

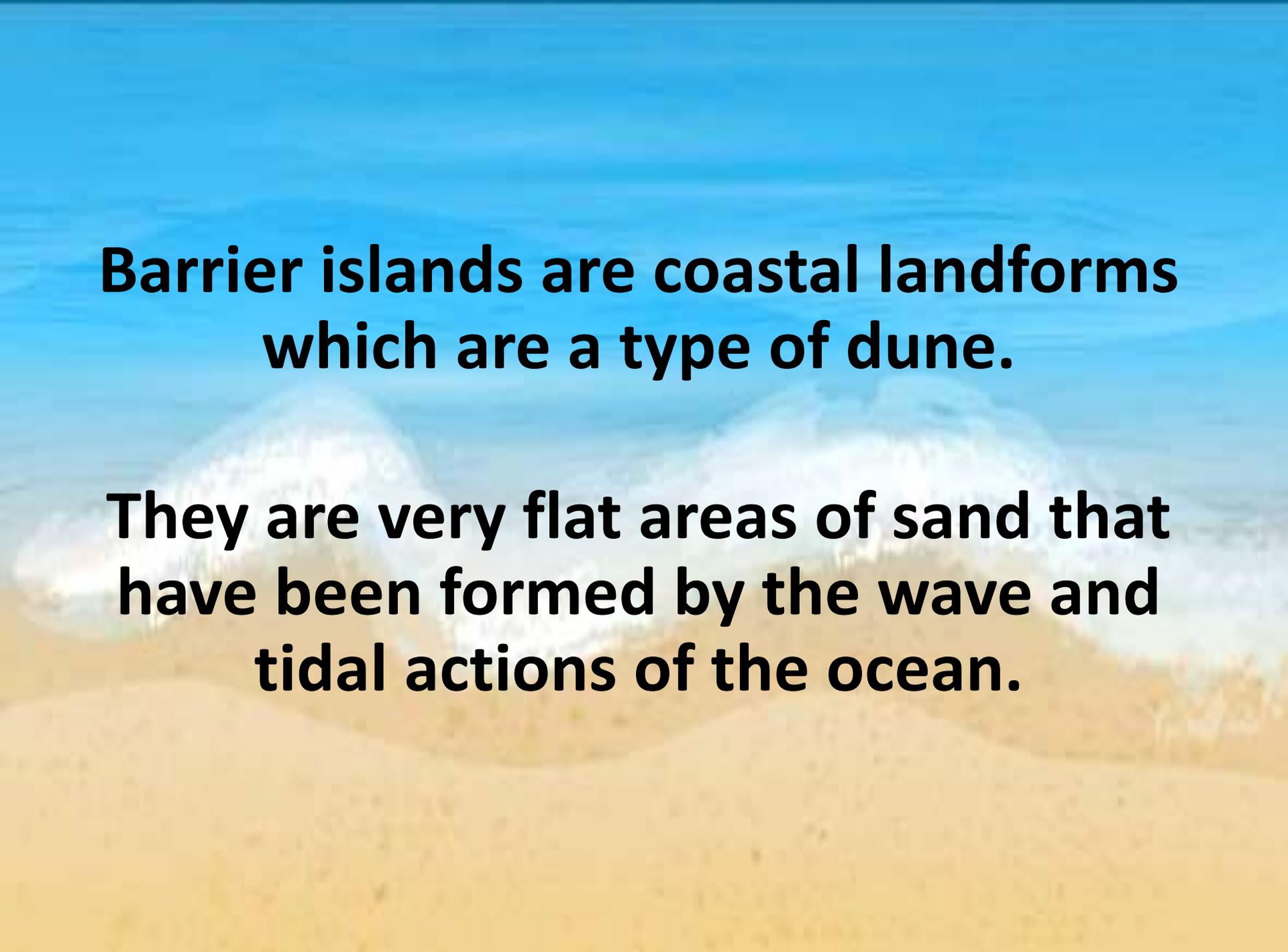


**More THAN
JUST BEACHES:**

Barrier ISLANDS AT WORK

What is a “barrier island”?





