

D'Arbonne

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



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photo: David R. Linden

Joe Saenz, Project Leader
Brett Hortman, Refuge Manager
D'Arbonne NWR
11372 Highway 143
Farmerville, LA 71241
Phone: 318/726 4222
Fax: 318/726 4667
E-mail: FW4RWNorthLARefuges@fws.

Refuge Facts

- Established: 1975.
- Acres: 17,419 purchased by the Corps of Engineers as partial mitigation for the Ouachita-Black River Navigation Project.
- Located in Ouachita and Union parishes.
- Location: the refuge office is located six miles north of West Monroe on LA Highway 143.

Natural History

- Eight miles long and averaging 4 miles wide, the refuge consists of over 11,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forest, 3,000 acres of upland forest, 1,000 acres of moist soil habitat, and 2,000 acres of permanent water. About 75 percent of the refuge is subject to annual flooding from December through May.
- The central physical feature is Bayou D'Arbonne, 13 miles of which lie within the refuge. The bayou meanders through a 2- to 4-mile wide floodplain characterized by alluvial soils.

- Refuge supports concentrations of ducks, numerous wading birds, raptors, and the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Hosts 25,000 visits annually.

Refuge Objectives

- Provides habitat for a diversity of migratory birds and resident wildlife species.
- Provides habitat and protection for endangered species and other species of concern such as the bald eagle, wood stork and red-cockaded woodpecker.
- Provides opportunities for wildlife-oriented recreation, environmental education and interpretation.

Management Tools

- Moist soil areas are periodically disced, mowed, or burned and subsequently flooded to provide habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds.
- Forest management including reforestation and thinning.
- Law enforcement.
- Public hunting and fishing.
- Environmental education/interpretation.

Public Use Opportunities

- Foot trails.
- Wildlife observation.
- Observation tower.
- Scenic vistas (land and water).
- Hunting.
- Fishing.
- Photography.
- Group tours.

Calendar of Events

January: waterfowl numbers typically peak.

February: wood ducks begin nesting and fishing improves.

March: major flooding season and early migrant songbirds arrive.

April: songbird migration peaks and everyone catches fish.

May: fishing continues to be good, red-cockaded woodpeckers can be seen bringing food to their young.

June: floodwaters recede, concentrating fish and other food in small water bodies where wading birds congregate to feast on them.

July: wading bird populations continue to build, fishing drops off with hot weather.

August: shorebirds arrive to feed on mudflats.

September: blue-winged teal arrive and fishing picks up.

October: small game and archery-deer seasons begin.

November: bald eagles arrive for the winter, waterfowl numbers increase, big game and waterfowl seasons open.

December: waterfowl are attracted to shallowly flooded forest, Christmas Bird Count.

Questions and Answers

What is there to see here?

The wildlife observation tower is a good place to see deer and wading birds in the summer and early fall. Later, many species of waterfowl utilize the shallow backwater near the tower.

What unique species of birds use the refuge?

The endangered red-cockaded woodpecker uses easily accessible areas of the refuge. They can usually be seen around the roosting area early and late in the day. Several bald eagles usually spend the winter here. While roadrunners are extremely elusive, the refuge is within their extreme eastern range.

When and where can I hunt and fish?

Fishing is allowed year round on all refuge waters. Hunting is allowed for many species. Contact the refuge office for a current hunting and fishing brochure.

Can I camp on the refuge?

The refuge has no camping facilities, and does not allow camping. However, camping opportunities exist at Lake D'Arbonne State Park near Farmerville and at both municipal and commercial campgrounds in the Monroe/West Monroe area.

Where can I launch my boat?

There are four boat ramps on or near the refuge.