

Fishing & Boating

Fishing for both fresh and saltwater species is permitted in accordance with State Regulations (except in Kennedy Space Center security areas). A special permit is required for night fishermen. Permits and additional fishing information can be obtained from the visitor center.

Motor boats may be used for fishing, hunting and other recreational uses. Boat speed regulations are in effect in several areas for manatee protection. Nonmotorized vessels only are allowed in the northern portion of the Banana River.

One of the best ways for viewing Merritt Island is by canoe. Information on canoeing and boating can be obtained from the visitor center.

Hunting

Waterfowl hunting for ducks and coots is permitted in areas designated in accordance with the refuge hunt leaflet. A refuge permit, state license, and state and federal stamps are required. All state and refuge regulations apply.

Limited Activities

Portions of the refuge may be closed from time to time due to NASA's launch activities. Camping is not allowed. All recreational use is limited to daylight hours. All plants, animals and historic artifacts are protected.

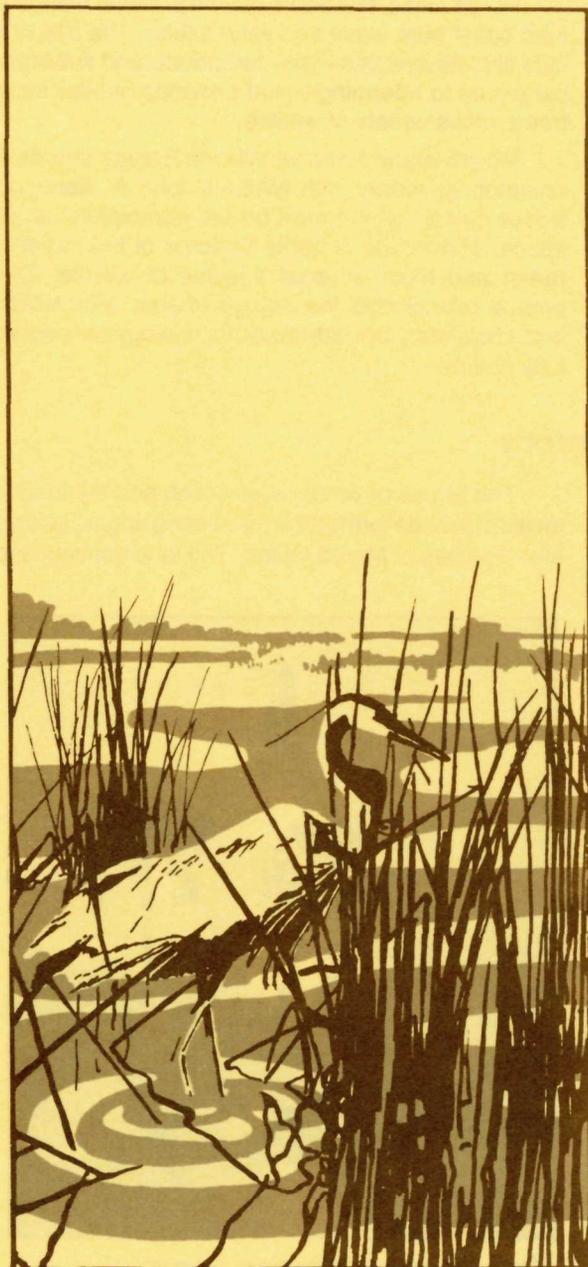
Tips on Visiting

Spring, fall and winter are the best times for visiting the refuge. During these times wildlife populations are highest, and the weather is most cooperative. During the summer (June - August), you may experience biting insects, high temperatures and frequent showers. Information on motels, campgrounds and restaurants can be obtained by contacting the Titusville Chamber of Commerce at (407) 267-3036.

