



Cattle egrets taking flight / Photo by 2016 Artist-in-Residence Lee Bailey

Welcome to Padre Island National Seashore!

As the sun peeks over the horizon, casting small streamlets of light across the Gulf waters, I find myself standing on the observation deck of Malaquite Pavilion at Padre Island National Seashore. The warm southeast wind has awakened a small squadron of brown pelicans, flying in single file 40 feet above the water, looking for a school of bait fish to enjoy for breakfast. Laughing gulls and royal terns are swooping in to claim what’s been left behind by the night janitors of the beach: ghost crabs.

Walking down the boardwalk toward Malaquite Beach, I surprise a kangaroo rat scurrying back to its burrow, while smaller ghost crabs head for their freshly dug homesteads. Over the vine-covered dunes is a pair of white-tailed hawks searching for a warm meal. The sun has now cleared the horizon on this beautiful morning and no white-tailed deer or badgers have appeared on the dunes. In the far distance a pair of coyotes, following a night on the prowl, howl to welcome in the new day.

My mind begins to wonder: how many people before me have taken in the beauty and tranquility this barrier island offers? The island was first inhabited by Native American people of the Coahuiltecan and Karankawa tribes. Four countries have also claimed the land: Spain, Mexico, Republic of Texas, and the United States. All have left a lasting imprint on the island.

As soft sand sifts between the toes of my bare feet, I marvel at this island’s several hundred year history. Survivors from various Spanish shipwrecks sought shelter on the island. Spanish land grants turned the region into a cattle ranching empire.



Foggy morning at Big Shell Beach, a remote area in the backcountry of Padre Island NPS Photo

During World War II, the Coast Guard patrolled offshore and the land itself was a bombing range. Oil and gas operations have also left an impression on the island. On top of all of this, several attempts were made to turn the island into wall-to-wall asphalt and condos. Thanks to Mother Nature, she stepped in with a few gusty storms, and today we are left to care for the longest undeveloped stretch of barrier island in the world and all the natural beauty it affords.

This changing landscape of beaches, dunes, grasslands and tidal flats, sandwiched between the Gulf of Mexico and the Laguna Madre, hosts incredible biodiversity. Tens of thousands of migratory birds as well as many species of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, mollusks, crustaceans, plants, and fish are found in the park. The most endangered sea turtle in the world, the Kemp’s ridley, nests here more often than at any other location in the country. In the summer, visitors here can even cheer on newly hatched sea turtle hatchlings as they make their first journey to the Gulf and beyond.

The sun has now risen higher off the horizon and the night prowlers have all retired until dusk returns again. Meanwhile, the beach is now covered with some of the 380 bird species who migrate from as far away as the Arctic and are heading south to Central and South America for warmer weather. The island provides food and a resting area before their trips further south. For the many visitors who enjoy the migratory bird seasons, this is a must to see.

What a hidden gem to visit with so many recreational activities and things to see and do, from searching for seashells and sea beans to the many water activities including some of the best saltwater fishing found anywhere. Many tours, along with youth and adult educational programs, are available most days of the week. You will be greeted and assisted by professional rangers and dedicated volunteers during your stay, whether it’s for a few hours or much longer. We welcome you to Padre Island, and await your return with friends in tow.

- Karl Vermace, Volunteer-in-Park, Master Ranger Corps

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Superintendent’s Message



NPS Photo / C. Fenn

I sincerely hope you enjoy your visit to the longest remaining stretch of undeveloped barrier island in the world. Over half a million visitors come here each year to enjoy camping, swimming, fishing, boating, and other recreational activities.

This national park was created to preserve the seashore, unimpaired, for purposes of public recreation, benefit, and inspiration. As the National Park Service enters its second century of service, I hope you will join and support our dedicated park staff and volunteers in preserving some of our nation’s greatest treasures.

Please 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 free trash bags from the Malaquite Visitor Center to help keep our beaches beautiful.

We are all stewards of this special place, and we must work together to protect and care for the Padre Island National Seashore so that it may be enjoyed for the next 100 years and beyond.

Enjoy your stay at your park!

Mark E. Spier

Mark Spier
Superintendent

4-5 Campground Information

Sleep under the stars! Solitude, warm nights, sea breezes, and dark skies are some of the features which make camping at Padre Island National Seashore an unforgettable experience.

10 Birding in the Park

Padre Island National Seashore is an ideal place for birds and bird-lovers alike! Discover the best birding locations and what species you’re likely to see when birding at Padre Island.

11 Sea Turtle Releases

Would you like to watch newly hatched sea turtles get released into the wild? Discover more about one of Padre Island’s most iconic animals, the Kemp’s ridley sea turtle.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Padre Island National Seashore
Authorized by Congress in 1962, Padre Island National Seashore preserves the longest stretch of undeveloped barrier island in the world.

Park Mailing Address
Padre Island National Seashore
P.O. Box 181300
Corpus Christi, TX 78480

Park Website
nps.gov/pais

E-mail
pais_visitor_center@nps.gov

Park Headquarters
(361) 949-8173

Malaquite Visitor Center
(361) 949-8068

Sea Turtle Hatchling Hotline
(361) 949-7163

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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

From Gulf to Laguna

Change, sudden or constant, is part of the dynamics of a barrier island. The island is in a constant state of change, moved by gentle Gulf breezes, violent tropical storms, and from the rhythmic ebb and flow of tides and crashing waves. The dunes, grasslands, and tidal flats are shaped and reshaped daily- a constant reminder of just how fragile the barrier island environment can be.

THE GULF OF MEXICO

Of all the ecosystems at Padre Island National Seashore, perhaps the most visited and familiar are the Gulf beaches, spanning 70 miles of undeveloped shoreline.

Winds create the dunes, and salt-tolerant plants, like railroad vine, anchor the wind-driven sand. The railroad vine reaches out toward the sea, stabilizing the fine, white sand with roots and spreading vines, forming a relatively continuous dune ridge. The sand dunes harbor life that is often unseen and unexpected; part of a rich and complex pattern of life here on Padre Island.



NPS Photo / C. Fenn

COASTAL PRAIRIE

Located on the interior of the island, the coastal prairie is a rare grasslands ecosystem with less than 1% remaining in the world. Padre Island National Seashore preserves one of the largest remaining protected tracts of this ecosystem. Most of the island’s terrain consists of coastal prairie interspersed with ephemeral marshes and dune fields. Grassland habitats are dominated by rolling mounds covered with salt tolerant vegetation such as seacoast bluestem and bushy bluestem.

The coastal prairie is an ever-changing habitat mostly controlled by rainfall. In the dry summer months the prairie is home to white-tailed deer, coyotes, rattlesnakes, and raccoons. With the coming of the fall and winter rains the prairie is transformed into a thriving wetland which supports thousands of wintering birds. Though at first glance the prairie doesn’t seem like much, it is a dynamic and complex ecosystem integral to the wildlife which call this barrier island home.



NPS Photo

THE LAGUNA MADRE

The western shore of the park borders the Laguna Madre, a shallow lagoon composed of extensive, environmentally sensitive mudflats. Due to a high rate of evaporation and limited freshwater mixing, the Laguna Madre is extremely salty and considered hypersaline. It’s a unique ecosystem as it is only one of six hypersaline lagoons in the world. Though saltier than the ocean, it’s not so salty that it can’t support life.

The Laguna is home to roughly 80% of the North American population of redhead ducks in the wintertime. Fish, clams, and snails use the extensive grassflats as a coastal nursery while sea turtles and ducks feed on the grasses. Islands in the Laguna Madre are protected and important rookeries for bird species, like the American white pelican.

Left: Railroad vines at Malaquite Beach

Center: White-tailed deer in the coastal prairie

Right: American white pelican rookery on the Laguna Madre



NPS Photo

Park Information

In Case of Emergency call 911, then contact a ranger.



Hours of Operation

The park is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Malaquite Visitor Center is open daily, year-round, from 9:00 am - 5:00 pm, except December 25.



Food, Gas, and Lodging

Gas, ice, and lodging are not available in the park. There are vending machines at Malaquite Visitor Center. The nearby community of North Padre Island, located about 14 miles from the park entrance, has restaurants, gas stations, and lodging.



Wireless Internet and Telephone

Wireless internet is available at Malaquite Visitor Center. Cell phone reception is not reliable.



Showers and Restrooms

Restrooms are available year-round at the Malaquite Visitor Center Pavilion, entrance to South Beach, Bird Island Basin, and Malaquite Visitor Center picnic shelter. Cold water rinse showers are available at the Malaquite Visitor Center Pavilion.



Campfires

Unless a fire ban is in effect, small, contained campfires are allowed on North and South Beaches. No campfires are allowed at Malaquite Beach, but visitors can bring their own grills to the picnic shelter in the parking lot. No bonfires are allowed anywhere in the park. For information on campfires within campgrounds, see pages 4 and 5.



Accessibility

All restroom and shower facilities, the Malaquite Visitor Center, deck, and pavilion are fully accessible.

- The 3/4 mile Grasslands Nature Trail is paved and fairly level
- Malaquite Campground has an accessible camping site and ramp to beach
- Beach wheelchairs are available for rent free of charge at Malaquite Visitor Center from 9:00 am- 4:30 pm



Swimming

Swimming is at your own risk. There is no lifeguard on duty. Rip currents and sudden drop-offs can occur and are dangerous.



Trash and Recycling

Free trash bags are available at the Malaquite Visitor Center. Dumpsters, trash cans, and/or recycling containers are available at the Malaquite Visitor Center Pavilion, entrance to South Beach, and Bird Island Basin.



Firearms

Visitors who legally possess firearms can bring them into the park. It is the visitor’s responsibility to understand and comply with all applicable state, local, and federal firearms laws. Federal law prohibits firearms in certain park facilities. These places are posted with signs at public entrances.



Ranger Programs

Free, public programs are offered most days of the year. Schedules are available at the Malaquite Visitor Center, and park staff are available during visitor center hours to provide park orientation, information, and assistance.

For more park and safety information, see page 16.



Entrance Fees

Private Vehicle.....	\$10	Valid for 7 days
Padre Island National Seashore Annual Pass.....	\$20	Valid for 1 year
Bicyclists and Pedestrians.....	\$5 per person,	Valid for 7 days
Motorcycles.....	\$5 per motorcycle,	Valid for 7 days
Interagency Annual Pass.....	\$80	Valid for 1 year
Interagency Senior Pass.....	\$10	Valid for a lifetime (U.S. resident, 62 or older)
Interagency Active Military Pass.....	Free	Valid for 1 year (Active U.S. Military and Dependents)
Interagency Access Pass.....	Free	Valid for a lifetime (U.S. resident, permanently disabled)
Every Kid In A Park Pass (4th graders).....	Free	Valid for 1 year



Bird Island Basin Boat Ramp Fees

Private Vehicle.....	\$5	Valid for 1 day
Bird Island Basin Boat Ramp Annual Pass.....	\$10	Valid for 1 year

A Dune Perspective

The dunes at the seashore have witnessed many changes over the years. In 1962, when President John F. Kennedy signed legislation to create Padre Island National Seashore, the landscape was much different than what can be seen today. The terrain was constantly changing with sand shifting in the blowing wind. The island was also recovering from use as a Navy bombing range. Despite the military presence, open-range cattle ranching was still practiced. At the sound of the planes, the clever cattle would move away from the target sites. Over time, the combined forces of hooves and explosions kept vegetation down and sand grains were constantly on the move with the blowing wind.

