

13-201-16-3-14

ISLAND BAY

WILDERNESS STUDY AREA



**ISLAND BAY
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

FLORIDA

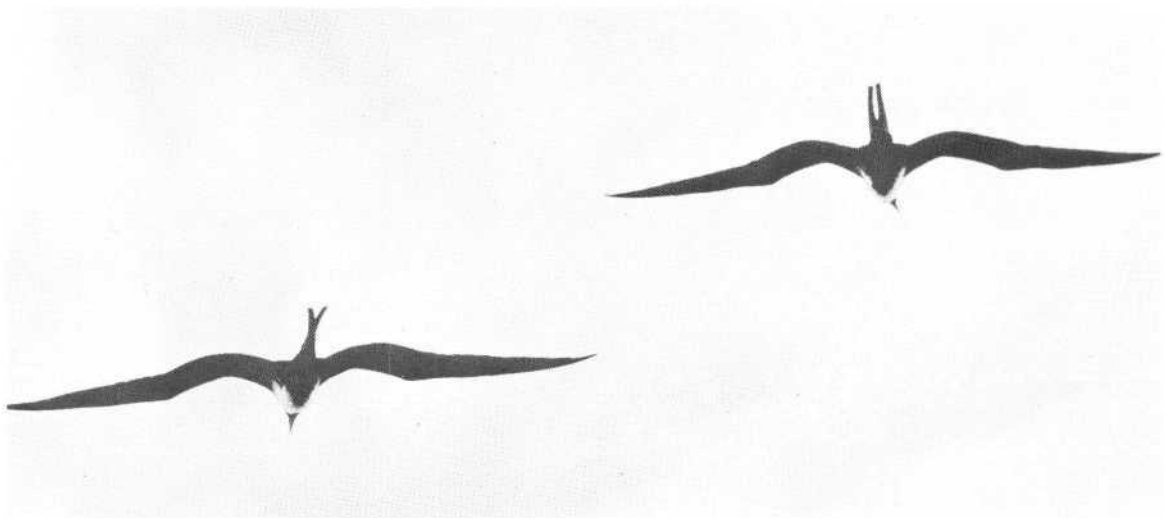


PREFACE

The Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (Public Law 88-577) provided the authority and indicated the procedure by which National Wildlife Refuges, meeting the necessary requirements, are to be considered for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. This law directed the review of every roadless area of 5,000 contiguous acres or more and every roadless island within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

As roadless, undeveloped islands, Island Bay National Wildlife Refuge qualifies as a wilderness study area. Located on the west coast of Florida, this refuge was set aside as a migratory bird sanctuary in the early 1900's. Located in a vast complex of mangrove islands and brackish bays, Island Bay Refuge includes six separate tracts of land totaling 20 acres. The refuge lands do not include entire islands but occupy the higher portions of several islands and mangrove shorelines.

Sections 4(a) and 4(b) of the Wilderness Act provide that: (1) the Act is to be within and supplemental to the purposes for which National Wildlife Refuges are established; (2) wilderness areas shall be administered so as to preserve their wilderness character and shall be devoted to the public purposes of recreational, scenic, scientific, educational, conservation and historical use, insofar as primary refuge objectives permit.



Man-o'-war-birds

Location

Island Bay Refuge is located in the Cape Haze area of Charlotte County, on the west coast of Florida. The nearest population center is Ft. Myers, some 23 miles to the southeast. Tampa is 75 miles north of the refuge.

