The refuge contains a wide variety of wildlife habitat, including bottomland hardwoods, freshwater marshes, brackish marshes, lagoons, canals, borrow pits, chenier (ancient beach fronts) 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 fl apgates 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.

The ridge Trail area on U.S. Hwy 90 is a primary spot from which to enjoy the 30-mile wide lake. The round trip is approximately nine miles, but shorter portions can be biked.

Bayou Sauvage
National Wildlife Refuge

General
Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge was authorized in 1986 and officially established in 1990. The refuge is located entirely within the corporate limits of New Orleans, Louisiana and encompasses approximately 23,000 acres. It is the largest urban wildlife refuge in the country, and is one of the last remaining marsh areas adjacent to Lakes Pontchartrain and Barne.

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Facilities
Headquarters
Bayou Sauvage and six other National Wildlife Refuges (Atchafalaya, Big Branch Marsh, Bogue Cito, Breton, Delta and Shell Keys) form a complex known as Southeast Louisiana Refuges, managed from a headquarters facility located in LaCombe, Louisiana. This office is a central access point for information about all refuges in the complex. Plans call for the development of an office and visitor information facility on Bayou Sauvage in the near future.

Recreation Area
The Ridge Trail area on U.S. Hwy 90 is a primary spot from which to enjoy the refuge. There is a 2 1/2 mile loop boardwalk trail, access to the Mayent Levee Trail, and a pavilion with tables. Restrooms are planned at this location. This area is adjacent to the historic Bayou Sauvage water way, once a distributary for flood waters from the Mississippi River, and is an example of a forested wetland ecosystem.

Environmental Education Programs
For more information, contact the refuge at least two weeks in advance for reservations.

Interpretive Tours
Free interpretive programs are presented on weekends by refuge staff, and include canoe tours, birdwatching trips, and explorations by bike and trail. These programs require advance reservations. A quarterly calendar of events provides more information, and may be obtained by mail, at the headquarters, in brochures around the refuge, or online at southeastLouisiana.fws.gov.

Canoeing
The varied habitats of the refuge provide rewarding canoeing opportunities in areas not accessible by car. Launch sites include the M-aixent 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.

Birdwatching
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. Crappie is popular at "Crabbing Bridge."

Fishing/Crabbing/Crawfishing
There are great opportunities for these activities on Bayou Sauvage. Freshwater lagoons, bayous and ponds serve as 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.

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Concessionaire Tours
A private company offers daily wildlife viewing tours through a concession agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The public tours are conducted via a 65-passenger boat and last approximately one hour and 45 minutes. The tour is accessed from exit 231 on Interstate 10. For more information phone New Orleans Swamp Tours at 504/236 3143.

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For Your Safety
Wear life jackets and have other required safety equipment on all water vessels.

Do not leave valuables in your vehicle.

Tell a relative or friend where you are going and when you expect to return.

Regulations
Be prepared and observe regulations concerning: fishing license requirements, closed areas, and boat registration.

Access to and recreational use of refuge resources are permitted in designated areas and in accordance with state and federal regulations.

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.

Taking, collecting, or injuring of plants or wildlife is prohibited.

Feeding, enticing, or disturbing alligators or any other wildlife is prohibited.

Hunting is not permitted on the refuge.

Firearms:
Carrying, possessing, or discharging firearms on the refuge is prohibited.