



The Border, Are You Aware?

Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge



Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge is an attractive place – and not just for scenery. Every year thousands of people are attracted to this remote location to illegally enter the United States. We want you to enjoy your visit to the Refuge, but it is important for you to be aware of your surroundings.

Not all Visitors are Legal

They may come from Mexico, Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and the rest of the world. They come for a variety of reasons – to find work, to bypass immigration laws, to smuggle illegal drugs.

At Sea in the Desert

Most illegal immigrants are unprepared for the rigors of crossing the Sonoran Desert. They may carry a few possessions, a little food, and some water. They are unaware they are crossing a national wildlife refuge, a place dedicated to conservation for wildlife. They may be unsure of their exact route, and merely follow the footsteps of others. As a result, the refuge is laced with hundreds of miles of unofficial routes.

Refuge Damage

These illegal routes are lined with empty water jugs and other trash. Illegal immigrants frequently stop to camp, collect wood and start fires. These fires sometimes escape and cause damage to wildlife habitat. Trash left at these sites is not only unsightly; it is unsanitary and attracts a variety of scavengers. Nearby water sources are often so fouled by pollution that wildlife can no longer use them. Some overnight rest stops are so heavily used that the damage is extensive. During the rainy seasons, trails and vehicle routes become avenues for floodwaters, further increasing the resource damage.

Potential Danger

As a result of illegal immigrants crossing our borders, other unlawful acts do occur within the refuge. Some of the illegal immigrants are armed, dangerous, and determined to complete the trip at any cost. Most often these are smugglers and drug runners. They may drive a stolen vehicle or they may hire human “mules” to carry their contraband in homemade backpacks.

Be Aware, Be Safe

- Remember that cell phone service is usually not available within refuge boundaries.
- Know where you are at all times. Follow good safety procedures and use common sense.
- Do not pick up hitch-hikers.
- Keep valuables out of sight and lock your vehicle at all times.
- Avoid traveling on well-used but unofficial trails and avoid hiking in areas of major border activity.
- People in distress may ask for food and water. Use good judgment in providing water; provide nothing else, and contact refuge staff or U.S. Border Patrol as soon as possible.
- Report any suspicious activity to refuge staff immediately. Do not approach suspicious persons. Contact a law enforcement officer for help.

Contact Information

Refuge Law Enforcement
1-520-823-4251 (7 am-4 pm)

Border Patrol
1-877-872-7435 (24 hrs)

Pima County Sheriff
1-520-741-4900 (24 hrs)