

Breton

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



photo: Theodore Roosevelt Collection
Harvard College Library



photo: James Harris



photo: USFWS

Elizabeth Souheaver, Project Leader
Southeast Louisiana Refuges
Bayou Lacombe Centre
61389 Highway 434
Lacombe, LA 70445
Phone: 985/882 2000
Fax: 985/882 9133
E-mail:FW4RWSELARefuges@fws.gov

Refuge Facts

- Established in 1904 through executive order of President Theodore Roosevelt; second-oldest refuge among the over 540 in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Only refuge visited by Roosevelt, in 1915. Celebrating its Centennial year in 2004.
- Acres: 13,000 in St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes. Wilderness designated 1975, 5,000 acres.
- Largest tern colony in the nation. Important area for reddish egrets. Nesting habitat for various other colonial seabirds. Large non-breeding concentration of magnificent frigate birds. Concentration of redhead ducks with a few canvasbacks and scaups.
- Refuge consists of barrier islands located in the Gulf of Mexico off the southeast coast of Louisiana.
- Largest nesting colony of endangered Eastern brown pelicans in the southeast region. Pioneering research underway to study bird movements, distribution, and breeding ecology.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Big Branch, Bogue Chitto, Breton, Delta, Shell Keys, Bayou Sauvage and Atchafalaya NWR's are administered under the Southeast Louisiana Complex with a total budget for FY02 of \$1,219,000.
- Over 30,000 visitors in 2003.
- Visitors generate \$10 million annually.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide sanctuary for nesting and wintering seabirds.
- Protect and preserve the wilderness character of the islands.
- Provide sandy beach habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

Management Tools

- Law enforcement.
- Beach stabilization and renourishment.
- Nest count surveys: terns, skimmers, Eastern brown pelicans.
- Waterfowl surveys.

Public Use Opportunities

- Fishing.
- Photography.
- Primitive camping.
- Bird watching.

Questions and Answers

How can I visit the refuge?
Access is by boat only across open waters of Breton Sound. No regular commercial boat transport available, but charters can be arranged. Small craft vessels generally reach the southern islands from launches in the Buras and Venice, LA areas, and those traveling to the northern portions of the refuge usually leave from launches on the Mississippi Gulf Coast."

Is camping allowed on the refuge? If so where?

Yes, primitive camping is allowed on the refuge. However campers are prohibited from camping in areas where birds are nesting.

Can you land a plane or helicopter on the refuge?

No, it is illegal to land a plane on the land. It is legal to land on the water and taxi to the beach, just as a boat would land on the beach.

Where are the best places to fish at the islands?

The surf on the Gulf side and in the cuts between the islands are very good at times. The grass flats on the lee side of the islands are very good at times. There are charter boats operating from the Mississippi Gulf Coast that serve these areas.

Can you do birdwatching and photography on the refuge?

Yes, as long as the refuge signs are obeyed. Entry into the nesting areas and any disturbance of the nesting colonies are prohibited.

How long is the nesting season for the pelicans and terns?

The nesting season is from March through August.