

The Gulf Breeze

National Park Service
Department of the Interior



Padre Island National Seashore
News and Information, 2013



Slipping Away

The Decline of the Park's Colonial Waterbirds

Sea Turtles:
Breaking Records!



Plus....

The Virtual Side of Padre Island

National Seashores: Jewels of the Coasts

A Man and His Island

Gulf Breeze

2013 Edition

An Annual Magazine
Published by:



Welcome

to Padre Island National Seashore!



I hope you enjoy your visit to your national park, a park created to protect the longest stretch of undeveloped barrier island in the world. Our team pledges to give a 100% effort in carrying out this goal, and we hope that you have an outstanding experience as you explore and enjoy this national treasure.

This past year, the park celebrated its 50th anniversary. Over 600,000 visitors came to enjoy camping, fishing, boating, swimming, and other activities. Park staff and volunteers presented programs to more than 30,000 students and visitors. Tens of thousands of birds found a safe haven here during their spring and fall migration. And for the second consecutive year, a record number of sea turtle nests were found in Texas.

In 2013, we will continue our commitment to our mission, which is to save and preserve this park, unimpaired, for purposes of public recreation, benefit, and inspiration. I hope you will join and support us in this effort. Be safe and courteous while boating, camping, or otherwise enjoying the park. Watch for children and animals while driving on the beach. Look for and report nesting and stranded sea turtles. And pick up a free trash bag from the visitor center to help clean our beautiful beaches.

Please remember that the National Park Service, visitors, and neighbors are all stewards of this special place, and we must work together to protect and care for the National Seashore so that it may be enjoyed for generations to come.

Joe Escoto, Superintendent

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Padre Island National Seashore

Editor and Layout: Jody L. Mays
Editorial Committee: Joe Escoto, Juan Rodriguez, William Botts, Suzy Murray, Sue Ewan

Padre Island National Seashore

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 181300
Corpus Christi, TX 78480
Physical Address: 20420 Park Road 22
Corpus Christi, TX 78418

Park Information: (361)949-8068

Official Park Website: www.nps.gov/pais

Weather & Beach Conditions: (361)949-8175

Sea Turtle Hatchling Hotline: (361)949-7163

Park Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/pages/Padre-Island-National-Seashore

Sea Turtle Program Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/pages/Padre-Island-NS-Division-of-Sea-Turtle-Science-Recovery

Partners and Concessions

Increasingly, partnerships are an essential and effective means for the National Park Service to fulfill parts of our mission and foster a shared sense of stewardship that is so crucial for our future. Padre Island National Seashore would like to thank its partners for the continued services they have offered to the park's visitors throughout the years.

Western National Parks Association Nature Store, located inside Malaquite Visitor Center, is a nonprofit partner of the park that provides support for park programs using proceeds from sales of educational books, t-shirts, DVDs, and other items. For more information, visit their website at www.wnpa.org or call (361)949-8068.

Island Seashore Gift Shop, located at the Malaquite Pavilion, is a general concessions store with snacks, ice, souvenirs, and other items. For more information, call (361)949-9368.

Worldwinds Windsurfing, Inc., located at Bird Island Basin's windsurfing area, offers windsurfing lessons and equipment rental for windsurfing and kayaking. For more information, visit their website at www.worldwinds.net or call (361)949-7472.

In this Issue

Superintendent's Greeting.....	2
Things to Do.....	3
On the Wing.....	5
Sea Turtles: Breaking Records!.....	6
Shark Bite Games: Tall Turtle Tales.....	7
Park Map.....	8
Slipping Away: The Decline of the Park's Colonial Waterbirds...	10
Shark Bite Games: Waterbird Words.....	11
A Man and His Island.....	12
The Virtual Side of Padre Island.....	13
Shark Bite Games: Picture It!.....	13
National Seashores: Jewels of the Coasts.....	14
Shark Bite Games: Answers.....	14
Top Notch !.....	15
Traveling Down Island: What You Should Know.....	15
Frequently Asked Questions.....	16

On the Cover: Hundreds of white pelicans crowd onto a nesting island as a fledgling ventures out into the Laguna Madre. NPS photo. A newly hatched Kemp's ridley sea turtle begins its trek into the Gulf. NPS photo.

Things to Do



Camping on the beach NPS photo.

Camping

Whether you want to camp on the beach or on the bay, near restrooms and showers or in a remote area, the park has a variety of camping opportunities for tents and RVs. However,

there are no public RV hook-ups anywhere in the park. Malaquite Campground, tucked in the dunes on the Gulf side, is \$8.00/night (in addition to the park entrance fee). It has cold-water showers, flush toilets, picnic tables, shade structures, a gray/black water dump station, a potable water filling station, and paved parking. Bird Island Basin, located along the Laguna Madre Bay, is \$5.00/night or \$10.00 for an annual pass (in addition to the park entrance fee). It has a chemical toilet and gravel parking. Those with Interagency Senior or Access passes get 50% off camping fees. Primitive beach camping, at your own risk, along more than 60 miles of the park's shoreline and at Yarborough Pass is free with your entrance pass. Restrooms and dumpsters are available at Malaquite Pavilion and at the entrance to South Beach. Cold-water showers are available at Malaquite Pavilion and at the northern end of the Malaquite parking lot. Permits are required for all camping. All camping is first-come, first-served (no reservations).

Birdwatching

Over 380 bird species spend part or all of the year in the park. Tens of thousands of birds find a safe rest-

ing place here during spring and fall migration. Birders come from all over the world to see the incredible variety and number of birds in the park. Join a guided bird tour, borrow a pair of binoculars from the visitor center free of charge, and join in the fun of birding.

Boating

Bird Island Basin boat ramp is a popular spot for boaters to access the Laguna Madre. It provides parking spaces for 106 vehicles with trailers, 4 vehicles without trailers, and 4 vehicles with handicapped parking permits. A day use fee of \$5.00/day, or a \$10.00 annual pass, is required (in addition to the park entrance fee).