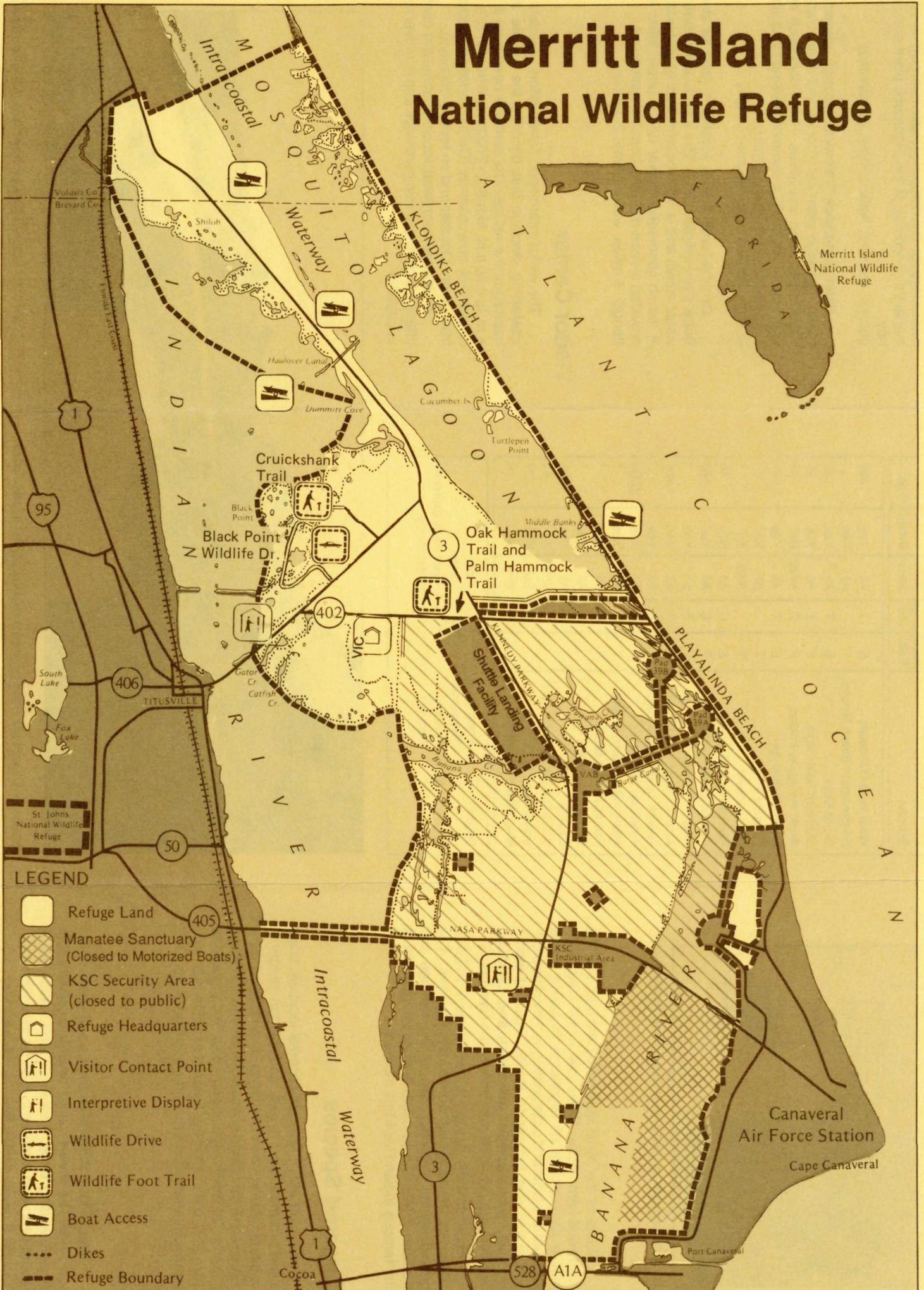
Information

Additional information may be obtained by writing: Refuge Manager, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box 6504, Titusville, Florida 32782.
Phone - (407) 861-0667
Office Hours - 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge



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LEGEND

-  Refuge Land
-  Manatee Sanctuary (Closed to Motorized Boats)
-  KSC Security Area (closed to public)
-  Refuge Headquarters
-  Visitor Contact Point
-  Interpretive Display
-  Wildlife Drive
-  Wildlife Foot Trail
-  Boat Access
-  Dikes
-  Refuge Boundary

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

Canaveral Air Force Station
Cape Canaveral

St. Johns National Wildlife Refuge

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

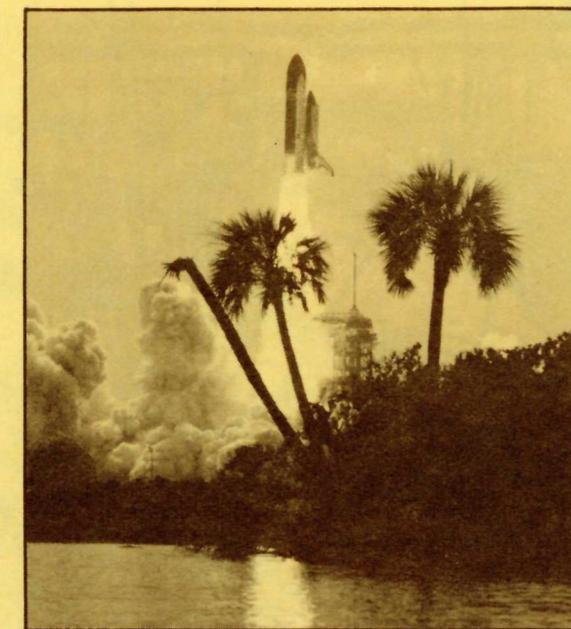
Since its gradual emergence from the sea about one million years ago - to the space age, Merritt Island has remained a unique natural area.

