Curlew Islands. Many of these islands have been washed away in recent storms, if they resurface they will continue to be managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. In January of 1975 all Federally owned islands of the refuge except North Breton Island became part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.



The refuge was established to provide sanctuary for nesting wading birds and sea birds as well as wintering shore birds and waterfowl, to protect and preserve the wilderness character of the islands, and to provide sand beach habitat for a variety of wildlife species. The islands are also the first line of storm defense for eastern Louisiana (including New Orleans) and coastal Mississippi.



Breton National Wildlife Refuge is composed of barrier islands formed from the remnants of the Mississippi River's St. Bernard delta. The course of the Mississippi River shifted westward approximately two thousand years ago,

Chandeleur Island was home to two brick light towers both of which were toppled by storms. The last light, a metal "Skeleton" tower was built in 1895 and stood for 111 years until Hurricane Katrina caused its fall.

leaving behind the sediment that formed the islands.

Throughout history the islands have been continually reconfigured due to tidal action, winds, and tropical storms. The Breton Islands were once home to a fishing community that included a school, until 1915 when a hurricane forced residents to evacuate the settlement. The unnamed hurricane destroyed the settlement and it was never rebuilt. More recently, a series of storms starting in the late 90's have caused devastating erosion to the islands.



Each year numerous volunteers and community partners assist U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel with projects to restore the islands and various wildlife species. These activities promote public awareness and significance of the refuge and preservation of this type of habitat.

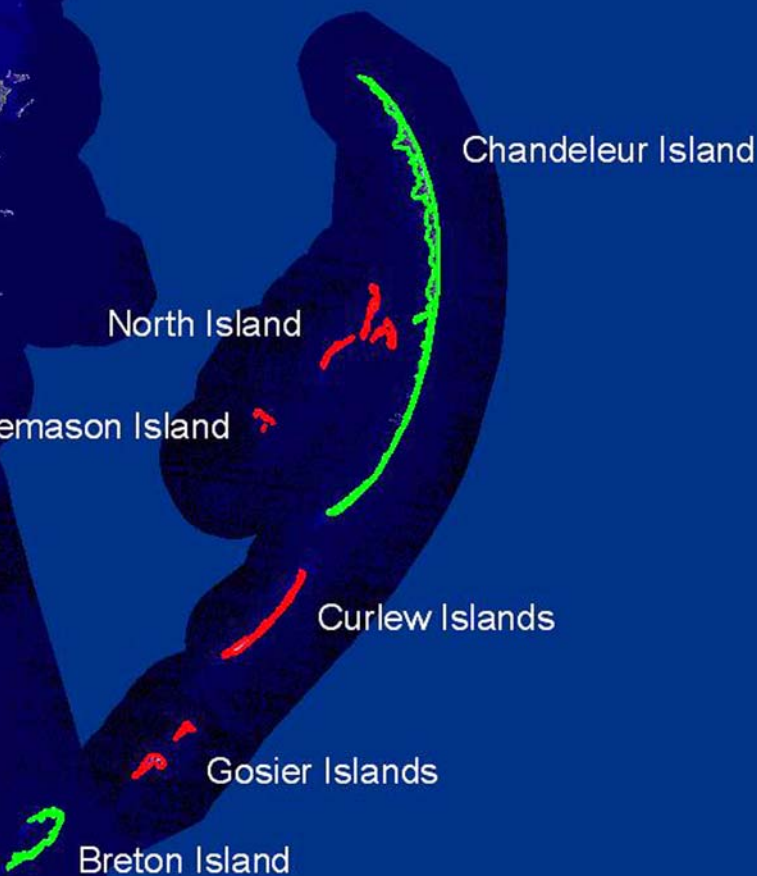


Breton

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 Federal owned lands

 State owned lands managed as Breton NWR

 Highways



Wildlife

The refuge provides crucial habitat and nesting ground for twenty-three species of shore birds and sea birds. Common nesting species include royal, caspian, and sandwich terns, laughing gulls, brown pelicans, and black skimmers. The refuge has a large tern colony and a nesting population of endangered brown pelicans. During the winter large numbers of waterfowl such as redheads, canvasback, and scaup frequent the numerous islands. The submerged aquatic grasses in the northern islands make this area one of the top four most important wintering areas for redhead ducks in the U.S. Frigate birds are commonly observed flying over the refuge. Endangered species that inhabit the refuge are brown pelicans, piping plover and least terns.

Habitat

The refuge provides a sandy barrier island beach with vegetation comprised of black mangrove, groundsel bush, and wax myrtle. The shallow areas around the islands support beds of manatee, shoal, turtle, and widgeon grass. The habitat provided by the islands offers significant importance for nesting sea, shore, and wading birds.



Public Use

Public uses such as wildlife observation, photography, and fishing are encouraged on the refuge. To avoid disturbance to nesting seabird colonies, each colony is posted as a closed area during the nesting season. Visitors may continue to visit the refuge during the nesting season but may not enter posted areas.



Travel to the refuge is limited by its remote location. Boats

venturing to the islands should be able to travel across open waters & should be operated by someone experienced in such waters. There are no facilities of any kind on the islands. Charter boats are available in Venice, LA and Gulfport and Biloxi, MS.



Refuge Regulations

Access to and recreational use of the refuge resources are permitted in designated areas and in accordance with state and federal regulations, subject to the following conditions:

Recreational fishing and crabbing are permitted on the refuge year round and must be in accordance with all state and federal regulations. All fishing and crabbing equipment must be attended at all times. Anglers may not use trotlines, slat traps, or nets.

Firearms: carrying, possessing or discharging firearms on the refuge is prohibited.

Refuge users should be aware of bird nesting colonies on the islands. The colonies are posted with “Area Closed” signs around them, and the entering or disturbing of bird colonies is strictly prohibited.

These provisions supplement the regulations which govern recreational uses on national wildlife refuges set forth in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 25-32.6.





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August 2006

