



The Gulf Breeze



...“save and preserve, for purposes of public recreation, benefit, and inspiration, a portion of the diminishing seashore of the United States that remains undeveloped”... (16 U.S.C. §459d, et seq).

Welcome to Padre Island National Seashore

The park protects the longest section of undeveloped barrier island in the world, protecting rare coastal prairie; a complex, dynamic dune system; and the Laguna Madre, one of the few hypersaline lagoon environments left in the world.

WELCOME TO THE GULF BREEZE!

This is the first issue of a semiannual newspaper intended to keep both the public and employees informed of not only events within the National Seashore but also happenings in the surrounding area which may affect the park. In addition, the Gulf Breeze hopes to increase the public’s awareness of the variety of factors affecting the National Seashore’s decision-making process and thus show the lengths to which the National Park Service goes to in order to protect Padre Island.

Padre Island National Seashore was established by an act of Congress on September 28, 1962 (Public Law 87- 712), “to save and preserve, for the purposes of public recreation, benefit, and inspiration a portion of diminishing seashore of the United States that remains undeveloped.”



Superintendent Colin W. Campbell

The park encompasses 130,434 acres and protects the longest portion of undeveloped barrier island in the world. White sand beaches, interior grasslands, freshwater ponds and wetlands, and the Laguna Madre provide habitat for songbirds, shorebirds, deer, snakes, waterfowl, coyotes, fish, and sea turtles. The park is the most important nesting site for the Kemp’s ridley sea turtle in the U.S., and is designated as a Globally Important Bird Area for over 350 species of birds. But while providing food, water, and shelter for the multitude of diverse wildlife, the island also remains a popular destination for visitors. From windsurfing to fishing, to open space and solitude, the seashore provides many recreational opportunities. The National Seashore strives to reach a balance between the two seemingly opposing values of visitor use and enjoyment and the preservation of park resources.



Kemp's ridley

issues and challenges here at the National Seashore, and it is my hope that readers find this information helpful.

The Gulf Breeze will also publicize many programs that enhance the public’s and scientific community’s knowledge of the island: wildlife and environmental studies, new interpretive programs, and research into the island’s history, among others.

The National Seashore hopes that you will find the Gulf Breeze an informative, professional, and enlightening periodical.

Sincerely,

Colin W. Campbell
Superintendent

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IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

DIAL: 911

Park Rangers are available during normal working hours to provide assistance.

Dial: 361-949-8173 ext. 0

The Gulf Breeze contains articles and information on relevant



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

The Gulf Breeze

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The Gulf Breeze is published by the National Park Service for the orientation and information of visitors to Padre Island National Seashore.

National Park Service

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P.O. BOX 181300
Corpus Christi, TX 78480-1300

Park Headquarters:

361-949-8173

Visitor Center:

361-949-8068

Internet Address:

www.nps.gov/pais

E-mail address:

pais_visitor_center@nps.gov

Visitor Center Hours of Operation

The center is open daily except December 25th, from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, and with extended hours Memorial Day through Labor Day, 8:30 am to 6:00 pm.

Beach Walk 11:00 am Daily
Deck Talk 1:00 pm Daily
Family Program 3:00 pm Daily
Meet at the Visitor Center

Special Programs: Star Gazing

Depends on atmospheric conditions. Please call the visitor center for more information.

Information and Services

The park is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The visitor center is open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., during the winter. Summer hours are extended to 6:00 p.m. The visitors center is closed on Christmas day.

Location

The physical address is 20420 Park Road 22. From Interstate Highway 37 turn onto Highway 358. The highway changes its name from 358 to South Padre Island Drive, then crosses over the Laguna Madre on the JFK causeway and becomes Park Road 22. At the end of Park Road 22 is the National Seashore. Following it through the park takes one to the Visitors Center and a half-mile farther the road ends on the beach. The total driving distance from I-37 to the beach is 37 miles.

Special Programs

Educational and interpretive programs are held year-round.

Deck talks and beach walks are held every day. Deck talks last 30 minutes and are an in-depth discussion of objects including shells, sea beans, and man-made items that are found along the shoreline. Beach walks last 45 minutes and are guided walks along the beach in which a ranger talks about the natural/cultural history of the island, and discussions include anything seen along the shore including shells, birds, flotsam, and plants while touching upon environmental issues of importance to the park. Evening programs may be offered at the Malaquite Beach campground in summer and winter, normally lasting 45 minutes and may be on a variety of topics from wildlife to history to astronomical topics such as meteor showers, comets, and constellations. Bird-watching walks may be offered at the Malaquite Beach Visitor Center during spring migration. The National Seashore also offers environmental education programs for school groups of all ages. These professionally-presented programs teach children about such topics as habitat and migration while providing direct contact with nature. Contact the park environmental education specialist.

Available Facilities

The Visitors Center has an information desk, small museum, bookstore, concession stand, observation decks, restrooms, and showers (open 24 hours). The visitor center is fully wheelchair accessible with ramps to the main deck and an elevator to the main observation deck. Beach wheelchairs are available.

Camping

There is a 14-day limit for camping.

Malaquite

Open All Year

Details

Semi-primitive, providing

only

toilets, rinse

showers, picnic tables, and 50 designated

sites (8 sites are for tent camping only, 26 are

for tent or RV camping, and 16 are for RV's

only). An \$8 fee is required; \$4 with a Golden

Age or Golden Access passport. There are

no hook-ups.

There is a gray water dump station and potable water filling station prior to entering the campground. Running generators after 10 p.m. is not allowed. For security, the area is patrolled by rangers. Camping is accommodated on a first-come, first-served basis. No reservations are accepted. The campground is rarely full; during fall, winter, and spring usually less than half the sites are occupied.

