

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Atchafalaya

National Wildlife Refuge

Managed as part of Sherburne Complex

©Tom Carlisle

A vertical photograph of a sunset over a swampy landscape. The sky is filled with soft, warm colors of orange, pink, and purple. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of trees and foliage are visible against the bright light of the setting sun. The overall mood is serene and natural.

*America's Great River Swamp
Deep in the heart of Cajun
Country, at the southern end of
the Lower Mississippi River
Valley in southcentral
Louisiana, lies the nation's
largest complex of forested
wetlands—the Atchafalaya
River Basin.*



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

This basin contains over one-half million acres of hardwood swamps, lakes and bayous, and is larger than the vast Okefenokee Swamp of Georgia and Florida. It is an immense natural floodplain of the Atchafalaya River, which flows for 140 miles south from its parting from the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico.

The fish and wildlife resources of the Atchafalaya River Basin are exceptional. The basin's dense bottomland hardwoods, cypress-tupelo swamps, overflow lakes, and meandering bayous provide a tremendous diversity of habitat for many species of fish and wildlife. Ecologists rank the basin as one of the most productive wildlife areas in North America.

The basin also supports an extremely productive sport and commercial fishery, and provides unique recreational opportunities to hundreds of thousands of Americans each year.

Wildlife

Every year, thousands of migratory waterfowl winter in the overflow swamps and lakes of the basin, located at the southern end of the great Mississippi Flyway. The lakes of the lower basin support one of the largest wintering concentrations of canvasbacks in Louisiana.

The basin's wooded wetlands also provide vital nesting habitat for wood ducks, and support the nation's largest concentration of American woodcock. More than 300 species of resident and migratory birds use the basin, including a large assortment of diving and wading birds such as egrets, herons, ibises, and anhingas. Eagles, ospreys, swallow-tailed kites, and Mississippi kites can occasionally be seen soaring overhead. Wild turkeys have been reintroduced to the basin and their populations are increasing.



*Wood duck;
photo opposite:
Lake Martin,
Cypress Island by
Donna Bush ©*



Red fox

Forest-dwelling mammals include the white-tailed deer, gray and fox squirrels, eastern cottontail, swamp rabbit, gray and red fox, coyote, striped skunk, and opossum. Commercially important furbearers found in this great swamp are raccoon, mink, bobcat, nutria, muskrat, river otter, and beaver. A small remnant population of black bears also exists.

Aquatic Resources

The aquatic resources of the basin are phenomenal. The Atchafalaya River and its myriad bayous, overflow lakes, and seasonally flooded hardwood swamps support a great abundance of fish and crustaceans. The lifeblood of the fishery is the basin's annual flooding and dewatering cycle. Overflows result from the winter and spring rains, with many areas gradually becoming dewatered during the summer and fall. This ebb and flow of water continually revives food and nutrient production, thus contributing to the diversity and abundance of the fishery.

Sportfishing is popular throughout the basin.

Largemouth bass, white and black crappie, warmouth, bluegill, redear sunfish, and channel catfish are the primary species sought.



Warmouth

More than 85 species of fish occur in the basin, and their populations frequently exceed 1,000 pounds per acre. Red swamp crawfish, white river crawfish, and blue crabs are also important from both a sport and commercial harvest standpoint.

The basin's commercial fisheries are also extremely valuable. Crawfish are by far the most important component, with an estimated average annual commercial harvest of nearly 22 million pounds. The most important commercial finfishes include catfish, buffalo, and freshwater drum.

Public Land Management

The combined fish, wildlife, and related recreational and commercial values of the Atchafalaya River Basin are so important that a major cooperative state and federal effort is underway to preserve and manage the natural resources of the area.



