



NATIONAL PARKS OF NEW YORK HARBOR 

# Fact Sheet

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of Interior  
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## Jamaica Bay Unit Gateway National Recreation Area *Urban Wildlife Refuge*

**Established:** October 27, 1972 as a unit of Gateway National Recreation Area

**Location:** Situated in the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens, New York

**2006 Gateway (Jamaica Bay, Staten Island and Sandy Hook Units) NRA Visitation:** 9,788,710

**Overview:** The term ‘urban wildlife refuge’ might seem like a contradiction. However, that is exactly what you will find at the Jamaica Bay Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area. The Jamaica Bay Unit is comprised of Jamaica Bay, Floyd Bennett Field, and Breezy Point. It covers thousands of acres in the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens. This unit includes many acres of the shoreline and water in addition to several dozen islands in Jamaica Bay. Jamaica Bay is designated the only “wildlife refuge” in the National Park System (usually, wildlife refuges are a US Fish & Wildlife Service function). Facilities include a historic Bath House, a public horse stable, equestrian trail, a public marina, and a multi-purpose sports/entertainment complex. Fishing, nature-viewing, swimming, aviation history, photography, boating, cycling, and sailing are the most popular activities within this unit.

**Floyd Bennett Field** opened in 1931 and was New York’s first municipal airport. The Ryan Visitor Center at Floyd Bennett Field is the former airport control tower building. Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge encompasses 9,155 acres. There is a new visitor contact station there and trails, marshes, ponds and a variety of birds, plants and local wildlife. It is renowned as the largest bird sanctuary in the northeastern United States with over 325 species of birds sighted in the past 25 years. Accessible by the A Train to the Rockaways.

**Canarsie Pier** is the first constructed to test the commercial viability of Jamaica Bay for serving as a commercial port. It is now a great place to picnic, enjoy the childrens’ playground or experience some of the best fishing on Jamaica Bay. Fort Tilden is a former U.S. Army base that was an important coastal defense from WWII—the Vietnam Conflict. It is now a center for the arts on the Rockaway peninsula.

**Jacob Riis Park** is an ocean beach with boardwalk and the famous Art Deco bathhouse. Breezy Point stretches to the tip of Rockaway Point and includes Jacob Riis Park and Fort Tilden, each with districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It preserves, in part, some of the last remaining natural dunes in the area, and is home to at least two endangered species (piping plover, and beach tiger beetle).

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