

# Passage Key

## National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



photo: Patrick D. Hagan



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Passage Key NWR  
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### Refuge Facts

- Established: 1905.
- Acres: Variable.
- Located in Manatee County, FL.
- Location: the refuge is located off shore from St. Petersburg and is accessible only by boat.
- Administered by Chassahowitzka NWR.

### Natural History

- Passage Key is one of the first national wildlife refuges in the system. When established, it was a mangrove island with a fresh water lake. A 1920 hurricane destroyed the island. Today it is a 5-acre meandering barrier island and submerged lands.
- The island once hosted the largest royal tern and sandwich tern nesting colonies in the state of Florida.
- The island is currently closed year-round to all public use.

### Financial Impact of Refuge

- Unstaffed.
- Managed as part of Chassahowitzka NWR Complex.

### Refuge Objectives

- Provide nesting, feeding and resting habitat for colonial water birds including laughing gulls, royal terns, black skimmers, sandwich terns, brown pelicans and oyster catchers.
- Provide critical habitat and protection for thousands of shore birds and water birds.

### Management Tools

- Law enforcement.
- Designated wilderness area.
- Wildlife population surveys.
- Partnerships.

### Public Use Opportunities

Closed to all public use.

### Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteer opportunities exist for visitor center operations, manatee watch activities, and refuge maintenance projects.

### Questions and Answers

#### *Where is Passage Key?*

Passage Key NWR is located off shore from the town of St. Petersburg, FL.

#### *How do I get there?*

The island is accessible only by boat and public entry is prohibited.

#### *Why is the refuge closed to public use?*

Passage Key NWR is a designated Wilderness Area and is closed because of its small size and importance to nesting and roosting sea birds and other sensitive bird species.

#### *What wildlife species use the island?*

Laughing gulls, royal terns, black skimmers, sandwich terns, brown pelicans and a few oyster catchers nest on the island.