North Beach

Open All Year

Details

Primitive and at no charge. A camping permit is required and is available from the Malaquite Beach Visitor Center. Open to RV and tent camping. No reservations are taken for camping, but none are needed as space is always available. There are no facilities and or designated sites. Camping is permitted from the dunes to the water's edge (about a 100 ft. distance). Open to two-wheel drive vehicles, however, beach conditions may vary with weather and campers should always use caution to avoid becoming stuck in unexpectedly deep sand.

South Beach

Open All Year

Details

Primitive and at no charge. A camping permit is required and is available from the information desk at the Malaquite Beach Visitor Center. Open to RV and tent camping. No reservations are accepted; space is always available. Camping is on the beach within 100 feet of the water's edge. There are no designated sites. The camping area extends from the end of Park Road 22 down 60 miles to the southern boundary of the park at the Mansfield Channel. There are no roads; all driving is on the beach. The first five miles of south beach are open to two-wheel-drive vehicles. The lower 55 miles are open only to four-wheel-drive vehicles. The beginning of the four-wheel-drive area is marked. Please note that in Texas beaches are considered highways and all vehicles on them must be street-legal and licensed.



Malaquite Beach

Be aware that driving conditions on the beach may vary with the weather and sometimes areas of soft sand may be found in the two-wheel-drive area making driving difficult and becoming stuck possible. Some areas within the four-wheel-drive area usually have very deep sand. A site bulletin on how to prepare for driving down island is available by contacting the Visitors Center. Contact the Visitors Center before driving down island to check on beach conditions. Driving off the beach and into the dunes, grasslands, and mudflats is not permitted.

Yarborough Pass

Open All Year

Details

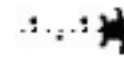
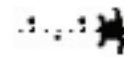
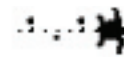
Primitive - there are no facilities. A camping permit is required and is available from the Malaquite Beach Visitor Center. Reservations are neither accepted nor needed because space is always available. Located on the Laguna Madre 15.5 miles south of the visitors center. No fee is charged for use. Access to this campground is possible only through the four-wheel drive area of South Beach. To find the campground drive to the 15-mile marker then backtrack approximately 100 yards and look for a notch in the dunes. Driving through the notch places one on a caliche road. Follow the road approx. 1-2 miles to the campground. Be aware that the notch through the dunes is sometimes filled with exceptionally deep and soft sand in which even four-wheel-drive vehicles become stuck occasionally. Do not drive in the mudflats surrounding the campground. The upper layers of the mud dry first, giving the appearance of solid ground, but leave soft mud underneath in which it is easy to become bogged down. Fines for damaging the mudflats are heavy.



Western National Parks Association promotes preservation of the national park system and its resources by creating greater public appreciation through education, interpretation, and research.

Come and visit the WNPA bookstore at the Padre Island National Seashore visitor center. Besides the great selections of books, CDs, and other educational products, you can purchase your Adopt a Turtle package for \$10.00.

Kemp's ridley a story of resilience



Donna J. Shaver, Ph.D.
Chief, Division of Sea Turtle Science and Recovery

Summer is the most exciting time of year for people interested in endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtles at Padre Island National Seashore. The two-foot-long, olive green colored adult females lumber ashore to lay their eggs between April and mid-July. Taking only about 45 minutes to nest, they crawl up the beach, bury their eggs in the sand, and return to the sea. From June through August, after about 50 days of incubation, the tiny hatchlings emerge from these eggs and are released.

Long-term recovery efforts paying off

For over 20 years, the National Park Service has worked with a variety of partners in the United States and Mexico to re-establish a nesting colony of Kemp's ridley turtles at Padre Island National Seashore. Kemp's ridley is the most endangered sea turtle species in the world. Taking of the eggs at the primary nesting beach near the village of Rancho Nuevo, Tamaulipas, Mexico, and loss of juveniles and adults due to fisheries operations caused the population to crash. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of many people over the last few decades, this recovery effort is an "endangered species success story in the making". The Kemp's ridley population is increasing. A record 51 Kemp's ridley nests were found on the Texas coast in 2005, compared to only one nest every three or four years only a decade earlier. Additionally, 55% of the Kemp's ridley nests that have been documented in the U.S. have been found at Padre Island National Seashore, making it the most important nesting area in the U.S. for Kemp's ridley. However, to ensure the future of this magnificent species, monitoring and protection efforts for it must continue.

Patrols from April through mid-July



Kemp's ridley nesting

Each year, the National Park Service conducts a program to detect, study, and protect nesting Kemp's ridley sea turtles and sea turtle nests on North Padre Island, including Padre Island National Seashore. This program is made possible due to funding from the federal government, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and a variety of partners and donors.

We use 4-wheel All-Terrain-Vehicles to patrol the beach to locate, investigate, and protect nesting Kemp's ridley turtles and sea

turtle nests. This year, we began our daily nesting patrols on April 3 and continued them through July 16th. We patrol from about 6:30 am until 6:00 pm since Kemp's ridleys nest mostly during daylight hours. Over 140 volunteers are participating in the patrol program and this project would also not be possible without them. Volunteers patrol from Malaquite Beach to the 20-mile marker or from Malaquite Beach to Bob Hall Pier. Staff members patrol from the 20-mile marker to the Mansfield Channel.

Our nest detection program is the largest one on the Texas coast. However, this year, patrols are also being conducted to find nesting on Bolivar Peninsula, Galveston Island, Matagorda Island, South Padre Island, and Boca Chica Beach. These patrol projects are administered by other groups that we closely collaborate with and provide technical assistance to.

