

Santee

National Wildlife Refuge

photo: USFWS



photo: Grafe



photo: Eddie Stuckey



photo: Bluff



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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1942.
- Acres: 15,095. Refuge owns 4,400 acres fee title; the remaining acreage is managed under a lease and agreement with the South Carolina Public Service Authority (a.k.a. Santee-Cooper).
- Office location: eight miles south of Summerton, SC on U.S. Highway 301.
- Other lands managed: Ten conservation easements totaling 458 acres in Bamberg, Barnwell, Clarendon, and Orangeburg counties.

Natural History

- The refuge is located on the north shore of Lake Marion in the upper coastal plain region of Clarendon County, South Carolina.
- Major wintering area for ducks, geese and swans. Nesting and stopover area for neo-tropical migratory birds, raptors, shore birds and wading birds. Endangered/threatened species include bald eagles and wood storks. Numerous other species of wildlife indigenous to this area.
- Habitat types: Wetlands and open water (10,622 acres) comprise most of the refuge. Woodlands (2,350 acres) and croplands and old field areas (1,895 acres) provide additional diversity.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Full time employees: seven
- Annual visitation: 100,000
- Current budget (FY 02): \$303,000

Refuge Objectives

- Provide habitat for migratory waterfowl consistent with the objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.
- Provide habitat and protection for neo-tropical migratory birds and endangered/threatened species.

- Provide habitat for a natural diversity of indigenous wildlife species.
- Provide opportunities for wildlife-oriented recreation and environmental education.

Management Tools

- Water level management in impoundments by use of pumps and water control structures.
- Cooperative and force account farming programs.
- Moist soil management.
- Prescribed fires.
- Mechanical and chemical control of noxious plants
- Managed hunt program for deer, upland game and mourning doves
- Law enforcement.
- Refuge interpretation, education, and recreation programs.

Waterfowl banding.

Public Use Opportunities

- Visitors Center.
- Walking trails.
- Auto tour route.
- Wildlife observation and photography.
- Hunting and fishing.

Calendar of Events

- February:** raccoon hunting.
- May:** International Migratory Bird Day Refuge Open House.
- September:** mourning dove hunting.
- October:** white-tailed deer hunting (archery and muzzle loading), National Wildlife Refuge Week.

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Questions and Answers

What can I see on the refuge?

Most visitors are interested in seeing wildlife. Depending on the time of year, there are opportunities to observe a variety of wildlife species. With almost 300 species recorded, Santee NWR is an excellent area for bird watching. Deer are abundant, even around the visitors center. Pine Island and Cuddo units provide the best opportunities for observing alligators. Bobcat, turkey and coyote are also common.

The Santee Indian Mound/Fort Watson site is located one-half mile from the visitors center. The Dingle Pond unit is home to a unique Carolina Bay wetland.

Is camping permitted? Can I make reservations for a cabin?

To lessen impacts to native and migratory wildlife, camping is not permitted on the refuge. Santee State Park on the south side of Lake Marion offers cabins and campsites. In addition, several commercial campgrounds are located in the area.

Are tours and programs available?

Staff led tours of the refuge are not available. On and off site programs are available for school groups and other organizations when staff time permits. The refuge hosts special programs and demonstrations for International Migratory Bird Day, National Wildlife Refuge Week, and other special events.

When and where are the best opportunities for observing waterfowl?

November through February is the best time to observe waterfowl. Several areas along the Bluff unit nature trail offer good opportunities for viewing ducks and geese. An observation tower along the trail provides a good vantage point to see geese feeding in corn and wheat fields. The Bluff unit is an excellent area to see wood ducks in the springtime.

When is the refuge open?

The refuge is open year-round during posted hours. Cantey Bay, Black Bottom, Savannah Branch and part of the Bluff unit are closed from November 1st through February 28th.

The closures minimize disturbance to waterfowl concentrated in the area.

The refuge visitors center is open every day from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm, except on holidays.