U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Aransas

## *National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Information and Map*

## Welcome to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge

We invite you to drive our 16-mile auto tour, fish from our pier, walk up our observation towers, and relax and enjoy a picnic overlooking San Antonio Bay. Take time to stretch your legs along several miles of walking trails. You'll find observation platforms, spotting scopes, diverse plants and wildlife, and stunning views of the bay and wildlife habitat. The trails are listed below in the order you encounter them along the auto tour loop.

## Trails

*Rail Trail (.5 mile)*
Waterbirds, from rails to bitterns, lurk in the reeds lining Tomas Slough. This grassy trail parallels the long, narrow slough that is home to alligators as well.

*Alligator Viewing Area (<.1 mile)*
Take a short walk up the ramp and look for alligators in Tomas Slough, one of the few freshwater resources on the refuge. On sunny days, you may see an alligator basking on the bank. Listen for frogs and birds calling and look for fish swimming in the water.

*Heron Flats Trail (1.4 miles)*
Freshwater sloughs, shell ridges, oak forests, and tidal flats make this trail quite diverse. You'll find two observation platforms equipped with spotting scopes. If you're lucky, you might see a whooping crane family feeding in the marshy salt flats. Watch, too, for herons, egrets, roseate spoonbills, pelicans, and other wildlife. * Please note that this trail will not make a loop.

*Songbird Loop (0.1 mile)*
Listen to a spring songbird serenade as you wander this short woodland loop.

*Oak Sanctuary (.1 mile)*
Walk this short trail towards San Antonio Bay and experience the mystery of a 500-year old oak tree. What might you find hiding in its branches, or seeking its shade? The oak is covered in mustang grapevine.

*A whooping crane catches a blue crab.* © Kevin Sims

*Dagger Point Trail (1 mile)*
Hike a winding trail through an oak/red bay forest. One of the few hills on the refuge offers an excellent vista.

*Jones Lake (< .1 mile)*
A very short, paved walkway leads to a platform overlooking the lake, another potential alligator hangout. The water in this lake comes entirely from rainfall.

*Big Tree Trail (.7 mile)*
Encounter some of the refuge's largest live oak trees along this woodland loop.

## Observation Towers and Boardwalk

In addition to crane watching, the two observation towers (20' and 40') offer a panoramic view of San Antonio Bay and Mustang Lake. Both towers are fully accessible with gently sloping ramps. Follow the boardwalk across the tidal flat to the Big Tree Observation Deck. Look for animal tracks in the mud.

## One-way Loop (driving only)

This 9-mile loop takes you through diverse habitat. Please note that it is one-way, and will take at least 45 minutes.

## Rules and Regulations

- Observe speed limit of 25 mph and watch for wildlife crossing roadways.
- All vehicles must be street legal and remain on designated roadways.
- Feeding animals is prohibited.
- No alcohol is permitted.
- No littering. Please take your trash with you when you leave.
- Bicycles are permitted on the paved tour loop only (no trail riding).
- There is no camping on the refuge.
- Pets must be kept on a standard (4-6 foot) leash at all times.

Keep in mind that the refuge is wild, and you may encounter venomous snakes, alligators, and biting insects. Please stay on marked trails and use caution.

## For More Information

Aransas National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 100
Austwell, TX 77950
361/286-3559
www.fws.gov/refuge/aransas