Launching at Bird Island Basin. NPS photo.

Fishing

Surf fishing is allowed along over 60 miles of park shoreline free with your entrance pass. Anglers can also enjoy fishing by boat or wade fishing at Bird Island Basin for a fee of \$5.00/day or with a \$10.00 annual pass (in addition to the park entrance fee). All anglers must meet Texas fishing license requirements and follow state regulations.



A successful redfish catch. NPS photo.

Attending a Ranger Program

Park Rangers offer a variety of programs, all free of charge! More programs may be offered, and listed programs are subject to change, so call the Visitor Center at (361)949-8068 for more information.

Sand Sculpting

Offered in summer. Learn how to build a beautiful sand castle and sand creatures!

Birding Tour

Offered in fall, winter, & spring. Join us for a 2-3 hour guided driving tour to view a variety of birds! Binoculars & field guides are available for loan. Be prepared to drive your own vehicle since space is limited.



Hidden Treasures

Offered in spring & summer. Catch & release some of the amazing creatures that live in the surf of Padre Island.

Birding Basics

Offered in fall, winter, & spring. Learn birding basics like how to select the right binoculars & where to find different species during this 45 minute program.

Beach Walk

Offered year-round. See what you discover on this easy 45- 60 minute stroll with a ranger.

Junior Ranger

Offered year-round. Earn your own Junior Ranger badge & do some fun activities at your own pace!



Deck Talk

Offered year-round. See & touch some of the strange & wonderful things found in the park during this 30-45 minute program!

Sea Turtle Hatchling Release

Offered in summer. Endangered sea turtle nests found during spring and summer are moved to a protected area until they hatch. When conditions allow, the public is invited to watch the newly hatched turtles as they are released into the wild. Most releases take place at Malaquite Visitor Center early in the morning. To find out more, call the Hatchling Hotline at (361)949-7163.



Things to Do

Windsurfing

Bird Island Basin is one of the most popular windsurfing areas in the country! Conditions in the Laguna Madre are great for the sport. You can bring your own equipment or you can rent equipment and even take lessons at Worldwinds Windsurfing concessionaire. A Bird Island Basin day use fee of \$5.00/day, or a \$10.00 annual pass, is required (in addition to the park entrance fee).

You can also windsurf in the Gulf along the entire shoreline of the park free with your park entrance pass.

Kayaking

Bird Island Basin provides access to the Laguna Madre, a great place for kayaking. Worldwinds Windsurfing concessionaire offers kayaks for rent. A Bird Island Basin day use fee of \$5.00/day, or a \$10.00 annual pass, is required (in addition to the park entrance fee). You can also kayak in the Gulf along the entire shoreline of the park free with your park entrance pass.

Hiking/Walking

Enjoy a relaxing stroll on the beach anywhere along the park's shoreline. Those with wheelchairs can get on the sand with a special beach wheelchair, available free for loan at Malaquite Visitor Center. Try hiking the paved, accessible Grasslands Nature Trail to see the interior, grassy habitats of the park. Or take a walk to the Novillo Line Camp to see where cowboys once gathered cattle.

Swimming

The seashore has more than 65 miles of beachfront where you can swim. Malaquite Beach provides an area closed to vehicles and pets where families can swim without worry. Cold-water rinse showers are available on the Malaquite Beach access ramp, at Malaquite

Pavilion, and at the northern edge of the Malaquite parking lot. Restrooms are at Malaquite Pavilion. There are also chemical toilets at the entrance to South Beach.

Looking for shells

Beachcombing for shells, sea beans, and other items is a relaxing way to enjoy the park's shoreline. If you have a 4-wheel drive vehicle, Little Shell and Big Shell beaches can be especially productive areas for this activity.



Sundial and auger shells. NPS photo.

Discovering

Malaquite Visitor Center has great exhibits on the history and wildlife of the park, brochures on seashells and jellyfish, and other helpful information. Join a Ranger for a guided beach walk or other program, or see if you can earn your own Junior Ranger badge. While there, pick up a free trash bag to help keep the park's beautiful beaches clean.

Picnicking

Picnic tables and shade structures are available at the Malaquite Pavilion, on Malaquite Beach, and at the Picnic Shelter located at the northern edge of the Malaquite parking lot. Feel free to bring your own grill, which can be used on the beach.



Malaquite Pavilion has numerous picnic tables. NPS photo.

Shopping

Visitors can purchase ice, snacks, and other items at the Island Seashore Shop, located at Malaquite Pavilion. Malaquite Visitor Center has educational books, field guides, caps, and other gifts and souvenirs.

Driving on the Beach

Driving on the beach is allowed along more than 60 miles of the park's shoreline. Drive a short distance off the pavement, down to Big Shell beach, or all the way to Port Mansfield Channel. Be aware that driving is at your own risk and most areas require a 4-wheel drive vehicle. All vehicles must meet state highway standards (i.e. no ATVs). To prevent damage to vegetation, driving is limited to the beachfront.



Photo courtesy of Worldwinds Windsurfing, Inc.



Novillo Line Camp. NPS photo.



Malaquite Beach. NPS photo.

On the Wing



Western Sandpipers travel through Padre Island in large numbers during migration. NPS photo.

Located on the Central Flyway for migratory birds, Padre Island National Seashore is a favorite spot for both novice and experienced bird watchers. During fall and spring, thousands of migratory birds intermingle with local birds of the Gulf Coast as they make their long flights across the Americas. The National Seashore is an important place for birds to rest, feed, and, in some cases, to nest. Over 380 species of birds have been known to call the seashore their permanent or temporary home.

During fall, winter, and spring, the beginning bird watcher is welcome to attend a free beginner's class or join a free driving tour to further your knowledge and love of birds. The driving tour goes not only to the shoreline itself, but also to several of the park's wetlands, grasslands, and ponds where birds tend to seek rest and protection from predators. Binoculars and field guides are available for loan.