In the mid 1960’s, the bombing practice had stopped and by the early 1970’s, the last of the cattle were rounded up. Sand continued to blow free across the island and into the salty Laguna Madre. During those early years of the park, grasses were planted and shells dredged from the lagoon were deposited on the land to keep the sand in place. With that, the dunes began to grow.

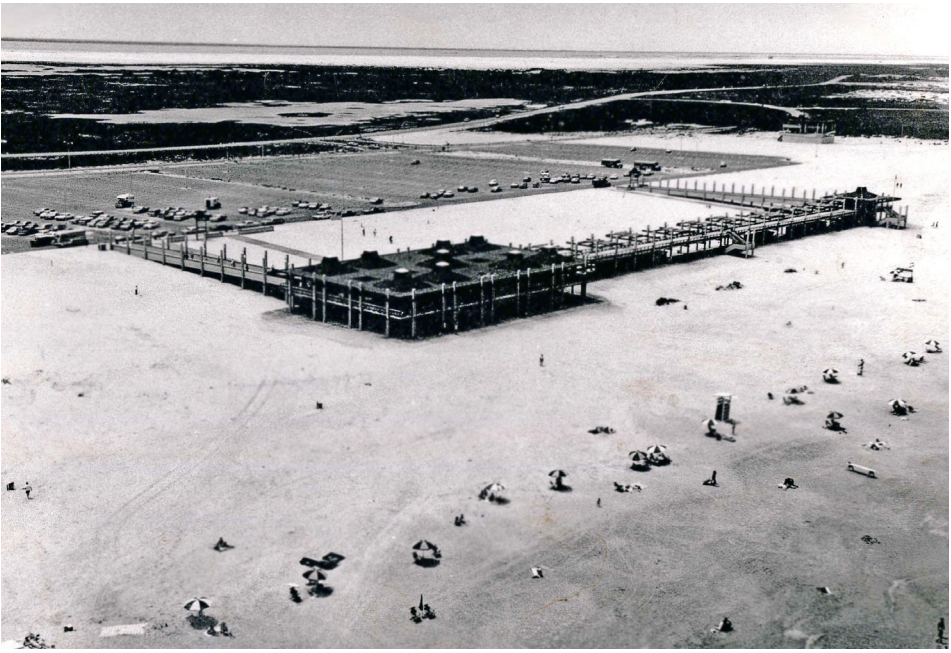
Dune growth is a slow process. When the wind blows, sand grains skip and bounce across the land surface until being trapped behind a rock, shell, or vegetation. During storms when strong winds and large waves crash into the beach dunes are often destroyed. In 1980, Hurricane Allen certainly left his mark by blasting the island with 120 mile an hour winds.

The foredunes, the first set of dunes up from the beach, were reduced to small hills. But they did their job by taking the brunt force of the storm and protecting the island. Over the past 30 years since Hurricane Allen, the dunes have been steadily building up and growing. Changes have come to the seashore but the dunes are ever present. Stabilized by grasses and railroad vine, the dunes continue to protect the island from storms and also serve as a home for kangaroo rats, ghost crabs, and northern bobwhite.

What will the dunes see in the future? Hundreds more visitors will swim and picnic in the park. Others will make memories by finding the perfect shell while beachcombing. Going down island, people wanting to camp and fish can experience the quiet that comes to the park at sunset. Park staff will continue to protect, preserve, and educate. Storms will blast the island with strong winds and waves will carve into the beach.

“Padre Island presents of the last remaining opportunities for this Nation to preserve such a length of beach in its natural state.... To preserve... a place where future generations of Americans can experience a wild spaciousness that is their heritage.”* These words were written in 1962 and they hold true today. The dunes are a part of the American heritage and though they are constantly changing, they will always be present.

*Report of the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, March 5, 1962



Compare the area around Malaquite Visitor Center in present day with this photo from the 1970’s. What differences can you see? NPS Photo



Note the absence of vegetation on the dunes in this undated photo from the archives NPS Photo

Pets in the Park

We are pet friendly! Pets are welcome almost everywhere in the park as long as they are on a leash at all times. Leashed pets are permitted in all camping areas and on over 60 miles of beach in the park, including all areas where you can drive on the beach.

The only areas where pets are NOT allowed includes:

- The deck of the Malaquite Visitor Center Pavilion and its facilities.
- The boardwalk that goes from the deck down to Malaquite Beach.
- The short stretch of beach in front of the Malaquite Visitor Center Pavilion.

But even there, pets and their owners can still access the beach near Malaquite Visitor Center using a pet access trail that goes from the parking area down to the beach. This trail is located on the north (left) side of the Malaquite Visitor Center Pavilion.

Once you reach the beach, the area to the left is open to pets and their owners and the beach to the right is not. The stretch of beach to the right, in front of the Malaquite Visitor Center



Pets are welcome in most areas of the park but they must be leashed at all times NPS Photo / C. Fenn

Pavilion, is intended to provide a swimming area for children where parents need not worry about pets or fishing activities. Please respect both other visitors and the park by picking up after your pet and ensuring your pet is under your control at all times.

Never allow your pet to chase or disturb birds or other wildlife. Keep your pets safe and hydrated, and never leave a pet inside an unattended vehicle. Even in mild temperatures, a vehicle can heat up to dangerous or even deadly temperatures in just a few minutes. Pet owners also have access to rest rooms and rinse-off showers that are located close to the pet access trail.

Coyotes live on the island and have been known to prey on pets, including small dogs. Keep a close eye on your pets and remember to keep pets leashed (no longer than 6 feet in length) at all times.

Service animals are welcome in all areas and facilities.

Horses and Pack Animals:

Horses and pack animals are also welcome in the park, but they are **only** allowed on the beaches of the Gulf of Mexico side of the park, except for the beaches in front of Malaquite Campground and Malaquite Visitor Center Pavilion.

To reduce the risk of bringing invasive plants into the park and to respect other visitors please:

- Keep hay in feed troughs or horse trailer feeding bays.
- Remove unused hay from the park.
- Remove all animal droppings from the park.

Become a Padre Island Junior Ranger!

Do you like sea turtles, birds, and seashells? Are you interested in exploring and learning more about Padre Island National Seashore? Then become a Padre Island Junior Ranger!

This program is for all ages! Free Junior Ranger booklets and pencils are available at the Malaquite Visitor Center. Upon completion of the booklet, you will be sworn in as a Junior Ranger and will earn an official Junior Ranger badge and certificate! You can also earn an additional patch if you participate in a beach clean-up.

Camping Information



Malaquite Campground NPS Photo

Malaquite Campground

Located just half a mile north of the Malaquite Visitor Center, Malaquite Campground is tucked in the dunes with a view of the Gulf of Mexico.

Fees: \$8 per night (\$4 with Interagency Senior or Access Pass).

Details: 48 paved, semi-primitive designated sites. 6 sites are for tent camping only and the remaining 42 are for tent or RV camping. Tent campers may set up camp at their site or on the beach in front of the campground. Each campsite has a limit of 2 tents, 2 vehicles, and 8 people. Small campfires are permitted on the beach in front of the campground. Campers should obtain a permit and deposit camping fees at the self-registration kiosk near the Malaquite Campground entrance.

Amenities: Flush toilets, cold-water rinse showers, grills, picnic tables, and shade structures. A free gray/black water dump station and potable water filling station are located along the campground entrance road.



Bird Island Basin Campground NPS Photo / C. Fenn

Bird Island Basin Campground

Located along the Laguna Madre, Bird Island Basin Campground is close to recreational opportunities, including windsurfing, kayaking, birding, and fishing.

Fees: \$5 per night (\$2.50 with Interagency Senior or Access Pass).

Details: 34 gravel, semi-primitive sites for RV or tent camping plus an additional tent camping area. Each campsite has a limit of 2 tents, 2 vehicles, and 8 people. Ground fires are not permitted. However, small cook fires in self-contained grills are permissible at the individual sites. Campers should obtain a permit and deposit camping fees at the self-registration kiosk near the Bird Island Basin Campground entrance.

Amenities: Chemical pit toilets, picnic tables, and shade structures. No potable water. A free RV dump station and potable water filling station available to all visitors are located along the Malaquite Campground entrance road. BIB also has a windsurfing area and a nearby boat ramp. For information on kayak and windsurfing rentals, lessons, and sales, call Worldwinds Windsurfing, Inc. at (361) 949-7472.



RV camping on South Beach NPS Photo

South Beach

South Beach includes 60 miles of shoreline, from the end of the main park paved road south to the Mansfield Channel.

Fee: Free (permit required).

Details: Campers should obtain a free permit at the self-registration kiosk by the vault toilets at the entrance to South Beach. All 60 miles of beach are open to primitive tent or RV camping. Driving on the beach is at your own risk. Four-wheel drive is strongly recommended beyond the “Four-wheel Drive Only” sign at mile marker 5. See page 8 for more information.

Amenities: South Beach has no designated sites and no facilities. Bring water with you. A vault toilet and dumpster are located at the beach entrance. Potable water, flush toilets, and cold-water rinse showers are available at the Malaquite Visitor Center Pavilion. A free RV dump station and potable water filling station available to all visitors are located along the Malaquite Campground entrance road.



View of the Laguna Madre from Yarborough Pass NPS Photo

Yarborough Pass

Yarborough Pass is located along the Laguna Madre, 15 miles south of the visitor center on South Beach. *A high-clearance, four-wheel drive vehicle is needed to reach this remote section of the park.*

Fee: Free (permit required).

Details: Campers using Yarborough Pass should obtain a free permit at the self-registration kiosk located at the entrance to South Beach. Access to this primitive tent camping area is possible only by driving through the four-wheel drive area of South Beach or by boating down the Laguna Madre. *The sand road through the dunes may be filled with exceptionally deep, soft sand in which even four-wheel drive vehicles can become stuck.* See page 8 for more information.

Amenities: Yarborough Pass has no designated sites. There are shade structures and fire pits. Bring water with you. See page 8 for more information on being prepared when traveling down island.