Documentation and study of nesting turtles

We want to find the Kemp's ridleys that are nesting locally so that we can study and protect them. Unfortunately, we only get the opportunity to examine a portion of the nesters, since many re-enter the water before biologists arrive. When possible, we examine them to determine whether they are from the experimental project to re-establish a nesting colony in south Texas and whether they had nested and been tagged previously.

We attached satellite transmitters to the first four Kemp's ridleys found nesting at the national seashore this year. Since 1997, we have attached these devices to 27 Kemp's ridleys that nested in the local area. The transmitters were affixed on the top shell of the turtles using fiberglass cloth and fiberglass resin and were designed to peel off the turtles after about 1-24 months.

Kemp's ridleys lay an average of 2.5 clutches of eggs within a nesting season. One goal of the study is to use the data to predict where and when the turtles might nest again, to aid with nest detection and protection efforts. We also want to gather information on the areas

where they go between and after nesting. Such information is useful to entities trying to examine threats to these critically endangered turtles and devise management strategies for their protection.

Other sea turtle species also nest in Texas

Nests from all five species of threatened and endangered sea turtle that occur in the Gulf of Mexico have been documented at the national seashore. Kemp's ridley is the most frequent nester on the Texas coast, with most nesting in south Texas and a few nests recorded recently on the upper Texas coast.

From 1-5 loggerhead turtle nests and from 1-5 green turtle nests are typically found on the Texas coast each year and these numbers have remained stable for the last decade. Loggerhead nests have been found statewide, while green turtle nests have only been documented at Padre Island National Seashore. Only one hawksbill nest has been confirmed on the Texas coast and it was at the national seashore. Leatherback nests were recorded at the national seashore in the 1920s and 1930s, but none elsewhere in Texas and none since then. We hope to find the nests so that we can protect the eggs and hatch as many baby turtles as possible, to help ensure future nesting here. Unfortunately, if we do not find the eggs, far fewer hatchlings are born due to predation, high tides, and other factors.

Eggs from all sea turtle nests found on North Padre Island and northward along the Texas coast are transported to the national seashore's incubation facility for protected care and monitoring. Eggs found on South Padre Island and Boca Chica Beach are transferred to a protective screen enclosed area on the beach (corral) on South Padre Island.

Watch for nesting Kemp's ridley alert flag

The public also plays a significant role in the Kemp's ridley recovery project, reporting about half the Kemp's ridley nests found on the Texas coast each year. We conduct extensive public education efforts to alert beach visitors to watch for and report nesting turtles that they see.

Kemp's ridleys often nest in groups called arribadas, so on days when one nest is found the chance of finding additional nests increases. In an effort to alert the public about nesting and enlist their help in locating nests, a "nesting Kemp's ridley alert" flag is flown on the Padre Island National Seashore Entrance Station and Malaquite Pavilion flagpoles each day that Kemp's ridley nests are found on the Texas coast. The rectangular flag has orange background and a black silhouette of a sea turtle.

What should you do if you see a nesting sea turtle?

You can greatly assist with the Kemp's ridley recovery program by watching for nesting while you are on the beach and immediately reporting it. Please report nesting on North Padre to a passing turtle patroller, law enforcement officer, or me at (361) 949-8173, ext. 226. For nesting observations on Mustang Island, call Tony Amos at (361) 749-6720.

If you find a nesting sea turtle, please: 1. stay back from her while she is crawling up the beach to select a nest site, 2. protect her from passing traffic; 3. allow her to nest undisturbed; 4. photograph or video her after she has started to lay the eggs or when she is returning to the water; 5. mark where she nested; and, 6. immediately report the observation. If possible, remain at the site until a biologist arrives.

Hatchling releases are events to remember

Baby turtles hatched from the eggs held at our incubation facility are released on the beach at the northern end of the national seashore. The hatchlings are released when they emerge from the eggshell and become active. However, incubation period varies and is influenced by temperature, number of eggs, and other factors. Hatchlings will likely be released on one or two days within each of the predicted release date ranges listed in the website, www.nps.gov/pais/pphtml/events.html. About half of the releases will be open to the public, but logistical and safety concerns prevent us from inviting the public to the other half.

It is an experience of a lifetime to see these baby turtles take their first steps in life, scamper towards the water, and swim away from shore. No fee is charged to attend. For more information on these releases, visit our website at www.nps.gov/pais/, call the national seashore's Visitor Center at (361) 949-8068, or call our recorded Hatchling Hotline at (361) 949-7163.

News!

As of August 15th, we have had a total of 56 nests! 51 Kemps, 3 Greens and 2 Loggerhead.

Oil and Gas Program at Padre Island

Issues related to the development and exploration of non federal oil and gas rights underlying Padre Island National Seashore are of considerable concern to many of the park's visitors and the public. As the land management agency charged with protecting the largest portion of undeveloped barrier island in the world, the National Park Service (NPS) is equally concerned with the exploration and development of these rights within the park, and the associated impacts on the park's natural resources, cultural resources, and the visitor experience. The following information explains the process that the NPS follows regarding oil and gas development and the protection of park resources and values.

Congress established Padre Island National Seashore on September 28, 1962 to "save and preserve, for purposes of public recreation, benefit, and inspiration, a portion of the diminishing seashore of the United States that remains undeveloped" (16 U.S.C. §459d, et seq). In this statute, Congress included provisions allowing the original owners of oil and gas rights to retain these rights within the National Seashore. As a result, the mineral estate underlying the park is either owned privately or by the State of Texas. The NPS is legally required to allow access to the minerals while applying resource protection requirements and ensuring adherence to federal and state regulations, policies, and guidelines.

