

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Bayou Sauvage

National Wildlife Refuge



Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1990. The refuge is located entirely within the corporate limits of New Orleans, Louisiana, and encompasses approximately 25,000 acres, which include the Brazillier Island tract acquired in 2009. Bayou Sauvage is the largest urban wildlife refuge in the country, and is one of the last remaining marsh areas adjacent to Lakes Pontchartrain and Borgne.

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



The refuge contains a wide variety of wildlife habitat, including bottomland hardwoods, freshwater and brackish marshes, lagoons, canals, borrow pits, and natural bayous.

The diverse habitat supports 340 bird species during various seasons of the year. Peak waterfowl populations of 30,000 use the wetland areas during fall, winter, and early spring. The American alligator is also a common sight on the refuge.

Most of the refuge is located within massive hurricane protection levees built to protect New Orleans from storm surges and flooding. The levees interrupt natural water flow patterns and challenge refuge managers to maintain productive wetland habitats in this altered environment. A network of pumps and flap gates provides

a means of regulating water levels seasonally to encourage the summer growth of emergent grasses that in turn provide waterfowl food supplies in winter. Rainfall is the main source of water for these fresh marshes, and during dry periods some areas of the refuge may dry up totally. Introducing brackish water from Lake Pontchartrain may provide a degree of relief but too much will damage freshwater grasses and other plants.

Effects of Hurricane Katrina on the Bottomland Hardwood Forest and Marshes

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Coastal Louisiana with devastating consequences. The eye of the massive



storm passed near the eastern edge of the refuge. In advance of the eye came a tremendous wall of water, or storm surge, that breached the hurricane protection levees located along the southern boundary of Bayou Sauvage. Soon the salty surge covered much of the refuge to depths of 6-8 feet, accompanied by powerful winds of up to 132 mph. As Katrina moved northward the winds subsided, but the salty floodwaters remained trapped for many weeks within the levee system before they

could be pumped out. The result of the plants and trees sitting in highly saline water in what was a formerly freshwater ecosystem was profound loss of vegetation. Up to 90% of trees in the bottomland hardwood forest and over 1700 acres of fresh and brackish marshes were destroyed.





As you explore the refuge today, you will see a landscape in various stages of recovery from this disaster. With the exception of any remaining live trees and the palmettos, the entire forested ridge has been mulched and replanted with native trees to facilitate reforestation. Our goal is to restore the productive freshwater marshes and forested habitats that formerly existed on Bayou Sauvage. Efforts to control invasive exotics such as the Chinese tallow tree are ongoing as well.



Effects of Hurricane Katrina on the Animals

Some wildlife was displaced or killed by Katrina's winds and flood waters. It's likely that some animals drowned in the storm surge, while others may have found refuge on levees or low ridges. Most birds were probably able to escape the storm's fury, and many of the larger alligators (over about 6 feet in length) were able to

withstand the violent surge and debris that it carried, as well as tolerate the salty water. Smaller gators did not fare so well.

After the storm in the weeks the refuge remained flooded, many animals were confined to the levees and ridge, including the destructive feral hog. This introduced species can cause significant damage to levees by digging for roots and other food. Waterfowl numbers were down sharply in the winter season following Katrina, but have begun to rebound and should continue to do so as



habitat is restored. The small amount of habitat for neotropical songbirds was heavily damaged, so those species will likely not return until forested areas recover, which may take many years.

Facilities

Headquarters

Bayou Sauvage and seven other National Wildlife Refuges (Atchafalaya, Bayou Teche, Big Branch Marsh, Bogue Chitto, Breton, Delta, and Mandalay) form a complex known as Southeast Louisiana Refuges (SELA) managed from a headquarters facility located in Lacombe, Louisiana. This office is a central access point for information about all refuges in the complex.



While there is no visitor center on Bayou Sauvage, the Southeast Louisiana Refuges Visitor Center at the headquarters site has exhibits and interpretive information about Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge.

Main Public Use Areas

The Ridge Trail area on U.S. Hwy 90 is a primary spot from which to enjoy the refuge. There is a 2/3 mile loop boardwalk trail, access to the Maxent Levee trail, and a pavilion with tables. Restrooms are available at this site. This area is adjacent to the historic Bayou Sauvage waterway, once a distributary for flood waters from the Mississippi River, and is an example of a forested wetland ecosystem.