Self-registration kiosk at the entrance to North Beach NPS Photo / C. Fenn

North Beach

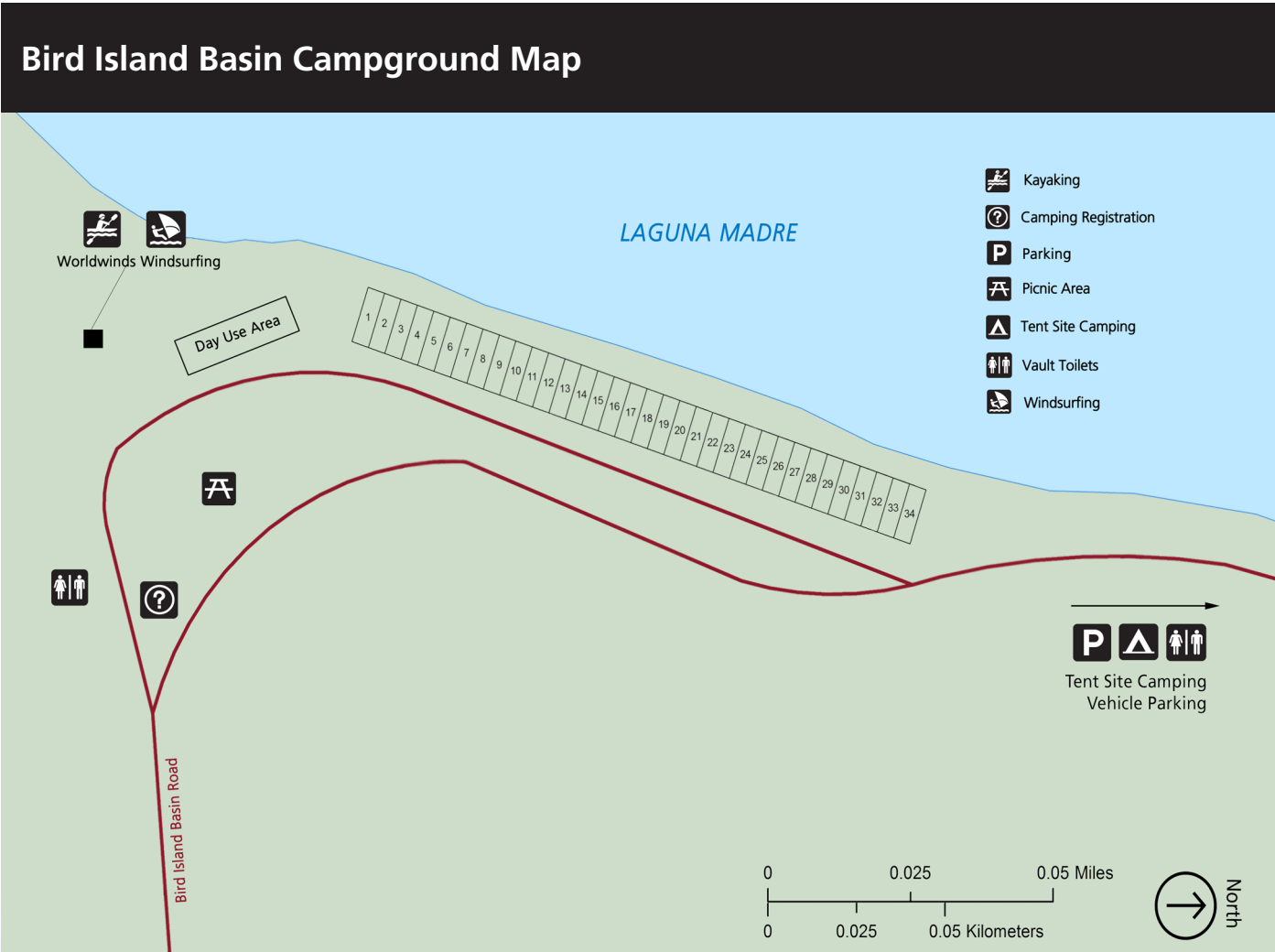
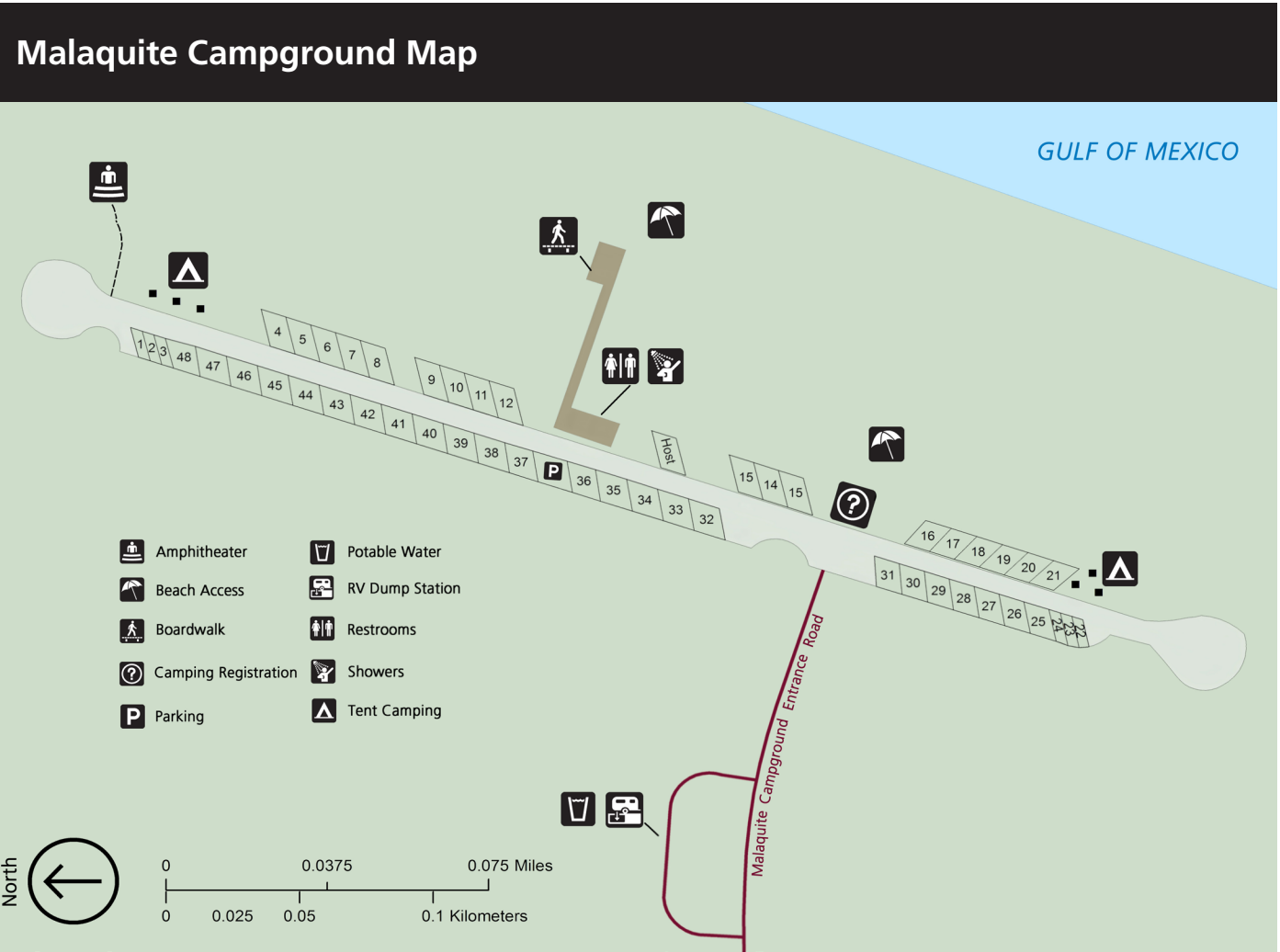
North Beach includes the northern most one mile of beach within Padre Island National Seashore.

Fee: Free (permit required).

Details: Campers using North Beach should obtain a free permit at the self-registration kiosk located at the entrance to North Beach. North Beach is open to primitive tent or RV camping. Driving on the beach is at your own risk.

Amenities: North Beach has no designated sites and no facilities. Bring water with you. Potable water, flush toilets, and cold-water rinse showers are available at the Malaquite Visitor Center Pavilion. A free RV dump station and potable water filling station available to all visitors are located along the Malaquite Campground entrance road.

Campground Maps and Information



Camping at Padre Island

All camping is on a first-come, first-served basis. There are no reservations accepted. Check out is at 12 noon.

Permits are required to camp within the park. Camping permits and fees are operated on a self-serve system, at kiosks located at the entrances to each campground.

There are no water, electric, or sewer hook-ups. A free RV dump station and potable water filling station available to all visitors are located near the entrance to Malaquite Campground.

Campers can stay in the park up to 14 consecutive days, but then must vacate the park for at least 48 hours before returning to camp. The total number of days spent camping in the park, in any combination of visits, cannot exceed 56 days per calendar year.

Quiet hours are between 10:00 pm and 6:00 am. Running generators is not allowed during this time.

Camping is permitted in designated areas only. No camping is allowed in dunes, grasslands, or mudflats.

Do not leave or bury trash on the beach or toss it into the dunes. Free trash bags are available at the Malaquite Visitor Center. Dumpsters are located near the entrance to South Beach and at the visitor center.



Beachcombing at Padre Island

Beachcombing is a time-honored tradition for many of our visitors. Due to the currents, Padre Island has a variety of natural treasures that wash in, including seashells, sea stars, sea beans, and more. Read the guidelines below so you can get the most out of your beachcombing experience.

- Going right after a storm passes through and 2-3 hours on either side of low tide will often yield better results, especially during “minus tides”. Minus tides are lower than the average low for the seashore, giving beachcombers an opportunity to reach typically inaccessible parts of the beach.
- Look through yellow tangles of “sea whip”, which look like bundles of electrical wire. Sea whip is not trash, but a type of soft coral. Seashells, sand dollars, and other treasures can sometimes be found in the masses.
- Bring a bag or bucket for your treasures- you can take home 5 gallons of unoccupied shells and sea beans for personal use. Commercial shell collecting is prohibited at the seashore.
- If the sand dollar is brown, put it down (back in water). If it’s white, it’s alright (it’s dead and sun-bleached).
- To see if a sea star is still alive, flip it over and look for any movement of the legs or small, tubular feet on its underside. Please put it back if movement is detected.
- Closed Beach and South Beach are good places to begin beachcombing. Beachcombing improves the farther south you travel down island, but remember, four-wheel drive is needed past the 5 mile marker.
- If you find a historic artifact or an animal part which belonged to a federally protected animal such as a bird, sea turtle, or bottlenose dolphin, please inform a ranger- it is illegal to keep these items.
- Look in the wrack line, which is the line of debris that was washed in by the tide. For sea beans, also look in the dune line.
- Go to areas that are less crowded, and try going on a weekday.
- Possession or use of metal detectors, digging for artifacts, relic hunting, and/or removing artifacts is strictly prohibited.
- Be aware of your surroundings! Check the beach driving conditions, tide predictions, and weather forecast before you go. Watch out for jellyfish and Portuguese man-of-war.
- Don’t keep anything that is still alive! It is illegal to remove any living creature from the park.
- Shelling is best in winter months, when cold fronts roll in, the water is more turbulent, and shells from deep in the Gulf wash in. December through February also have extremely low tides.
- Remember to wear sunscreen, sun protection, and stay hydrated. Have fun!



NPS Photo / C. Fenn

What to See and Do in...

An Hour or Two



Grasslands Nature Trail

B. Lewis

- Swim and sunbathe along relaxing Gulf of Mexico beaches. Malaquite Beach offers shade structures and nearby restrooms and showers.
- Walk along the Grasslands Nature Trail (3/4 mile in length) located near the park entrance and learn about the rare coastal prairie habitat in the park. See pages 14-15 for a trail guide.
- Beachcombing is a popular activity in the park. Stop by the visitor center for information on seashells, sea beans, and other marine treasures.
- Padre Island is a great place to bird watch! More than 380 species of birds live in or pass through the park during spring and fall migration. In the wintertime attend a bird tour to learn more about the birds of Padre. See page 10 for more information.
- Learn more about the park by attending a ranger-led program. We offer programs year-round including beach walks, deck talks, bird tours, art classes, and plant walks. Check our website or stop by the Malaquite Visitor Center for the latest program schedule.