Barrier islands are coastal landforms which are a type of dune.

They are very flat areas of sand that have been formed by the wave and tidal actions of the ocean.



Barrier islands parallel the mainland coast. They usually occur in chains, sometimes a few islands or many connected islands.



Where are our barrier islands located?

They are found along the United States' eastern coast and the gulf coast, where every state, from Maine to Florida to Texas. No barrier islands are found on the Pacific coast due to the rocky shore.

But barrier islands can even be found on Alaska's Arctic coast.



Outer Barrier, Long Island, New York (satellite image)



Barrier Islands, Mississippi and Alabama coastline



Why are barrier islands important?

Barrier islands protect the mainland. They can buffer the shoreline from a storms' ocean swells, preventing serious erosion of soils from the mainland.

Why are barrier islands important?

They also protect people's homes and businesses by blocking some of the high winds and waves caused by ocean storms.

Why are barrier islands important?

Wildlife also depends on barrier islands. They create unique environments – wetland systems including lagoons, estuaries, and marshes- where birds, fish, and mammals live. Without the barrier islands, this wildlife would have no habitat.

Merritt Barrier Island, Florida



Sanibel Barrier Island, Florida



A scenic view of a beach with waves crashing onto the shore under a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the image in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

**Let's visit some of Our
Country's Largest
Barrier Islands!**

Outer BANKS

(North Carolina and Virginia)

The Outer Banks is a 200-mile-long string of barrier islands off the Atlantic Ocean.

The Outer Banks are a major tourist destination and are known for their wide expanse of open beachfront, such as the Cape Hatteras National Seashore.



The dangerous seas off the Outer Banks have caused a large number of shipwrecks over the years.



Outer Banks: Yesterday and Today

The Outer Banks were inhabited before the arrival of Europeans by American Indians, such as the Secotan and Poteskeet, who lived nomadic lives. Often, these people would use the barrier islands for fishing.

Today, commercial fishing and shipbuilding are important industries along these barrier islands.



The islands are home to herds of wild horses, which according to local legend are descended from Spanish Mustangs washed ashore centuries ago in shipwrecks.

Outer Barrier

The “Outer Barrier” is a chain of barrier islands, also called the Long Island and New York Barrier Islands, including the famous Coney Island.





There are many communities that have developed along the many Outer Barrier islands, connected to the mainland by bridges and inlets.

TEXAS BARRIER ISLANDS

The Texas barrier islands are a group of barrier islands in the Gulf of Mexico along the coast of Texas.

The islands attract tourists for activities such as recreational fishing and dolphin watching.

The longest of these islands, and the world's largest barrier island, is Padre Island.