Wayside Park Site

Wayside Park, located less than a mile due east of the Ridge Trail, is home to one of the majestic live oak trees remaining on the refuge after Hurricane Katrina. The site has a viewing pier which affords



an up-close view of the bayou for which the refuge is named. The goal of refuge managers is to keep this 2-mile remnant of Bayou Sauvage in as natural a state as possible. The bayou itself was once a major transportation route for early settlers and traders and extended approximately 15 miles further into the city from this point.



Madere Marsh Site

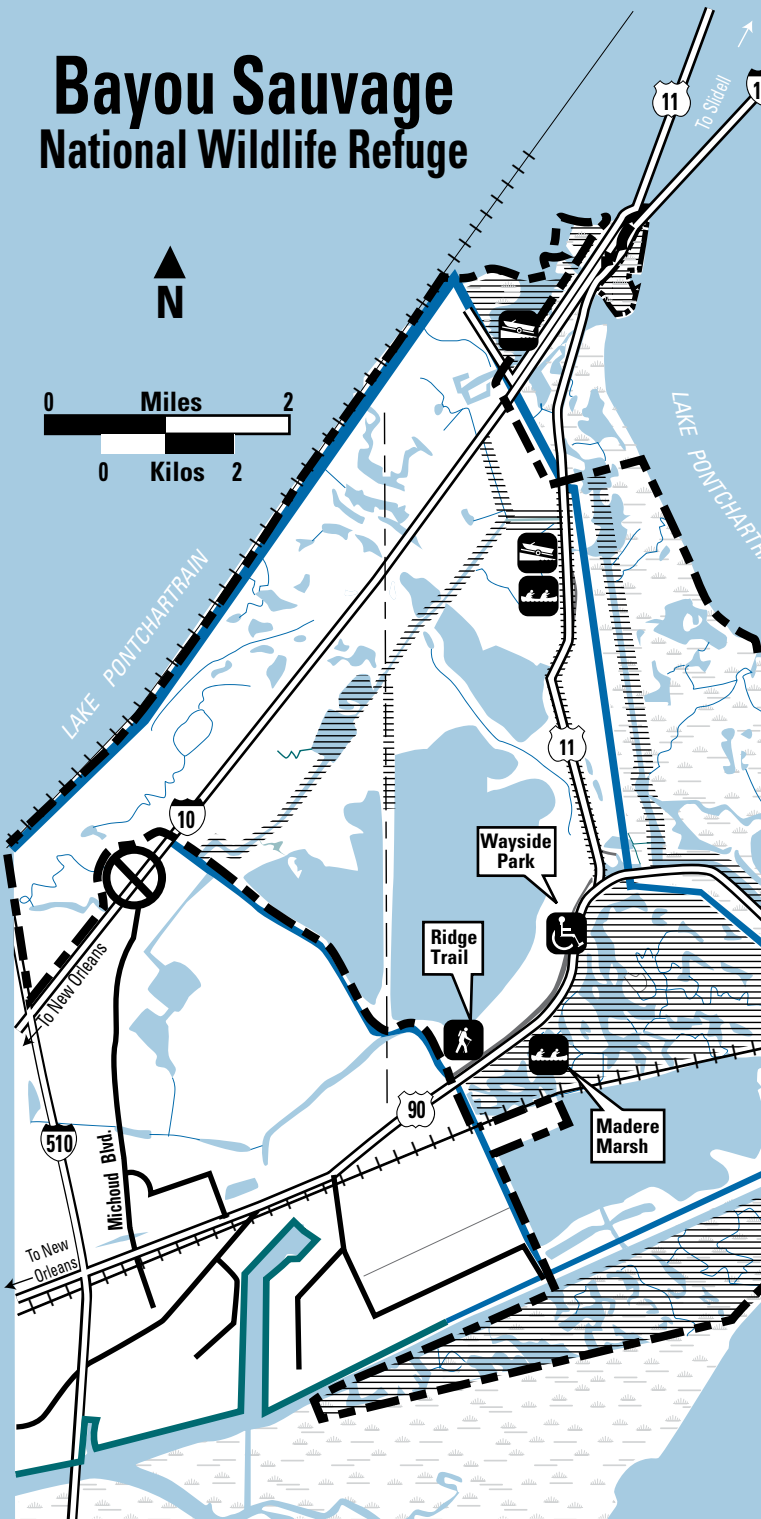
Located approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ mile southeast of the Ridge Trail site, Madere Marsh is named after long time resident of the area and current volunteer, Joe Madere. This unit has a non-motorized boat launch which provides easy access to the Marsh for those who want to fish, canoe or kayak. Madere Marsh is also one of the best locations on the refuge to view alligators. The lush marsh grasses not only provide excellent habitat for the alligator population, but are also a haven for migratory birds and waterfowl. The viewing area at the end of the short boardwalk offers an excellent vantage point amid the lush grasses for viewing a variety of birds. It is common to see mottled ducks, and the black bellied whistling ducks that have begun to utilize the wood duck boxes to nest in. An array of wading birds and shorebirds such as black-necked stilts and killdeer also take advantage of the abundant habitat of this freshwater marsh.