A Day

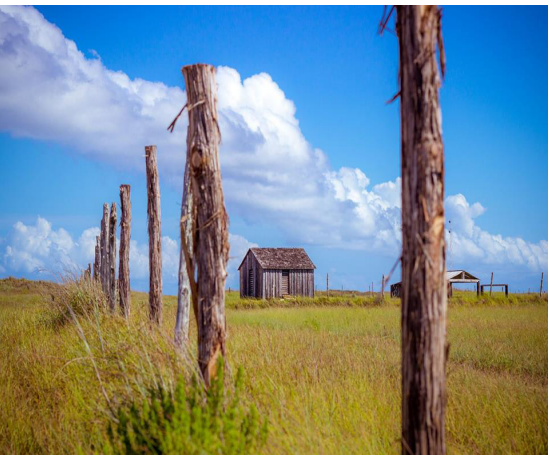


Windsurfing the Laguna Madre

WorldWinds Windsurfing

- Spend a restful day fishing. Visitors can fish over 60 miles of beaches along the Gulf of Mexico and wade fish in the Laguna Madre. To fish anywhere within the park requires a valid Texas fishing license and a saltwater stamp, which are only sold outside of the park at any local gas station or tackle shop. See page 12 for more information on fishing.
- Learn how to windsurf! The Laguna Madre is one of the top windsurfing destinations in the country. Worldwinds Windsurfing, Inc., located near the Bird Island Basin Campground, will rent windsurfing and kayaking gear. They also give lessons! For more information call (361) 949-7472.
- Do you have a boat? You can launch at the boat ramp at Bird Island Basin. Pack a picnic lunch and spend the day on the water! See page 2 for boat ramp fee information.
- Become a Junior Ranger! There’s no age limit and it’s a great way to learn about the park. There are different Junior Ranger badges you can earn- try for them all! Stop by Malaquite Visitor Center to get your free program booklet and pencil to get started!

A Weekend



Historic Novillo Line Camp

J. Valadez

- Primitive camp for a few days on South Beach. Spend a day walking, beachcombing or fishing away from the crowds.
- Drive to Big Shell Beach to collect shells and experience the park “down island”. Continue all way to the Mansfield Channel to see the southernmost end of the park. Look for the wreck of the Nicaragua at mile 51. See page 8 for more information.
- The low light pollution and remoteness here offer amazing opportunities for night sky viewing. If you have a telescope of your own, take advantage of our Night Sky Observatory at the north end of Malaquite Visitor Center Pavilion parking lot.
- Step back in time and discover the historic structures of Novillo Line Camp, remnants of one of the very last open-range cattle ranches in the U.S.. Novillo is across from the road to Bird Island Basin. Though not a designated trail, you can walk the 1 mile round trip on the gravel road to the camp. There are rattlesnakes in the area, so caution is advised. Boots and long pants are recommended. Learn more on page 13.

Keeping Wildlife Wild



NPS Photo / C. Fenn

Gulls



Feeding gulls or other birds in the park is NOT allowed and is strictly prohibited. Feeding birds can cause them to approach people too closely, beg for and steal food, and be less able to survive on their own.

Feeding gulls also increases the danger for newly hatched sea turtles because gulls, hoping to be fed, are drawn to crowds of people and may swoop down and take a hatchling. Feeding gulls causes them to become more aggressive to humans and other wildlife. For the safety of our hatchlings and other wildlife, do not feed or approach the gulls.

When you’re at the beach, remember that gulls are wild animals and they live here- they do not need human food to survive.

Coyotes

Coyotes are one of the most ecologically important mammals and are the top predators on the island. Their diet consists of deer, birds, mice, lizards, rabbits, raccoons, and fish. NEVER approach or feed a coyote. Feeding a coyote human food, dog food, or cat food is unsafe for the coyote. Coyotes fed by humans may become reliant on humans for food and may starve due to improper nutrition.

Contact with humans can also lead to aggressive behavior and/ or wildlife-related vehicle accidents. Never leave pets or pet food unattended, and pets should always be on a leash. If a coyote exhibits aggressive behavior toward humans, please report such interactions immediately to a park ranger.



NPS Photo / M. Varnstad



K. Christensen

Spotted Ground Squirrels

The spotted ground squirrel is a common sight around the dunes near Malaquite Visitor Center, especially during the summer months. The ground squirrel makes its home in long, shallow burrows which are marked by slight mounds in the vegetation.

Though they are quite charismatic, they can inflict a painful bite if fed by humans or approached too closely. Ground squirrels are rodents and can carry a host of diseases. Feeding ground squirrels human food is harmful and causes the squirrels to behave unnaturally. Help keep ground squirrels a welcomed sight in our dunes by keeping them wild.

Rattlesnakes

There are three species of rattlesnakes in the park which are venomous: the western diamondback, western massasagua, and desert massasagua.

The dunes and grasslands are home to the rattlesnakes and visitors are cautioned against entering these areas. Snakes may become more active on warm, sunny days, even in the winter months, so tread carefully when walking near thick grass, dunes, grasslands, and natural debris. If you locate a rattlesnake, calmly back away as quietly as possible. NEVER handle or provoke a rattlesnake in any way. If bitten, restrain physical activity and go to a hospital immediately.



NPS Photo



NPS Photo / S. Laughlin

Ghost Crabs

Ghost crabs, also called sand crabs, are so named because of their ability to blend in with the sandy beaches and dunes where they live. Ghost crabs make golf ball-sized entrance holes in the dry sand and you can most often observe them at night, which is when they feed on other crabs, clams, lizards, insects, and dead and decomposing matter. They help keep our beaches clean!

Ghost crabs are valued residents of the unique and fragile ecosystem of Padre Island. Do not feed, approach, capture, or handle ghost crabs, and do not disturb their burrows.

How You Can Help Wildlife

- SLOW DOWN, observe all posted speed limits, and watch closely for nesting sea turtles and animals crossing the beach roadway. Use caution during nesting season when driving on the beach, as sea turtles can nest in vehicle ruts.
- A fed animal is a dead animal! Human food is dangerous to wildlife. Feeding, approaching, harassing, handling, harming, and capturing wildlife is dangerous to both you and the wildlife, and it’s illegal!
- Never approach any wild animal- even seemingly tame animals are still wild!
- Store food in a secure location, such as coolers or in an enclosed vehicle. After eating, dispose of all food scraps and garbage properly and promptly.
- Secure fishing bait and scraps where coyotes cannot obtain access.
- Admire wildlife safely from a distance with binoculars, spotting scopes, or cameras.
- Never leave pets or pet food unattended.
- Pets should always be on a leash for their own safety and for the safety of the park’s wildlife. NEVER allow your pet to chase birds or wildlife.

How to Help Sea Turtles

If you find a sea turtle (nesting, floating, or washed ashore, alive or dead) or sea turtle tracks, report it immediately:

- On North Padre Island, call (361) 949-8173, ext. 226.
- For other areas, call 1-866-877-8535.
- Notify a turtle patroller or beach official if no cell service.
- IT IS ILLEGAL to touch or take sea turtles, their eggs, or their eggshells, or harass, harm, or kill them.



NPS Photo

Nesting female Kemp's ridley sea turtle

Look for the YELLOW FLAG!

- The flag (photo below) is flown at the Malaquite Visitor Center on days that sea turtle nesting has occurred along the Texas coast. Observe all posted speed limits and watch closely for nesting sea turtles when driving on the beach so you do not crush one with your vehicle.



NPS Photo

The flag alerts visitors to use caution when driving on the beach as sea turtles are nesting on the Texas coast

Traveling Down Island

Many people come to Padre Island National Seashore to experience the beauty of nature in isolation. One way to experience the rugged beauty of Padre Island is to travel down island on South Beach into the park's most remote areas, which are only accessible with a high-clearance, four-wheel drive vehicle. Please remember that all beach driving is at your own risk, and that in Texas, beaches are considered public highways. Only street-legal and licensed vehicles are allowed in the park. All-terrain vehicles (ATVs), utility task vehicles (UTVs), go-carts, golf carts, dune buggies, and other such vehicles are prohibited. Driving in dunes, grasslands, and mudflats is also prohibited.

Be sure to gas up your vehicle before you come! There is no place to get gas once you enter the park and the nearest gas station is about 14 miles north of the park entrance, which is many miles from the more remote areas of the park. If traveling down island, it is recommended to bring items such as a shovel, water, food, jumper cables, extra fuel, first aid kit, tow ties, wooden planks, spare tire, jack and other tire-changing equipment, 5-gallon bucket, and vinegar for jellyfish stings. Before you explore the island in search of its wonderful mysteries and the awesome solitude it provides, please read the helpful information below.

Tips for Driving Down Island

- Be aware that beach conditions are constantly changing. Call the Malaquite Visitor Center at (361) 949-8068 for beach and weather conditions and tide predictions.
- When driving, observe all posted speed limits and watch out for children, other visitors, pets, campers, nesting sea turtles, nesting birds, and large debris.
- Wildlife, including nesting sea turtles, can be found on the beach roadway. See page 5 for more information on how you can protect wildlife when traveling down island.
- A high-clearance, four-wheel drive vehicle is strongly recommended past the 5 mile marker.
- Be prepared for soft and shelly sand, flat tires, and hazards such as large debris and trees. The National Park Service (NPS) will not tow non-government vehicles. The cost for a private wrecker can be expensive.
- Cell phone reception is often non-existent or very spotty. If there is an emergency you can climb the dunes to possibly get better reception and call 911.
- Report all sea turtle sightings to a ranger or call (361) 949-8173 ext. 226.
- Park above the high tide water line to avoid a water logged vehicle, and do not block traffic when parking.
- Do not pick up hazardous waste, contraband, illegal drugs, unexploded ordnance, etc. It is illegal to possess these items and may be dangerous. If found, report it to a ranger as soon as possible.

Rules and Regulations

- Traveling down island is at your own risk! The NPS is not responsible for injury to visitors or damage to vehicles while driving down island.
- The following speed limits are established and strictly enforced down island:

From mile marker 0-2.5:
15 MPH all year round.

From mile marker 2.5-60:
Labor Day through the last day of February – 25 MPH

March 1st to Labor Day – 15 MPH
- Seat belts must be worn at ALL times. No drinking and driving or open containers.
- Do not drive behind the dunes or over areas of beach covered in vegetation. Damage of any kind to natural resources is strictly prohibited.
- Northbound vehicles have the right of way.

What can you see on your down island adventure?

South Beach:

Located south of the Malaquite Visitor Center, South Beach is the entrance point to 60 miles of drivable beach within the park. Mile markers are placed every five miles. Miles 0-5 are the most easily accessible and four-wheel drive is normally not required. All camping on this 60 mile stretch of beach is primitive and open to RV and tent camping. For more information on camping on South Beach, see page 4. South Beach is also available for day use activities like picnicking, swimming, and fishing.



Entrance to South Beach NPS Photo

Little and Big Shell Beach, Miles 10-25:

Here the beaches are made up of shelly material. Within the Gulf, a current from the north meets with a current from the south causing deposition of shells and marine debris.

Both beaches will usually have more shells than Malaquite Beach and South Beach and they are a great place to go beachcombing. To reach Little and Big Shell Beaches four-wheel drive is strongly recommended and caution is urged as the beaches tend to have loose, deep sand and shells making driving difficult. Due to the convergence of nutrient-carrying ocean currents, Big Shell Beach is a popular fishing location at Padre Island.



Big Shell Beach NPS Photo / C. Fenn

Yarborough Pass, Mile 15:

Yarborough Pass is a sand road that allows down island access to the Laguna Madre side of the park. It was originally dredged as a channel in 1941 to allow Gulf waters to dilute the hypersaline waters of the Laguna Madre.

