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St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge Visitor's Center
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601-442-6696

Bayou Cocodrie National Wildlife Refuge
3391 Poole Road,
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Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge Visitor's Center
21 Pintail Lane, Hattiesburg, MS 39120
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Lower Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuges



Northeast Louisiana: Outdoor Series

The Lower Mississippi River Refuge Complex includes St. Catherine Creek, Bayou Cocodrie and Cat Island National Wildlife Refuges. All three are within 5 miles of the Mississippi River. From loess bluffs to cypress swamps, each refuge has its own unique landscape. These lands were set aside

to allow our nation's wildlife to thrive, but, you can experience the refuges by hiking or paddling on designated trails listed in this brochure. Both activities offer a safe way to learn and observe nature in the Miss-Lou area. All trail distances are round trip unless stated otherwise.

Exploring the Lower Mississippi River Refuge Complex

All-Terrain Vehicle Trails

Many trails on all three refuges are marked for ATV use during hunting seasons, from September through February. This should not steer hikers away. Hikers are encouraged to explore designated hiking trails as well as ATV trails year-round.

Signage

All trails and boundary areas are clearly marked. Hikers should pay close attention to signs. Be safe, respect wildlife, please pack out what you pack in, and leave no trace.

Hunter Orange

National wildlife refuges welcome many different kinds of use, and one of those uses is hunting. For that reason, hikers are encouraged to wear hunter orange during hunting seasons. Hunting is not allowed on some trails but hikers should be aware of hunting seasons and share the space with other users.

Canoeing the Refuges

Canoeing and kayaking are great ways to explore the beautiful lakes and bayous on St. Catherine Creek, Cat Island and Bayou Cocodrie National Wildlife Refuges.

River Stages

St. Catherine Creek and Cat Island National Wildlife Refuges are not protected by levees from flooding on the Mississippi River. Lakes and some trails on these refuges are not accessible during flood events. Call the refuge headquarters or go to refuge websites to see if the lakes are accessible.

Personal Flotation Devices

The use of personal flotation devices is highly recommended. By state law, all watercraft **must** carry at least one personal flotation device. All children 12 years and under are required to wear a personal flotation device.

Waterfowl Hunting

Waterfowl hunting is allowed on Butler Lake and Gilliard Lake Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays during the state waterfowl season. Hunting is allowed until 12 noon on these days. Those canoeing and kayaking should be aware of open hunting seasons.



Acknowledgements:

The Northeast Louisiana Outdoor Series is a project of the agritourism program at the LSU AgCenter. www.lsuagcenter.com/agritourism



Blackfork Walking Trail
Distance: 2.5 miles

The Blackfork Walking Trail, created and maintained by the Louisiana Hiking Club, winds its way through the cypress forest of Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge. The trail, marked by white diamonds, is an easy walk over relatively flat terrain. The trail starts from the refuge road, 1.7 miles from the main gate, with parking across from the trailhead. Less than a mile from the trailhead, the trail splits around a short loop following Blackfork Bayou. Blackfork Walking Trail passes by spectacular, large old-growth cypress trees. The trail is in a no hunting area. Rubber or waterproof footwear is recommended.

Photos by Owen Donohue, Photo by OSWS

Blackfork Walking Trail
4

Bayou Cocodrie Nature Trail
Distance: 1.2 miles

The Bayou Cocodrie Nature Trail is a hiking and learning trail. Leaving from the refuge headquarters, this out-and-back trail features signs with interesting facts about the local wildlife such as wood ducks, cottonmouths, white-tailed deer and woodpeckers. The trail joins with a boardwalk that takes hikers to a large bald-cypress tree and observation deck over the bayou. In that area, benches provide an excellent spot to bird watch or listen to the sounds of nature.

Photos by Owen Donohue, Photo by Bob Strader

Bayou Cocodrie Nature Trail
3

Cabin Road Hiking Trail
Distance: 4.5 miles

The Cabin Road Hiking Trail is an ATV trail that also is frequented by hikers. This trail runs along the base of the loess bluffs and through a variety of habitats, including a cypress swamp. This trail passes through a diversity of habitats, including a cypress swamp. This trail is flat and accessible to all abilities. It begins at the end of Cabin Road and runs 2.2 miles until reaching a small clearing. It is a great trail for hikers and bikers looking to explore St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge.

