

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Lacassine

National Wildlife Refuge



Mission:

To protect, restore, enhance, and manage for public benefit a representative portion of bottomland hardwood forest, wetland, and associated habitats for wintering waterfowl, other migratory birds and endangered and threatened species.





This blue goose, designed by "Ding Darling," has become a symbol of the Refuge System.

Introduction

Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1937 to preserve a portion of the vast marshlands of Louisiana and to provide habitat for wintering and migrating waterfowl. The refuge, located in Cameron Parish in southwest Louisiana, supports one of the largest concentrations of wintering waterfowl of any refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Most of the 35,000 acre refuge is freshwater marsh, characterized by dense emergent growths of maidencane and bull tongue with only a few natural ridges, spoil banks and levees. The dominant feature of the refuge is Lacassine Pool, created by enclosing a 16,000 acre marsh with a low levee. Large waterfowl concentrations of up to 800,000 ducks and geese have been observed in Lacassine Pool in the past. The Pool serves as a daytime sanctuary for waterfowl, with large concentrations flying out to feed at sunset and returning by dawn.

A 3,345 acre wilderness area has been designated in the refuge. This area is relatively unimpacted by man's activities. Most of the marshes outside of this area have been influenced to some extent by petroleum exploration activities.

Wildlife

Strategically located at the southern end of the Mississippi and Central Flyways, Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge preserves one of the major wintering grounds for waterfowl in the United States. During the winter months, the refuge supports peak populations of over 300,000 ducks and 80,000 geese. Large wintering concentrations of white-fronted and snow geese can be found here. Pintails, blue-winged and green-winged teal, mallards, ring-necked

ducks, gadwalls and American wigeons are the common migratory ducks. Nesting waterfowl include wood ducks, fulvous and black-bellied whistling-ducks, mottled ducks and occasionally blue-winged teal.



photo: USFWS

A variety of wading birds are common on the refuge, particularly during the breeding season. The first American nesting colony of cattle egrets outside of Florida was found here. One of the only roseate spoonbill nesting rookeries in Louisiana is located in Lacassine Pool.

Other common marsh and water birds include neotropic cormorants, anhingas, least bitterns, great blue, tricolored and little blue herons, great and snowy egrets, black-crowned and yellow-crowned night herons, white and white-faced ibises, king rails, American coots, common moorhens, purple gallinules, and black-necked stilts.

Rice fields surrounding the refuge are well known for supporting large populations of migrating shorebirds in the spring and fall, and waterfowl and yellow rails in the fall and winter.

The refuge also provides suitable habitat for armadillos, swamp rabbits, fox squirrels, nutria, mink, muskrats, skunks, opossums, otters, raccoons, coyotes, white-tailed deer and a large population of American alligators. The Louisiana black bear, federally listed as threatened, has been an occasional visitor to the refuge since the 1990's.

Management Activities

Refuge habitat is managed for use by all wildlife, with special emphasis on waterfowl. Management techniques used at Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge include burning, managing for moist soil plants, planting food crops and water level manipulation.

Approximately 2,129 acres are managed for moist soil plants and agricultural crops to provide desirable waterfowl foods.

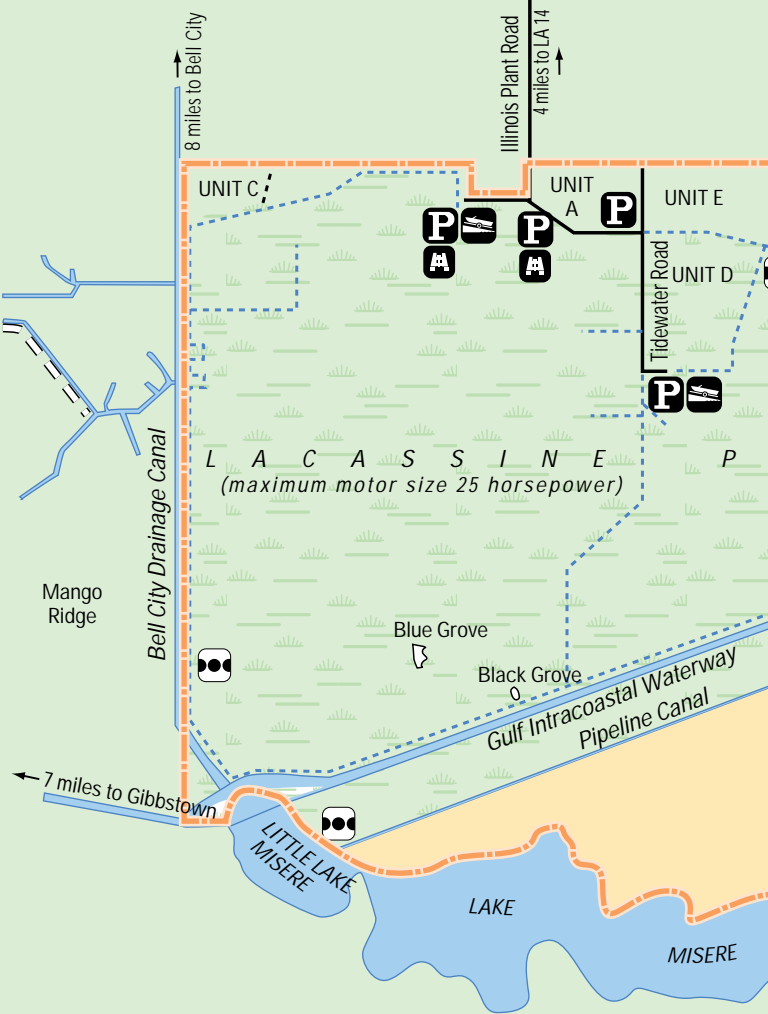
Marshlands continually undergo a natural process called succession, the development of different plant communities over time, eventually reaching a dry land stage. The refuge uses different management techniques to slow succession within Lacassine Pool in order to provide optimum conditions for waterfowl.