After repeated attempts to keep the channel sand free, dredging efforts were abandoned. By 1950 the pass had filled and the beach was again unbroken. Today, Yarborough Pass remains filled in with sand, which is sometimes exceptionally deep. Four-wheel drive vehicles can become stuck so caution is strongly advised. Primitive camping is available at Yarborough Pass. Permits for camping are at a self-serve kiosk located at the entrance to South Beach.



Entrance to Yarborough Pass NPS Photo / K. Sanders

Wreck of the SS Nicaragua, Mile 51:

The SS Nicaragua was a slim, white ship built in 1891 in Bergen, Norway and was 190 feet in length and weighed 611 gross tons. On October 11th, 1912, she left Tampico, Mexico bound for Port Arthur, Texas carrying cotton and miscellaneous cargo. Five days later, she ran aground during a storm at about what would become the 51 mile marker in the park. Today, the ship has mostly rusted away. All that remains are the fireboxes located about 100 yards offshore. These can be seen at low tide.



Brown Pelicans on the SS Nicaragua NPS Photo / C. Fenn

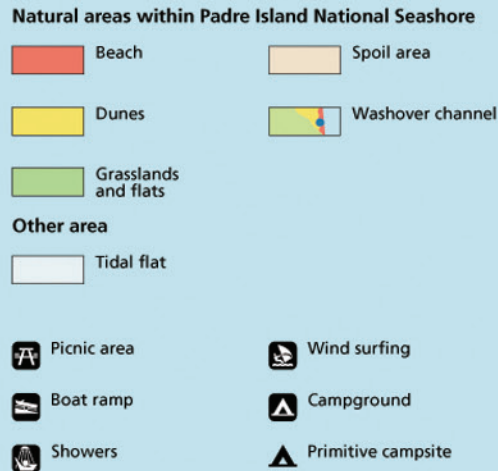
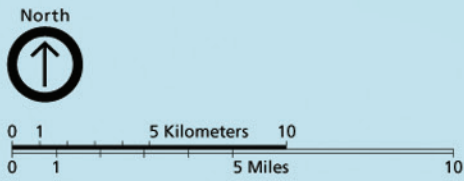
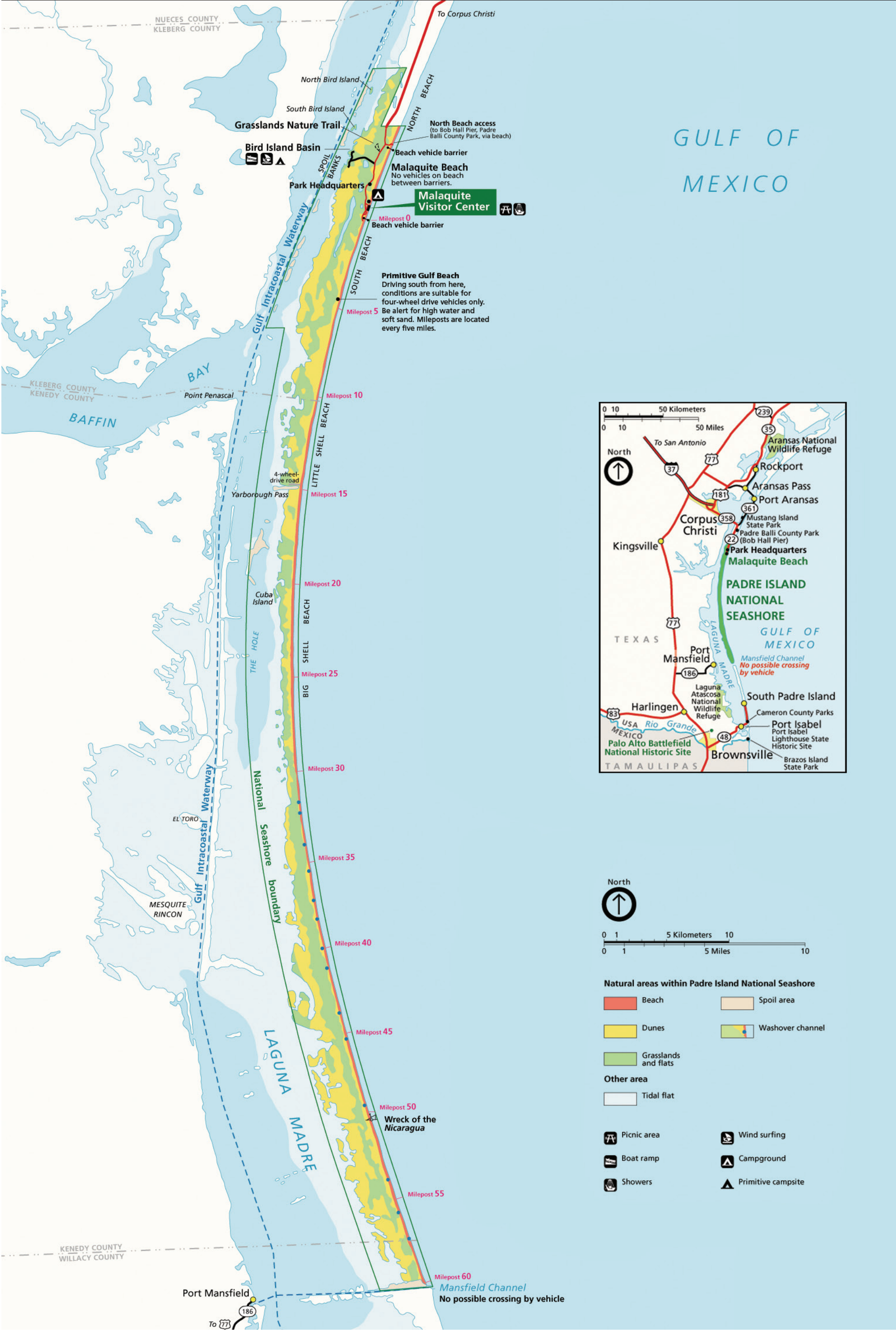
Mansfield Channel, Mile 60:

Mansfield Channel marks the southernmost boundary of the park, separating North Padre Island from South Padre Island. It is a popular fishing destination. The original channel and jetties were dug in 1957 for private use. Unfortunately, they were destroyed by storms that same year. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built the present channel and jetties in 1962. The waterway connects the town of Port Mansfield on the Laguna Madre with the Gulf of Mexico.



Mansfield Channel NPS Photo / C. Fenn

Padre Island National Seashore



Common Birds By Habitat

Gulf of Mexico:

Brown Pelican, Sanderling, Laughing Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Forster’s Tern, Royal Tern, Caspian Tern, Willet, Ruddy Turnstone, Snowy Plover, Piping Plover, and Black Skimmer



Coastal Prairie:

Sandhill Crane, White-tailed Hawk, Snow Goose, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Pied-billed Grebe, Barn Swallow, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Loggerhead Shrike, Tri-colored Heron, and Savannah Sparrow



Laguna Madre:

Reddish Egret, Redhead, Bufflehead, Double-crested Cormorant, American White Pelican, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Wilson’s Plover, Long-billed Curlew, and Turkey Vulture



Artist Spotlight: Lee Bailey



Painters, photographers, and artists of all mediums have been integral to furthering the mission of the National Park Service even before its inception, beginning in 1872 when Yellowstone was designated as the world’s first national park. This union of arts and parks is still very much relevant today, in part due to initiatives like the Artist-in-Residence program.

Lee Bailey, landscape photographer, was the 2016 Artist-in-Residence for Padre Island National Seashore. During his residency, he captured the essence of this barrier island through photographs of the ethereal beauty of birds, delicate wildflowers, and expansive landscapes.

Lee’s photographs taken during Spring 2016 are featured on the front page and throughout this newspaper. We invite you to view his work in the Malaquite Visitor Center, and hope that you will “Find Your Park Through Art” with us this year. We will be offering watercolor classes, workshops, and hosting several new Artists-in-Residence.

Birding in the Park

During the fall, our beaches at Padre Island become quiet as vacations end and school starts. Gone are the crowds of sun seekers and day-trippers. Instead, another sort of person shows up in the park, the birder. Armed with binoculars, spotting scopes, cameras, and worn copies of bird guide books, birders come here.... well, to look for birds!

Padre Island is located along the Central Flyway, a migration pathway for millions of birds. In the fall, birds fly south seeking warmer temperatures and more abundant food sources. Second, the diversity of habitat at the National Seashore makes it one of the best places in the Gulf Coast region to see birds. In the spring, birds head north, moving to summer nesting grounds. Padre Island National Seashore is an essential stop over site for migrating songbirds and a wintering ground for thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds.

So, how can you see birds in the park? You can sign up for a Bird Tour! Tours generally start at the beginning of November and run through March or April. On the tour you will be driven in a park vehicle to several birding “hotspots” that showcase a variety of habitats within the park including South Beach for Gulf Coast beaches, stops along Park Road 22 for the coastal prairie, and Bird Island Basin for the shallow waters of the Laguna Madre. Tours are lead by knowledgeable volunteers and rangers who will help spot birds and give you information about the birds you are seeing in addition to some park history.



If you have forgotten your binoculars, don’t worry! We have several pairs to lend out as well as bird books to help with identification. We welcome birders of all skill levels from beginners learning to use binoculars to experts working on their year lists. Each tour lasts about two hours and is limited to 8 people. Check with the park website or give us a call at the Visitor Center (361-949-8068) to get exact times and dates for the tours.

VIP’s in the Park

Padre Island National Seashore has great staff and rangers but we couldn’t do our jobs without our fantastic volunteers. “VIP” stands for Volunteers-in-Parks and it’s not a coincidence that it also stands for Very Important People. Our volunteers are not only important but vital to the mission of the National Park Service. Each and every day, volunteers in over 400 national park units help us conserve, preserve, and protect America’s natural and cultural resources for current and future generations.

Being a VIP is a unique opportunity and it’s a chance to experience a national park in a different way. Our VIPs keep the beaches clean, educate the public about the park, and protect marine life in the Gulf of Mexico. By contributing their skills, time, energy, and sweat, volunteers work to make the park a better place. We truly appreciate all of their hard work. If you see someone with a volunteer patch giving a deck talk or picking up trash, please be sure to thank them for their service!



This group of volunteers, known as the “Trashbusters”, picked up over 3,300 bags of trash off the beach in 2016 alone! Here they hold marine debris washed in from other parts of the world

Last year alone, 2,061 volunteers contributed over 25,635 hours of service at Padre Island National Seashore! Do you enjoy exploring and learning more about the world around you? Are you ready to share your time and talents to help us protect and preserve this special place? Consider volunteering with us and joining our incredible cohort of volunteers! Many unique volunteer opportunities are available at Padre Island National Seashore for individuals, groups, and scout troops.

Opportunities include working at the Malaquite Visitor Center and interacting with visitors, assisting with Turtle Patrol efforts, leading guided bird tours and other public programs, beach clean-ups, campground hosting, and for scouts, becoming a Scout Ranger. There’s no age limit for volunteering! Kids can help out, too! For more information on how you can be a volunteer, stop by the visitor center to fill out an application, call (361) 949-8068, or e-mail our Volunteer Coordinators at: pais_volunteer@nps.gov.