The National Seashore is quite possibly the most beautiful beach in Texas. The visitor will see the ever present Great Blue Heron scanning the water and the Brown Pelican swooping down into the surf for a fish, while Sander-

lings, Long-billed Curlews, and Gulls patrol the beach.

Located just a short drive from Corpus Christi, the park is a wonderful place to spend a day or more and explore. Padre Island is a great year round destination. Call the Malaquite Visitor Center for more information about bird programs and other activities offered at the park.

- *Chris & Linda Bruce, Volunteers*



Aplomado Falcon. NPS photo.

"A flash of color to our left caught our eye. A young Aplomado Falcon had just made a kill and was now perched on a wall, enjoying the fruits of his labor. This small, swift hunter was showing his best colors of buff, orange, black and white. We shut off the engine and began to watch as he went about his business, seemingly without noticing the human intrusion. In perhaps ten to twenty minutes he had devoured about three-quarters of the prey. To see an Aplomado Falcon, once erased from this country and now coming back, was a wonderful experience."

- *Tom & Karyn Schmitz, Volunteers*

Sea Turtles: Breaking Records!



Nesting Kemp's ridley sea turtle. NPS photo.

The 2012 sea turtle nesting season was busy and exciting! Nests of three species of sea turtles were found on Padre Island National Seashore, including Kemp's ridley, green, and loggerhead sea turtles. We are thrilled to report 2012 was the second consecutive year a record number of Kemp's ridley nests were found in Texas since record-keeping began in 1980. Green sea turtles had a record-breaking year as well, with a total of eight nests found in Texas, six within the park.

Kemp's Ridley Nests

For more than three decades, the National Park Service has worked with several other agencies in the U.S. and Mexico to help save the Kemp's ridley sea turtle from extinction. Kemp's ridley is the world's most endangered sea turtle species, but thanks to the hard work of many people, nesting is increasing and the population is recovering.

During 2012, staff and volunteers patrolled the North Padre Island beachfront to find and protect nests. The public also aided by reporting nesting turtles that they observed. A record 209 Kemp's ridley nests were found in Texas during 2012. Of these, 116 were located on North Padre Island, including 106 at Padre Island National Seashore. More Kemp's ridley nests are consistently found at the National Seashore than any other location in the U.S., making it the most important Kemp's ridley nesting beach in the U.S.

Eggs from nearly all nests found on the Texas coast are retrieved from the beach for protection from natural and human-related threats. Eggs from 102 of the nests found at the National Seashore and northward in Texas were brought to the National Seashore's incubation facility for protected care. Eggs from 35 nests found at the south-

ern end of the National Seashore were transferred to a large, screened enclosure called a corral located near the 40 mile marker. Hatchlings from the National Seashore's incubation facility and corrals were released at the park. Eggs from 67 nests discovered on South Padre Island and Boca Chica Beach were protected in a corral and the hatchlings were released on South Padre Island. Hatchlings from the incubation facility and corrals were guarded during release to help ensure every hatchling safely entered the surf and swam away from shore.

Loggerhead & Green Sea Turtle Nests

Five loggerhead and eight green sea turtle nests were documented on the Texas coast. Loggerhead nests were found on Quintana Beach, South Padre Island, and North Padre Island, including one on Padre Island National Seashore. Of the eight green turtle nests, two were found on South Padre Island and six at the National Seashore. Eggs from one loggerhead nest were protected in a corral on South Padre Island and eggs from the other 12 loggerhead and green turtle nests were brought to the National Seashore incubation facility. Most of the hatchlings were released at the park.



Kemp's ridley hatchlings. NPS photo.

Come Watch the Hatchlings

More than 16,000 Kemp's ridley hatchlings were released on the Texas coast during 2012, most at the National Seashore. Twenty-nine of the hatchling releases held at the National Seashore were open to the public. More than 12,000 people attended these hatchling releases! Many traveled long distances and planned their vacation around the opportunity to watch a release. Releases are held between late-May and late-August in front of the visitor's center at Padre Island National Seashore. No fee is charged to attend. For information on hatchling releases for the 2013 nesting season, visit our website at www.nps.gov/pais/ and call our recorded Hatchling Hotline at (361) 949-7163.

Cold Stunning of Green Sea Turtles

During 2011, 1,923 green turtles were documented stranded in Texas, including nearly 1,600 found “cold stunned” during early February. Cold stunning occurs when severe cold fronts pass through the area, drastically dropping water temperatures. Sea turtles, like other reptiles, cannot regulate their body temperature, and at water temperatures below 50 degrees they become immobilized. They float to the water’s surface or wash ashore and, if not located and protected quickly, often succumb to the elements. Thanks to the hard work of many people, more than 1,000 cold-stunned green turtles were located alive, stabilized, tagged, and released in South Texas waters.



Stranded green sea turtle. NPS photo.

Report Stranded & Nesting Turtles

All reports of nesting and stranded sea turtles are important, even if the turtles are dead. If you find any sea turtle nesting, floating, or washed ashore (alive or dead), please report it immediately by calling 361-949-8173, ext. 226. Please be aware many cold stunned turtles that are still alive will often be motionless and appear to be dead. However, if these turtles are found and taken to a rehabilitation facility quickly, they can be saved and released when temperatures increase.

The green turtle population once thrived in Texas, but numbers began to drop due to severe freezes and over-exploitation during the late 1800’s. The large number of green turtles found stranded during the 2011 cold stunning event is an indicator that, after years of conservation efforts, the juvenile green turtle population is increasing in Texas. Saving turtles during cold stunning events will help with recovery efforts of this threatened species.

- Rosalie Rossi, Division of Sea Turtle Science & Recovery

SHARK BITES

Tiny pygmy sharks are only about 8 inches long! They can emit their own light & can dive a mile deep!