Environmental Education Programs









Formal environmental education programs, which allow students to experience learning in a natural setting, are offered year round on the refuge. Targeted for various age groups, these programs allow a first-hand encounter with aspects of the refuge's ecology and wildlife. Classroom visits by refuge rangers or trained volunteers may also



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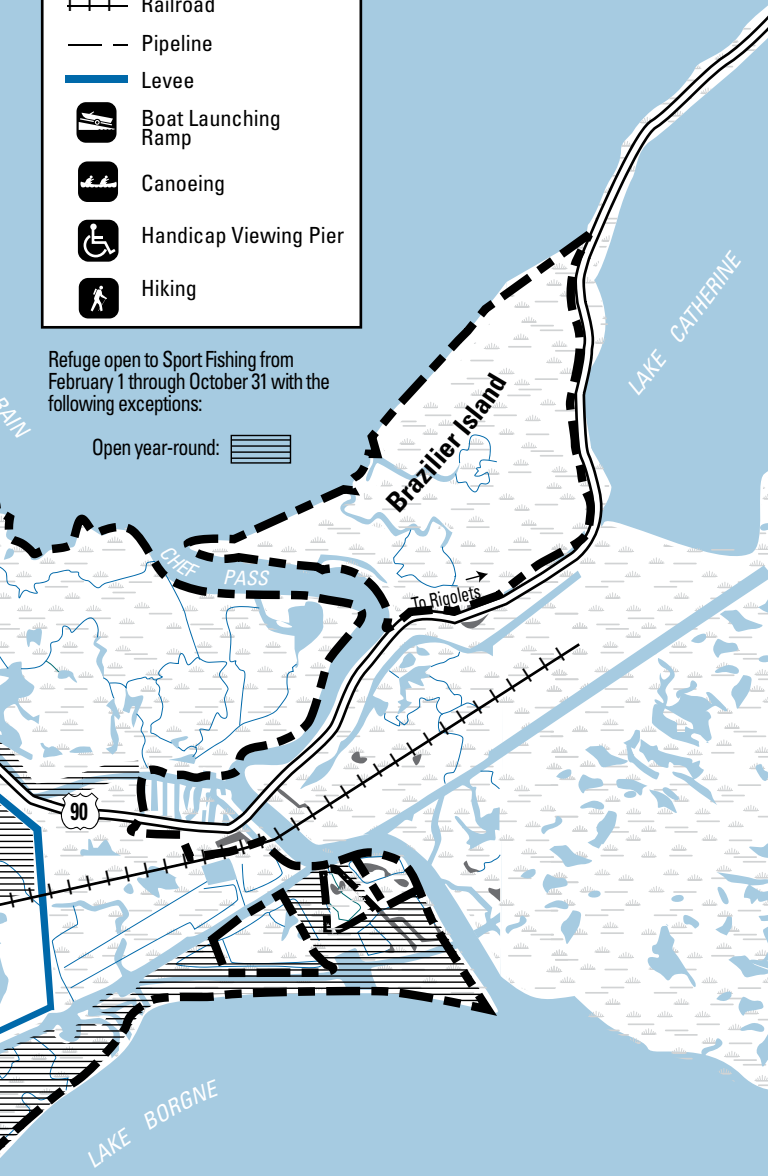