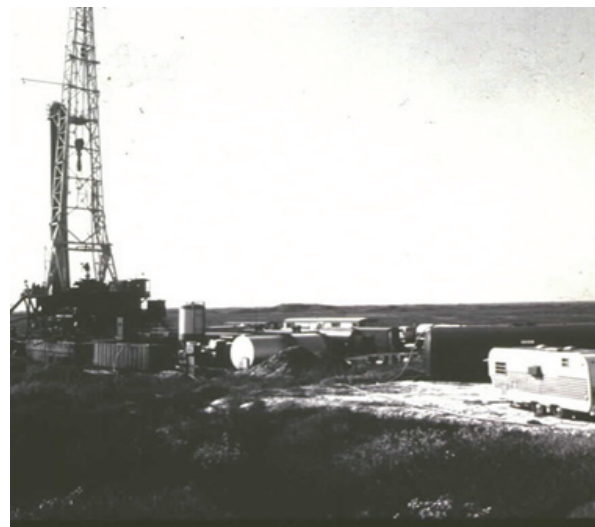
The NPS promulgated specific regulations in 36 CFR Part 9, Subpart B, commonly referred to as the "9B Regulations" to provide a system wide regulatory framework governing the exercise of nonfederal oil and gas rights. The purposes of the regulations are to "insure that activities undertaken pursuant to [nonfederal oil and gas rights] are conducted in a manner consistent with the purposes for which the National Park System and each unit thereof were created, to prevent or minimize damage to the environment and other resource values, and to insure to the extent feasible that all units of the National Park System are left unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations" (36 CFR § 9.30(a)). The regulations control conduct associated with private mineral rights on, across, or through federal land so that these activities avoid or minimize harm to park resources and values.

The 9B regulations require that each oil and gas operator develop a proposed "Plan of Operations" and submit that plan to the NPS for approval prior to commencing activities in a park. A Plan of Operations is essentially a "blueprint" of an operator's planned activities. It outlines the specific location, activities, equipment, access routes, protection measures, reclamation, and other information that will be used to survey or extract an operator's oil and gas rights in a park. The NPS evaluates the submitted plan and must determine whether those operations will affect park visitors or resources and if so, how to eliminate, minimize, or mitigate those impacts. All park resources and values are considered when evaluating a Plan of Operation, including sea turtles, vegetation, shorebirds, visitor use, cultural sites, and natural soundscapes to name a few. The plan assessment is required by the 9B regulations, NPS policy, and the National Environmental Policy Act, and takes place prior to any approval being granted by the NPS. The development of such an assessment includes soliciting input from the public, and federal and state agencies on all aspects of the operation, an analysis of viable alternatives, and measures that the NPS would require to minimize any effects from the operation.

Impacts from an individual oil and gas operation may include long-term and short-term impacts. The short-term impacts are those that recover in a period from several days to three

years and would include impacts from an activity such as burying a pipeline that will be re-vegetated and the impacts restored. Long-term impacts may last up to 20 years or longer and are typically associated with a producing well where facilities like an access road or pad will remain for the life of the well.

Forty six mitigation measures have been developed to minimize or eliminate impacts to park resources and are required of all



oil and gas operators working in the park. Some of these measures include:

- Limiting the maximum speed limit of oil and gas vehicles to 15 mph throughout the park while park visitors have a maximum speed limit of 25
- Limiting the maximum number of trucks that can be in the park each day
- Disallowing oil and gas equipment to be operated along the beach at night
- Requiring all oil and gas equipment to convoy as a group, which is escorted by an NPS trained turtle observer
- Placing a net or other type of cover over any container that can hold a liquid.
- Establishing a 500-foot buffer around permanent freshwater ponds

One of the park's primary natural resources is the Kemp's ridley sea turtle and Padre Island National Seashore staff has extensive knowledge and experience pertaining to the protection of nesting Kemp's ridleys. The park routinely works with others in the NPS and numerous federal and state agencies to ensure that this valuable resource is protected. There may be times when eggs, nesting turtles, hatchlings, and stranded turtles could be directly vulnerable to all activities taking place along the beach including both oil and gas traffic and recreational traffic. Visitors are permitted to operate their vehicles along most of the Gulf beachfront at Padre Island National Seashore, with driving occurring from the water's edge to the dunes. In the areas where beach driving is permitted, sea turtles that nest and hatchlings that emerge from undetected nests cross at least one vehicular roadway and hence could be vulnerable to crushing from vehicles. No nesting sea turtles, hatchlings, or eggs have been documented as struck or killed by vehicles at the park. Currently, the NPS removes all sea turtle eggs that are located from the beach in Padre Island National Seashore and transfers them to the incubation facility at the park. To reduce the direct impacts that could occur from crushing or covering of nests or turtles, many mitigation measures have been created and are applied to all oil and gas operators. These measures include:

- Having all drivers of oil and gas equipment attend a sea turtle awareness training class held by the NPS
- Convoying all large trucks during the sea turtle nesting season
- Having an NPS patroller conduct a morning patrol before large vehicles can traverse the beach
- Establishing additional mitigation measures during the peak Kemp's ridley nesting season to provide additional protection to Kemp's ridleys sea turtles, nests, and hatchlings during the peak nesting season

In the event that a proposed operation cannot be sufficiently modified to prevent the impairment of park resources and values, the NPS may seek to extinguish the associated mineral right through acquisition, subject to the appropriation of funds from Congress. Where funds are available, this option does eliminate the possibility of oil and gas development. While the Federal Government could pursue a complete buyout of the mineral estate at Padre Island National Seashore, such a buyout would likely be cost prohibitive.

Exploration, development, and production of oil and gas minerals have occurred on Padre Island since the early 1950's. Seventy-eight operations have been conducted at Padre Island National Seashore to date, including 58 abandoned and plugged wells, nine seismic operations, six pipelines, and five gas wells (3 active, 2 inactive, 1 water well).

