Welcome to Laguna Atascosa NWR

We hope you enjoy your visit! We have recorded more species of birds than any other national wildlife refuge, provide habitat for several endangered species including the ocelot and aplomado falcon, and welcome visitors from around the world to discover the great diversity of birds, plants and wildlife found only in deep south Texas. Walk a trail, attend a tour, explore the exhibits, or bike our over 70 miles of trails. There’s something for everyone!

Important Visitor Information
To enter the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge, visitors can pay entrance fees by cash or check at the Visitor Center, or with exact change or check at the self-pay station when the visitor center is closed. Entrance fees are applicable whether visitors are walking, driving or bicycling on the Refuge. All vehicles must display a valid Daily Entrance Pass—either issued by the Visitor Center staff or from the self-pay envelope.

Help Us Protect the Refuge
You can keep this Refuge special for wildlife and people by following all Refuge rules:

- Be watchful for wildlife on roads—especially the endangered ocelot.
- Please stay in the designated public areas (i.e., drives and trails) for your own safety and to protect the habitat.
- Keep dogs on a leash, and do not allow them to drink or enter water bodies due to the presence of alligators.
- Pack out your trash.

For More Information Contact
Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge
22617 Ocelot Road (Mailing)
22688 Buena Vista Road (Physical & GPS)
Los Fresnos, Texas 78566
956/748-3607, ext 111 (Visitor Center)
www.fws.gov/refuge/laguna_atascosa
www.facebook.com/LagunaAtascosaNWR

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Enjoying wildlife watching. / USFWS

Do not disturb or remove wildlife, plants or historic objects. Disturbance is caused by getting too close to wildlife, playing recorded bird/wildlife calls, feeding wildlife, or throwing objects at wildlife. Metal detectors are not allowed.

No fireworks, fires, or alcohol.

Camping is allowed only at Adolph Thomae Jr. County Park (entrance and camping fees apply for this area, call 956/748-4533 for information).

For your safety and comfort
- Avoid chiggers, ticks and rattlesnakes by staying on trails.
- Be prepared with insect repellent, water and sunscreen.
- Plan to hike or bike during the cooler hours of the day (March–November).
- Use a map to plan your trip when venturing out on trails.
- Take a cell phone in case of an emergency.
- Wear comfortable, sturdy shoes with closed toes.
- If bicycling—see the Bicycling section.

Bicycling
Riding a bike on the refuge is a great way to connect with nature. You can cover more distance than on foot, and explore the far reaches of the refuge away from the hustle and bustle. It is important to be prepared before starting your trip. The following are recommended guidelines for bicycling on the refuge.

Wide tires work best on the dirt and gravel trails.
Carry extra tire tubes and a repair kit—your vegetation is thorny!
Slime and tube shields are recommended for your tires to avoid flats.
If your bike breaks down, you must be prepared to walk it back to your vehicle.

Keep a cell phone in case of an emergency.
Wear comfortable, sturdy shoes with closed toes.
If bicycling—see the Bicycling section.
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Yield to hikers, always give pedestrians the right of way.

When on roads, ride with the flow of traffic. Check the forecast. High winds will make pedaling more challenging and weather can change quickly.

Watching Wildlife

For better observation of wildlife, keep noise to a minimum, move slowly; use your vehicle as a blind, try staying in one place and be patient. Most wildlife are active early or late in the day. For your safety and to avoid disturbing wildlife, stay at a safe distance.

Feeding wildlife is illegal on the refuge as it causes animals to lose their natural fear of humans and they can become dangerous.

Designated Public Areas

Laguna Atascosa Unit: Visitor Center Area

Kiskadee Trail — pedestrians only
1/8 mile loop, cement
One of our most popular trails near the Visitor Center. In wet years there is a pond that may harbor an alligator. Watch the treetops for great kiskadees, warblers and green jays. In dry years the alligator often moves to the old livestock trough beside the trail.

Fiddlerwood Trail — pedestrians only
<1/8 mile loop, crushed gravel
Great for viewing native thornscrub plants, butterflies and birds. Stop and rest in the shaded gasbo. Water feature and bird feeding area. Located across the parking lot from the Visitor Center.

Metalmark Butterfly Trail — pedestrians only
< 1/8 mile, cement
Circling the Visitor Center, this trail has many native plants and a photo blind with a water feature and bird feeding area.

Mesquite Trail — pedestrians only
1.5 mile loop, dirt
Beginning at the Visitor Center parking lot, this figure-eight loop trail winds through grassy savannas, across two small ponds and past an historic family cemetery.

Laguna Atascosa Unit: Lakeside Drive Area

Lakeside Drive — pedestrians, bicycles, vehicles
1.5 miles, paved and gravel
Great for viewing native thornscrub, ponds, and Cates Pond. From the visitor center, go through the far parking lot and take a left. Follow this road to reach our 3,500-acre freshwater lake, Laguna Atascosa. In the fall, this shallow lake can be 20+ feet deep. Since 2000, we have restored the lake to enhance wildlife habitat. Wildlife sightings include the aplomado falcon, from the parking area.