History

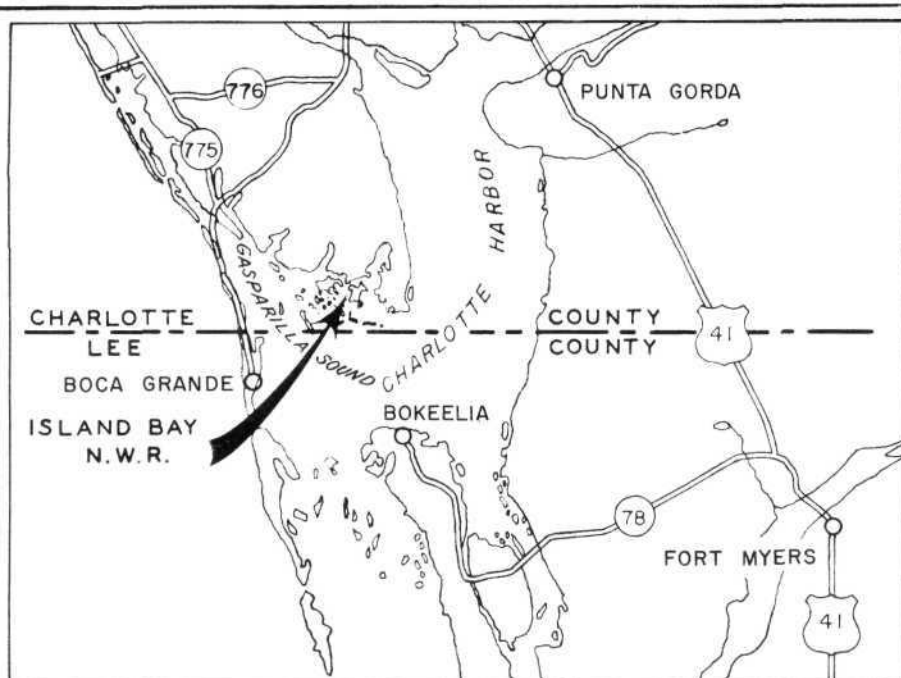
Two of the refuge tracts, Cash and John Quiet Mounds, are of historical interest in that the dominating feature of each is a large Indian midden. These mounds date back hundreds of years to the Caloosa Indians who inhabited the coastal areas of south Florida. Their principle source of food was derived from the sea. Great mounds of shells mark areas formerly inhabited by the tribe, and there is some evidence that these middens were used for residential purposes, at least on a seasonal basis. Cash and John Quiet Mounds are a part of the vast network of middens occurring in this section of the State.

Boca Grande Key, a barrier island southwest of the refuge, was reportedly used as a base of operations for the infamous pirate, Jose Gaspar. Tales persist that Gaspar used the Caloosa mounds as hiding places for his treasure. For this reason most mounds in the area have been altered to varying degrees by eager treasure hunters.

Island Bay was set aside as a migratory bird refuge on October 23, 1908, by Executive Order 958, signed by President Theodore Roosevelt.





John Quiet Mound. Turtle Bay in background.