For 25 miles, this barrier island protects Florida's east coast from wave and wind action. The island's mild climate enables many temperate and subtropical plants to intermingle and provides habitat for a tremendous variety of wildlife.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge shares a common boundary with NASA's John F. Kennedy Space Center where man began the exploration of space. The refuge is home to some of the nation's rarest and most unusual species of wildlife. The unique relationship the refuge shares with NASA bears testimony that nature and technology can peacefully coexist.

History

The forces of wind, wave action and fluctuating levels of the sea formed the alternating ridges, swales and marshes of Merritt Island. The land continues to



Where Nature and Technology co-exist

change as natural forces constantly shape and sculpture the island.

Over the millennium, human occupation of the island has ebbed and flowed. Archaeological data suggest that the island was occupied by at least seven distinct Indian cultures beginning as early as 7000 BC. Their burial mounds and shell middens remain today as mute reminders of their past civilizations. Spanish explorers, British colonists, pioneer citrus growers and civil war troops all contributed to Merritt Island's history.

Despite man's early attempts at settlement, the forbidding marshes and the ever-present salt marsh mosquito kept the island largely undeveloped until the early 1960's. At that time NASA began acquiring the area for what was to become the John F. Kennedy Space Center.

In 1963, when acquisition was complete, NASA turned over those portions of the Center not critical to Space Program operations to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; thus, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge was established. Today, most of the 220 square mile reserve is managed by the Department of the Interior as a National Wildlife Refuge and National Seashore.

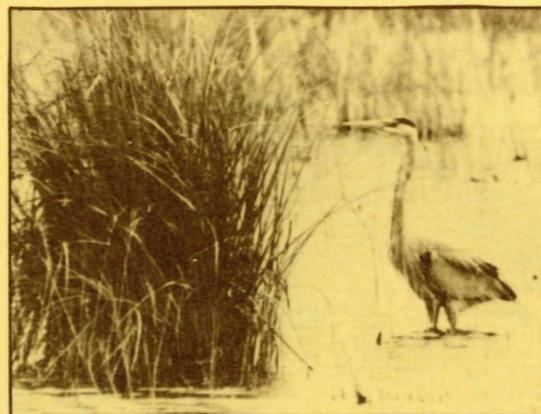
Habitats for Wildlife

A wide variety of habitats exist on the refuge, ranging from freshwater impoundments and vast saltwater estuaries to brackish marshes. Gradually, the marshes give way to hardwood hammocks and pine flatwoods. This diverse landscape provides habitat for more than 330 species of birds, 31 mammals, 117 fishes and 65 amphibians and reptiles.

The open water provides wintering areas for 23 species of migratory waterfowl and a year-round home for great blue herons, great egrets, wood storks, cormorants, brown pelicans, white pelicans and other species of marsh and shore birds.

The most diversified wildlife areas are the marshes. These shallow water grasslands harbor a myriad of snails, crabs, worms, clams and fish which attract animals higher in the food chain such as shore birds, wading birds, raptors and alligators.

In 1993, a marsh restoration project was initiated that will reconnect many of the refuge impoundments to the Indian or Banana River. This project will help create greater wildlife diversity in the refuge salt marshes.



Marshes provide an important link in the food chain

Some of the most interesting habitats are the hardwood hammocks. These low, moist areas support a lush growth of vegetation including many unusual air plants and a fascinating variety of tropical, subtropical and temperate plants. Pileated woodpeckers, gray squirrels, armadillos and migratory warblers are common residents of the hammocks.

Approximately 1,500 of the refuge's 140,000 acres are managed as active citrus groves. The groves are an important part of the heritage and tradition of Merritt Island and form an integral part of the famous Indian River fruit industry.

Endangered Species

Blessed with a favorable coastal location, tropical-like climate and a vast and diverse range of habitats, Merritt Island remains unsurpassed as a refuge for endangered species. Currently, the refuge supports 21 wildlife species listed as Endangered or Threatened on either the Federal or State lists, and this is more than any other single refuge in the U.S.

