

Grand Cote

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1989.
- Size: 6,077 acres.
- Location: central Louisiana, Avoyelles Parish.
- Other lands managed: FmHA conservation easements and fee-title transfers; 21 tracts, 2,130 acres.
- Directions: follow Louisiana Highway 1 north from Marksville to Fifth Ward; turn left onto Louisiana Highway 1194 at caution light; stay on Highway 1194, following signs to headquarters building.

Natural History

- Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge was once part of the large contiguous Mississippi River bottomland hardwood forest. Topography of the refuge is characterized by a large depressional basin that fills with shallow water from winter rains and backwater flooding.
- During the seventies, the area that would become Grand Cote Refuge was cleared and leveed for agricultural purposes. The area was poorly suited for farming, but provided ideal shallow flooded habitat preferred by many waterfowl and shorebird species.
- Habitat management objectives are centered around providing shallow flooded habitats for waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds during August through March. A special emphasis is placed on providing shallow flooded rice and native moist soil plant fields preferred by northern pintails.
- Habitat found on the refuge include: 420 acres forest, 2,485 acres reforestation, 2,040 acres cropland, 830 acres moist soil and 300 acres of permanent water.

- Underlying soils are the typical poorly drained, nutrient-rich, clays associated with a large river floodplain. These soils are capable of supporting large numbers of resident and migratory wildlife.

Financial Effects of Refuge

- Nine-person staff.
- 10,000 visitors annually.
- Lake Ophelia, Cat Island and Grand Cote NWR's are administered under the Central Louisiana Refuges Complex with a total budget for FY02 of \$566,000.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide wintering habitat for migratory birds, particularly waterfowl.
- Provide habitat for threatened and endangered fish and wildlife.
- Restore and protect habitats capable of supporting a high diversity of native fish and wildlife.
- Provide opportunities for compatible fish and wildlife-oriented education and recreation.

Management Tools

- Water level manipulation.
- Cooperative farming.
- Bottomland hardwood reforestation.
- Mechanical and chemical control of noxious plants.
- Environmental education/interpretation.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships.

Public Use Opportunities

Refuge is open daylight hours year-round.

- Wildlife observation.
- Photography.

Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge

- Fishing.
- Crawfishing.
- Walking trails.

Calendar of Events

April-May: Crawfishing.

May: International Migratory Bird Day.

August: Bowhunter Safety Course.

September: Bowhunter Safety Course.

October: National Wildlife Refuge Week.

December-January: Christmas Bird Count.

Questions and Answers

When will the next bowhunter education course be taught?

The complex teaches two courses a year: one each in August and September.

Do I need a special permit to fish on Grand Cote NWR?

No. Sport fishing is permitted year round in Coulee Des Grues along Little California Road. Creel limits and license requirements are in accordance with state law.

When will the refuge be open to crawfishing?

Due to changes in water elevation and weather, the opening date of crawfish season on Grand Cote is variable. Typically, the season runs from mid-April to mid-May. As soon as dates are selected, we advertise in local papers and on local broadcasts. Special regulations apply, a free permit and brochure is available at the refuge office.

When is the refuge open for public access?

Grand Cote Refuge is open year round 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset. The refuge office is open Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 4:00 pm.