

Carbon & Climate Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge

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Project Type:

Tree planting

Project Description:

Located deep in the Rio Grande Valley at the southeastern tip of Texas along the Rio Grande River and the Gulf of Mexico, the 97,000-acre Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1946 to provide habitat for wintering waterfowl and migratory birds. Today, Laguna Atascosa is a world-renowned birding destination, boasting more recorded bird species than any other refuge in the entire United States National Wildlife Refuge System. But Laguna Atascosa is special for more than just its bird count. It also is home to the largest ocelot population in the nation, making it the center for conservation and recovery efforts for these endangered cats.

The refuge is part of the South Texas Refuge Complex which includes Laguna Atascosa, Lower Rio Grande Valley and Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuges, which span approximately 180,000 acres and provide important habitat for the many species that rest, nest, feed and live in the thick scrub brush, yucca and saltwater and freshwater marshes. A haven of biodiversity, the complex safeguards 1,200 plant species, more than 530 species of birds, about 40% of all North American butterfly species (330+ species), and 17 federally listed threatened, endangered and migratory species including ocelot and aplomado falcon.

What's At Risk:

Like so many places in the United States, much of the native landscape across the lower Rio Grande Valley has changed dramatically over the last 30 years. Thick brush called Tamaulipan thorn scrub (habitat for both the birds and the wild cats) was cleared to make room for agricultural and urban development. It is estimated that 95% of the native vegetation here has been impacted. Since the mid-1980s, the South Texas Refuge Complex has made restoring Tamaulipan thorn scrub a high priority to ensure species like the ocelot and aplomado have a chance at a comeback. They need our help. With the support of our corporate partners and donors, The Conservation Fund can make a tremendous difference at Laguna Atascosa.

Additional Information:

- **Water** - Laguna Atascosa NWR also manages the Laguna Madre, which is one of seven hypersaline lagoons in the world. It is in a key watershed area with critical wetlands.

- **Community** - Each year, Laguna Atascosa beckons 180,000 visitors seeking opportunities to watch birds, learn about nature, hike, hunt and fish and enjoy photography.

- **Economy** - This refuge created nearly \$30 million in local economic benefits as a result of the 300,000 visitors each year. This means that every \$1 spent on this refuge leverages \$37 for the local economy.

- **Conservation Partner** - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a conservation partner which ensures that our projects have long term stewards of the land.

A Biodiversity Haven

South Texas Refuge Complex is home to:

- More than 1,200 plant species
- More than 530 species of birds
- More than 330 species of butterflies
- 40% of all North American butterfly species
- 17 federally listed threatened, endangered and migratory species