Padre Island National Seashore prides itself on its oil and gas management program. Park staff and managers constantly strive to utilize cutting edge technology, review and update established mitigation measures, evaluate past practices, apply current research findings, incorporate public comment, and coordinate with partners to ensure the preservation and protection park resources. These actions help provide an enjoyable visitor experience, protect park natural and cultural resources, but still allow congressionally mandated access to non-federal oil and gas minerals.



Convoy of gas field equipment trucks being escorted by an ATV during the turtle nesting

A Birder's Paradise

Volunteer Mary Eggenberger

Padre Island National Seashore is a birders paradise! In the winter of 2004, a birding program was started in the park. We offered birdwalks and classes for beginning birders.

Among the best places to bird in the park are the gulf beaches. With 65.5 miles of undeveloped beach along the Gulf of Mexico, the sky is the limit! A good assortment of sandpipers, gulls and terns. Willets, Black-Bellied Plovers, Sanderlings, Ruddy Turnstones, Snowy and Piping Plovers, Royal and Forster Terns, Laughing, Ring Billed and Herring Gulls, Brown Pelicans, and Double Crested and Neo-Tropical Cormorants. In spring, Sandwich and Least Terns arrive and Franklin Gulls migrate through, with their beautiful pink breeding plumes. Eared Grebes can also be seen. The ponds along the park roads are full of ducks in winter – Ruddy, Blue Wing and Green Wing Teal, Northern Shoveler, Pintail, Mottled Gadwall,



Courtesy: Dwight Sokoll

Canvasback, Scaup and Ring-Necked. Pied-Billed Grebes, and Coots can also be seen. Watch for Sandhill Cranes in the grasslands and Snow Geese (and blue) in the ponds. You can also watch for a Peregrine Falcon on the Headquarter's antenna, American Kestrels are often spotted on the road signs. The road into Bird Island Basin: watch for Crested Caracara as you enter the road. A pair has nested here in the Live Oak for several years. Eastern Meadowlarks will serenade you as you go along and

a Loggerhead Shrike is often seen on a tree branch. Whitetail Hawks are often seen soaring, as well as Northern Harriers flying low over the grasslands in search of rodents. Turkey Vultures are sometimes seen as well. The marsh area ½ way to BIB is a good spot on both sides of the road for American Bitterns, Sora, ducks and Ibis. In spring, little Blue Herons, and Whistling Ducks pass through. Watch the trees for a wintering Merlin. The pond on the left near the end of the road is the best place for Dabbling ducks close-up. Both Yellowlegs and Long-Billed Dowitchers like it here. In spring almost anything can be seen, including Roseate Spoonbills, Black-necked Stilts and White-faced Ibis. The wetland/pond opposite the above pond is very good for assorted shorebirds and Gull-billed Terns. A bit further up the road some small ponds and grasslands often yield a Long-billed Curlew and other shore birds.

The road along the Laguna Madre: Stop at the windsurf rental building and scan the beach and flats ahead to the left for Herons, Reddish Egrets, Long-billed Curlews, Pippits, Horned Larks, and Savannah sparrows. In the Laguna Madre, look for Redheads in great numbers in the winter, with a few Buffleheads, Mergansers, and Eared Grebe. This is the place for White Pelicans, and a Caspian Tern is often on a sandspit. At the end of the road (before it turns toward the boat launch check the bird islands to the right. In early spring the Great Egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, Great Blue Herons, Reddish Egrets, Cormorants and others begin to build their nests and form a rookery. Snowy Plovers can be found on the beach if there aren't too many people.

The boat launch area: This is a good spot for White Pelicans and a favorite spot for the White Phase Reddish Egret. Wherever you go in the park, you will see birds, and to make it more exciting, we never know from day to day what will appear.



Courtesy: Dwight Sokoll

News!

During the night of April 25th, a cold front came through the Corpus Christi area including Padre Island, and changed the direction of the wind from Southeast to North. The North wind made it hard for the migrating birds since they are flying North to begin with. They often drop to the ground to eat and rest. In what is often called a "Fall-out", this is what happened on the morning of April 26, 2005. Birders saw thousands of Brown Headed Cowbirds in mixed flocks with orioles, Flycatchers, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and other birds. A partial albino Cowbird was also seen, and in nearby bushes and trees, many Warblers and other songbirds. Enjoy your stay in the park, and enjoy your birding or join us for our 8 a.m. bird walks/tours, from February to the end of April.

What is a Malaquite ?

Ranger Philip L. Slattery

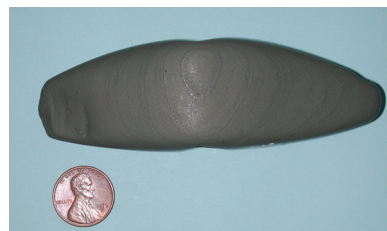
It is something of a tradition that the Karankawa inhabited this area of south Texas and that they occasionally came out to the island to hunt and fish. However, this concept is not completely accurate. While the Karankawa probably came to the island, and some records do show that they were here, it was probably a group known as the "Coahuiltecs" (not a name they called themselves, but one modern archeologists use to refer to them) that came out here the most during much of the island's history. One of the subgroups making up the Coahuiltecs was called the "Malaquites".

The Karankawas and the Coahuiltecs were the native people who most recently inhabited the coast of South Texas (within the last five hundred years or so). Both were groups of interrelated, nomadic hunter-gatherer bands that roamed the coast and inland for some distance. The bands, usually consisting of a single family among the Karankawas but maybe numbering into the hundreds among the Coahuiltecs, were probably related linguistically and culturally to other bands of their people, but otherwise probably had few ties. Each band wandered the country foraging for food on its own and probably seldom came together with other bands of its tribe, except by accidental meeting. Both groups lived off deer, small game, rodents, and even insects, but their main food sources were probably plants such as prickly pear cactus, mesquite beans, and pecan. Probably the only major distinction (besides a few customs) between the Coahuiltecs and the Karankawas was language. Because the Spanish who colonized the area left few records of the Coahuiltecs people or their language, it is probably best to say that the bands of the Coahuiltecs were probably related by language.

