



Hurricane Harvey Response

A dozen National Wildlife Refuges—home to whooping cranes, sea turtles, ocelots, and a multitude of other plant, fish and wildlife species—were impacted by Hurricane Harvey



Hurricane Harvey as it reaches peak intensity of Category 4 with maximum sustained winds of 130 mph (NOAA)

Service Facilities and National Wildlife Refuges Affected

The Service had a total of 12 facilities along the Texas Coast that were affected. Some received more damage than others. The facilities that experienced the largest impacts are:

- Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (including Matagorda Island)
- Big Boggy National Wildlife Refuge

- Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge
- San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge
- Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge
- Moody National Wildlife Refuge
- McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge
- Texas Point National Wildlife Refuge
- Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge

Please visit [our website](#) for the latest updates and information.

Damage Assessments and Information Gathering

Staff has been working on rapid assessments of areas impacted. These efforts will inform the more thorough cost and damage assessments. It is important to have accurate information to inform restoration and recovery efforts, while being good stewards of taxpayer's money.

Wildlife and Habitat Impacts

We recognize the severe effects the hurricane has had on the people of south Texas. There have also been impacts to wildlife and their habitat.

As conditions improve and staff are able to get out on the ground, the Service will have a better idea of the storm's overall effect on the wildlife of south Texas. While individual species may experience mortality during hurricane events, these types of losses often do not have large impacts on the populations.

It is important to remember that these animals evolved over vast periods of time in the face of severe storms and some of the hurricane's impacts may prove to be beneficial to wildlife and their habitat, similar to the way that habitats regenerate in areas that have burned in natural wild fires.



A Service emergency response trailer deployed in Texas (USFWS)

Wildlife and Habitat Impacts (cont.)

Three endangered species on the Texas Gulf Coast were in the right place at the right time to avoid the wrath of Hurricane Harvey.

Whooping Cranes

Whooping cranes are currently far removed from the devastation of Hurricane Harvey. They are still in Canada at Wood Buffalo National Park, staging for their eventual trip south. Small flocks of three to 10 birds will start arriving at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and adjacent habitats in mid-October. By mid-December all of these elegant birds that made the trip will be on their wintering grounds. Aransas NWR felt the full force of the hurricane and at present, refuge staff are assessing buildings and infrastructures. They will soon assess crane habitat and if necessary, measure changes in habitats and manage accordingly.



A whooping crane family in their wintering grounds at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas (USFWS)

Sea Turtles

Because the Kemp's Ridley sea turtle nesting season was already over by the time the hurricane hit, the sea turtle nests along the Texas Gulf Coast were not affected. The incubation facility at Padre Island sustained very little damage. One of the Service's permitted rehab centers was hit hard, but the animals all survived.



Kemp's Ridley hatchlings at South Padre Island National Seashore (NPS)

Ocelots

Hurricane Harvey hit north of the Ocelot concentration in Texas. Hurricanes are infrequent events and are not identified as major threats to ocelots.

At this time there was little to no damage to the ocelot population or their habitats from the hurricane event.



Three-week-old male ocelot kitten at Laguna Atascosa NWR (USFWS)

Volunteers

The Service has been humbled by the outpouring of support and willingness to help. At the moment, there are not any opportunities for volunteers.

Once the refuges are in the recovery phase of this incident, there will likely be opportunities for volunteer projects. It would be best to periodically check with the local refuge. The National Wildlife Refuge Association has developed other ways to contribute.



Collapsed and twisted board walk damage at Aransas NWR (USFWS)

Contact Us

For media inquiries, please contact:

Keenan Adams
Acting External Affairs Assistant
Regional Director
505-248-6285
keenan_adams@fws.gov

For all other inquires, please contact:

Beth Ullenberg
Regional Outreach Coordinator
(505) 248-6638
beth_ullenberg@fws.gov

For more information, visit:

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