Catch a Sea Turtle Hatchling Release

One of the most popular summer activities at Padre Island National Seashore is our public releases of Kemp’s ridley sea turtle hatchlings. Every year thousands of visitors come to the park hoping to catch a glimpse of the rarest sea turtle species in the world, the Kemp’s ridley, as they make their way to the ocean to begin their journey. At approximately 3 inches long, thousands of tiny Kemp’s ridley hatchlings are released into the Gulf of Mexico annually at the National Seashore.

Although Kemp’s ridley is the most endangered of all sea turtle species, it is the most common sea turtle nesting at the park. This is because more Kemp’s ridleys nest at Padre Island National Seashore than anywhere else in the U.S., making it the most important U.S. nesting beach for this species. The other four species of sea turtles documented nesting on our beaches are the green, loggerhead, hawksbill, and leatherback sea turtles. Kemp’s ridley sea turtles nest on our beaches from April through mid-July. In an effort to enhance the recovery of this endangered species, the Park’s Division of Sea Turtle Science and Recovery, led by Division Chief Dr. Donna Shaver, documents nesting Kemp’s ridley females and provides care for their nests and hatchlings through protected nest incubation and guarded hatchling releases. Once a sea turtle nest is found on our beaches, staff biologists place the eggs in either our incubation facility or a fenced beach hatchery called a “corral” for protected incubation until they hatch. Biologists closely monitor the nests and release the hatchlings when they begin to become very active in a condition called a “frenzy,” which typically occurs at night or during the early morning.

Public hatchling releases occur in the summer from June through August. If you visit the park’s website (nps.gov/pais) during this time, you will see about 100 Kemp’s ridley nests that have been placed into our incubation facility that are listed, along with their estimated hatching dates. Public releases are scheduled for when at least two nests are predicted to hatch on the same date. We strongly recommend visitors from out of town plan their trip when several nests are scheduled to hatch at the same time. This will increase the chances of witnessing a release since not all of these nests and their hatchlings will be a part of a public release; like human babies, hatchlings do not always operate on our time schedule and might hatch



Dr. Donna Shaver (photo above) has led sea turtle conservation and recovery efforts at Padre Island National Seashore for over 30 years

earlier or later than expected. Public releases are scheduled early in the morning to fit within the biological needs of the hatching turtles, but if the hatchlings begin to “frenzy” during the night biologists must release them and the hatchling release may be cancelled. The park is able to successfully hold 20-25 public releases every summer.

If you are planning to attend a public hatchling release, visit the park’s website to see anticipated hatch dates. Once you have determined a target set of dates, call the Hatchling Hotline at (361) 949-7163 or visit our Facebook page (facebook.com/nps.pais.seaturtles) to find out the date, time, and location of release. As the hatch date approaches, our biologists will have a better idea of the release date so it is important to check often for the latest information.

On the morning of a release, visitors will meet at the Visitor Center, where they will receive information from staff about the release and what to expect. Once visitors reach the release site on Malaquite Beach it is important to follow a few guidelines (see panel at right). Hundreds to more than 1,000 visitors attend each public release, so there may be a crowd when you arrive. The hatchlings will take up to 45 minutes to enter the surf, so chances are you will have multiple opportunities for a great view or to take a photograph of them crawling towards the surf. We ask visitors to be kind and courteous to help ensure everyone gets a chance to watch these rare sea turtles begin their journey. We hope you can catch a release this summer and participate in this once-in-a-lifetime experience!

Guidelines for Public Hatchling Releases

Flash photography, cell phone lights, and flashlights are not permitted.

Artificial lights may confuse the hatchlings since they orient themselves toward the sun.

Do not wear white clothing.

As hatchlings orient toward light, we ask that visitors do not wear white clothing. If wearing white clothing, you may be asked to stand behind someone else if the hatchlings get disoriented.

Keep an eye out and feet firmly planted.

Although the release site is cordoned off, hatchlings may veer into the crowd or a wave could wash them into the crowd, so keep an eye out for these tiny turtles and make sure your feet are firmly planted so you do not step on them.

No smoking or food is allowed at the release site, and never feed birds or other wildlife.

Do not wave your arms in an attempt to scare off the gulls- they will think you are trying to feed them. Gulls can and have swooped down and taken hatchlings during public releases- do not feed the birds.

Do not touch the sea turtles.

Touching them can interfere with the imprinting process that helps them return here to nest as adults.

Why is There So Much Trash?

While there is a notable amount of trash left behind by park visitors, much of the trash found on our beaches travels from far and wide to get here. The abundance of marine debris is due to the prevailing winds and convergence of currents. The Gulf of Mexico can be likened to a washing machine, with multiple currents acting together to bring marine debris to our shores. A current that travels north from Mexico and a current that travels west along the Gulf of Mexico converge about 30 miles offshore, sending anything that has crossed paths with these currents to the beaches of Padre Island National Seashore.

Why is trash so bad?

Aside from being an eyesore, trash is very harmful and even deadly to wildlife. Animals can become entangled in it and mistake it for food. Trash bitten by sea turtles is frequently found washed up on our beaches (photo right). Consumption of debris like balloons, fishing line, plastic bottles, and bottle caps kills thousands of marine animals and shorebirds each year.

One of the most numerous forms of trash found on our beaches is plastic. Many plastics, including plastic soft drink rings and drink cartons, can exist in our oceans for over hundreds of years. Plastic trash breaks into smaller and smaller pieces that can be consumed by wildlife. The plastics often contain toxins that can collect in the tissues of organisms and move through the food chain in a process called biomagnification. Biomagnification occurs when bigger species consume many smaller species that have ingested and accumulated toxins, causing the bigger species to accumulate a greater concentration of the contaminants.

Is this trash?

While some things that wash ashore may appear to be trash, some are actually living creatures. Visitors frequently report finding bunches of yellow electrical wire, but the majority of the time, what they are actually describing are the remains of a soft coral called sea whip (*Leptogorgia setacea*).

Sea whip, or whip coral, is a colony made up of many different polyps, or tiny animals. They are related to jellyfish and sea anemones. Sea whip builds itself around a black axial rod that, when exposed, resembles electrical wire.



Plastic with sea turtle bites

NPS Photo / C. Fenn



A willet stands behind a bundle of sea whip

NPS Photo / S. Laughlin

How Can You Help Keep Our Beaches Clean?

Reduce waste!

Select reusable items instead of disposable ones and use products made with recycled materials. These practices will reduce waste that can potentially get into the environment and harm wildlife.

Recycle any items that you can!

Lots of cities, towns, and businesses have recycling programs. Materials that can be recycled include glass, plastics, paper, and electronics.

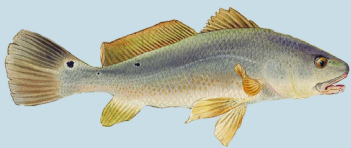
Do a beach clean-up at Padre Island!

Free trash bags are available at the Malaquite Visitor Center. Beach clean-ups can consist of one person to large groups- every little bit helps! Stop by Malaquite Visitor Center for more information.

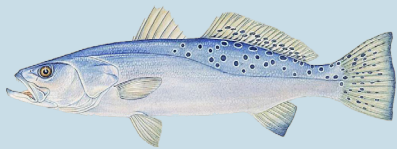
Get out there and pick up trash where you live!

Pick up trash around your house and neighborhood. Remember, no matter where trash is dropped it will probably make it into the ocean. Look for events in your town or neighborhood like Adopt-a-Beach or park clean-up days.

Common
Saltwater Fish
Species at the
Seashore



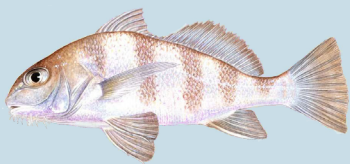
Redfish



Speckled Trout



Florida Pompano



Black Drum



Whiting

Images courtesy of Texas Parks and Wildlife

Gone Fishing...

Fishing is an extremely popular and enjoyable activity at Padre Island National Seashore. If you are a newcomer to the National Seashore and plan to fish during your visit, here are a few tips that may help ensure a successful trip:

Hope for the best but
prepare for the worst!

Normally a drive down the beach goes smoothly. If you have the misfortune to run into trouble though, you will have far less to worry about if you plan ahead. Never travel down island without at the very least taking a shovel, a first aid kit, and plenty of water. In addition, if you plan to venture past the 4.5 mile mark and down into the four wheel drive portion of the beach, take a tow strap, some basic hand tools for vehicle repairs, 2 or 3 cans of aerosol tire inflator, tire changing equipment, jumper cables, and extra fluids and duct tape in case of a blown hose. Be sure you have a functional spare tire and a jack. ALWAYS tell a friend or family member how long you plan to be out so they can alert a park ranger if you fail to promptly return.

Take the proper fishing tackle
and baits for what is in season

Each season brings different species into the surf zone. Catching species such as large sharks requires special tackle while other species such as pompano, redfish, whiting, and speckled trout can be caught using more conventional tackle. Decide what you are going to fish for and then be sure you have the right baits and tackle for the job. Don't ever leave without checking the



Black drum are a popular sportfish at Padre Island National Seashore

tide charts first since driving at high tide can be especially difficult. Knowing what the tides are doing is also critical to catching fish. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department maintains an excellent website with lots of helpful fishing information. To visit their site, go to: tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/fish/

Know the regulations

To fish at the National Seashore, anyone 17 years or older needs a fishing license with a salt water endorsement in Texas. If you are only here for a day or so, one day fishing licenses are available for residents (at \$11.00/day) and non-residents (at \$16.00/day). There are exceptions for the military, veterans with permanent disabilities, and for certain senior citizen groups. However, even in these groups, a free

license must be obtained to legally fish. Responsible fishing also means knowing the bag and length limits on fish. A few species such as whiting and pompano are not restricted in anyway.

Other popular fish such as speckled trout, redfish and black drum are restricted in both how many you may keep and what length they may be since they fall into a size "slot" that defines a minimum and maximum length. Due to the numerous variations and complicated details regarding each species, it is highly recommended that everyone keep a copy of the Texas Parks & Wildlife Hunting and Fishing Regulations booklet with them when fishing. Copies are available free upon request at the Malaquite Visitor Center desk.

Practice Conservation

There is nothing wrong with keeping a few fish for dinner, but don't keep more than you can use. Catch and release is a great idea, especially for fish populations such as most sharks that are already overfished. When you leave the beach, be sure to pack out the items you brought with you.

In the past few years the use of collapsible shade structures has really increased, but unfortunately they often live up to their name all too well when they collapse and are destroyed by high winds. Once they can no longer be folded and neatly packed away, unethical visitors occasionally abandon them and drive away leaving a mass of twisted steel and canvas on the beach. The slogan "Pack It In, Pack It Out" has been around for a long time for a reason- it is great advice!

Park Partner

Western
National Parks
Association

Western National Parks Association (WNPA) is a nonprofit education partner with the National Park Service. Headquartered in Tuscon, Arizona, the Association was founded in 1938 to support the mission of the National Park Service.

WNPA has worked to connect new generations to parks in meaningful ways, to ultimately create advocates who want to preserve and protect these special places for everyone for years to come. WNPA supports 71 national park partners across the West, developing products, services, and programs that enrich the visitor experience.

The WNPA Bookstore is located in the Malaquite Visitor Center and provides support for park programs using proceeds from sales of educational books, field guides, games, and other items. Your purchases help support parks like Padre Island National Seashore- thank you for your contributions!