Photo by Owen Donohue

Cabin Road Hiking Trail
2

Magnolia Trail
Distance: 8.3 miles

The Magnolia Trail is designated a National Recreation Trail. It is a complex of trails that are a great hiking and learning experience for visitors of all ages. The trail passes through a diversity of southwest Mississippi habitats including loess bluffs and native wetlands. Highlights include a cypress overlook, observation deck and photography blind. Benches along the trail provide opportunities to rest and watch wildlife. The trail also features "animal olympics" beginning at the north trailhead. It provides 14 stations with activities for children to walk and play while learning about local wildlife. Bird watchers will find a variety of habitats within a half mile of the south trailhead. The trail is in a no hunting zone.

Photo by Owen Donohue

Magnolia Trail
1

Exploring the Lower Mississippi River Refuge Complex

5

Big Cypress Trail

Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge

Distance: 1.5 miles

The Big Cypress Trail is a short out-and-back trail through a unique mixture of bottomland hardwood forest. The destination is the National Champion Bald Cypress tree, an extraordinary landmark to the state of Louisiana. It is the largest tree east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Parking is located at the trail head, 4.6 miles from the main gate. This easy, short walk guides you to a boardwalk and platform where hikers can view this natural landmark.



Trail

Refuge Road



Photo by Chairman Cagle



Photo by Owen Donahue



Photo by USFWS



6

Gilliard Lake

St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge

Gilliard Lake is a beautiful cypress lake. This maze of trees provides spectacular views of large cypress trees, as well as many opportunities for wildlife observation. The lake is frequented by great blue heron, great egrets and alligators. The lake has an easily accessible boat ramp and parking area off Gilliard Lake Road. Gilliard Lake is an extraordinary natural area that is perfect for canoeing and kayaking. Refer to the refuge website for a map.



Photo by Chairman Cagle

7

Butler Lake

St. Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge

Butler Lake is another great opportunity for canoeing and kayaking. This lake is open and provides visitors with bountiful opportunities to view wildlife. The northern end of the lake connects to "old" St. Catherine Creek, which is perfect for paddling. The boat launch and parking area are easily accessible from Hutchins Landing Road. Refer to the refuge website for a map.



Photo by Alex Strader

8

Impoundment Overlook Trail:

Bayou Cocodrie National Wildlife Refuge

This is the shortest trail within the refuge complex. The path quickly leads to a roofed observation deck, where hikers can experience a wide view of the moist-soil impoundments. Refuge staff manages the water levels here to create a haven for migratory birds. Spring and summer months bring wading birds, while fall marks the arrival of several species of ducks. (See map below.)

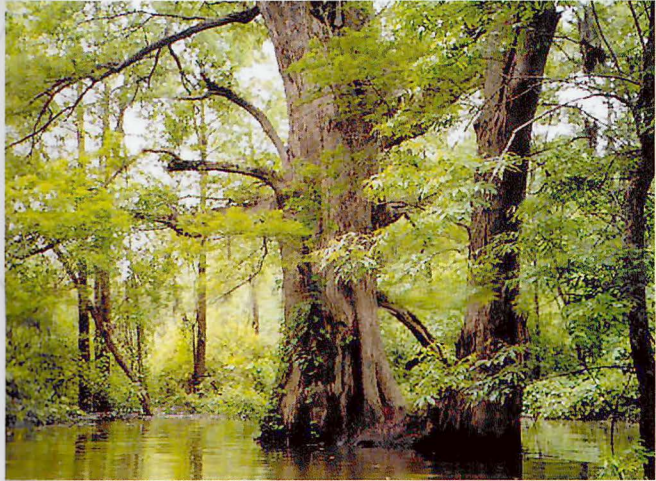


Photo by USFWS



Photo by Alex Strader

9

Bayou Cocodrie Canoe Trail

Bayou Cocodrie National Wildlife Refuge

Distance: 11 miles

Bayou Cocodrie is a state designated scenic stream. The trail starts at the Bayou Cocodrie National Wildlife Refuge's boat ramp and runs to the Wallace Lake check station. The canoe trail features all-weather access points. In between are miles of forest-lined shores featuring huge cypress trees and sections of marsh. The bayou supports excellent fishing and a variety of birds and other wildlife.



Photo by Owen Donahue



Photo by USFWS