Tall Turtle Tales

SHARK BITE GAMES

See if you can tell which of these are true and which are just “tall tales!”

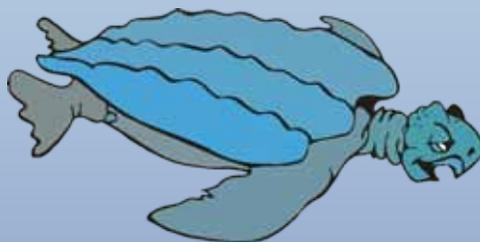
1. The green sea turtle is named after the green algae it eats. TRUE / FALSE

rarely found in water deeper than 65 feet. TRUE / FALSE

2. The Kemp’s ridley is the only sea turtle that comes ashore to nest during the day. TRUE / FALSE

6. Leatherbacks can dive almost 4,000 feet down! TRUE / FALSE

3. One sea turtle nest often has over 100 eggs. TRUE / FALSE



4. Like land turtles, sea turtles can pull their heads into their shells. TRUE / FALSE

7. A sleeping sea turtle must wake up & come to the surface to breathe every 10-15 minutes. TRUE / FALSE

5. Hawksbill sea turtles are

8. The largest sea turtle, which can grow to 8 feet long & weigh 2,000 pounds, eats mostly jellyfish. TRUE / FALSE

9. Loggerhead sea turtles got their name because of their big head! TRUE / FALSE

10. A 1940’s video showed 40,000 sea turtles coming onto the beach at once during one nesting event. TRUE / FALSE

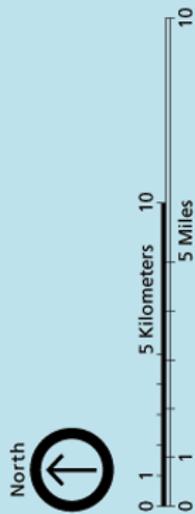
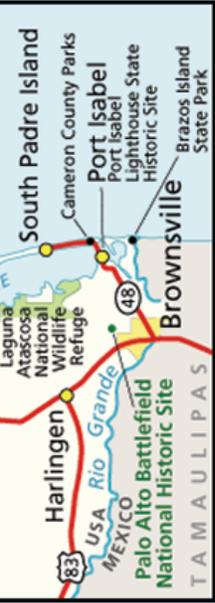


Answers are on page 14

Padre Island National Seashore



National Seashore



- Natural areas within Padre Island National Seashore**
- Beach
 - Dunes
 - Grasslands and flats
 - Other area
 - Tidal flat
 - Spoil area
 - Washover channel
- Facilities**
- Picnic area
 - Boat ramp
 - Showers
 - Wind surfing
 - Campground
 - Primitive campsite



SHARK BITES

The gigantic whale shark, which can grow to over 40 feet long & weigh over 45,000 pounds, eats mostly tiny algae, krill, & plankton!



Slipping Away

The Decline of the Park's Colonial Waterbirds

Padre Island National Seashore is considered second-to-none when it comes to the great diversity and abundance of feathery friends. With over 380 species of birds either visiting or calling this long stretch of island home, the Division of Science and Resources Management takes their role in conservation and protection seriously, and with much pride. A visit to the park lends the opportunity to enjoy watching Brown Pelicans effortlessly cruising just inches above the waves, bright pink Roseate Spoonbills flapping their wings against a deep blue sky, and Black Skimmers dragging their bills through the shallow waters. One might also get the chance to listen to the screech of a tern protecting its freshly caught meal from looting gulls, or the haunting call of the Great Blue Heron.

All of these birds, which have come to define the beauty of Padre Island National Seashore (Park), nest along the Laguna Madre in large colonies on natural islands and those formed by material dredged from the Intracoastal Waterway. They are

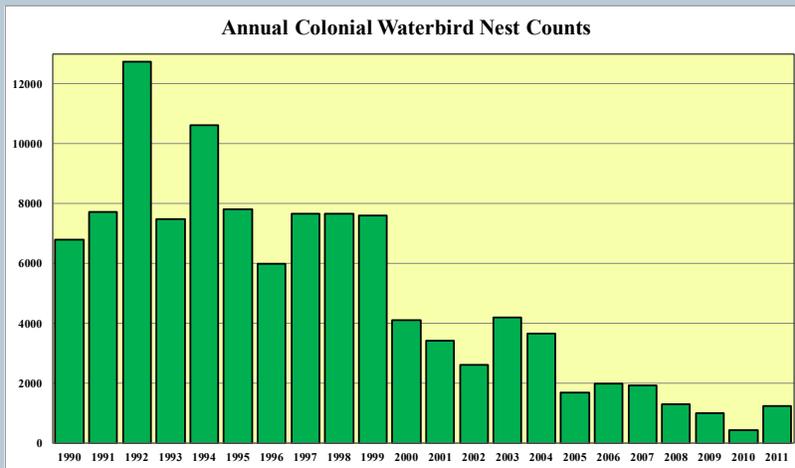
but a few of the more than 30 species that depend on this unique habitat for nesting and raising their young. Site selection and nest construction begin in February, and by April the islands are bursting with life. It is quite spectacular to observe the thousands of flapping wings and constant chatter. After spending just a few minutes studying the boundless activity of these nesting birds, you can't help but appreciate and respect the energy the adults commit to feeding and tending to their young. The colonial nature of these birds, meaning their instinct to nest in large groups, makes the experience that much more impressive.

The responsibility of maintaining this critical natural resource is not without its challenges. Colonial waterbird populations have experienced dramatic declines over the past several years (see graph) due to a number of reasons, many of which are directly attributed to human disturbance. If these birds feel threatened during nesting, they may abandon their nests or choose not to nest in the area at all. A boat coming close to shore,

or worse, people and pets going onto the island, can result in the loss of thousands of nests. Although signs are in place (and new signs are being installed) to keep people away during nesting season, some boaters still choose to enter the protected space. At certain times, this action can prove

catastrophic to that year's nesting numbers. Trash washing onto the islands can have a similar effect, and Park staff removes fishing line, cans, plastics, and other debris prior to each nesting season.