Laguna Atascosa Unit: Trails South of Lakeside Drive Area

Prairie Trail — pedestrians, bicycles, 3.3 miles (3.3 miles-paved, 3.3 miles-dirt)
White-tailed hawks and aplomado falcons can be seen here. When accessed from the Osprey Overlook parking area, the first 3 miles of this trail is accessible (paved). It follows the shoreline of Laguna Atascosa (lake), leading to a viewing platform on Alligator Pond that hosts alligators during wet years. The trail continues for another 3 miles mostly through prairie, ending at FM106. Visitors can head west and cross FM106 to continue on the Prairie Trail, or access the West Lake Trail north of FM106 from Prairie Trail parking area.

Kennedy Pond Trail — pedestrians and bicycles
2.5 miles, dirt
Accessed from Lakeside Drive, this trail passes by a small pond that generally has an alligator.

The following trails are dirt and are open for pedestrians and bicycles:

Fiddler’s Green Trail — 1 mile
Giant Palm Trail — 3 miles
Fiddler’s Green Trail
Island Fields Trail — 2 miles
Trails of Wildlife

1.5 miles, dirt
This loop winds through thornscrub forest, coastal prairies, freshwater wetlands and along Laguna Madre shoreline. Plover Point Boardwalk allows you to view the Laguna Madre and is a great place to see shorebirds. An elevated overlook, Redhead Ridge, gives you a 360 degree view of all four habitats. A restroom is located at the Redhead Ridge parking area. Wildlife sightings may include aplomado falcons, white-tail deer, Texas tortoise, osprey, great blue heron, roosevelt spoonbills, redshank egret, crested caracara, Harris’ hawk and non-native nile antelope. Guided tours of the Bayside Drive are available.

Morane Blanco Trail — pedestrians, bicycles
1.7 miles, dirt
This trail begins 1 mile south of Redhead Ridge Overlook. It traverses coastal prairie and thornscrub, ending with a great view overlooking the Laguna Madre.

Bahia Grande Unit

Highway 100 Viewing Area — From Highway 100, follow Highway 48 south of Port Isabel. There is a parking area pull-out on the right side of the road before you get to the main water channel to Bahia Grande. This is a great place to see wading and shore birds. The refuge also offers birding tours of the Bahia Grande Unit seasonally.

South Padre Island Unit

Visitors may enjoy the refuge trails along the beach north of Public Access 6 off Padre Blvd. Activities include beachcombing, fishing, bird watching, horseshoe driving, swimming and camping. The dunes and tidal flats, however, are closed to public activities as they are sensitive wildlife habitats. These trails are many miles from the public access and are generally accessed by 4-wheel drive vehicle.

Hunting

The Refuge conducts seasonal archery and firearm hunts for white-tailed deer, nilgai antelope (exotic) and feral hog. This allows us to maintain a healthy deer population as well as keep exotic animals in check. These hunts take place between mid-November and mid-January. Hunter permits are sold at the refuge visitor center. The Friends also host an annual fundraising event, the Ocelot Soiree, which is the purpose of which is to advocate for and support the mission and goals of the Refuge. They are comprised of a board of directors, a part-time nature store manager, and there are opportunities to become more involved as volunteers. This nonprofit group operates and receives all proceeds from the nature store located in the Refuge visitor center. They can become more involved as volunteers.

Picnicking

There is designated picnic area with tables off the parking area at the Visitor Center. No grills are allowed. Please put all trash in receptacles.

Friends of Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge

The Friends of Laguna Atascosa Refuge is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to advocate for and support the mission and goals of the Refuge. They are comprised of a board of directors, a part-time nature store manager, and there are opportunities to become more involved as volunteers. This nonprofit group operates and receives all proceeds from the nature store located in the Refuge visitor center. The Friends also host an annual fundraising event, the Ocelot Soiree, which is the purpose of which is to advocate for and support the mission and goals of the Refuge. They are comprised of a board of directors, a part-time nature store manager, and there are opportunities to become more involved as volunteers. This nonprofit group operates and receives all proceeds from the nature store located in the Refuge visitor center. They can become more involved as volunteers.

Alligator Safety

1. Always keep a safe distance from alligators and do not approach an alligator.
2. If you encounter an alligator, back away slowly and make no sudden moves.
3. Do not feed alligators. If fed, they can become aggressive toward people. You could be at risk for this action.
4. Alligators are typically found in freshwater, but they can move over land.
5. Keep a close eye on pets and small children.

Lake (part of the Bahia Grande Unit) can be accessed at the Jaime Zapata Memorial Boat Ramp, Fishing Pier and Kayak Launch south of Port Isabel on State Highway 48. Please keep our waters clean and properly dispose of your trash and fishing line. If you are using a boat in shallow waters with seagrass, remember to Lift, Drift, Pole or Troll to avoid uprooting the seagrass.

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www.friendsoflagunaatascosa.org or call 956/748-3607 x112.

The Beaches of the South Padre Island Unit are great for surf fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. San Martin

Drift, Pole or Troll to avoid uprooting the seagrass.

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