

CHANGES IN LIVING RESOURCES

The term living resources refers to the birds, finfish, shellfish, reptiles, mammals, and amphibians that live in the Barataria-Terrebonne estuary. The health of these animals is being affected by three issues: loss of habitat, water pollution, and overharvesting.

The high productivity of the Barataria-Terrebonne estuary invites animals such as shrimp, blue crabs, and certain species of finfish to reside in the estuary during different stages of their life cycles. The barrier islands, marshes, and forested wetlands are also permanent homes to many species of animals, and they offer food and shelter to many birds passing through. These habitats are slowly changing and in some cases disappearing because of human disturbance, coastal erosion, storms, and hurricanes. Both residents and migrants are finding it increasingly difficult to find habitat in which to live and reproduce.

Water pollution in the Barataria-Terrebonne area is caused by herbicides, pesticides, and other pollutants from toxic waste sites, oil spills, industrial releases, and agricultural and urban runoff. Toxins can kill animals, contaminate the food chain, make fish unfit for human consumption, and potentially cause infectious and contagious diseases.

Louisiana's bountiful resources may seem endless, but there are limits to the population of each organism. Sometimes fishermen and hunters take too many young or adults of an animal species. When they do this they can destroy the resource's ability to replenish itself.



**Barataria-Terrebonne
NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM**

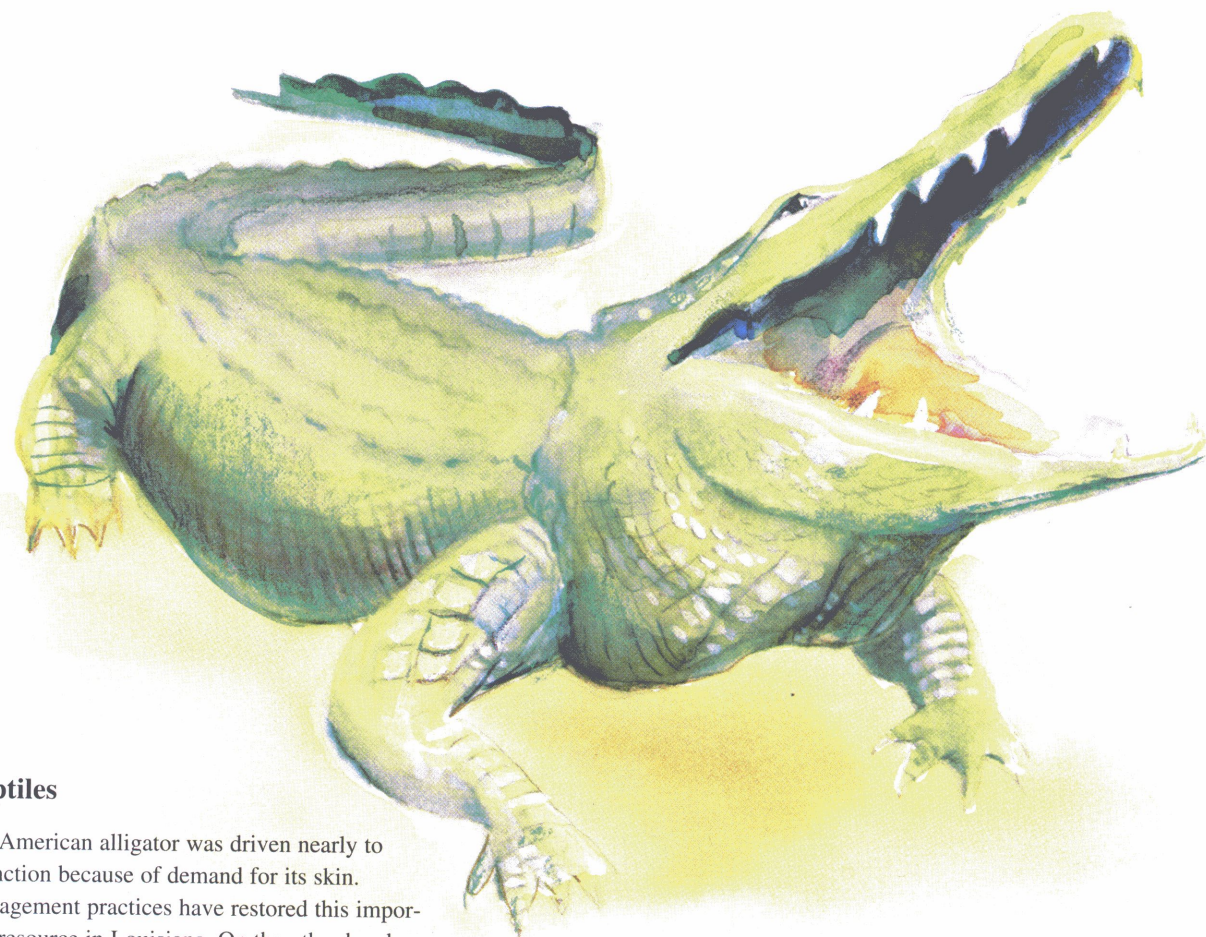
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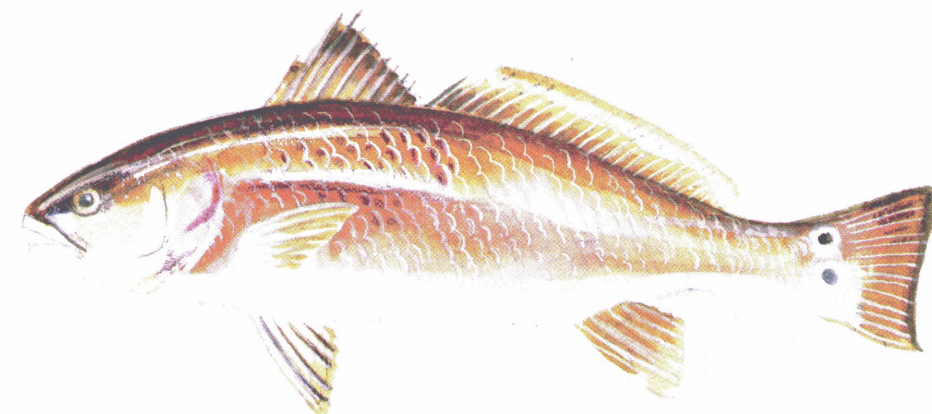
Birds