Your Fee Dollars at Work

After you pay your park entrance fees, you may wonder, "Where does my money go?". Have you ever used a grill to cook a meal at Malaquite Campground or the Malaquite Pavilion picnic shelter? How about enjoyed an evening ranger program under the stars at the Malaquite Campground Amphitheater or the Malaquite Pavilion Night Sky Observatory? Or maybe you've walked along the paved, handicapped-accessible Grasslands Nature Trail, enjoyed a lunch at one of our picnic tables, learned more about the park from an interpretive wayside exhibit, used the Bird Island Basin day use area or boat ramp, or park showers, restrooms, or trash cans?

If you have used any of these amenities, you have used some of the services at Padre Island National Seashore funded by YOUR fee dollars. Your fee dollars make a difference, and help ensure that the National Park Service can continue its mission of preservation for future generations well into our second century of service and beyond!

The congressionally authorized Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) allows parks like Padre Island National Seashore to retain up to 80% of the entrance fees collected at their sites for important visitor-related services and facilities. The remaining 20% of fees are generally distributed to parks which do not collect fees to assist them with completing similar needs or for service-wide initiatives.

Your entrance fees are integral in generating funds for projects which directly impact visitors here at Padre Island, such as enhancements to visitor services, signs, and information, public safety and recreation, habitat restoration related to wildlife observation, and facility maintenance and repairs.



Improvements to the Grasslands Nature Trail were made possible through funds generated from the park's entrance fees

Upcoming Projects from Your Fee Dollars:

- Construct the Malaquite Education Center, which will serve over 17,000 students each year.
- Construct two Wildlife Viewing Observation Stations to enhance visitor experience.
- Replace the Malaquite Visitor Center Complex shingle roof.
- Repair the Malaquite Visitor Center deck and boardwalk.
- Replace two deteriorating vault toilets.
- Replace failing beach security bollards.
- Create new exhibits for the Malaquite Visitor Center.

The History of the Dunn Ranch

Dunn Ranch, the last open range cattle ranch in the lower 48 States, was located at what is now Padre Island National Seashore. The history of the Dunn Ranch begins in 1879, when Patrick Dunn first arrived on Padre Island and leased land from John McCampbell and Stanley Welch. Patrick moved 400 head of cattle onto the island. The first year on the island was a disaster and Patrick had to work on a 1,000 head cattle drive for the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company to make ends meet. He was paid a dollar a head and was able to pay his lease.

Three line camps and a headquarters were built on the island. Black Hill, Green Hill, and Novillo Line Camp were built at 15 mile intervals along the island. This distance was about as far as cattle could be driven in a day without running the weight off of them. With cowboys and vaqueros starting work at 4:00 in the morning, they were able to drive the cattle to the next line camp with enough daylight left to allow for penning them in for the night.

Since trees are scare on Padre Island, Patrick used whatever type of wood washed ashore to construct his home, shacks, pens, and fences, and to fuel cooking fires. But on the island, wood is constantly being attacked by termites, carpenter ants, and wood bees and rarely lasts more than 10 years. The Dunn Ranch also had to contend with hurricanes, including a category 4 storm at the Green Hill Line Camp.

The cowboys and vaqueros drove the cows north from the area around where Mansfield Channel is now, to Greenhill, where they would cull the yearlings and other cattle suitable for sale. After the herd was run through dip baths to kill parasites, the balance of the cattle would be turned out to continue grazing. The saleable cattle would be driven north to Black Hill as cattle were rounded up in the area between the camps. This process was continued to the headquarters at the north end of the island where the herd was pushed across the Laguna Madre to Flour Bluff.

Despite its challenges, the island provided many advantages to a ranch. The Gulf and Laguna Madre made fences unnecessary. On the mainland, the chaparral brush allowed the cattle to avoid the vaqueros



Novillo Line Camp in present day

NPS Photo / J. Lindsay

and cowboys. It forced the cowboys and vaqueros to wear chaps, heavy gauntlets, a heavy hat and high boots while “brush popping” or tearing a hole in the brush. Padre Island didn’t have chaparral and the heavy gear was not needed. Cattle could easily be seen from a distance and had nowhere to hide when a round up started.

Burton Dunn took over the ranch after his father’s death in 1938 and the routine changed little on the island until the late 1940’s when the first truck was brought to the island. Soon horses were trailered down island and cattle were loaded at the line camps and carried north. This saved wear and tear on horses and men and allowed the ranch to leave a little more weight on the cattle they sold.

With the dredging of the Intracoastal Waterway, the ranch could no longer drive cattle across the Laguna Madre. Cattle were driven up Mustang Island and taken to the mainland on ferries. After the Causeway was built in 1951, cattle were trucked off the island. Ranching operations continued until Burton’s death in 1970, which brought a total of over 90 years of the Dunn Ranch on Padre Island to an end.

The Novillo Line Camp, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, still stands and is the last surviving of the three original line camps. Although not an officially designated trail, visitors can walk back to the camp (1 mile roundtrip), located across the road to Bird Island Basin. Take a trip back in time to discover the rich cultural legacy of the island through Novillo Line Camp, a remnant of an era when ranchers once survived and thrived in the harsh environment of Padre Island.

How to Leave No Trace

With increased visitor use, it is important to minimize our impacts and Leave No Trace of our visits in the backcountry. Please learn, practice, and pass on Leave No Trace skills and ethics to others. The following principles will help protect precious resources so that we can all enjoy our park.

Camp and Travel on Durable Surfaces

- Use the tent pad at the campsite and camp in the area indicated on your permit. If camping on the beach, camp between the high tide line and the edge of the dunes.
- Restrict activities to the area where vegetation is compacted or absent.
- Camping and traveling in the dunes, mudflats, or wetland areas is strictly prohibited.

Plan and Prepare

- Know and obey the regulations of the area you’re visiting.
- Visit the backcountry of the island in small parties. More people mean more impacts.
- Avoid popular areas during times of high use.
- Repackage food into reusable containers.

Leave What You Find

- Treat our natural resources with respect. You may collect seashells, but leave behind any shell with an animal living in it.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site should not be necessary. Don’t build structures or dig trenches.
- Let nature’s sounds prevail. Speak softly and avoid making loud noises. Allow for others to enjoy the peace and solitude of being in this beautiful place.

Pack It In, Pack It Out

- Inspect your campsite for trash and evidence of your stay. Pack out all trash -- yours and others.
- Protect wildlife; secure your food and waste to keep animals out.
- Strain food scraps from wash water and pack them out.
- There are pit toilets at the entrance to South Beach if you cannot pack out waste.
- If there are no pit toilets nearby, urinate or defecate at least 200 feet (70 adult steps) from water, camp, or trails
- Deposit human waste in catholes dug 6-8 inches deep. Carry a small garden trowel or lightweight scoop for digging. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished, or pack out solid waste.
- Use toilet paper sparingly and pack it out along with feminine hygiene products in an airtight container.
- Wash your dishes and yourself at least 200 feet (70 adult steps) from water sources, and use small amounts, if any, of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.



Leave
No
Trace™

Center for Outdoor Ethics | LNT.org

Meaning of Malaquite

“Where does Malaquite come from?” It’s a common question asked by visitors when inquiring about the namesakes of Malaquite Visitor Center and Malaquite Beach. Malaquite (pronounced “Mal-ah-keet”) is named for the Malaquite Indians, a band of the Coahuiltecan Native Americans. The Coahuiltecan were a nomadic hunter-gatherer band that roamed the coast and inland for some distance.

A map drawn by Colonel Diego Ortiz Parrilla, who scouted Padre Island for Spain in 1766, shows several Malaquite settlements in the vicinity of the today’s visitor center. Because of that map notation, the park’s second superintendent, Ernest Borgman, named the area Malaquite Beach to honor the native people.

Part of the mission of the National Park Service is to protect and preserve sites like Padre Island National Seashore. Visiting the park today is very much like stepping back in time to when the Malaquite inhabited the area.

Creature Feature



NPS Photo

You never quite know what the currents will bring in, especially after a large storm! These marvelous **blue dragon nudibranchs** pictured here (*Glaucus atlanticus*) were discovered washed up alive at Malaquite Beach in Spring 2016. Nudibranchs are soft bodied mollusks closely related to snails, squids, and oysters.

Also called blue sea slugs, these animals get their vivid blue color from their food sources, which include Portuguese man-of-war and blue button jellyfish. They aren’t affected by the stinging cells (nematocysts) in these organisms, and they actually concentrate the nematocysts in cnidosacs (the black tips on the “fringes”) and store them for protection against larger predators!

The blue dragon spends its life floating upside down at sea, traveling warm ocean currents, and capturing prey with its powerful venom. Unfortunately, unlike the blue dragon, we humans are not immune to the stings of jellyfish and man-of-war. If you get stung while at Padre Island National Seashore, seek first aid at Malaquite Visitor Center, or apply a paste of meat tenderizer and vinegar and/or hot water to the wound. Watch closely for allergic reactions.

It was a rare sight to see these beautiful, seemingly mythical, animals. What will you discover on the beaches of Padre Island?

Grasslands Nature Trail Botanical Guide

Located near the park entrance, the Grasslands Nature Trail truly is a snapshot into the past. This paved 3/4 mile loop trail offers you a glimpse of one of the rarest ecosystems in the world: the coastal prairie, a critically imperiled grasslands ecosystem. Padre Island National Seashore protects one of the last remaining vestiges of the prairies that once appeared to have no end in coastal Texas.

Read more to learn about this very rare and special ecosystem. Along the trail are numbers which correspond to the following botanical guide. Please enjoy your walk on the Grasslands Nature Trail- a truly rare and unique national treasure.

Why is Coastal Prairie Important?

- Supports incredible biodiversity of animals, insects, and plants- home to over 1,500 vascular plant species.
- Provides critical wintering and migratory habitat for hundreds of bird species, like sandhill crane and northern harrier.
- Supports plants which are important for pollinators and larval food sources for moths and butterflies.
- Provides habitat for a variety of animals, such as insects, waterfowl, coyote, white-tailed deer, snakes, jack rabbits, and threatened and endangered species.
- Vast roots and thatch networks underneath the grasses add nutrients to the soil.
- Grasses and plants provide food and forage for wildlife.
- Seeds from plants are important food sources for a variety of songbirds in winter.

Mounds on the Ground



T. Ross

Heaps of excavated sand along the trail are from the burrowing activities of the elusive Texas pocket gopher, a resident rodent of Padre Island National Seashore and South Texas.

The Texas pocket gopher forages mostly underground on the roots, bulbs, stems, and leaves of grasses in the coastal prairie.

Though they weigh less than one pound, one gopher can move over one ton of sand in a year! Their tunneling mixes and aerates the sand- making it more fertile for plants.

1 Rough Leaved Agave *Agave scabra*

This species is heavily armed with strong spines along the edges and a single spine at the tip of the leaf. Although this species lives many years, it blooms once prior to dying. Its bloom period is spring and summer.

This is an important larval food plant for the yucca giant-skipper (*Megathymus*) complex of butterflies.



NPS Photo / C. Sassine

2 Scarlet Pea *Indigofera miniata*

This plant has beautiful salmon-rose to light red flower petals and curved pea pods. This species is beneficial as the larval food plant for the grey hairstreak, southern dogface, and Reakirt’s blue butterflies.

It is also a popular species in wildflower gardens as a ground cover due to its mat-like growth pattern. Deer and livestock also commonly consume this plant as a food source.