Trails

Black Point Wildlife Drive is a self-guided auto tour route. The drive is routed through excellent areas to see wading birds, shorebirds and waterfowl. A leaflet describes features to look for along the trail. (length: 6 miles, driving time: 30-60 minutes)

Endangered Species	Status		Sea-sons	Breed	Peak Pop.
	Fed	St			
West Indian Manatee	E	T	All	Yes	366
Southeastern Beach Mouse	T		All	Yes	*
Wood Stork	E	T	All	Yes	750
Southern Bald Eagle	E	T	All	Yes	20
Arctic Peregrine Falcon	E	E	SFW	No	35
Florida Scrub Jay	E	T	All	Yes	3,200
Roseate Tern	T		SF	No	*
Piping Plover	T		SFW	No	*
Kemps Ridley Turtle	E	E	All	No	10
Atlantic Green Turtle	T	E	All	Yes	160
Atlantic Hawksbill	E	E	s	Yes	*
Atlantic Loggerhead Turtle	T	T	All	Yes	1,800
Atlantic Leatherback Turtle	E	E	Ss	Yes	*
American Alligator	T	T	All	Yes	5,000
Atlantic Salt Marsh Snake	T	E	All	Yes	*
Eastern Indigo Snake	T	T	All	Yes	*
Gopher Tortoise		T	All	Yes	*
Osprey		T	All	Yes	500
Southeastern Kestrel		T	SFW	No	50
Least Tern		T	SsF	Yes	1,000
Magnificent Frigatebird		T	sFW	No	10

Legend	E - Endangered	F - Fall
	T - Threatened	W - Winter
	S - Spring	* - Populations Currently Under Study
	s - Summer	

Oak Hammock Trail is an interesting foot trail routed through a subtropical forest. Interpretive signs explain the ecology of the hammock plant community.

(length: 1/2 mile, walking time: 30 minutes)

Palm Hammock Trail winds through hardwood forest, cabbage palm hammocks and open marsh. Boardwalks span wet areas. Palm Hammock and Oak Hammock share a common parking lot located 1 mile east of the visitor center.

(length: 2 miles, walking time: 1 hour)

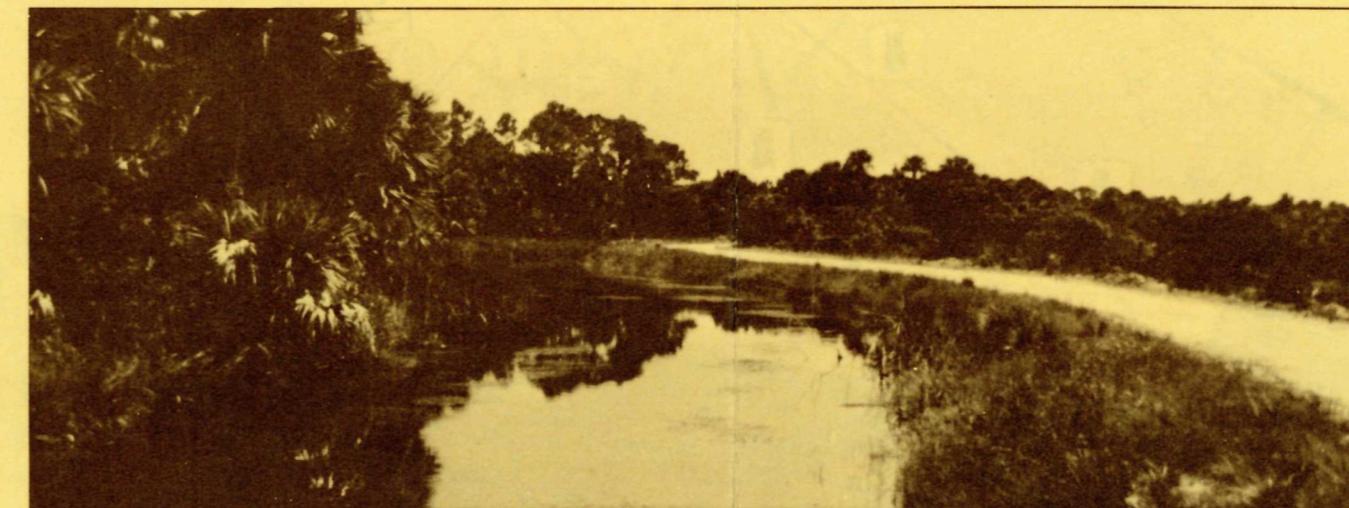
Cruickshank Trail is located at stop #8 along Black Point Wildlife Drive. The trail circles a shallow water marsh and is an excellent place to bird watch. A marsh observation tower and a photo blind are provided a short distance from the parking lot.

(length: 5 miles, walking time: 2-3 hours)

Visitor Center

The visitor information center offers a variety of interesting displays that describe the wildlife and habitats of the refuge. The center is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday, and from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekends. (Center is closed Sundays from April - October and on federal holidays).

A 1/4-mile boardwalk located behind the center offers a look at a mesic hammock and is universally accessible.



Auto tours and foot trails provide close-up views of the refuge