Based on archeology and records left by the Europeans (both Anglo-American and Spanish) that settled Texas, we know that, the Karankawa generally ranged within the area between Corpus Christi Bay and Galveston and the Coahuiltecs generally ranged within the area from Corpus Christi Bay south into northern Mexico. Within the Coahuiltecs, three groups (not tribes in the traditional sense, but more like loose confederations) existed within the area closest to the island. Around Corpus Christi Bay lived the Orejones. Between Corpus Christi Bay and down to Baffin Bay lived the Malaquites. Around the southern end of the island and in the eastern Rio Grande Valley lived the Borrados. However, bear in mind that these locations are only broad approximations and that all of these peoples were nomadic. For example, there was one group of Coahuiltecs known as the "Payayas" that lived in what is today downtown San Antonio.

A map drawn by Colonel Diego Ortiz Parrilla, who scouted the island for Spain in 1766, shows several Malaquite settlements on the southern end of the island while a Karankawa settlement and two other Malaquite bands are noted on the northern end. During the Spanish era in South Texas, the island was apparently more associated with the Malaquites than with the Karankawa. Before Padre Balli settled the southern tip, the island had been known by several other names at various times. Two of these names were "La Isla de los Malaquitas" (the Island of the Malaquites) and "Isla de San Carlos de los Malaquitas" (the Island of San Carlos of the Malaquites).

Probably the reason the Karankawa are better known than the Coahuiltecs is because the Karankawa existed as a people in Texas until about 1850, whereas the Coahuiltecs, being closer to Mexico, from where Spanish culture advanced, were quickly assimilated by the Spanish and faded away as a people in the 1700s. However, the Coahuiltecs are making a slight resurgence whereas the Karankawa have disappeared completely. Remember the "Payayas" mentioned above? A group of San Antonians, who have recently discovered their descent from the Coahuiltecs are now trying to be officially recognized by the US government as the Coahuiltecs nation. Additional information can be obtained from their website at www.texasmissionindians.com.



This is a banner stone and dates from the period 7,000 BC to 3,000 BC. It is a very rare find and banner stones have been found in Texas only once before. What banner stones were used for is unknown, but they are normally found at burial sites. This one was confiscated from a treasure-hunter who found it down island.

Shoreline Trash, Where Does it Come From ?

Just as the sometimes overwhelming abundance of Sargassum “weed” on the beaches mystifies many people, the overwhelming abundance of trash at other times gives rise to a great deal of consternation, bewilderment, and, regrettably, anger.

Most visitors to the Seashore come here to experience the beautiful sun-drenched beaches and leave with pleasant memories of a wonderful vacation. However, some are not so lucky and find their way here at times when the beach is covered with a seemingly endless river of trash then leave wondering “Where does all this trash come from and why is no one doing anything about it?”

Several thousand years ago, the currents in the Gulf of Mexico brought the sand, sargassum, and driftwood that formed the island. Today the currents continue to bring natural objects, but they also bring anything that is thrown or emptied into the Gulf: bottles, hypodermic needles, light bulbs, lumber, oil, etc. Well, where does this debris come from? The sources are countless. They come from cruise ships, commercial fishing vessels, recreational boaters, illegal dumping, and people like us. Because we all use plastics, (the most abundant of marine trash) we are all responsible.



An international treaty has been enacted to limit the dumping of wastes into the Gulf, but this treaty can be violated and enforcement may be difficult. In addition, many items may not have been thrown directly into the Gulf. Debris can wash down from far within the interior of a country by traveling from sewer to stream to river to the open sea.

Between 1988-1998, park researchers collected data on the types and quantities of trash that washes onto park beaches. This labor intensive research project has required daily cataloging and removal of 43 debris items from 16 miles of shoreline within Padre Island National Seashore. Park scientist obtained over 1,000 days of marine debris data from the Point Source Investigation, collectively covering a survey area of over 16,800 miles of shoreline. This study represents one of the first long-term comprehensive, marine debris research projects initiated in the United States. The study showed that the trash may be traced to the commercial shrimping industry, offshore oil and gas industry, and other sources. In addition, 94% of the oil and tar found on the beach be traced to man-made sources such as oil spills, engine lube oil, and tanker washings.

However, one must keep in mind that the final study was concluded in 1998. Within the last seven years many changes have taken place and we do see a reduction in certain items once used by commercial fisherman and the offshore oil and gas industry. The offshore oil and gas industry has played a very positive, proactive role in reducing various sources of marine trash and pollution.



With over 60 miles of shoreline, keeping the beaches clean would be an immense task for any organization. While the Padre Island National Seashore staff does the best it can to keep as much of the shore as clean as possible, we must often rely on the assistance of the environmentally-conscious volunteer groups from the general public. The National Seashore also participates in statewide beach clean-ups and the Adopt-a-Beach program. We also get help from the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA), Sunny Beaches, school groups, and many others. We also rely on “grass roots” participation by visitors and always have a ready supply of garbage bags available at the Visitors Center for those who want to pitch in on an individual basis.

A major problem confronting the National Seashore is that most of the park’s shoreline is accessible only by fourwheel drive (4WD) vehicles. Although the park does have 4WD vehicles of its own, most are SUV’s or ATV’s and the park has very few 4WD vehicles designed for hauling substantial amounts of material. If you have a 4WD vehicle and would like to learn more about how you can help, please call the Malaquite Visitor Center.