NPS Photo / C. Sassine

3 Texas Prickly Pear Cactus *Opuntia engelmannii* var. *lindheimeri*

The long, sharp spines of cacti are actually modified leaves that harden as they age. This cacti is common in the park along coastal dunes, vegetated barrier flats, disturbed sites, roadsides, and environments with shell deposits.

The cacti is generally considered a range pest to ranchers yet during times of extreme drought was an important cattle food source.



NPS Photo / C. Sassine

4 Padre Island Mistflower *Conoclinium betonicifolium*

Mistflower is one of the most important nectar sources for butterflies and moths on the island. This is the larval food plant for the rounded metalmark butterfly and several species of moths.

Because of this importance, this is a very popular plant in most butterfly gardens. In the park, it is common near ephemeral ponds, marshes, and roadsides.



NPS Photo / C. Sassine

5 Yankeeweed *Eupatorium compositifolium*

The stout woody stems and tendency to form distinct colonies are diagnostic features of this plant. It is often referred to as being both annual and perennial. Although it can be found in a wide variety of habitats and soils it is most common on dry, sandy soils along roadsides. The bloom period usually ranges from early August through December.

This species is also one of the many larval food plants for the bordered patch butterfly.



NPS Photo / C. Sassine

6 Elegent Liatris *Liatris elegans*

Belonging to the aster family, this is one of the island's most attractive and showy species. It also provides an important nectar source for butterflies and day flying moths.

Its beautiful purple and lavender blooms occur in summer and fall. This species is commonly found in open grasslands, hillsides, and slopes.



NPS Photo / C. Sassine

7 Wax Myrtle *Morella cerifera*

This densely branching perennial shrub is common in association with black willows in northern sections of the park, and is rarely found further south on the island.

In winter, the seeds are important food sources for the Carolina wren and other songbirds. This shrub also provides significant habitat for a variety of bird species.



NPS Photo / C. Sassine

8 Buckley's Yucca *Yucca constricta*

This plant has leaves shaped like swords with a piercing spike at the tip and beautiful creamy white flowers. Buckley's yucca is a sand growing species that has a very specialized pollination system where yucca moths purposely transfer pollen from one plant to another. During pollination, they lay an egg in the flower. The moth larva then feeds on some of the developing seeds, yet always leaves enough seed to perpetuate the species.

Yuccas are important larval food plants for the yucca giant-skipper (*Megathymus*) complex of butterflies.



NPS Photo / C. Sassine

9 Seacoast Bluestem *Schizachyrium scoparium*

This is the most abundant grass on the island. It is an attractive grass forming upright clumps of slender green leaves which have a tinge of blue at the base. The seacoast bluestem has striking clusters of fluffy, silvery-white seed heads which often persist into winter. The most outstanding feature of this grass may be the bronze-orange fall foliage color. It provides forage and cover for wildlife.



NPS Photo / C. Sassine

10 Sea Oats *Uniola paniculata*

The large seed heads of this plant that turn golden brown in late summer give the plant its common name. Its tall leaves trap wind-blown sand and promote dune growth, while its deep roots and extensive rhizomes act to stabilize them. This plant is vital in the protection of beaches from damage due to high winds, storm surges, and tides. It also provides food and habitat for birds, small mammals, and insects.



NPS Photo / C. Sassine

11 Plains Wild Indigo *Baptisia leucophaea*

This species has beautiful creamy yellow colored flowers which form long horizontal clusters. In late summer, the entire upper portion of the plant loses its green color. It becomes dry, turns dark grey to black, and breaks off at the ground to become tumbleweeds. This process aids in seed dispersal.



NPS Photo / C. Sassine

How Did the Coastal Prairie Become So Rare?

Grasslands worldwide are unappreciated for their beauty and ecological importance but have certainly been recognized for another reason: they make outstanding croplands. What's not to like about great soil and gently sloped terrain with no or few trees to clear?

Those attributes make them attractive for agriculture and grazing. Is it any wonder prairies have been prime targets for conversion to farmlands and home sites? Texas's prairies, as is true of grasslands in other areas of the U.S. and around the world, have disappeared at an alarming rate. The cotton, sorghum, and other crops as well as much of the pastureland that cover mainland Texas coastal areas are all thriving on former coastal prairies.

During pre-settlement times, there was an estimated nine million acres of coastal prairie, with 2.5 million acres in Louisiana and 6.5 million acres in Texas. Today, less than 1% of this critically imperiled ecosystem remains, due to agricultural use and development, and here on Padre Island, overgrazing by cattle prior to the park's designation as a federal protected area.



The coastal prairie in the 1970's prior to the removal of cattle on Padre Island

The park's prairies have not always looked the same as you see here today. Proof of that may be seen in archival photographs (photo above). During the cattle ranching era that began in the 1700's, many of the native grassland species were significantly reduced due to grazing by cattle. Native grasses could not tolerate the close cropping from cattle, especially since the stress was compounded periodically by the droughts that the region is known for.

The result of the grazing was a landscape that was markedly different from what visitors see today. Historic photographs show vast areas of sand dunes that were constantly moving due to the areas strong winds and a lack of stabilizing vegetation.

In the 40 years since cattle were removed from Padre Island, the prairie has made a comeback. Older visitors returning today, who last visited the island as children or young adults, are often unsure if they have even returned to the same place due to the presence of so much grass and the abundance of wildflowers!

Weather and Climate

Come prepared! Weather on Padre Island varies widely and can change from sunny and warm to thunderstorms and high winds very quickly.

For Today’s Conditions: Stop by the Malaquite Visitor Center to learn the day’s weather forecast, tides, beach driving conditions, seaweed levels, fish-ing reports, alerts, and other helpful information. Conditions are updated at about 9:00 am daily.

Climate: Padre Island has long, hot summers and short, mild winters. Spring and fall are merely transitional periods. Most rain falls near the beginning and end of hurricane and tropical storm season, which lasts from June to October.

Spring: Daytime temperatures average in the 70s-80’s° F, with lows in the 50s-60’s° F .

Summer: Daytime temperatures are usually in the mid-90’s° F, with very humid conditions. Lows are usually in the 70’s° F. Late afternoon and evening sea breezes help to moderate temperatures.

Fall: Daytime temperatures average in the 70s-80’s° F, with lows in the 50s-60’s° F.

Winter: High temperatures are usually between 50°-70°F but can occasionally drop into the upper 30’s. Sudden, strong cold fronts can move through, bringing gale force winds and dropping temperatures quickly. The wintertime climate is typically dry.

Year-round: Average wind speed ranges from 5-25 miles per hour. Relative humidity seldom drops below 70%.

Precipitation: Average annual rainfall for the southern end of the park is 26 inches and 29 inches for the northern end of the park.

Thunderstorms: Storms can pop up suddenly, especially during the summer and fall months. Keep an eye on the sky, and watch for darkening skies, flashes of lightning, or increasing winds. If you hear the sound of thunder, go to a safe place immediately.



Afternoon sun and clouds over Bird Island Basin L. Bailey

Average Monthly Temperatures and Precipitation												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Max. Temp	65° F	68° F	74° F	80° F	85° F	90° F	91° F	92° F	89° F	83° F	75° F	67° F
Min. Temp	50° F	54° F	61° F	67° F	74° F	78° F	79° F	79° F	77° F	70° F	61° F	53° F
Precipitation (inches)	1.95	1.83	1.77	1.79	3.11	3.01	2.21	2.73	6.16	4.15	2.34	1.62

Protecting Yourself and the Park

In Case of Emergency call 911, then contact a ranger.

 **Collecting**
To preserve and protect cultural and natural resources, possession or use of metal detectors is prohibited in the park. Items such as unoccupied seashells, sea beans, and driftwood, washed in by the tide, may be collected as long as items are not used for commercial purposes. All other collecting is strictly prohibited.

 **Come Prepared**
No ice, gas, firewood, or fishing licenses are sold in the park. There are vending machines at Malaquite Visitor Center. The nearest amenities from the main park entrance are about 14 miles away.

 **Fireworks**
Use of fireworks is prohibited.

 **Rip Currents**
Occasionally, conditions can create rip currents. If caught in one, do not 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. There is no lifeguard on duty and swimming is at your own risk.

 **Marine Debris**
Hazardous materials, from medical syringes to 55 gallon barrels of chemicals, sometimes wash ashore. If you see something hazardous, do not touch it. Note the location and alert a park ranger as soon as possible.

 **Hunting and Fishing**
Fishing is permitted everywhere in the park except at Malaquite Beach directly in front of the visitor center. No hunting is permitted except for the taking of waterfowl by boat only in the Laguna Madre. Transporting any other lawfully taken wildlife through the park is prohibited.

 **Feeding the Birds**
Feeding gulls or other wildlife in the park is not allowed and is strictly prohibited. See page 7 for more information on the dangers of feeding wildlife.

 **Driving**
Beaches are Texas public highways. Only street legal and licensed vehicles may be driven in the park. Driving in dunes, grasslands, or mudflats is prohibited. Pedestrians have the right-of-way at all times and do not always watch for approaching vehicles. Drive with caution and strictly observe posted speed limits. See page 8 for more information.

 **Dangerous Animals**
Jellyfish and Portuguese man-of-war can cause a painful sting, even if they are dead. Do not touch them. If stung, apply a paste of meat tenderizer and vinegar and/or rinse with hot water. Watch for allergic reactions and seek medical attention if necessary. Stingrays, if stepped on or agitated, can inflict an extremely painful puncture wound. To help avoid them, shuffle your feet when entering the water. Be aware that sharks also occur in the Gulf. To avoid rattlesnakes, stay out of the dunes, grasslands, and mudflats. First aid is available at Malaquite Visitor Center or call 911 in an emergency (climb a dune for better reception).

 **Off-Road Vehicles**
All-terrain vehicles (ATVs), utility-terrain vehicles (UTVs), go-carts, and dune buggies are prohibited.

 **Leave No Trace**
Help make your park beaches beautiful by practicing Leave No Trace—if you bring it in, take it back out. Free trash bags are available at Malaquite Visitor Center. Dumpsters, trash cans, and/or recycling containers are available at Malaquite Pavilion, South Beach entrance, and Bird Island Basin.

 **Boating**
Jet skis, air boats and kite surfing are prohibited. For the safety of all visitors, boaters launching from Bird Island Basin must avoid the NO BOATS buoy line west of the boat ramp near the windsurfing area.

 **Bait Launchers**
According to 36 Code of Federal Regulations, compressed gas-powered bait launchers are considered weapons, and are prohibited.

 **Pets**
Pets on a leash are allowed everywhere in the park except for the Malaquite Visitor Center area. Please be courteous to other visitors and clean up after your pet. Pets must be on a leash no longer than 6 feet and under your control at all times. Do not leave pets unattended in vehicles. See page 3 for more information.

 **Drones**
Launching, landing, or operating aircraft-based, remote-controlled equipment within Padre Island National Seashore is prohibited.

 **IN CASE OF MEDICAL EMERGENCY:**
Park rangers are available during normal working hours to provide assistance. If you have a medical emergency during your visit, contact a park ranger immediately or go to the Malaquite Visitor Center.

The closest hospital is Bay Area-Corpus Christi Medical Center, located at the corner of South Padre Drive and Rodd Field Road in Corpus Christi (7101 S. Padre Island Dr., Corpus Christi, TX 78412). This facility is located 24 miles from the Malaquite Visitor Center.