

Big Branch Marsh

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



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Refuge Facts

- Established 1994.
- Acres: 18,000.
- Located in St. Tammany Parish, LA.
- Refuge also manages the state's 1,500 acre St. Tammany Refuge under a cooperative agreement.
- Location: The refuge is located on the north side of Lake Pontchartrain between the Pearl River (east of Slidell) to Mandeville, Louisiana. Refuge lands are south of Hwy 190.

Natural History

- Encompasses the habitats and transition zones between the pine savannahs to the north and the shorelines, marshes, and offshore grassbeds of the lake to the south.
- Concentrations of waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, and neotropical migrants.
- Several red-cockaded woodpecker colonies, bald eagle nests, and osprey nests are present.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- More than 125,000 visitors annually.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide habitat for a natural diversity of wildlife associated with Big Branch Marsh.
- Provide habitat for endangered and threatened species.
- Provide wintering habitat for migratory waterfowl.
- Provide nesting habitat for wood ducks.
- Provide habitat for non-game migratory birds.
- Provide opportunities for public outdoor recreation, such as hunting,

fishing, hiking, birdwatching, and environmental education and interpretation, whenever they are compatible with the purposes of the refuge.

Management Tools

- Forest habitat management.
- Prescribed fire.
- Artificial nest boxes/structures.
- Mechanical/chemical control of noxious plants.
- Public hunting.
- Education/interpretation.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships.

Public Use Opportunities

- Hiking/biking trails.
- Canoeing.
- Boardwalk.
- Wildlife observation.
- Photography.
- Fishing.
- Hunting (big game, waterfowl, small game).

Calendar of Events

April: Great Louisiana Bird Fest.

May: International Migratory Bird Day.

October: Wildlife Refuge Week.

October – January: Archery deer hunting.

December – January: Waterfowl and woodcock hunting.

Questions and Answers

Where is the refuge and how do you access it?

The refuge is located along the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain from Slidell to Mandeville, Louisiana. It can be accessed by vehicle off of State Hwy 190, State Hwy 434 and along Bayou Paquet Road, Barringer

Road and Lemieux Road. It can be accessed by boat from Salt Bayou, Liberty Bayou, Bayou Bonfouca, Bayou Lacombe, Cane Bayou and Lake Pontchartrain.

What is available at the refuge, what can I do?

The refuge has a hiking and biking trail, and a nature boardwalk, and has a canoe launch into Cane Bayou. Public hunting and fishing are available in-season. Opportunities for wildlife observation and nature photography can be found around the refuge. A visitor center is located at the headquarters facility in Lacombe, Louisiana (61389 Hwy 434).

What types of fishing are available?

Both freshwater and saltwater fishing are available on or near the refuge. The most commonly caught species include largemouth bass, bream, crappie, redfish, and speckled trout. Crabbing is a popular activity along Hwy 434 near Lake Pontchartrain.

What types of hunting are available?

Public hunting is allowed for white-tailed deer (archery only), waterfowl, quail, squirrel, rabbit, woodcock, snipe, and hog.

What is in store for the future?

We will continue to acquire lands as they become available and as funds are available and make those lands available for compatible public uses. We are in the process of planning visitor access facilities (boat launches, parking areas and nature trails).