The 345 acre Vidrine Unit (Duralde Prairie) was transferred from the Farmer's Home Administration (FmHA) in 1993. A coastal prairie restoration project, calling for the former farmland to be restored to a coastal prairie mixture of grasses and forbs, was initiated in 1994. Prior to the advent of farming, southwestern Louisiana prairie encompassed as much as 2.5 million acres of land.



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Today, the few remaining remnants of original prairie are found only on narrow strips of land along railroad tracks.

Office:

Public Use-Where and When

Located at the end of Highway 3056. If traveling west on Interstate 10, take Exit 64 (Jennings) and travel south on Highway 26 to Highway 14 in Lake Arthur, west on Highway 14



for 7 miles to Highway 3056, then south 4.5 miles. If eastbound on Interstate 10, take exit 54 (Welsh) and travel south on Highway 99 to Highway 14, east on Highway 14 for 3 miles to Highway 3056, then south 4.5 miles. The office is open week days, year-round from 7:00 am to 3:30 pm.

Lacassine Pool:

Located at the end of Illinois Plant Road. Travel west from Lake Arthur

photo: USFWS



on Highway 14 for 15 miles or east from Hayes on Highway 14 for 3 miles to Illinois Plant Road, then south 4.5 miles. Access is allowed year-round from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset. Boats are allowed from March 15 - October 15.

Unit B: Located at the end of Streeter Road near the refuge office. Travel 3.5 miles south of Highway 14 on Highway 3056 to

Streeter Road, then west 2 miles. Access is allowed from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset from March 15 through October 31. An observation area overlooking Unit B is open year-round from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset.

Vidrine:

Located in Evangeline Parish, north of Eunice, LA. This unit is currently under development by the refuge. Contact the refuge manager for additional information.

Other Units of the Refuge:

Access is allowed in other units of the refuge from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset from March

photo: USFWS



15 through October 31. Certain areas may be closed for management purposes and are identified by closed area signs.

Disabled Access

Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to contact the refuge manager for information on special accommodations which are available.



Activities to Enjoy

Hiking: Although no designated trails have been developed, hiking is permitted on about 30 miles of levees and service roads in Lacassine Pool and Unit B near the refuge office.



Berry Picking: Picking berries is permitted throughout the refuge except when access in an area is closed for management purposes and identified by closed area signs.



Wildlife Observation/Photography:

The best opportunities for waterfowl observation and photography are during the fall and winter months at either Unit B or from the four miles of public roads at Lacassine Pool. In addition to waterfowl, many other types of wildlife may be seen on the refuge throughout the year.



Boating: Refuge canals, bayous and waterways are open to boat travel during most of the year. Two public boat launches are available in Lacassine Pool. Only commercial (fee) boat launching facilities are available for access to portions of the refuge outside of Lacassine Pool.

NOTE: Motors are restricted to 25 horsepower or less in Lacassine Pool. Marshes outside of Lacassine Pool may be entered only by paddling and poling - not by the use of motors. Airboats may not be used on the refuge. Visitors are cautioned that motorboat travel on the refuge may be hazardous due to water conditions, weather and restricted view from vegetation.





Fishing and Crawfishing:

Recreational only. Fish include bass, bowfin (choupique), bream, crappie, catfish and gar. Consult the refuge fishing brochure for specific regulations. The refuge has fishing piers available for use, two at Lacassine Pool and one at Unit B.



Hunting: Waterfowl hunting is permitted on the 6,400-acre waterfowl hunting area. Archery deer hunting is permitted on the refuge. Consult the refuge hunting brochure for specific regulations.

Ask if it is permitted before doing any activity not listed above.



Restricted Activities

Vehicles: All motor vehicles are restricted to designated roads and parking areas. Roads and trails may be closed at any time due to adverse conditions. Vehicles must be removed from the refuge at night. All-terrain vehicles (ATV's) are prohibited on the refuge.



Alcoholic Beverages: It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle or motorboat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Federal law also prohibits the use or possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting on national wildlife refuges.



Camping: Camping is not allowed on the refuge. Public camping is available at Myers and Garys Landings along Highway 3056 near the refuge office.



Littering: Littering is prohibited on the refuge. Please pack out all trash and leave a clean marsh. Marking trails with tape or other means is prohibited on Lacassine.

Fires: Do not light fires on the refuge.



Collecting: Do not gather or take any plants, flowers, insects, firewood, artifacts, etc. Permits are issued for special activities.



Weapon Possession: Archery equipment and firearms in vehicles on refuge roads or in boats traveling through the refuge on State navigable waterways must be unloaded and either encased or dismantled. The only weapons and ammunition which may be possessed while in the field are archery equipment during the refuge archery deer season, and shotguns and non-toxic shot in the waterfowl hunting area during the refuge waterfowl hunting seasons. Possession of any weapon or ammunition on the refuge in any situation not listed above is prohibited.



Harassing Wildlife: All wildlife including frogs, turtles and snakes, both nonpoisonous and poisonous, are protected on the refuge. Do not feed any wildlife including alligators. The use of lights to observe or hunt wildlife is prohibited. Only hunting and fishing activities which are authorized by refuge regulations are permitted.



Trapping: Only alligator and furbearer trapping authorized by the refuge manager is permitted.



Pets: Pets are not recommended on the refuge because of the alligators. All pets must be kept on leashes. Hunting dogs used during the refuge waterfowl hunt must be under control at all times.

Swimming: Swimming is prohibited on the refuge.

Horseback riding: Horses and horseback riding are prohibited on the refuge.

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