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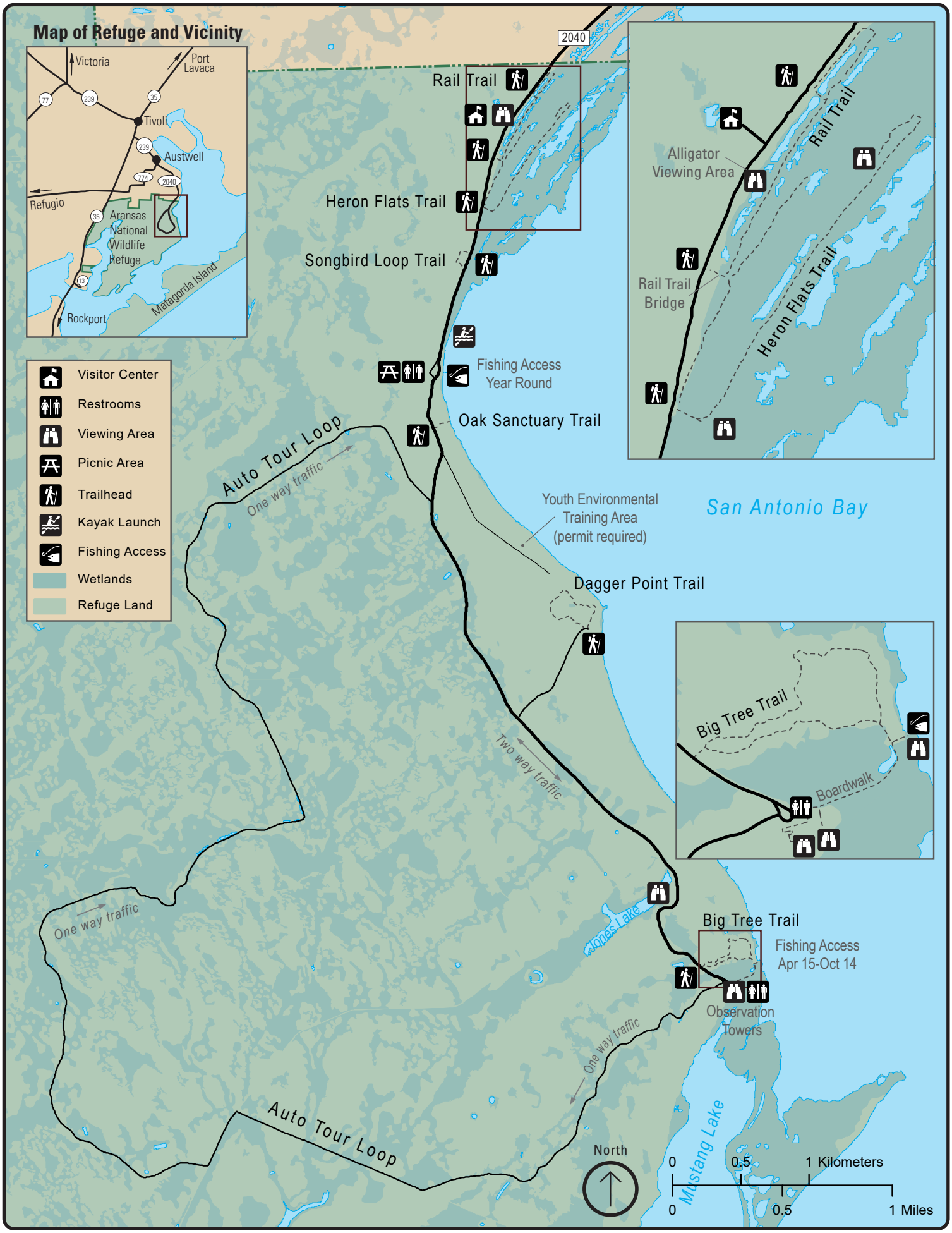
Map of Refuge and Vicinity
Victoria
Port Lavaca
77
239
35
Tivoli
239
Austwell
774
2040
Refugio
35
Aransas National Wildlife Refuge
13
Rockport
Matagorda Island
2040
Rail Trail
Heron Flats Trail
Songbird Loop Trail
Fishing Access Year Round
Oak Sanctuary Trail
Auto Tour Loop
One way traffic
Youth Environmental Training Area (permit required)
San Antonio Bay
Dagger Point Trail
Two way traffic
Jones Lake
Big Tree Trail
Fishing Access Apr 15-Oct 14
Observation Towers
One way traffic
One way traffic
Auto Tour Loop
Mustang Lake
North
0
0.5
1 Kilometers
0
0.5
1 Miles
Visitor Center
Restrooms
Viewing Area
Picnic Area
Trailhead
Kayak Launch
Fishing Access
Wetlands
Refuge Land
Rail Trail
Alligator Viewing Area
Rail Trail Bridge
Heron Flats Trail
Big Tree Trail
Boardwalk