Some factors contributing to the decline in colonial waterbirds are considered natural processes in and of themselves. Erosion due to currents and wave activity reduces the amount of space available for nesting. In addition, predation by coyotes, raccoons, rats, and even badgers can lead to complete abandonment of an island. However, as this is a natural process, it is not one that Park



This graph depicts the total nests counted each year at Padre Island National Seashore. Data collected by the National Park Service and eight partner agencies. Data compiled by the Texas Colonial Waterbird Society in partnership with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

staff can manage. The natural preservation of the land is a founding principle of the National Park Service, by which every attempt is made to protect its natural state and allow it to evolve unencumbered.

Helping to return the colonial waterbird populations to those

of years past, before their numbers reach perilous lows, depends largely on the actions of Park visitors. Avoiding the restricted areas during nesting season and not allowing trash or foreign debris to enter the waters will save thousands of birds. Knowing just how vital this habitat is for so many of our avian allies keeps our management team focused on preserving and improving the nesting islands for generations of birds and visitors to come.

- Kristie Jenkin, Division of Science & Resources Management



Signs posted near nesting islands help prevent disturbance. NPS photo.



White Pelicans and Great Blue Herons nesting in close quarters. NPS photo.

Waterbird Words

SHARK BITE GAMES

Answers are on page 14

Can you unscramble these bird names? (hint: their names are printed somewhere on these 2 pages!)

- Roseate lopslinob _ _ _ _ _ 1 _ _ _ 5
- White cealinp _ _ _ _ _ 7
- Laughing lugl 8 _ _ _ _

- Great Blue rhone _ 2 _ _ _ _
- Caspian nerf 4 _ _ _ _
- Black mikmers 3 _ _ 6 _ _ _ _

Put the circled letters from above in order to find out what to call a baby bird in a nest:



A Man and his Island

José Nicolas Balli, the eldest of three sons of José Maria and Rosa Maria Hinojosa de Balli, was born circa 1770. His parents were of the Spanish aristocracy and very wealthy by receipt of significant land grants from the Spanish crown, eventually enlarging their holdings to over a million acres in Reynosa, Camargo, Matamoros and along the lower Rio Grande Valley. These large haciendas engaged primarily in cattle ranching and were completely self sufficient. Young Nicholas developed a keen interest in and knowledge of cattle ranching during these early years. He was still a teenager when his father died, which left the care of Nicolas and his siblings, as well as the vast Balli haciendas, to Rosa Maria. She proved exceedingly adept to the task and continued to successfully apply for additional land grants for her three sons.

José Nicolas Balli received his elementary education at a Catholic school in Reynosa, then was enrolled in the Conciliar Seminary in Monterrey. Perhaps it was during this time he became convinced that, to improve the lives of New Spain's Indian population through conversion to Christianity, he would continue into the priesthood. That quest took him to Spain, where he enrolled at the University of Salamanca for religious studies. Ordainment as a secular Catholic Priest came around 1790 or 1791 and, fortunately for the new Padre Balli, did not require a vow of poverty. For by now, like other members of his family and with his mother working on his behalf, Nicholas owned large areas of land and was a very wealthy man.

As a new priest, Padre Balli took up residence in Matamoros. He became quite well known and, traveling by horseback, officiated at well over 500 baptisms, marriages, and funerals between 1800 and 1829. He visited all the haciendas in the lower Rio Grande Valley offering religious services. In his quest to bring Christianity to peoples of the region, he was instrumental in the construction of the present Cathedral de Nuestra Señora del Refugio in Matamoros. Padre Balli was also the official collector of funds for building missions and churches of the villas on the Rio Grande. He was missionary priest for Reynosa, Mier, Revella, Camargo and Matamoros. He owned at least four large properties in what now is South Texas, but is most remembered for his land holdings and development on an island that would eventually be called "Padre Island" in his honor.



Artist's concept of Padre Balli with Native American girls. NPS Graphics Library.

The island was first mapped by Spanish explorer and cartographer Alonso Álvarez de Pineda, who labeled it "Isla Blanca." The "white island" was covered with massive sand dunes 25 to 40 feet high, with a white sandy beach stretching its entire length on the Gulf side and white bleached salt deposits on the mainland side. The island was considered virtually useless. It was uninhabited but for occasional visits by various Indian tribes, most notably the Karankawa, who had a reputation for being particularly fierce and treacherous. King Carlos III of Spain had originally included at least some of the island in the "Isla de Santiago Grant" given to Padre Balli's grandfather in 1759. Padre Balli inherited that land grant and, with his early acquired knowledge of ranching, viewed the island as a very suitable area for raising cattle. He decided to expand on its value by successfully applying to the Viceroy of New Spain for an additional 51,000 acres.

At the turn of the 19th century, Padre Balli began ranching on Isla Blanca with the help of his nephew, Juan José Balli, whom he made "Mayordomo" or ranch foreman. They brought in over 1,000 head of cattle, along with large herds of sheep and horses. In 1804, Padre Balli established the first settlement, called Rancho Santa Cruz, about 26 miles north of the southern tip of the island. There he built a mission both for the settlers and to continue his zeal for Christianizing the Karankawa Indians. Soon the island became known as "Isla de Padre" or simply Padre Island.

There is no record of Padre Balli living full time on Padre Island. He had his own hacienda, "San Juan de los Estores," in Matamoros. It is possible, however, being a member of the Spanish aristocracy, he may have taken up temporary residence on the island as refuge during the Mexican Revolution. After Mexico won independence from Spain, the legitimacy of the original land grant came into question. In 1828 Padre Balli was required to have his island holdings resurveyed and to reapply to the Mexican government for title. Padre Balli died on April 16, 1829, before the issue was resolved. Title was posthumously granted in December of that year, issued jointly to Padre Balli and his nephew Juan José Balli.