What is the General Management Plan Process?

Padre Island National Seashore is developing a General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, which is an important 15 year planning document that guides park management. In the summer/fall of 2003, the National Park Service released a newsletter and held public workshops in San Antonio, Corpus Christi, and Harlingen, Texas to provide the public an opportunity to present those issues and concerns that they consider important to the long- term management of Padre Island National Seashore. Comments and responses from the public workshops, the newsletter mail-back, and the National Park Service website link were taken into consideration and draft action options were developed during the spring/summer 2004.

The National Park Service considers the draft action options to be reasonable and feasible based on the park’s enabling legislation, National Park Service policies, and park goals that were developed during the planning process.

Public participation is an essential aspect of our planning process. Public input is important and must be considered in developing the General Management Plan.

During the fall of 2005, park staff will select a preferred option that outlines the types of activities and scribes that could take place in the park. This option, along with at least two other options, will be presented to the public for their comments and suggestions, in the spring of 2006.

Whats New? Bird Island Basin

Over the last few years, Padre Island National Seashore has developed a plan to restructure the windsurfing, camping, and boat-launching facilities at Bird Island Basin (BIB). The need to develop this plan stems from an increase in the recreational use of and visitation to BIB and a need to address the overall carrying capacity of the area. There are several issues related to this problem which include: the management of recreational use conflicts, increasing environmental impacts associated with the heavy visitor use of BIB, a lack of vehicle parking spaces, a higher than normal erosion rate of the shoreline, the access road, and the surrounding upland sites. Padre Island National Seashore is upgrading BIB to address these issues and to better protect park resources.

The new Bird Island Basin design will truly benefit all users. It now separates the windsurfing and boat-launching area. Fishermen no longer have to pass through the windsurfing camping area in order to launch their boats. Parking in the boat-launching has increased by thirty-two spaces, each designed to accommodate one vehicle and one boat trailer. This phase required the removal of topsoil, excavating soil, placing and compacting a limestone road base, and asphaltting the road and boat ramp. This was completed in May 2005.

Upgrading the shoreline road and parking areas was another phase. This phase began in May 2005, and is now completed. This phase included the installation of road culverts to establish water flow to currently native mudflats, improving the road, formalizing parking spaces, and the building a new parking area.

Updrading the windsurfing concessions area. This phase has been completed. This phase has improved and expanded the current parking area. Camping facilities in the southern end of Bird Island Basin have been expanded to accommodate a maximum of forty-five recreational vehicles and twenty-five single vehicles. A day-use area has been established between the windsurfing areas and boat-launching ramp.

Future improvements will include a beach nourishment project to reestablish the beach along the shoreline.



Bird Island Basin dock area

What is there to do? How about windsurfing, shelling, fishing, and beachcombing

Windsurf the longest barrier island in North America

Only a short drive from Corpus Christi Texas, Worldwinds is located in the Padre Island National Seashore at Bird Island Basin. This half-mile stretch of beach on the protected Laguna Madre is internationally recognized as one of the top windsurfing sites in the mainland U.S.A.



Windsurfing, Laguna Madre

A shallow saltwater lagoon with a sand bottom and unobstructed wind, the Laguna is the perfect teaching classroom and a favorite location for sailors of all levels. Try new equipment from JP Australia, Starboard, Gaastra, Sailworks, berspar, Chinook, True Ames, and Curtis. All of our equipment is fully rigged and ready to launch. Our extended sailing season lasts from February through November and the annual average wind speed is 18mph. This is a great place to learn the basics, improve your skills or just do some incredible speed sailing and chop hopping. Experience windsurfing and wildlife at it's best in the natural undeveloped setting of our National Park.

Our Bird Island launch site is open 11-6pm
7 days a week. Telephone is: 361-949-7472. Website is: worldwinds.net

Sportfishing

Along with camping and windsurfing, sportfishing is one of the biggest attractions to the National Seashore. Visitors fish along the entire length of the Gulf of Mexico beach, and at Yarborough Pass and Bird Island Basin. Boat fishing, wade fishing, and kayak fishing may be done throughout the Laguna Madre portion of the seashore.

Wherever you choose to fish, please watch out for your own safety and fish so that your fishing lines and other equipment do not pose a threat to the safety of others.

Three areas within the park are renowned for their fishing: Big Shell Beach, the Mansfield Channel, and Yarborough Pass. All three can be reached only by using a four-wheel drive vehicle.

Many types of fish may be caught along the shores of the island, but most common are red drum (also known as redfish), black drum, pompano, sea trout, whiting, jack crevalle, and saltwater catfish. fishing for sharks is also very popular with black-tipped shark being the most abundant.

Yarborough Pass is located 15.5 miles south of the Malaquite Beach V.C.. Yarborough provides access to the Laguna Madre and is known for its flounder fishing along with red drum, black drum, and spotted sea trout.

Big Shell is located in an area between 18 and 28 miles south of the Malaquite Beach Visitor Center. In this area two currents meet bringing nutrients from opposite sides of the Gulf: one from the north one from the south. A wide variety of fish accumulate off Big Shell to feed on the abundant nutrients or on other fish that feed on the nutrients. This area provides deep clear water close to shore and is a great place to fish for shark.

Located 60 miles south of Malaquite Visitor Center, Mansfield Channel is a popular fishing spot because it is one of the few channels connecting the Gulf of Mexico with the Laguna Madre. As a result, many fish journey through this narrow chokepoint when traveling between feeding grounds.

Remember fishing anywhere at the seashore requires a valid Texas fishing license and saltwater stamp. Happy fishing!