Randy Lemmon

Great blue heron

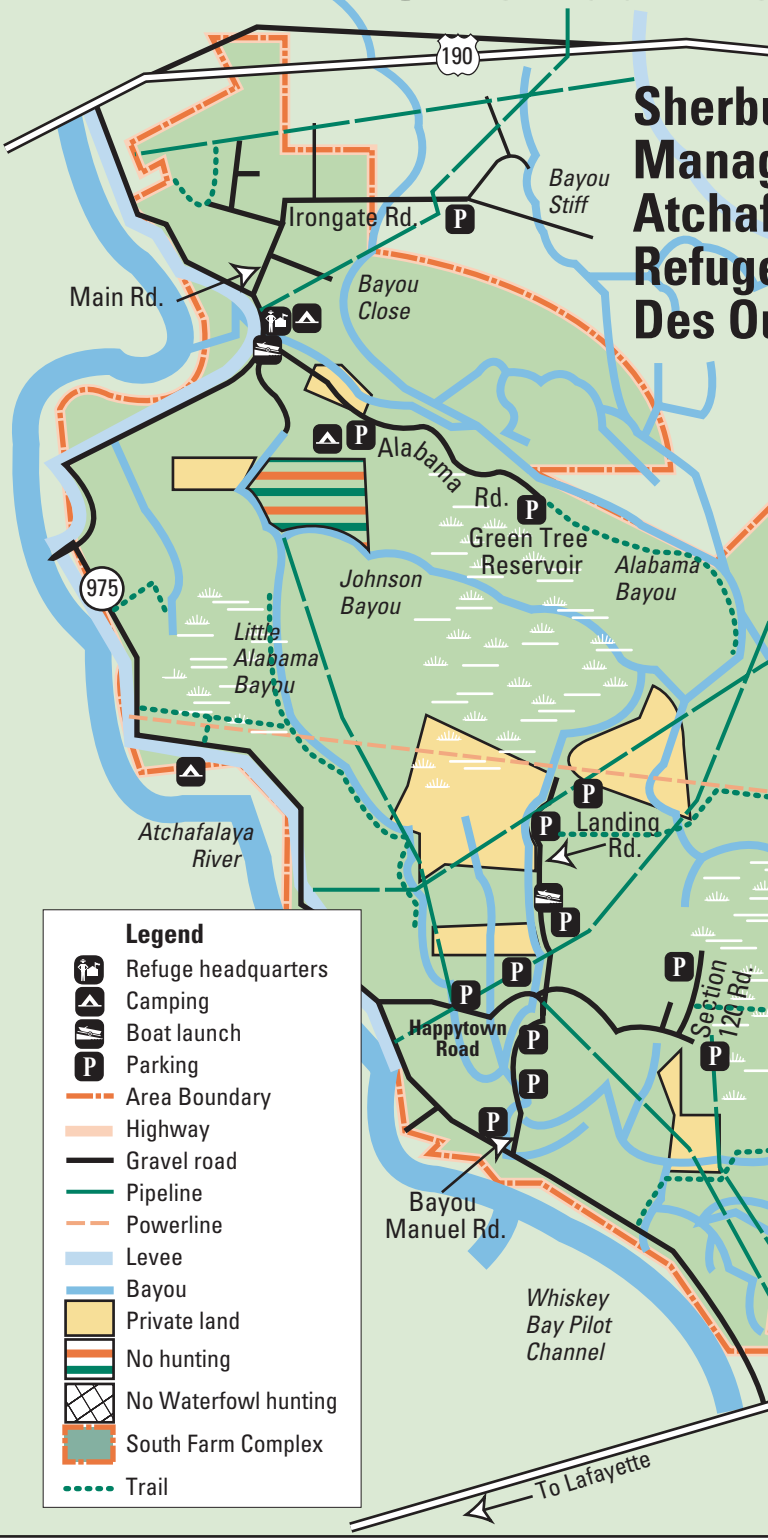
The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries owns the 11,780-acre Sherburne Wildlife Management Area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has established Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge on 15,220 acres adjacent to the Sherburne

Wildlife Management Area. In addition, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has purchased over 16,000 acres in the vicinity of both of these areas. **All of these public lands are managed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries under a cooperative multiagency agreement.**