Over 400 species of birds have been identified in the Barataria-Terrebonne estuary. Barrier islands, coastal forests, and marshes are permanent homes for year-round residents and also offer critical stopover points for birds migrating to and returning from Central and South America. Birds are being affected by loss of habitat, human disturbances of breeding sites, pollution, and storms.



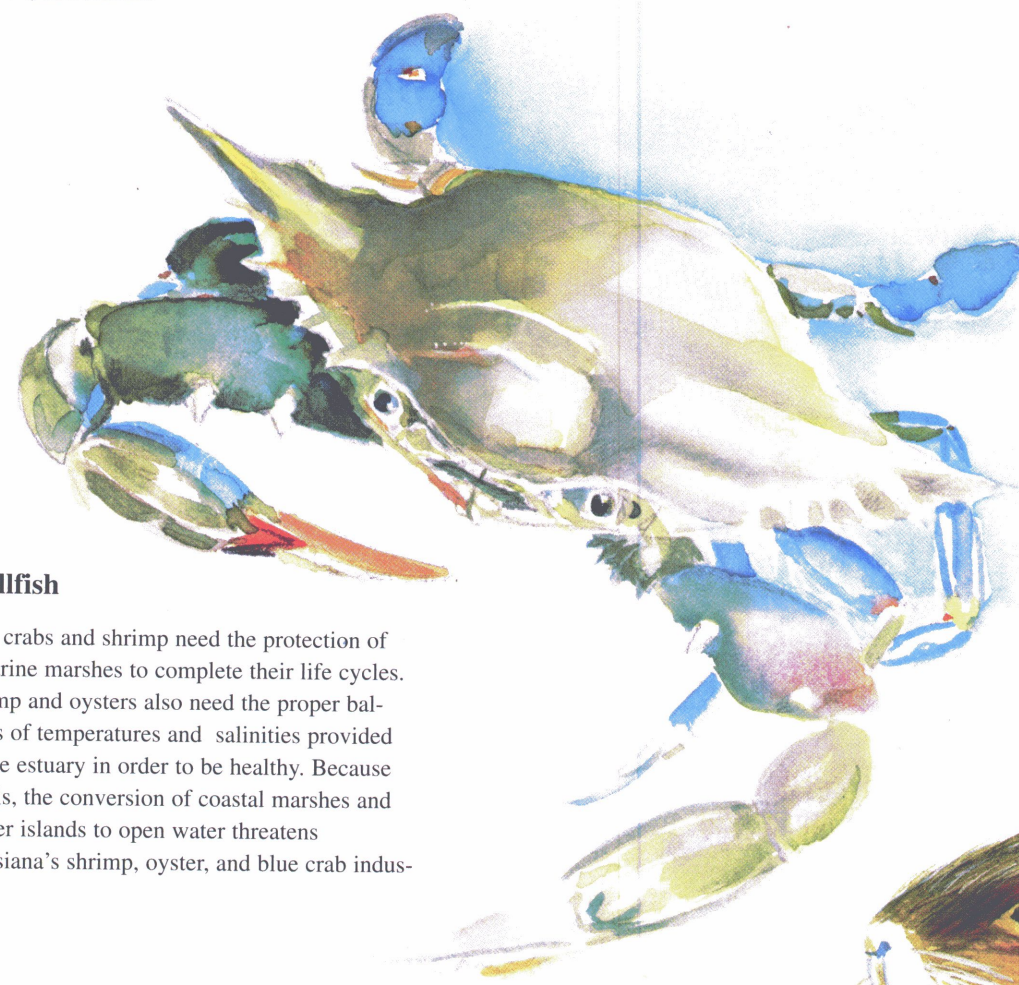
Reptiles

The American alligator was driven nearly to extinction because of demand for its skin. Management practices have restored this important resource in Louisiana. On the other hand, snapping turtles continue to be overharvested. Sea turtles are endangered because of overharvesting and destruction of nesting habitat.



Finfish

Destruction of habitat may affect finfish populations because many species of finfish depend on the estuary to complete their life cycles. In addition, overharvesting can quickly deplete populations of commercially important fish species. For example, in the mid-1980s there was a high demand for red drum and a threat that they would be overharvested. Management practices are rapidly restoring this resource.



Shellfish

Blue crabs and shrimp need the protection of estuarine marshes to complete their life cycles. Shrimp and oysters also need the proper balances of temperatures and salinities provided by the estuary in order to be healthy. Because of this, the conversion of coastal marshes and barrier islands to open water threatens Louisiana's shrimp, oyster, and blue crab industries.



Mammals

Little is known about population trends for most species of mammals in the Barataria-Terrebonne area. It is known, however, that populations of muskrat and nutria have increased because of lower fur prices. These mammals can cause serious damage to coastal marshes. It is therefore necessary that population sizes of these species be controlled.



Amphibians

While more scientific surveys are needed, it appears that populations of bullfrogs have decreased due to overharvesting.