

Catahoula

National Wildlife Refuge



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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1958
- Acres: 25,242 (6,671 acres in LaSalle Parish, 18,571 acres in Catahoula Parish). The refuge manages 4,159 acres through a cooperative management agreement with American Electric Power Company (AEP).
- Location: The refuge headquarters is located 1.5 miles west of the Intersection of Highway 28 & 84, on Highway 84 or, approximately 12 miles east of Jena, Louisiana.

Natural History

- Vegetation consists primarily of lowland hardwood forest, subject to annual flooding from Catahoula Lake.
- The Willow Lake Unit contains one hundred acres of old farm fields which provide habitat for grassland species.
- White-tailed deer, small game mammals, songbirds, raptors and waterbirds, in addition to, reptiles and amphibians from alligators to cricket frogs also inhabit the refuge.
- Waterfowl, primarily mallards, are abundant during the winter period, wood ducks reside year-round. Peak waterfowl populations of over 100,000 ducks have been recorded.
- Duck Lake Impoundment, Cowpen Bayou, Dempsey Lake, Round Lake, Long Lake, and Rhinehart Lake serve as the major water bodies.
- Restoration of bottomland hardwood forest habitat accomplished through reforestation with native oaks, ash, baldcypress, and others. American Electric Power financed reforestation of 9,792 acres. Reforestation through the Wetland Reserve Program restored 3,620 acres.

- Major habitat types found on the refuge include: reforestation 13,800 acres, bottomland hardwood forest 7,250 acres, wooded/shrub swamp 2,250 acres, lakes and bayous 700 acres, moist soil impoundments 650 acres.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Three-person staff.
- 40,000 visitors annually.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide wintering habitat for migratory waterfowl consistent with Mississippi Flyway objectives.
- Provide habitat and protection for endangered species.
- Preserve bottomland hardwoods and provide habitat necessary for wildlife diversity.
- Provide opportunities for environmental education, interpretation, and wildlife oriented recreation.

Management Tools

- Water management for waterfowl.
- Deer, waterfowl, and small game management with public hunting.
- Education/Interpretation.
- Chemical and mechanical control of weeds.
- Law enforcement.

Public Use Opportunities

- Auto tour route.
- Hiking trails.
- Boardwalk and observation tower.
- Fishing pier for the disabled.
- Wildlife observation.
- Photography.
- Fishing.
- Small game, waterfowl, and deer hunting.
- Volunteer Program.

Calendar of Events

March: Environmental Education Symposium, Green Wing Day, start of fishing season.

May: Migratory Bird Day & Count.

June: Free Fishing Days

September: Earth Fair

October: National Wildlife Refuge Week, start of hunting seasons.

December: Christmas Bird Count.

Questions and Answers

What is the relationship between Catahoula NWR and Catahoula Lake?

Catahoula Lake is a state owned wetland which lies adjacent to Catahoula NWR. The refuge manages the water level on Catahoula Lake in accordance with a Tri-party Cooperative Agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, and the Army Corps of Engineers.

What is the water management schedule for Catahoula Lake?

The lake is dewatered beginning July 1, to encourage the production of moist soil vegetation valuable to waterfowl. A 5,000 acre conservation pool is maintained throughout the summer. Ten to fifteen days prior to the waterfowl hunting season the water level is raised two feet to provide habitat for migratory waterfowl and hunting opportunities. After the waterfowl hunting season, the water level is raised another 4.5 feet to enhance commercial fishing resources.

When is Catahoula NWR open?

The refuge is open during daylight hours throughout the year.

Do I need a special permit to hunt or fish on Catahoula NWR?

Yes. A hunting, fishing and ATV use permit is required of all hunters and anglers 16 years old and older. Permits sell for \$15.00 and are valid March 1 through February 28. Permits may be purchased at the refuge headquarters or by mail. Creel limits and license requirements are in accordance with state law.

What is the fishing season on the refuge?

Cowpen Bayou is open to sport fishing throughout the year. Duck Lake Impoundment and all other refuge waters are open from March 1 through October 31.

What is the refuge hunting season?

The refuge is open to squirrel hunting (rabbit, raccoon, hog incidental) from the first day of the state squirrel season through October 31 and from the end of the waterfowl hunting season through the end of the state squirrel season. The refuge archery deer season runs from October 1 through January 31. Either sex (firearm) deer and muzzleloader hunts, check refuge brochure for dates.

The Bushley Bayou Unit is open to waterfowl hunting on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, til noon, during the state season. Other migratory bird hunting, woodcock, morning doves, snipe, and rails are open during State seasons. Squirrel and rabbit seasons coincide with state seasons. Either sex deer hunting by archery, muzzleloader, and gun are allowed on certain dates. Check refuge hunt brochure for specific dates and regulations.