

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Grand Cote

National Wildlife Refuge



Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge is one of over 500 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to "administer a national network of lands for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."



*Grand Cote
National
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Refuge*



This blue goose, designed by "Ding" Darling, has become the symbol of the Refuge System.

The National Wildlife Refuge System
Unmatched anywhere in the world, the National Wildlife Refuge System is an extensive network of lands and waters protected and managed especially for wildlife and its habitat.

This unique system encompasses over 92 million acres of land and water from north of the Arctic Circle in Alaska to the subtropical waters of the Florida Keys and beyond to the Caribbean and South Pacific. The lands managed as Grand Cote NWR are a part of this system.

Introduction

Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1989 to provide habitat for northern pintails and other wintering waterfowl as part of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Located in Avoyelles Parish in east central Louisiana, this 6,000-acre refuge is not only home to wintering waterfowl, but also to many other wildlife species.

Grand cote is cajun-french for a big hill, and describes the refuge's most distinguishing geographical feature: a large bluff along its northern boundary. The land below the grand cote is a natural sump bordered by the higher ridges of the Red River on the north and east and by terraced uplands on the west and south. The refuge was once part of a vast bottomland hardwood forest that stretched along the Mississippi River. Much of this forestland, including what would become Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge, was cleared for agriculture in the early 1970's.

Wildlife Residents

Prior to clearing, this productive bottomland hardwood ecosystem provided ideal habitat for forest wildlife, but the shift toward agriculture and open marsh has made it more attractive to a wide variety of

*Cover photo:
Northern Pintail*



Snowgeese

waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds.

Because of its location in east-central Louisiana, Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge is influenced by both the Mississippi and Central Flyways. The large expanses of converted wetlands draw a diversity of waterfowl species. During the fall and winter months migratory waterfowl can be found throughout the refuge. Northern pintails, mallards, and green-winged teal are the dominant species. At times, wood ducks, blue-winged teal, northern shovelers, gadwall, and widgeon are abundant. Primary diving ducks are ring-necked ducks and lesser scaup. Occasionally, Canada geese are seen, flocks of snow and white-fronted geese also use the refuge habitats. As other waterfowl begin the trip back north, wood ducks begin nesting on the refuge.



Shorebirds

As spring arrives, the warmer weather finds migratory songbirds ending a long journey from Central and South America. A variety of neotropical migratory songbirds take advantage of the bayous, scattered forests, and open marshland provided by Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge. Shorebirds and wading birds such as spotted sandpiper;



Moist soil habitat



Environmental education

great blue herons, and egrets can be observed feeding and resting along the shallow waters and mudflats.

Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge is also a year-round home for a number of amphibians, fish, insects, and reptiles. Mammals found here include white-tailed deer, raccoon, river otters, beavers, nutria, and rabbits. Species of concern that have been known to use the refuge include peregrine falcons and bald eagles.