The story of Padre José Nicolas Balli is that of the early Texas and lower Rio Grande frontier and the initial development of a "useless" island into one of purpose through cattle ranching, permanent settlement, and agriculture. And it is the story of a man dedicated by his religious convictions to helping establish civilization in an untamed land and on an island in the Gulf of Mexico that would forever bear his name.

- Ron Kratzer, Volunteer



Padre Balli statue.
Photo by J Stephen Conn.

THE VIRTUAL SIDE OF PADRE ISLAND

Many visit the beach to get away from cell phones and laptops and just get lost in the warmth of the sun and the sounds of the surf. But for those visitors who want to learn more about what they see or connect with the history of the island, the park has some fun activities to enrich your visit. And for those “virtual visitors” who may never set foot on the beach due to distance, disability, or other circumstances, the park has some fun, digital tools that can enable you to experience much of what the park has to offer.

sites and more features, including images, maps, and videos. Smart phone owners will be able to access and download information at the site, or even before they visit, to have park maps, images, and videos literally at their fingertips. A link on the park’s website will enable “virtual visitors” to access the information, too. And with a webcam that will soon stream live audio and video of Malaquite Beach to the park’s website, “virtual visitors” will be able to “escape” to the beach any time!



Like most national parks, Padre Island National Seashore has its own website (nps.gov/pais) with lots of information on camping, what to bring, and more. But did you know the park also has not one but two Facebook pages? The main park Facebook page (facebook.com/pages/Padre-Island-National-Seashore) is frequently updated with upcoming events, news, cool sightings, and other fun information. The park’s Sea Turtle Science and Recovery program also has a Facebook page (facebook.com/pages/Padre-Island-NS-Division-of-Sea-Turtle-Science-Recovery) that supporters can follow to find out how many nests have been found, how to see the hatchlings get released, and other exciting information.

Inside Malaquite Visitor Center, two screens display current weather and beach conditions, including a live webcast from the National Weather Service. Exhibits will soon include digital frames with changing images. And a new display will allow visitors to see videos and images, play fun games, and find information about sea turtles, history, and other topics by touching a screen.



Live weather update screen. NPS photo.

Whether you want to enrich your time spent here or experience the park from a distance, Padre Island National Seashore offers fun, virtual tools to help you have a fun and fulfilling visit. So set up your beach chair, click your mouse, and enjoy!

- Jody Mays, Division of Interpretation & Education



Cell phone tour sign. NPS photo.

On-site visitors may notice a few small signs illustrated with a cell phone around the park. These signs mark sites for a self-guided mobile device tour. Although cell phone service in the park is spotty, those with coverage can call the number on the sign, enter the site code, and hear information specific to where they are standing. The park currently has four audio sites and is developing more

SHARK BITES
Sharks living in frigid waters can heat their eyes with a special organ they have! This helps them keep hunting!



Picture It!

SHARK BITE GAMES

Answers are on page 14

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Can you figure out the names of these park animals from the picture clues?

1. C + = _____

4. + + K = _____

2. + = _____

5. + + + = _____

3. + = _____

6. + e + 8 + + = _____

National Seashores: Jewels of the Coasts

The 398 national parks, monuments and historical areas include only ten national seashores. Seven are located on the Atlantic coast, two are on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, and one is on the Pacific coast. With hundreds of islands and thousands of miles of coastline in the United States, it is interesting to note that only these ten areas were set aside as national seashores.

All ten national seashores were added to the National Park Service from the 1950's through the 1970's. In 1937, legislation was passed that cleared the way for the creation of a National Coastal Park. It would take until 1953, however, before Cape Hatteras, the first national seashore, became a reality. In many cases, it took the threat of development to spark interest in preserving an island or a portion of the coastline. Each national seashore has unique historic sites as well as flora and fauna that are protected.

established in Massachusetts. With nearly 40 miles of beaches, this area includes the historic Marconi Station, Three Sisters Lighthouses and the former North Truro Air Force Station.

The world's longest undeveloped barrier island can be found at Padre Island National Seashore, which was established in 1962. It is located on the Gulf of Mexico in southern Texas. Padre Island is a safe nesting ground for the Kemp's ridley sea turtle and a haven for 380 bird species.

Banks, South Core Banks, and North Core Banks which are all part of the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Herds of wild horses are found on the islands as well as Cape Lookout Lighthouse and the historic Theodore and Anne Salter House.

Gulf Islands National Seashore, established in 1971, is found off of the coasts of Mississippi and Florida. It encompasses seven islands which have four historic forts.



Point Reyes. NPS photo.



Dungeness Mansion at Cumberland Island. NPS photo.

The only national seashore found in California, Point Reyes National Seashore, was also established in 1962. The historic locations on the Point Reyes Peninsula include the Point Reyes Lighthouse and Lifeboat Station.

Cumberland Island National Seashore, established in 1972, is only accessible by ferry. It is the site of the historic Plum Orchard and Thomas Carnegie's ruined Dungeness Mansion.

Fire Island National Seashore, established in 1964, is located south of Long Island, New York. It has the historic William Floyd House and Fire Island Lighthouse.

The last national seashore, added to the National Park Service in 1975, was Canaveral National Seashore, located adjacent to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Mosquito Lagoon is the home to dolphins, manatees and sea turtles.

Assateague Island, which is located off the coasts of Maryland and Virginia, became a national seashore in 1965. It is the home of feral horses, deer, crabs, fox and migrating snow geese.

As your travels take you to various parts of the country, plan a trip to these beautiful and varied national seashores. They are truly the jewels of our nation's coasts.

Cape Lookout became a National Seashore in 1966, and is made up of Shackleford

- Suzy Murray, Division of Interpretation & Education



Lighthouse at Cape Hatteras. NPS photo.