Shelling

Seashells are the outside skeletons of marine invertebrates, soft bodied animals. Most of those found along the shore are mollusks or snail, which literally means "animals with a foot on its belly." The shells found along the beach are the remains of these animals.

High tides carry the shells onto the sand and low tide leave them in plain sight on the beach. As the tide recedes, a variety of shells may dot the sand including the lettered olive shells, sand dollars, an ark shells. Along the beach, other treasures may appear, such as scallops, Fi-snails, pen shells, seastars, sea whips, and crab shells.

While shells can be found virtually anywhere along the gulf beaches of Padre Island National Seashore, the best places to look are Little Shell and Big Shell beaches, which is only accessible by 4-wheel drive vehicles.

For successful shelling, check the high and low tide lines. Wear old canvas shoes, and have roomy pockets, or use a plastic pail, a digging tool, and dip net. Check to see if the shells you gather have been vacated by their occupants, and look to see whether a hermit crab has moved into a once-empty shell. Such living creatures must, by law, be returned to the Gulf waters.



Lighting Welk

Winter is also the time when many sea beans wash in from South and Central America. Sea beans are seeds that drop from the pods of tropical vines and trees. Sea beans float down rivers and into the ocean currents traveling thousands of miles before making landfall on Padre Island. Sea beans come in a variety of shapes and carry such unique nicknames as sea heart, sea purse, and hamburger bean. In the past, larger sea beans were made into snuff boxes and match boxes. They have also been fashioned into jewelry and some were worn as "good luck" necklaces to ward off sickness and disease. As with vacant shells, sea beans can be collected and taken home by visitors.

Unfortunately, shell creatures are not as plentiful as in years past. By nature, they react strongly to changes in temperature and changes in salinity. In recent years two hard freezes killed the invertebrates that failed to swim into deep water.

Even when shells are scarce, living colonies of Coquina clams appear and disappear along the water line. Shallow waves roll in and hundreds, or thousands, of Coquinas rise from the sand. The waves recede and the Coquinas magically bury themselves. With the next wave, again, these elf-like pastel shells, pale blues, pinks, and yellows, rise from the water and wet sand.

The search for shell specimens may cause you to rise early to go to the beach when the air feels icy cold, or to walk "just one more mile" along the shore. When another variety ends up in your pocket or pail, you will vote it all worthwhile, and find yourself hurrying back to the beach at the next low tide.



Murex



Saw-Tooth Pen

Health and Safety Tips when Visiting Padre Island National Seashore

Park Map

Swimming: Use caution when swimming and never swim alone. Strong currents flowing parallel to the beach, tides flowing to and from the beach, and sudden drop-offs in the surf can be dangerous for swimmers and waders alike. If caught in a rip tide, do not panic. Swim parallel to the beach until you are free from the flow, then swim to shore. Do not attempt to swim to shore against the flow. You will not make it.

Hazardous materials: These periodically wash ashore and range from 55 gallon barrels containing unknown substances to used medical products. If you come upon hazardous materials, note the location and alert a park ranger.

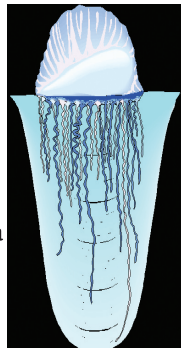
Metal detectors: Possession or use of metal detectors is prohibited in the park. Items such as seashells and driftwood, washed in by the tide, may be collected as long as the items are not used for commercial purposes. All other collecting is prohibited.

Pets: Pets must be on a leash and under physical restraint at all times. Pets are not permitted at the Malaquite Beach Visitor Center area including the designated swim beach in front of the visitor center.

Gray water and sewage: Gray water and sewage must be disposed of only at the dump station at the Malaquite Beach campground.

Beaches are Texas public highways. Only street legal and licensed vehicles may be driven in the park. All Terrain Vehicles (ATV's) are prohibited. Driving in dunes, grasslands or mudflats is prohibited. Drive with caution and strictly observe posted speed limits. Pedestrians have the right-of-way at all times and do not always watch for approaching vehicles.

Portuguese Man-of-War: These dangerous critters are found at the park throughout the year. These attractive, blue jellyfish cause a painful sting, which is usually accompanied by redness and some swelling of the affected skin area. If stung, seek first aid. A very small percentage of those stung will experience an allergic reaction, which can cause difficulty breathing, numbness in the arms, legs or elsewhere, severe pain and/or disorientation or unconsciousness. Visitors experiencing these or other symptoms should notify a park ranger immediately and seek medical attention.



Sting Rays: These relatives of the shark can inflict a puncture wound in the lower leg that can be extremely painful. If you are in the water we recommend doing the "sting ray shuffle"; instead of walking visitors should shuffle along, so instead of stepping on them you actually nudge them thereby causing them to swim away.

Rattlesnakes: Rattlesnakes live in the dunes, grasslands, and mudflats. Visitors should use extreme caution when walking in these areas.



Hunting: Hunting is not permitted in the park, except for the taking of waterfowl in the Laguna Madre in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations. The transportation of lawfully taken wildlife, including exotic species, through the park, is prohibited, except for waterfowl and fish.

Medical Emergency: If you have a medical emergency during your visit, contact a park ranger immediately or go to the First Aid station at the Malaquite Beach Visitor Center. If an employee is not immediately available, you may summon assistance for any emergency by dialing 911.

The closest hospital is Bay Area Medical Center, located at the corner of South Padre Island Drive and Rodd Field Road in Corpus Christi. This facility is 24 miles from the Visitor Center.



Road Information

New Road

A new road has been added to the Bird Island Basin boat ramp parking area. This will facilitate easy access to the boat ramp and thus to the Laguna Madre. This new road will especially benefit fishermen.