VICINITY MAP

0 10 20 MILES
SCALE OF MILES

— LEGEND —

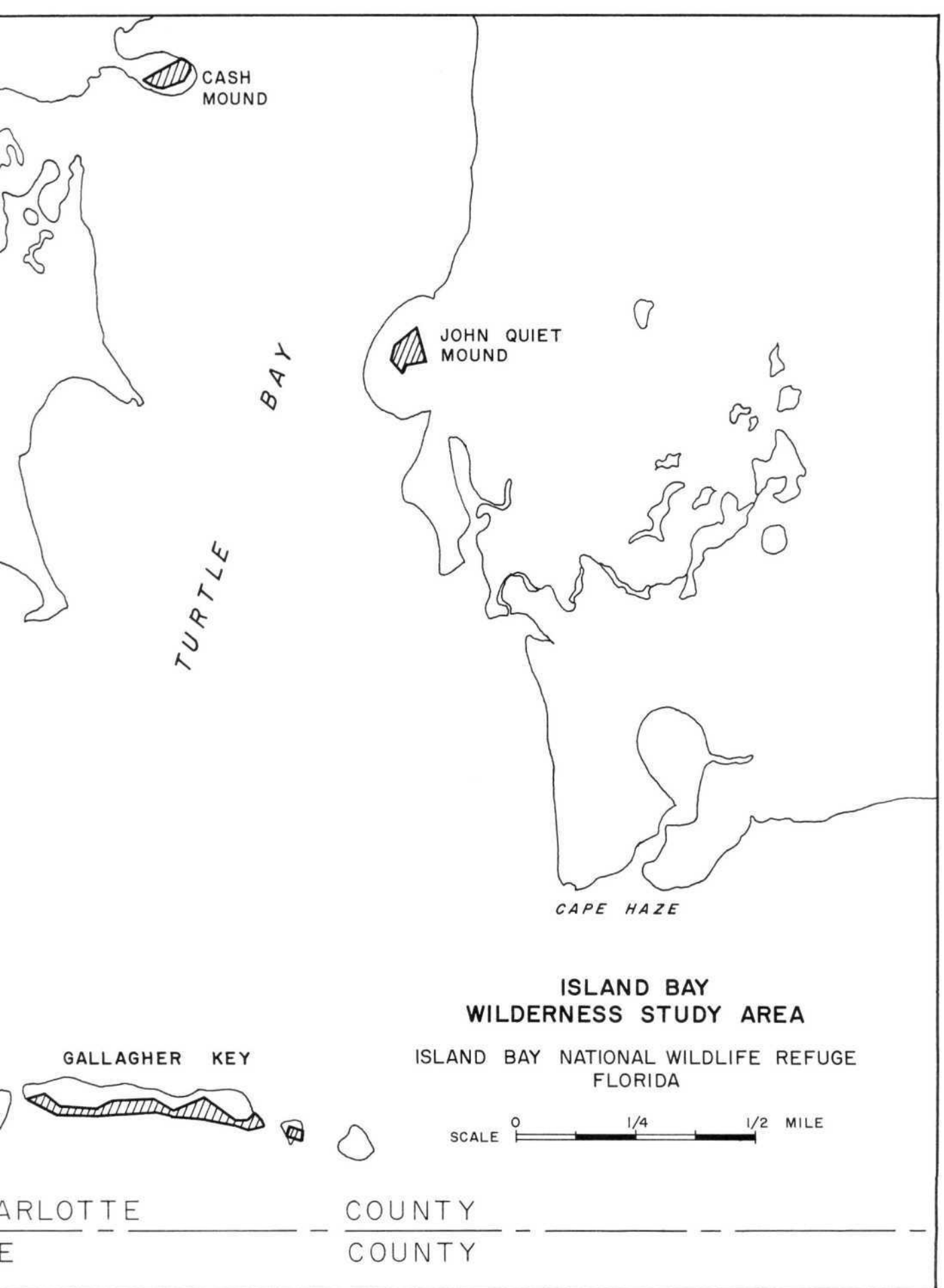
-  STUDY AREA
-  REFUGE LANDS

BULL BAY

ROBERTS GAP

BULL KEY

CH
LE



Description

Island Bay Refuge is a part of a vast maze of mangrove islands and brackish bays in the Cape Haze area of Charlotte Harbor. The refuge includes portions of Gallagher Key, Bull Key, and two unnamed keys located between Bull and Turtle Bays. Two smaller tracts, Cash and John Quiet Mounds, are located on the edge of Turtle Bay. The lower portions of the islands and the surrounding water bottoms are State-owned.

Small, isolated beaches of white sand are scattered along the shores of Bull and Gallagher Keys where highest elevations extend about four feet above mean sea level. Cash and John Quiet Mounds rise 10 to 20 feet high. Cash Mound was seriously defaced a number of years ago when a portion of the midden was illegally removed by private individuals to obtain shell for oyster beds.

The refuge area is protected from the open Gulf by barrier islands but is directly influenced by tidal action. The surrounding waters are strongly brackish.

The lower portions of the refuge are dominated by black mangrove with occasional borders of red mangrove. Sea grape and buttonwood occur in a narrow beach zone found principally on Bull and Gallagher Keys. The higher sand ridges are dominated by cabbage palms with scattered rubber trees and palmetto. Cash and John Quiet Mounds are vegetated with low shrubs, vines, cabbage palms and a few gumbo-limbo trees. Black mangroves completely surround these mounds. Bay bottoms surrounding the refuge islands support good stands of shoalgrass, widgeongrass, and various marine algae.

The refuge areas are similar in most respects to the numerous other mangrove islands in the Cape Haze area. There is very little public use of the refuge. Sport fishing is popular in the surrounding bays and an occasional fisherman lands on the refuge beaches. Several fishing shelters have been constructed on piling over the State-owned water bottoms near Bull Island.



Small beach on south side of Gallagher Key.



Great Blue Heron

Wildlife

In the past, the refuge has been an important nesting area for colonial birds, particularly for brown pelicans. While relatively little nesting has occurred recently, the refuge islands are excellent potential nesting areas and may again be used at any time since colonial birds often make unpredictable shifts in rookery sites. The beaches and shores provide loafing and feeding sites for shorebirds, gulls, terns, and wading birds. The surrounding shallow bays are valuable feeding grounds, used by many species of water birds.

No vertebrates other than birds and raccoons are known to be permanent residents of the refuge islands. The harsh environment, isolation from the mainland, and the lack of a permanent fresh-water supply discourage invasion by mainland forms.