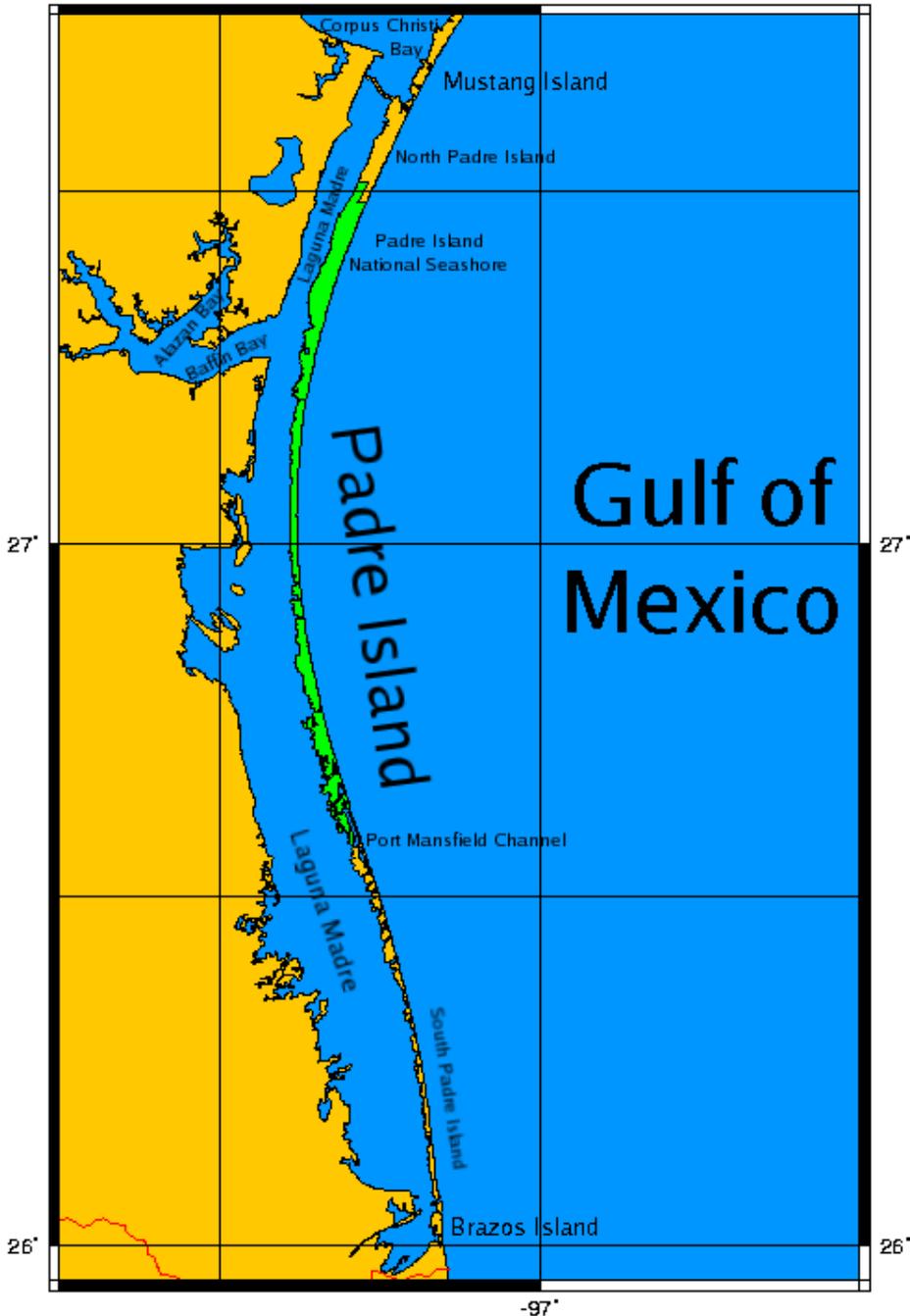


Padre Island is the second-largest island by area in the contiguous United States, after Long Island in New York on the Atlantic Coast.

It is about 113 miles long and 2 miles wide.

The island was used and occupied seasonally by the Karankawa Indians at the time of European encounter.





The town of South Padre Island is located on its southern end of Padre Island, but the island as a whole is sparsely populated. Most of the island is preserved in a natural state as the Padre Island National Seashore.



The southern half and much of the Texas coastline is in an erosional stage. Wind, wave and current action continue to rework and shape the island.



Barrier ISLANDS Need Protection

**Barrier islands protect both humans
and wildlife.**

But they need our protection, too.

What's the risk?

Barrier islands are fragile, constantly changing ecosystems.

Urban development and tourism have posed dangers to these ecosystems.

Without the barrier islands, there is an increased risk of property damage every year from hurricanes and storms.

Because barrier islands are popular vacation spots, many more are being developed.

Resort communities are being built on them including high-rise hotels, condominiums and golf courses.

To accommodate these structures, sand dunes are destroyed and salt marshes and barrier flats are filled in.

“Renourishing the Sand”

To preserve the beach, humans must renourish it with sand dredged from other sources, a process known as beach nourishment.

Beach nourishment is an expensive undertaking, often costing millions of dollars.

But quickly, the offshore currents can erode the replenished sand. At best, beach nourishment is a temporary effort to halt the eroding sands of barrier islands.



**Because barrier islands serve
important functions
(protecting the coasts from storm
damage, nurturing ecosystems,
and protecting wildlife)
a balance is needed between
conservation and further development.**



**More THAN
JUST BEACHES:
Barrier ISLANDS At Work**