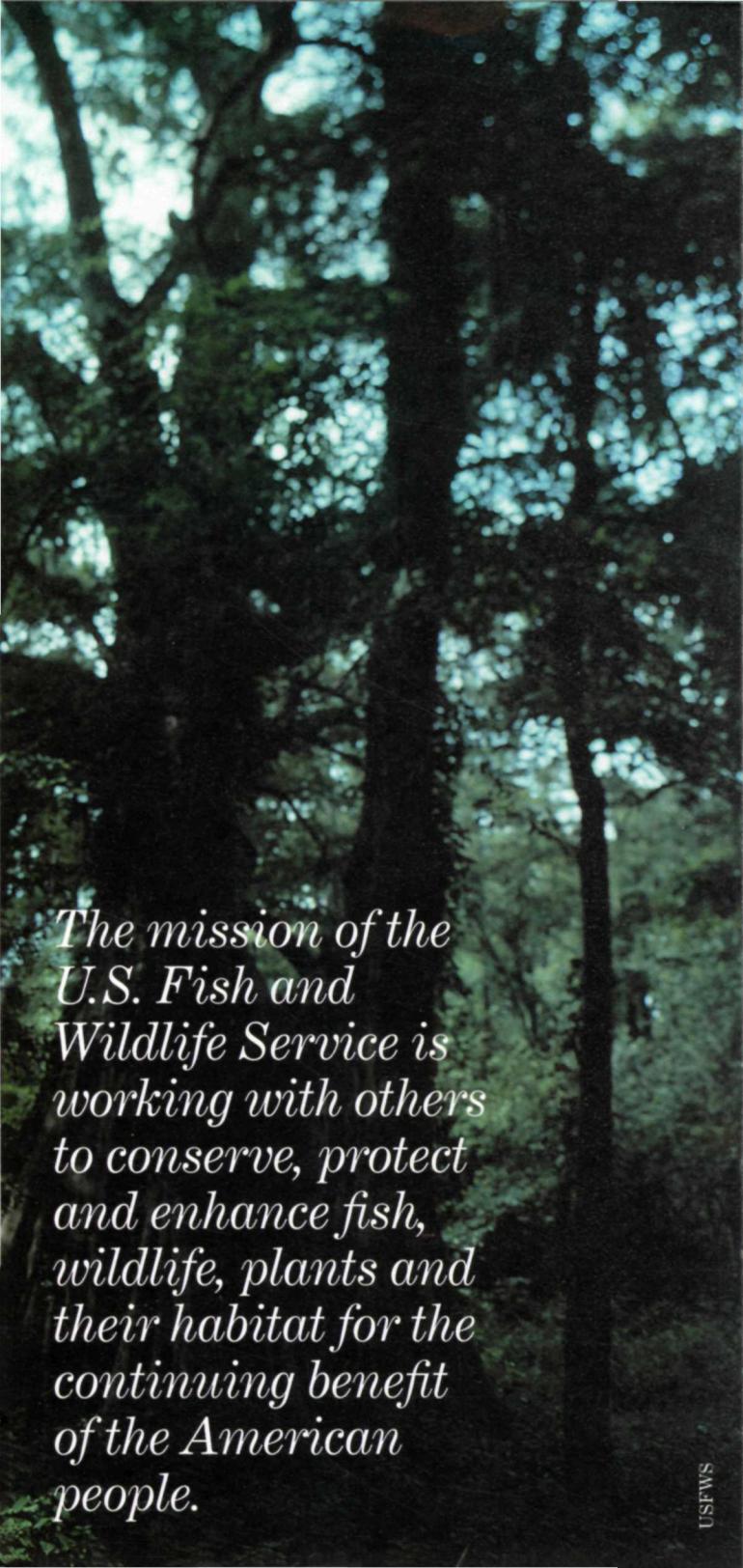


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Cat Island

*National Wildlife
Refuge*





The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitat for the continuing benefit of the American people.



