

About the Refuge

Established in 1969, Nathaniel P. Reed Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge is one of over 565 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System — a network of lands set aside and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service specifically for wildlife. The area consists of 1,091 acres and is split by the Indian River Lagoon into two tracts: the Island Tract and the Mainland Tract.

The Island Tract features a 3.5 mile beach, the largest contiguous section of undeveloped beach in Southeastern Florida and one of the most productive sea turtle nesting areas in the Southeastern United States. The Mainland Tract includes a large remnant of sand pine scrub, hardwood hammock and about five miles of mangrove communities along the Indian River Lagoon. The Refuge is a sanctuary for nearly 40 species listed as either threatened, endangered or of special concern. It is a beautiful and unique place for walking nature trails, fishing in the surf or viewing wildlife.

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



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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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USFWS/Diana Gu



USFWS/Christine Eastwick

Kimberly Mohlenhoff

Florida Sand Pine Scrub

Florida Sand Pine Scrub is a very rare habitat made up of dry, sandy ridges. To conserve water, plants have small tough, curled, hairy or waxy leaves and are dwarfed in size. These hardy plants are nutrient-rich sources of food for scrub animals. Gopher apples are a treat not only for gopher tortoises but also for raccoons, opossums and foxes. Birds, like blue jays and grackles, as well as mammals, munch on the acorns of myrtle oak. Prickly pear cacti produce fruits that are popular with catbirds, mockingbirds and gopher tortoises, which also eat the spiny pad!



USFWS/Christine Eastwick



Gopher tortoise

USFWS/Randy Browning

Indian River Lagoon

The Indian River Lagoon is the most biodiverse estuary in the U.S. and provides habitat for over 2,200 animals and 2,100 plants. In an estuary, salt water from the ocean mixes with fresh water from the inland and provides a breeding, staging and resting area for all kinds of wildlife. Seagrass beds flourish in the



Brown pelican

USFWS/Diana Gru

Sarika Khanwilkar

lagoon and are used as cover or foraging areas by fish and the Atlantic bottlenose dolphin. The most common grass in the Indian River Lagoon is manatee grass, which is a staple in the diet of threatened West Indian manatees in the winter.



Jessica Richards



Zebra longwing

USFWS/E. Tremontana

Mangrove Forest

The mangrove forest along the shoreline of the Indian River Lagoon is vital to the health of the estuary. The roots of mangrove trees provide protected nursery areas for fish, crustaceans and shellfish. These nursery areas, in-turn, provide a food source for marine species such as snook, snapper, oysters and shrimp. The limbs of mangroves are also optimal roosting and nesting platforms for wading birds like the wood stork and great blue heron.



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Green sea turtle

Kate Fraser

Coastal Dunes

Coastal dunes have three zones: upper beach, foredune and coastal strand. The upper beach is closest to the ocean and is regularly disturbed by waves and tidal changes. The



USFWS/Diana Gru

Royal terns

foredune has plants like sea oats and railroad vine that can tolerate constant agitation from sand blown off the beach. The coastal strand has shrubs and trees such as sea grapes and saw palmetto that are often stunted due to the

windblown salt and sand. The area between the upper beach and foredune is used as nesting grounds for shorebirds and sea turtles. The endangered leatherback and threatened green and loggerhead sea turtles nest on the Refuge every year. Some years, they can collectively produce over 3,000 nests!



Jessica Richards



Bobcat

Bradley Rosendorf

Hardwood Hammock

A few of the hardwood hammock habitats (made up of hardwood tree species) on the Refuge grow on top of Native American shell middens. These are areas where tribes threw away shells and bones, which have created a calcium rich soil that helps support the hammock. The high humidity in these areas and dense cover under tropical trees provides the perfect habitat for a variety of wildlife such as neotropical migratory birds, land crabs and tree frogs.