Management

Island Bay Refuge is managed as a natural area. No development is planned. The refuge areas are excellent potential bird nesting habitat and will continue to be preserved for this purpose. There is little opportunity to provide for recreational use on the refuge; however, limited day use may be permitted during the July-October period. Cash and John Quiet Mounds will be preserved in their present condition as examples of the Caloosa Indian culture.

Relationship to Surrounding Area

Island Bay Refuge is located near some of the more famous developed areas, old and new, on Florida's southwest coast, among them Ft. Myers, Sanibel and Captiva Islands, Pine Island, and Boca Grande. Numerous real estate and tourist developments have appeared in recent years in the Charlotte Harbor area, most of them oriented to the rich and extensive water resources of the area. As development of this area continues, there will be more boating, sport fishing and other water-oriented recreational uses in the refuge vicinity.

A number of areas within a 35-mile radius of Island Bay Refuge offer a variety of recreational opportunities. These include the famous beaches of Sanibel and Captiva Islands in Lee County, the Myakka River State Park in Sarasota County, and the C. M. Webb Wildlife Management Area in Charlotte County.

The Charlotte Harbor area provides an environment, extremely rich in marine resources, supporting significant shellfish, bait shrimp, commercial and sport fishing industries. These resources are one of the major attractions that make this area an important tourist center.

Inspection

Anyone concerned about this study is urged to personally inspect the Island Bay National Wildlife Refuge.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

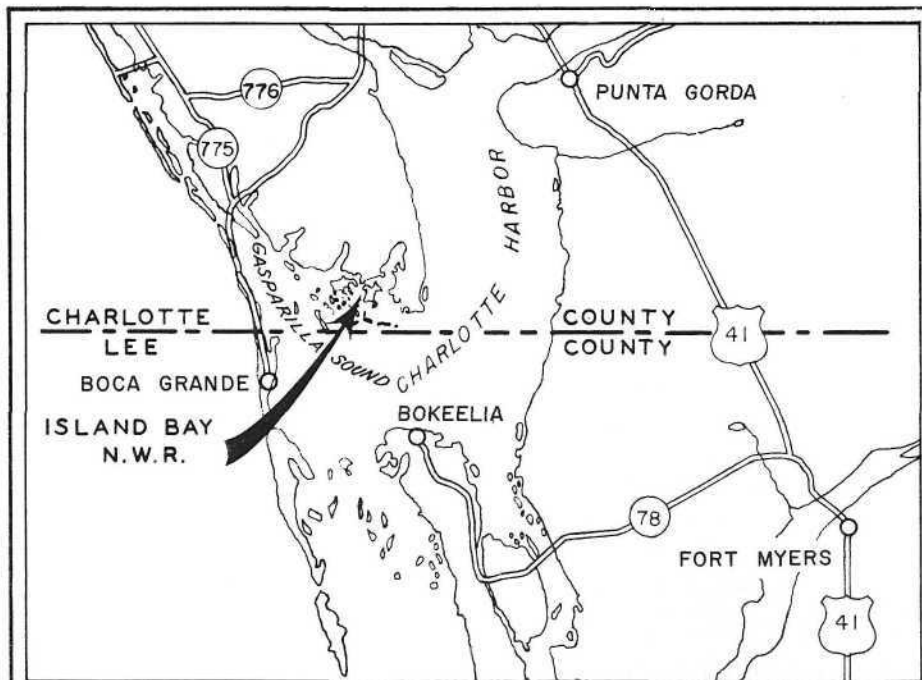
Changes subsequent to the Public Hearing

As a result of the public hearing and a reexamination of the proposal, the following changes were made:

1. A third unit of 2,490 acres was added on the California side of the river.
2. The road corridor between units 4 and 5 was eliminated.

This increased the size of the proposal to 12,010 acres.


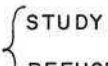
In addition, 2,460 acres of State, private, and additional parcels of refuge lands were identified for Potential Wilderness Additions. They would become wilderness at such time as the non-Federal lands are acquired and nonconforming uses and features are terminated.



VICINITY MAP

0 10 20 MILES
SCALE OF MILES

— LEGEND —

 STUDY AREA
 REFUGE LANDS

BULL BAY

BULL KEY

ROBERTS GAP

GALLAGHER KEY

CHARLOTTE
LEE

COUNTY
COUNTY

TURTLE
BAY

CASH
MOUND

JOHN QUIET
MOUND

CAPE HAZE

ISLAND BAY
WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

ISLAND BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
FLORIDA

SCALE 0 1/4 1/2 MILE