Legend

-  Refuge Boundary
-  Railroad
-  Pipeline
-  Levee
-  Boat Launching Ramp
-  Canoeing
-  Handicap Viewing Pier
-  Hiking

Refuge open to Sport Fishing from February 1 through October 31 with the following exceptions:

Open year-round: 



be arranged. Schools and other organized groups should contact the refuge at least two weeks in advance for reservations.

Recreational Opportunities

Canoeing

The varied habitats of the refuge provide rewarding canoeing opportunities in areas not accessible by car. Launch sites include the Madere Marsh unit, on U.S. Hwy 90, and the boat launch on U.S. Hwy 11. Spring and fall are ideal for enjoying the many waterways of Bayou Sauvage.



Nature Walks

The Ridge Trail Boardwalk is the most popular short hike on the refuge, affording views of a variety of habitats. Other options include the Maxent Levee trail (three miles one way) which offers great wildlife viewing opportunities from the crown of the levee. Other levee tops throughout the refuge provide more wildlife viewing opportunities.



Bird watching

The diversity of habitats on Bayou Sauvage provides opportunities to observe a variety of bird species within a small geographical area. Before Hurricane Katrina, neo-tropical migrants abounded during the fall and spring migrations, with many nesting on the refuge. With the restoration of the forested ridge, hopefully these birds will once again make Bayou Sauvage part of their annual journey. Wading birds are present year-round and mottled ducks and wood ducks are common summer nesters. Each winter thousands of waterfowl make their home on the refuge.



Fishing/Crabbing/Crawfishing

There are great opportunities for these activities on Bayou Sauvage. Freshwater lagoons, bayous and



ponds serve as production areas for largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill, catfish, and crawfish.



The marshes along Lakes Pontchartrain and Borgne serve as estuarine nurseries for fish and crabs. Non-commercial fishing, crabbing, and crawfishing are permitted year round; some restrictions may apply within the impoundments (see map). Be sure to obtain a copy of the refuge fishing regulations, available in boxes at various sites on the refuge, at headquarters, on the web site, or by mail.

Friends of Louisiana Wildlife Refuges, Inc.

The Friends are a non-profit corporation that supports the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in educational and environmental projects on Bayou Sauvage and other area refuges. To join the Friends or for more information contact 985/882 2025, or visit www.FLWR.ORG.



When Visiting Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge

Bayou Sauvage is located thirty minutes from downtown New Orleans. Access is available from U.S. Highways 90 and 11, and Interstate 10. Lodging is available in New Orleans. General tourist information is available from the New Orleans Welcome Center at 529 St. Ann St., New Orleans, LA 70116, phone 504/568 5661. You can also visit the New Orleans tourism web site at: www.Neworleanscvb.com

Please enjoy the refuge safely by taking the following actions:

- Wear life jackets and have other required safety equipment on all water vessels.
- Do not leave valuables in your vehicle.
- Tell a friend or relative where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Be prepared and observe regulations concerning fishing and boat registration requirements and closed areas.

Other refuge regulations include:

- Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge is a daylight-use only refuge.
- Motorized vehicles are permitted only on paved public roads and designated parking areas.
- Only outboard motors, 25 horsepower or less, are permitted in waterways inside the hurricane protection levee.
- Airboats, aircraft, motorized pirogues, mud boats and go-devils are prohibited in refuge waters.
- Feeding, enticing, or disturbing alligators or any other wildlife is prohibited.
- Taking, collecting, or injuring plants or wildlife is prohibited.
- Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuges must comply with all provisions of state and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific refuge regulations in 50 CFR Part 32).





For More Information contact:

Project Leader, Southeast Louisiana

Refuges Headquarters

61389 Hwy 434

Lacombe, LA 70445

985/882 2000, Monday-Friday

7:00 am-4:30 pm

E-mail: southeastlouisiana.fws.gov





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Bayou Sauvage
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