Cape Hatteras National Seashore, established in 1953, is located on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. It is known for its Bodie Island and Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.

In 1961, Cape Cod National Seashore was



SHARK BITE GAMES

Shark Bite Games by Jody Mays & Evan Mays

1. Seahorse
2. Angel Wing
3. Sandwich Tern
4. Lightning Whelk
5. Bottlenose Dolphin
6. Roseate Spoonbill

Picture It! (page 13)

1. Roseate Spoonbill
2. White Pelican
3. Laughing Gull
4. Great Blue Heron
5. Caspian Tern
6. Black Skimmer

Waterbird Words (page 11)

Answers

1. FALSE. The green sea turtle was named after its green fat.
2. TRUE. The other sea turtles nest at night.
3. TRUE. Sea turtles lay 50-150 eggs in one nest!
4. FALSE. Because their shells are flatter for swimming, sea turtles cannot pull their heads into their shells.
5. TRUE. Hawksbills like to feed around coral reefs in shallow water.
6. TRUE. Leatherbacks can dive as deep as 4,000 feet but spend most of their time at depths less than 1,000 feet.
7. FALSE. An active sea turtle must come up for air every few minutes, but a resting one can stay underwater for up to 2 hours!
8. TRUE. Jellyfish are the main food for the leatherback.
9. TRUE. One meaning of the word loggerhead is "big head."
10. TRUE. About 40,000 Kemp's ridleys were filmed nesting on a beach in Mexico in the 1940's.

Tall Turtle Tales (page 7)

Top Notch!

Our park's Facilities Management Division recently received the Inter-mountain Regional Director's Award for Employee Safety and Health Achievement for 2011 for its commitment to excellence and to the safety of all who come to Padre Island National Seashore. Our park has the only Hazmat Response Team within the National Park Service. It provides for employee, visitor, and resource protection by removing and securing numerous containers of hazardous materials annually. These containers, which wash up on the park's beaches, pose a real danger to humans as well as the environment. Congratulations to our Hazmat Response Team on a job well done!



Padre Island National Seashore's award-winning Hazmat Response Team. From left to right are David Poe, Craig Cowan, Rudy Villarreal, Sam Brown, Glenda Hammond, Kyle Christenson, and Phil Ziegler (not pictured). NPS photo.

Traveling Down Island: What You Should Know

Driving down island to Big Shell or other remote areas can be a great adventure, but it also entails risks and hazards that should not be taken lightly. Experience and the right preparations can help you avoid getting stuck, stranded, or trapped in a potentially dangerous situation. Here are some tips to help ensure your beach adventure is a fun and safe experience.

1. **Know the risk.** Be aware that driving on the beach is at your own risk. Even 4-wheel drive vehicles can get stuck sometimes. The National Park Service does not tow vehicles, and a private wrecker can cost several thousand dollars.
2. **Check conditions.** The beach can change fast - washed out areas and other hazards can form overnight. Call our Beach Hotline at (361)949-8175 for updated tides, weather, and driving conditions. Starting down island 1-2 hours before low tide can help you take advantage of what may be the best driving conditions.
3. **Keep it legal.** All Texas beaches are considered public highways, and all vehicle requirements and traffic laws apply. So fasten your seatbelt, stay within the speed limits, and leave your ATV at home.
4. **Who yields?** North-bound vehicles have the right of way on the beach.
5. **Stay on the beach.** Driving into the dunes, grasslands, and mud flats is not only prohibited, it can get you stuck in deep sand or soft mud.
6. **Follow the leader.** Travel in the tracks of those who went before to help you avoid much of the debris and deep sand.
7. **Keep moving.** If you hit an area of deep or soft sand, don't stop - it may be difficult to get out.
8. **Don't block the road.** Park where you won't block traffic or force others to drive in soft sand.
9. **Avoid the water line.** It may be easier driving on the hard-packed sand at the water's edge, but steep embankments and rough "washboards" can also form in these areas. If you see water pooling in your tracks, move to drier ground.
10. **What you can't see can hurt you.** Broken glass, needles, and other sharp objects can be hidden by seaweed, garbage, or other debris. Many boards have nails. Sinkholes of water beneath mats of seaweed can form, creating hidden hazards. Large barrels of hazardous waste can wash up. Report hazardous materials to a ranger as soon as possible.
11. **Know what to do.** Jellyfish and Portugese man-of-wars occur here. Don't touch them - they can sting even if dead. If stung, rub the area with a paste of meat tenderizer and vinegar. Watch for allergic reactions and seek medical attention if needed. To avoid stepping on a stingray, shuffle your feet along the sandy bottom when in the water.
12. **Keep it clean.** Currents wash in debris from other areas, but a lot of trash on the beach comes from visitors. Don't contribute



A vehicle stuck near the water's edge. NPS photo.

13. **Remember, this is a beach.** Kids run & play here, and animals live here. Slow down and be alert as you approach tents or parked vehicles in case a child runs out at the last minute. Be aware that people near the surf may not hear approaching vehicles. Look for and avoid deer, sea turtles, young birds, and other animals that might be nesting or resting on the beach. Be especially careful at night when visibility is reduced.
14. **Look for and report nesting and stranded turtles.** Sea turtles nest here from April to August. If you see one nesting, do not disturb her. After she leaves, mark the spot where she nested, but don't use anything sharp. Report it to the nearest ranger or call (361)949-8173 ext. 226 as soon as possible.
15. **Height matters.** Cell phone service is extremely variable and spotty in the park. If you can't get service, try climbing to the top of a dune, it may help. In an emergency, call 911.
16. **Be prepared.** Bring supplies to be ready for situations you might face. Remember you use more fuel in 4-wheel drive. If you get stuck, you can dig yourself out; put boards or carpet against your tires for traction; or wet the sand for traction.

