

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Cat Island

*National Wildlife
Refuge*



The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitat for the continuing benefit of the American people.





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

Introduction

Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge was established in October 2000 as the 526th refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System. It is located near the town of St. Francisville, Louisiana, which is 25 miles north of Baton Rouge.

The refuge was established to conserve, restore, and manage native forested wetland habitats for migratory birds, aquatic resources, and endangered and threatened plants and animals. Additionally, it was created to encourage the participation of volunteers and facilitate partnerships among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, local communities, and conservation organizations to promote public awareness of resources of the refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

In 2000, The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana purchased the 9,500 acres that eventually was acquired by the Fish and Wildlife Service. The Congressionally-approved acquisition boundary is 36,500 acres.









Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge is along the southern-most unleveed portion of the lower Mississippi River and completely floods in most years. The river may rise several times during the year beginning in late December through June. Some areas of the refuge receive more than 15 feet of water. As the river rises, the refuge becomes closed to all vehicular access. River levels can be checked at "www.srh.noaa.gov/lmrfc" or by checking Baton Rouge's newspaper, "The Advocate."

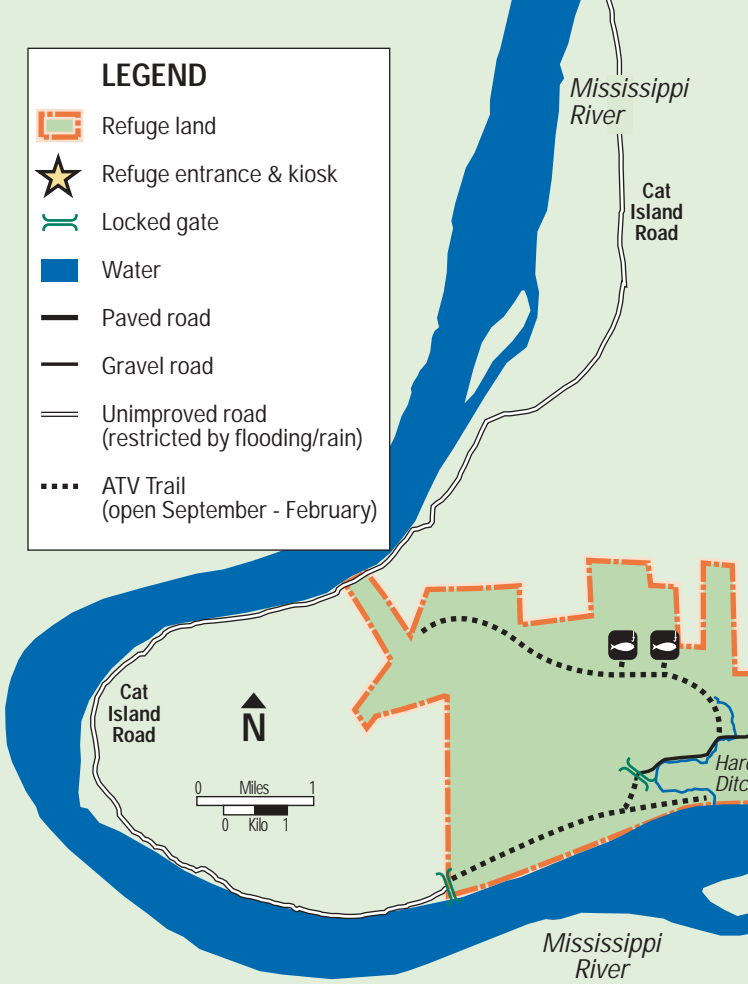


Mike Boylan

Above: great egret; left: Champion baldcypress tree

LEGEND

-  Refuge land
-  Refuge entrance & kiosk
-  Locked gate
-  Water
-  Paved road
-  Gravel road
-  Unimproved road (restricted by flooding/rain)
-  ATV Trail (open September - February)



Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge



Wildlife

The refuge is home to many fish, wildlife and plant resources. As Mississippi River floodwaters recede from the refuge in the spring, water and fish remain in oxbow lakes and depressed areas in the swamp. Fish species known to occur include largemouth bass, bream, catfish, crappie, buffalo, and alligator gar.

The Mississippi River is a major bird migration corridor and the refuge is located within an area of high importance for neotropical migratory birds. Other wildlife found in the area include white-tailed deer, bobcat, river otter, black-crowned night-heron, wood duck, woodcock, solitary sandpiper, and prothonotary warbler.



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Habitat

Common trees on the refuge include water tupelo, baldcypress, overcup and Nuttall oak, bitter pecan, sugarberry, and sweetgum. Many of the baldcypress trees are estimated to be 500 to 1,000 years old.



Bob Loudon

Public Use

Public use opportunities such as wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, hunting, and fishing are available on the refuge.

Big Cypress Trail

The National Champion baldcypress tree is located along this 1/2-mile-long trail. The trailhead is located about five miles from the refuge entrance. The champion tree is the largest tree of any species in the United States east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Blackfork Trail

This 2 1/2 mile-long trail follows along scenic Blackfork Bayou. Several large baldcypress trees are located along the trail. The trailhead is about 1 3/4 miles from the refuge entrance.

*Top: spider;
middle: yellow-
crowned night-
heron; bottom:
red-shouldered
hawk*

James C. Leupold



The refuge headquarters office is located at 5720 Commerce Street in St. Francisville Inn and is open on weekdays.

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Refuge Regulations

Daylight use only.

Unleashed pets are not permitted on the refuge.

Littering on the refuge is prohibited.

Dane Menhe



Firearms are prohibited, except during refuge hunts.

All vehicles are restricted to public roads and designated parking areas. No parking is allowed on refuge roads.

Top: white-tailed deer; middle: swamp milkweed; bottom: wood ducks

Camping and open fires are prohibited on the refuge.

No overnight parking.

All-terrain vehicle (ATV) use is permitted on designated trails only.

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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CELEBRATING A
CENTURY
of CONSERVATION