This blue goose, designed by J.N. Ding Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Introduction

Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge was established in October 2000 as the 526th refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System. It is located near the town of St. Francisville, Louisiana, which is 25 miles north of Baton Rouge.

The refuge was established to conserve, restore, and manage native forested wetland habitats for migratory birds, aquatic resources, and endangered and threatened plants and animals. Additionally, it was created to encourage the use of volunteers and facilitate partnerships among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, local communities, and conservation organizations to promote public awareness of resources of the refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

In 2000, about 9,500 acres of forested wetlands were purchased by The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana for eventual purchase by the Fish and Wildlife Service. To date, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has provided funding to acquire about 2,350 acres. The Congressionally-approved acquisition boundary is 36,500 acres.



Mike Boylan

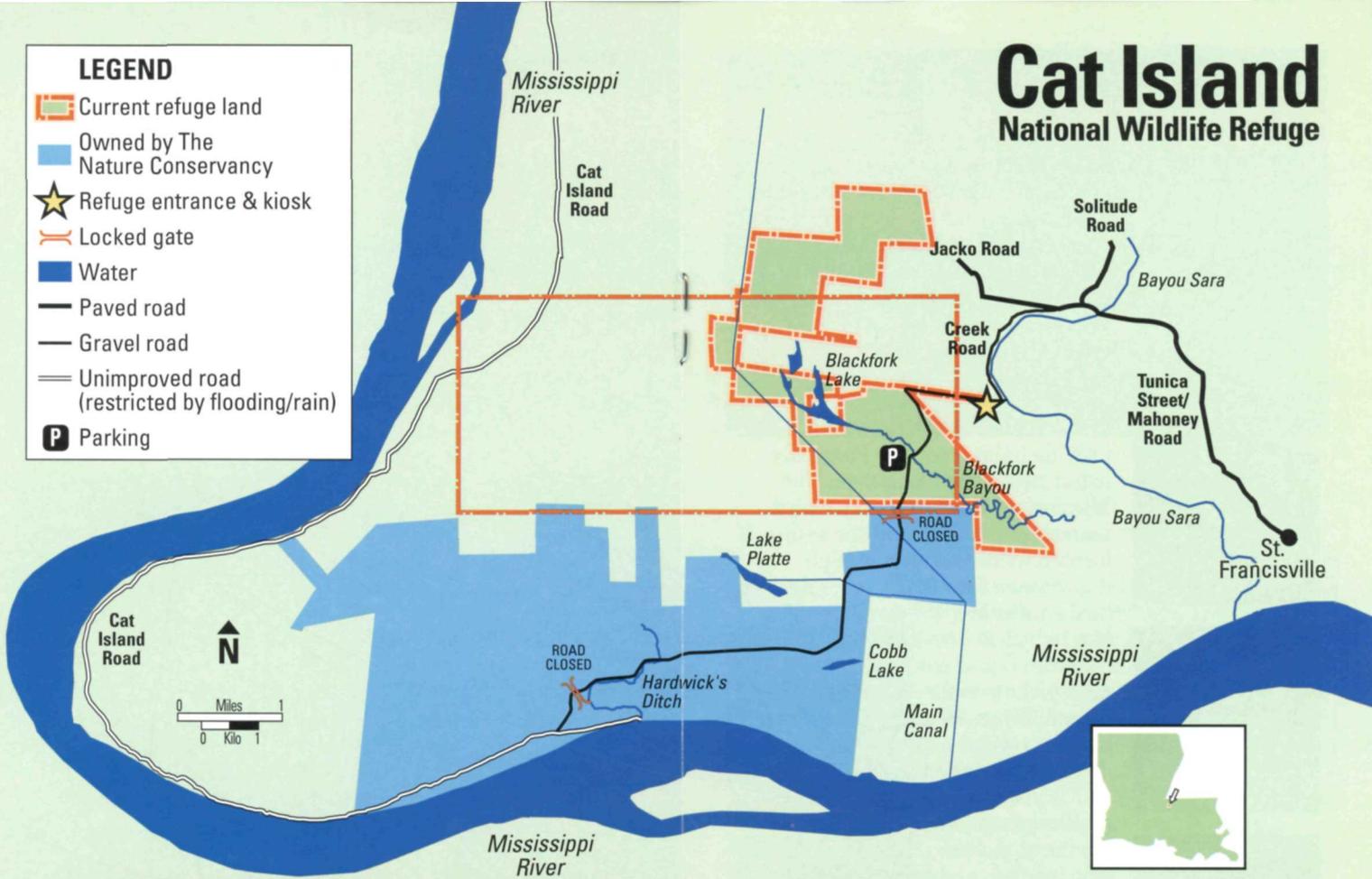
Above: great egret; left: Champion bald cypress tree

Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge is along the southern-most unleveed portion of the lower Mississippi River and completely floods in most years. The river may rise several times during the year beginning in late December through June. Some areas of the refuge receive more than 15 feet of water. Access to the refuge road is restricted when the Mississippi River reaches 23 feet (Baton Rouge river gauge). As the river rises, the refuge becomes closed to all vehicular access. River levels can be checked at "www.srh.noaa.gov/lmrfc" or by checking Baton Rouge's newspaper, "The Advocate."

Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge

LEGEND

-  Current refuge land
-  Owned by The Nature Conservancy
-  Refuge entrance & kiosk
-  Locked gate
-  Water
-  Paved road
-  Gravel road
-  Unimproved road (restricted by flooding/rain)
-  Parking



Wildlife

The refuge is home to many fish, wildlife and plant resources. As Mississippi River floodwaters recede from the refuge in the spring, water and fish remain in oxbow lakes and depressed areas in the swamp. Fish species known to occur include largemouth bass, bream, catfish, crappie, buffalo, and alligator gar. The Federally listed endangered pallid sturgeon is known to occur in the Mississippi River in Louisiana.

The forested wetlands of the refuge provide habitat for the Federally listed Louisiana black bear. The Mississippi River is a major bird migration corridor and the refuge is located within an area of high importance for neotropical migratory birds, including the swallow-tailed kite, which is a species of special concern. Other wildlife found in the area include white-tailed deer, bobcat, river otter, mink, wild turkey, black-crowned night-heron, wood duck, blue-winged teal, woodcock, solitary sandpiper, greater yellowlegs, prothonotary warbler, northern parula, pileated woodpecker, and green treefrog.

Habitat

Several habitat types including overcup oak-bitter pecan, hackberry-elm-ash, nuttall oak-ash-sweetgum, and shrub-scrub swamp occur on the refuge. While baldcypress trees are found throughout the area, there are stands of old growth cypress-tupelo present. Many of the baldcypress trees are estimated to be 500 to 1,000 years old. In fact, the Grand National Champion baldcypress, which is also the largest tree of any species east of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, is located within the acquisition boundary. Public access to the tree will be permitted beginning in mid-2002.



USFWS



USFWS



Paul Davidson

*Top: spider;
middle: yellow-crowned night-heron;
bottom: black bear*



James C. Leupold



USFWS



Dane Menhe

*Top: white-tailed deer;
middle: milkweed;
bottom: wood ducks*

Public Use

Public use opportunities such as wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, hunting, and fishing will eventually be available for the public on the refuge. The refuge will be open for activities such as hiking, birdwatching, and photography in fall 2001. Hunting and fishing will be available in fall 2002.

The refuge headquarters office is located at 5720 Commerce Street in St. Francisville Inn and is open on weekdays.

Refuge Regulations

Daylight use only.

Unleashed pets are not permitted on the refuge.

Littering on the refuge is prohibited.

Firearms are prohibited.

Vehicles with a wheel-tire combination having a radius of 17 inches or more are prohibited.

All vehicles are restricted to public roads and designated parking areas. No parking is allowed on refuge roads.

Camping and open fires are prohibited on the refuge.

No overnight parking.

All-terrain vehicle (ATV) use on the refuge is prohibited.

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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September 2001



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