Here are some recommended supplies for any down-island trip:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| >Water | >Protective clothing |
| >Ice | >Wood planks/carpet |
| >Food | >Toilet paper |
| >Shovel | >Tow ties |
| >Flashlight | >Jumper cables |
| >Tide chart | >Air compressor |
| >Hand sanitizer | >Meat tenderizer & vinegar |
| >Flat tire repair spray | >Trash bags |
| >First aid kit | >Prescription medicines |
| >Shade structure | >Sunscreen |
| >5-gallon bucket | >Jack & tire-change equipment |
| >Spare tire(s) with air | >Spare car key |
| >Extra fuel | |

- Jody Mays, Division of Interpretation & Education



Frequently Asked Questions



I want to go camping - what do I need to know?

Camping is permitted on North Beach, at Bird Island Basin Camping Area, at Malaquite Campground, on South Beach, and at Yarborough Pass. All camping areas are open year-round.

No reservations are accepted, and all camping is first-come, first-served. Campers must have a camping permit, which is available from the kiosks at the entrance to each camping area. Camping anywhere in the park is limited to 14 days at one time and no more than 56 days per calendar year. After each 14-day stay, all camping equipment and vehicles must be removed from the park for a minimum of 48 hours. See "Camping" on page 3 for more information on camping fees and specific areas.

May I build a fire?

Unless a fire ban has been initiated, small campfires on North & South beaches are allowed. Campers at Malaquite Campground can build a campfire on the beach in front of the campground but not within the campground. No fires are allowed at Bird Island Basin (visitors can use the grills provided for cooking). No bonfires are allowed anywhere in the park. At Malaquite Beach, no campfires are allowed, but visitors can bring their own grills to the beach or to the picnic shelter located in the parking lot. No grills are allowed on the Malaquite Pavilion deck. See "Picnicking" on page 4 for more information.

Where do I take my trash?

Due to illegal dumping of hazardous materials, trash cans are no longer provided in many areas of the park. However, free trash bags are available at the park entrance gate and at Malaquite Visitor Center. Dumpsters, trash cans, and/or recycling containers are located at Malaquite Pavilion, the entrance to South Beach, and Bird Island Basin. Please don't leave your trash on the beach or bury it in the sand, or toss it into the dunes. Help make your park beaches beautiful by practicing "leave no trace" - if you bring it in, take it back out.

Where can I dump my gray & black water?

There are no public RV hook-ups in the park, but an RV dump station and a water filling station are available to all visitors. Both are located at the entrance to Malaquite Campground. See "Camping" on page 3 for more information.

May I collect seashells & other things?

Yes, if they are not alive. All living things are protected within the park. So if you find something alive - a hermit crab, a living sand dollar, etc. - don't harm it, just leave it where it is. But you can pick up and collect up to 5 gallons of empty (dead) shells, sea beans, or other natural beach treasures per day. See "Looking for Shells" on page 4 for more information.

May I use a metal detector?

No. Possession or use of a metal detector is not allowed in order to preserve & protect cultural resources.

I found a strange container on the beach - what should I do?

Hazardous materials, from medical syringes to 55-gallon barrels of chemicals, sometime wash ashore. If you come across something hazardous, don't touch it. Note the location and alert a park ranger as soon as possible.

May I feed the gulls?

No. Feeding gulls or other wildlife in the park is not allowed. It can cause them to start approaching people too closely, it teaches them to beg and steal human food, and it can make them less able to survive on their own.

May I bring my dog or other pet? Yes, to most areas. Pets on a leash are allowed everywhere in the park except for Malaquite Pavilion and the portion of Malaquite Beach in front of the visitor center. Sand trails located at either end of the Malaquite parking lot may be used by pet owners to access the rest of the closed beach area. Please be courteous to other visitors and clean up after your pet. Pets must be on a leash at all times.

Are there riptides? Yes, occasionally conditions can create riptides. If caught in one, don't panic. Swim parallel to the beach until you are free from the flow pulling you out, then swim back to shore. Do NOT attempt to swim against the current pulling you out. Use caution when swimming, and never swim alone. See "Swimming" on page 4 for more information.

Are there any dangerous animals? Jellyfish and Portuguese man-of-war can cause a painful sting, even if they are dead - so don't touch them. If stung, rub the area with a paste of meat tenderizer and vinegar, or pour hot water on it. Watch for allergic reactions, and seek medical attention if necessary. Stingrays sit on the sandy bottom and can inflict an extremely painful puncture wound if stepped on or agitated. To help avoid them, shuffle your feet on the sandy bottom as you walk. Sharks occur in the Gulf as well. Rattlesnakes live in the dunes, grasslands, and mudflats, so avoid those areas. First aid is available at Malaquite Visitor Center. In an emergency, call 911 (climb a dune to get better reception).

Are hunting & fishing allowed? Fishing is permitted throughout the park. No hunting is permitted in the park except for the taking of waterfowl by boat only out in the Laguna Madre. Both of these activities must be done in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations. Transporting any other lawfully taken wildlife, including exotic species, through the park is prohibited.

May I bring my firearm into the park?

Yes. A 2010 federal law allows people who can legally possess firearms to bring them into national parks. But it is the visitor's responsibility to understand and comply with all applicable state, local, and federal firearms laws. And federal law prohibits firearms in certain park facilities. These places are posted with signs at public entrances.

May I bring my ATV or off-road vehicle? No. Texas beaches are considered public highways, so only street-legal and licensed vehicles are allowed in the park. All-terrain vehicles (ATVs), UTVs, go-carts, golf carts, dune buggies, and other such vehicles are prohibited. Driving in dunes, grasslands, and mudflats is also prohibited. For more information, see "Driving on the Beach" on page 4 and "Traveling Down Island: What You Should Know" on page 15.

SHARK BITES

A little-known group of sharks, called river sharks, live in fresh water! Very rare & likely endangered, a couple are only known to exist from a single specimen!