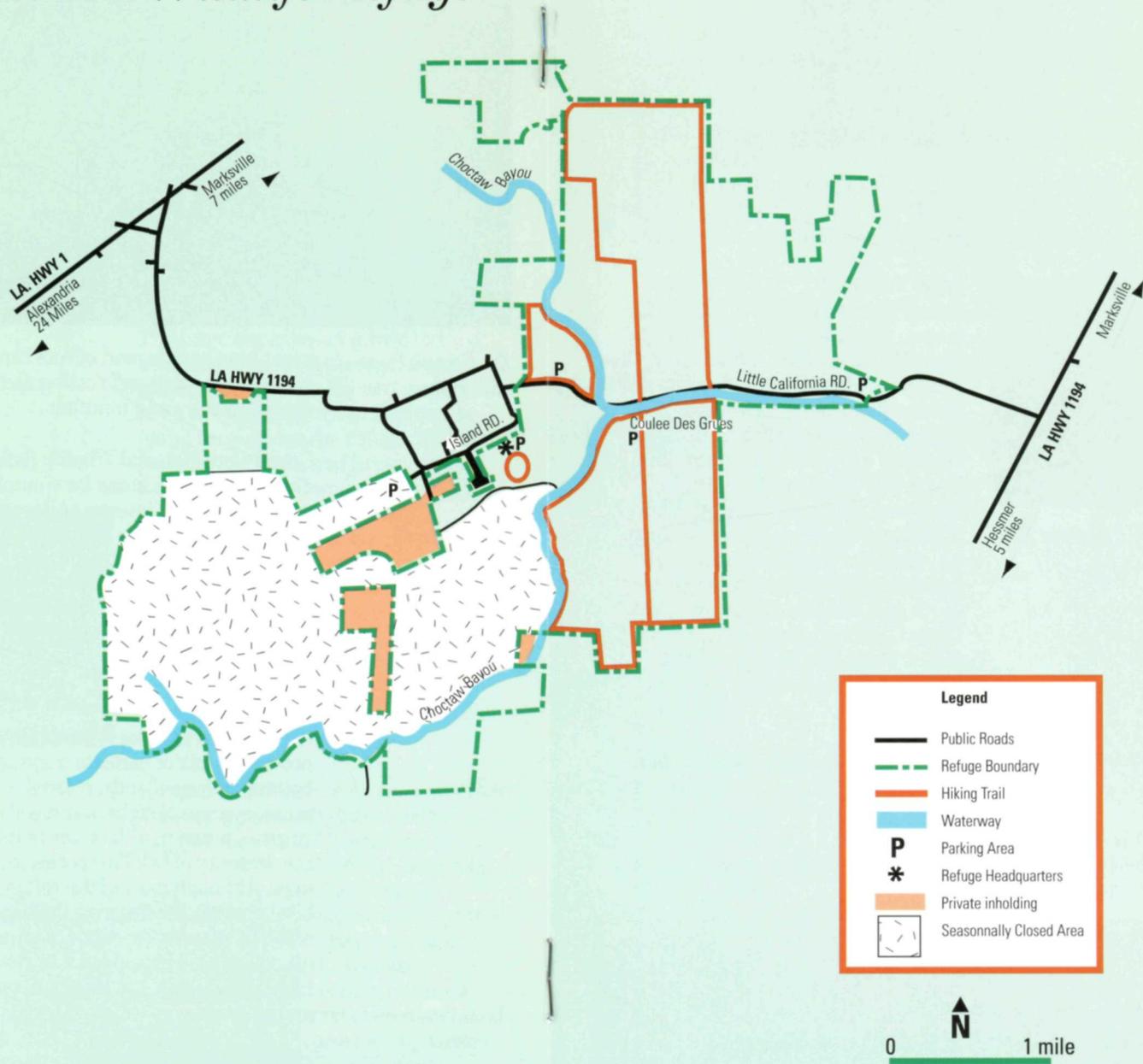
Providing Habitat

Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge provides a mix of habitats (remnant bottomland woodlands, reforested areas, cypress sloughs, moist soil areas, croplands, and mudflats) that supports the diversity of wildlife species found here. Although most of the refuge has been cleared, banks along the bayou and a few isolated sections of forest contain typical bottomland hardwood tree species such as a variety of oaks and cypress.

Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge's most important contribution to restoring and conserving the Lower Mississippi Valley ecosystem is providing large expanses of shallow open wetland for

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Crawfish harvest

wintering waterfowl, particularly northern pintails. To provide these shallow wetlands, the refuge uses a series of levees and water control structures. These improvements allow refuge

managers to produce natural moist soil plants that can be flooded in the winter to benefit waterfowl.



Wildflowers

Enjoy Your Visit

Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge is open year-round from daylight to dark. Portions of the refuge are seasonally closed due to flooding and to reduce disturbance to wildlife. The headquarters is located on Louisiana Highway 1194, 3.9 miles from the junction of Highway 1194 and Louisiana Highway 1 in Fifth Ward. Highway 1194 becomes Island Road 0.5 mile from the headquarters. An alternate route from Marksville is south on Louisiana Highway 115 to Little California Road, 3.3 miles to Island Road, the headquarters is located 0.5 mile left from the intersection.

The office is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 4:00 pm.

The best time for seeing wildlife is early in the morning or at dusk.

Waterfowl using flooded marsh





Hunting

The refuge is closed to all hunting.



Fishing

The refuge is open year-round for fishing only in the Coulee Des Grues along Little California Road. A popular month-long crawfishing season is opened in late spring. See refuge fishing brochure for more information.



Wildlife Observation/Photography

Wildlife observation and photography opportunities are available throughout the year. There are a number of hiking trails accessible from designated parking areas. Waterfowl can be seen during the winter months and migratory songbirds, shorebirds and wading birds during the spring and summer.



Environmental Education

Environmental education is a very important refuge program. Programs and tours can be arranged by contacting the refuge headquarters in advance for school and group programs and tours.



Pets

Pets must be on a leash at all times.



Firearms

Firearms are prohibited on the refuge at all times.



Overnight Parking and Camping

Overnight parking and camping are not permitted on the refuge.



Access

All vehicles must stay on public roads and parking areas. ATV's are not permitted on the refuge.



Fires

Fires are not permitted on the refuge.

photos: USFWS



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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