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries manages public use such as hunting and fishing on all the lands as part of Sherburne Wildlife Management Area. A self-clearing check-in/check out permit is required and a sport hunting or fishing license or a LA Wild Stamp is required to enter any

Sherburne

Sherburne Management Attachment Refuge Des Ours

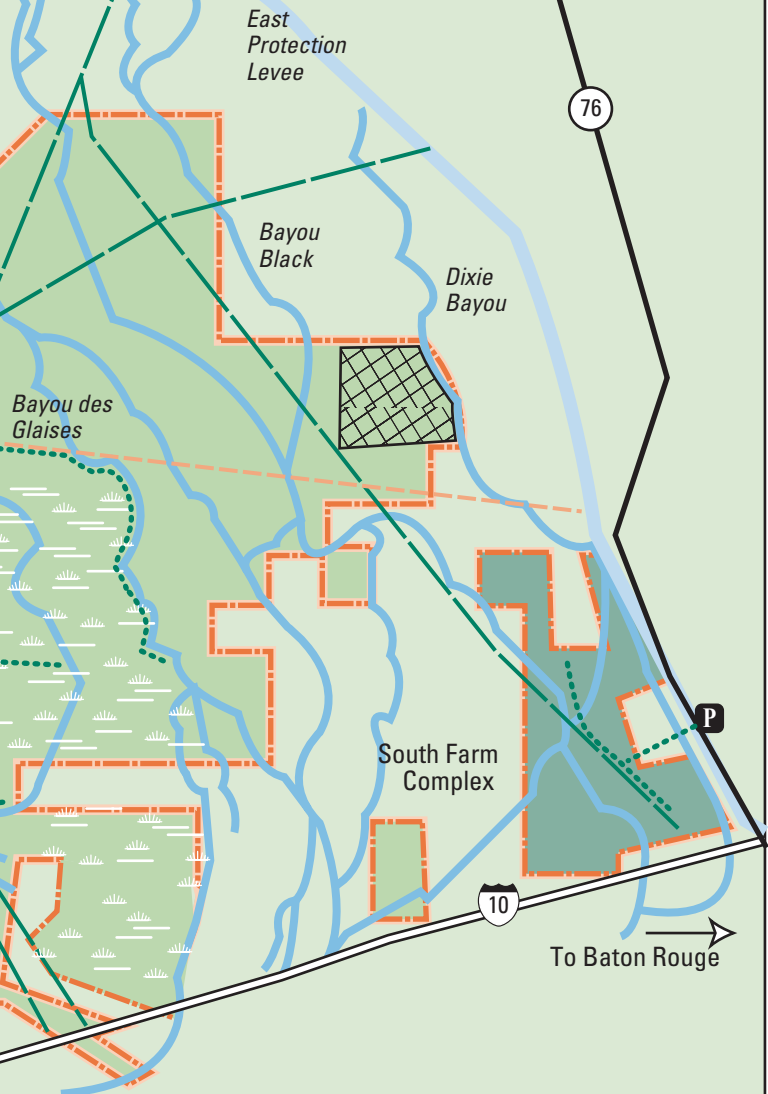


Legend

- Refuge headquarters
- Camping
- Boat launch
- Parking
- Area Boundary
- Highway
- Gravel road
- Pipeline
- Powerline
- Levee
- Bayou
- Private land
- No hunting
- No Waterfowl hunting
- South Farm Complex
- Trail

e Complex

urne Wildlife
gement Area - LDWF,
alaya National Wildlife
e - USFWS, and Bayou
urses Area - USACOE



*East
Protection
Levee*

*Bayou
Black*

*Dixie
Bayou*

*Bayou des
Glaises*

**South Farm
Complex**

76

10

To Baton Rouge

P

part of the management area, including the federal government lands.

Good forest management is essential to the protection and enhancement of the wildlife within the basin. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are responsible for a wide range of forest management programs on the preserved areas of the basin. These programs ensure that the area's productivity for wildlife remains high. Planting, thinning, and selective vegetation regeneration are a few of the forestry management techniques utilized to improve wildlife habitat. Mature forests are also being preserved and left intact for species which require this habitat.

Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge

The 15,220-acre Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge was established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1986. It is located adjacent to the Sherburne Wildlife Management Area and is managed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries under a cooperative agreement with the state.



Dave Menke

Wood duck pair

Seasonally flooded impoundments exist for the benefit of migratory waterfowl. Agricultural fields have been converted to native hardwood forests for both waterfowl and

upland wildlife. A large increase in the production of wood ducks and hooded mergansers is being achieved through the use of artificial nest structures.

Public hunting is allowed on the refuge for migratory waterfowl and upland and big game species. All seasons, rules, and regulations conform to those of the adjacent Sherburne Wildlife Management Area. The refuge is popular for white-tailed deer hunting and is especially noted for its youth and handicapped hunts.

The refuge is open year-round for sportfishing in accordance with state fishing regulations.

Sherburne Wildlife Management Area

The State of Louisiana's Sherburne Wildlife Management Area is located in the upper third of the Atchafalaya River Basin between Interstate 10 and U.S. Highway 190. It covers approximately 11,780 acres and was established in 1983 by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. The area supervisor's headquarters is located east of Krotz Springs, Louisiana, on LA 975 approximately three miles south of U.S. Highway 190.



Green-heron

This wildlife management area is being managed to provide a variety of habitats for native and migratory wildlife and to promote public outdoor recreation. A camping area, boat launching ramp, and shooting range are available for use by the public. Each year thousands of visitors participate in hunting, fishing, camping, wildlife photography, target shooting, and nature study.



White-tailed deer

The shooting range has accommodations for rifle, pistol, and shotgun shooters to sharpen their marksmanship skills.

Hunting is permitted on the Sherburne Wildlife Management

Area for white-tailed deer, squirrel, rabbit, raccoon, woodcock, and waterfowl.

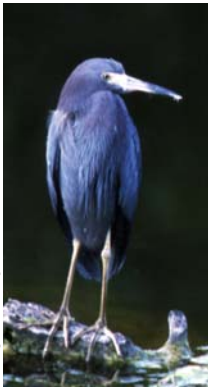
Fishing is excellent for largemouth bass, crappie, catfish, and sunfish. Both hunting and fishing are subject to current state regulations, which are available from the headquarters office.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers owns 50,000 acres within the Atchafalaya Basin. The *Bayou Des Ourses* (Bayou of the Bears) Area, which consists of over 16,000 acres is managed cooperatively with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, as part of the Sherburne complex.

The area is being managed to provide a variety of habitats for native and migratory wildlife and to promote public outdoor recreation and access. A variety of outdoor recreational opportunities are offered such as hiking, birdwatching, hunting, fishing, and horseback riding. Public hunting is allowed on the complex for migratory waterfowl, small game, and big game species.

The Bayou Des Ourses Area is located to the east of the Atchafalaya River between Interstate 10 and U.S. Highway 190. Season dates, rules, and regulations are found in the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries State hunting pamphlet as part of the Sherburne Wildlife Management Area.



George Gentry
Little blue heron



Ryan Hagerty
Snowy egret



American alligator

For further information on the Sherburne Wildlife Management Area and/or public use of the Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge, please contact:

Area Supervisor
Sherburne Wildlife
Management Area
P.O. Box 127
Krotz Springs, LA 70750
Telephone: 337/566 2251

For further information on USACOE Lands, please contact:

Park Manager
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
112 Speck lane
Port Barre, LA 70577
Telephone: 337/585 0853

Equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental disability. For information please contact the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office for Equal Opportunity, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

**Atchafalaya
National Wildlife Refuge
61389 Highway 434
Lacombe, Louisiana 70445
Phone: 985/882 2000
Fax: 985/882 9133
E-mail: Atchafalaya@FWS.GOV**

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://Atchafalaya.FWS.GOV>**

July 2006

