Breton
National Wildlife Refuge

photo: USFWS

photo: Theodore Roosevelt Collection Harvard College Library

photo: James Harris

photo: USFWS

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Refuge Facts

- Established in 1904 through executive order of President Theodore Roosevelt; second-oldest refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System. It is the only refuge visited by the Refuge System founder, Theodore Roosevelt, in 1915.
- Acres: 1,100 in St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes. Five thousand acres were designated as wilderness in 1975.
- Has one of the larger nesting colonies of Royal and Sandwich Terns; important area for Reddish Egrets; nesting habitat for various other colonial seabirds; large non-breeding concentration of Magnificent Frigate Birds; winter concentration of Redhead Ducks with smaller number of Canvasbacks and scaups.
- The Refuge consists of barrier islands, including the Chandeleurs, located in the Gulf of Mexico off the southeast coast of Louisiana.
- Large nesting colonies of several thousand Eastern Brown Pelicans; wintering migration habitat for Piping Plover, Red Knot, and other shorebirds; pioneering research is underway to study bird movements, distribution and breeding ecology.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Approximately 3,000 annual visitors.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide sanctuary for nesting and wintering seabirds.
- Protect and preserve the wilderness character of the islands.
- Provide sandy beach habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

Management Tools

- Law enforcement.
- Beach stabilization and renourishment.
- Nest count surveys: terns, skimmers, Eastern brown pelicans.
- Waterfowl surveys.

Public Use Opportunities

- Fishing.
- Photography.
- Bird watching.

Questions and Answers

How can I visit the Refuge?
Access is by boat only across open waters of Breton Sound. Boats should be of sufficient size to cross unprotected waters and weather conditions should be closely watched. The crossing should not be attempted by inexperienced boaters. No regular commercial boat transport available, but charters can be arranged. Small craft vessels generally reach the southern islands from launches in Venice, Louisiana, and those traveling to the northern portions of the refuge usually leave from launches on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Is camping allowed on the Refuge?
No, camping is not permitted at Breton NWR.

Can you land a plane or helicopter on the Refuge?
No, it is illegal to land a plane or helicopter on the refuge land or waters. It is legal to land a plane outside of the refuge water boundary and taxi to the beach.

When is the nesting season for the pelicans and terns?
The nesting season is from March through August.