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
22817 Ocelot Road (Mailing)
22885 Buena Vista Road (Physical & GPS)
Los Fresnos, Texas  78566
956/748-2044, ext 111 (Visitor Center)
www.fws.gov/refuge/laguna_atascosa

956/748-2044 (entrance and camping fees apply for this area, call 956/748-3607, ext 111 (Visitor Center)
Los Fresnos, Texas  78566
22688 Buena Vista Road (Physical & GPS)
22817 Ocelot Road (Mailing)
For information).

Watch for chiggers, ticks and rattlesnakes by staying on trails. Do not feed wildlife. Metal detectors are not allowed.

For your safety and comfort

Avoid chiggers, ticks and rattlesnakes by staying on trails.

Prepare 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.

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.

Feder 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**
There are several short, loop trails that visitors may walk (see map insert). These trails are accessible and offer several wildlife viewing areas, native plants, and are great for seeing butterflies and forest birds. The Mesquite Trail is a 1.5-mile loop dirt trail that passes by historic El Granjeno Cemetery.

**Lakeside Drive**—1.5 miles, paved and gravel, 15 miles-paved, Currently pedestrians, bicycles and Refuge tour vehicles only. (plan to reopen to private vehicles after construction completed)

This loop winds through thornscrub forest, coastal prairies, freshwater wetlands and along the Laguna Madre shoreline. Plover Point Boardwalk allows you to view the Laguna Madre and is a great place to see shorebirds. Redhead Ridge Overlook gives you a 360 degree view, including Bayside Lake and Laguna de los Patos. Wildlife sightings may include aplomado falcons, white-tailed deer, Texas tortoise, osprey, great blue heron, roseate spoonbills, reddish egret, crested caracara, Harris’ hawk and non-native nilgai antelope. One mile south of Redhead Ridge Overlook gives you the option to continue north on Center Line Trail, and in 0.3 miles you will reach the 1.7 mile trailhead of Moranco Blanco Trail which offers hikers and bikers a great view of the freshwater. The lower end of West Lake Trail is one of the most scenic trails on the refuge. It takes you through coastal prairie, the western shoreline of Laguna Atascosa lake, two brushy lomas and numerous freshwater wetlands during wet years. Great for water birds and raptors.

**Hiking and Biking Trails Open Fall/Winter Only (except during hunting seasons)—all are dirt**

**Upper West Lake Trail**—6.3 miles
The upper end of West Lake Trail follows the northern Cayo Atascosa.

**Kidney Pond Trail**—2.5 miles, dirt, Passes by a small pond that generally has an alligator.

**Giant Palm Trail**—3 miles
Island Fields Trail—2 miles
Mud Trail—5 miles
Stump Pond Trail—1.9 miles
South Boundary Trail—8 miles
Eva Thompson Trail—1.2 miles
Horse Island Trail—3.7 miles
North Point Trail—3.5 miles

**Laguna Aves Trail**—1.5 miles
This trail connects the Laguna Madre shoreline to the refuge. Paved and gravel, 1 mile-paved, 3 miles-dirt. Hike and bike rack and entrance fee station are located here. From the refuge visitor center. The Friends also sponsor the Save Texas Ocelots specialty license plate, and offer an Adopt-an-Ocelot program. Funds raised through these programs are used to protect ocelot habitat, for research and monitoring of ocelots and to raise the public’s awareness of endangered ocelots. For more information visit: www.friendsoflagunaatascosa.org or call 956/748-3007 x112.

**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 receive a fine 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.

**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 November and January. Hunting areas will be closed to visitors during hunts. To apply go to tpwd.texas.gov/drawnhunts.

**Fishing**
The refuge offers fishing opportunities and boat access on the Arroyo Colorado at Adolph Thomae Jr. County Park in Arroyo City (the county has an entrance fee for this area, call 956/748-2044 for information). The beaches of the South Padre Island Unit are great for surf fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. San Martin 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, Drill, Pole or Troll to avoid uprooting the seagrass.

**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—our 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. 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.

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