



# Great Dismal Swamp

## National Wildlife Refuge

American black bear Photo: P. Cuffee  
 Lake Drummond Photo: P. Cuffee  
 Wild turkey with young Photo: J. Ross  
 Yellow jessamine Photo: D. Schwab  
 Pine warbler Photo: D. Schneider  
 Great purple hairstreak Photo: T. Kain

Located within a two hour drive of over 1.6 million residents of southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina, the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is a wonderful place to connect with nature. With 111,203 acres of forested wetlands and the 3,100 acre Lake Drummond at its center, the refuge contains some of the most important wildlife habitat in the mid-Atlantic region.

### Visitor Opportunities

Refuge trails are open daily, sunrise to sunset, unless otherwise posted. Visitors may participate in a variety of activities including hiking, biking, nature photography, wildlife observation, hunting, fishing and boating. The refuge was established for the purpose of protecting and managing the swamp's unique ecosystem which includes wildlife and habitat. Therefore, portions of the refuge may be periodically closed to public use activities in order to accomplish this objective.

### Refuge Entrance Points

The refuge has four main entrances from which visitors will find many miles of trails for exploring. The Washington Ditch entrance and the Jericho

Lane entrance are both located off White Marsh Road in Suffolk, Virginia, and provide the best dirt roads for hiking and biking. In the Railroad Ditch entrance, located off Desert Road in Suffolk, Virginia, are all-weather gravel roads that allow auto access by special permit to Lake Drummond. The Feeder Ditch water trail is located off the Dismal Swamp Canal in Chesapeake, Virginia, and is a by-water only entrance.

### Washington Ditch

The Washington Ditch Trail is the most often recommended trail for hiking and biking. The 4 1/2 mile dirt road is the shortest trail to Lake Drummond. Once at the lake visitors enjoy panoramic views from the pier using a mounted scope. The elevated Dismal Town Boardwalk Trail is located adjacent to the Washington Ditch parking area. This boardwalk meanders almost a mile through a representative portion of swamp habitats. Vault restrooms and a large parking area complete the accommodations making the entrance favored by large and small groups.

### Jericho Lane

At the Jericho Lane entrance visitors will find a more primitive setting but with four trails to consider. South Jericho Ditch Trail and Lynn Ditch Trail are favored by birding enthusiasts. Hardier visitors may prefer the challenging loop of north Jericho-Williamson-New-Hudnell Ditches (approximately 6 miles). Parking is available two miles into the forest from White Marsh Road.

### Railroad Ditch

When available, auto access to Lake Drummond is possible

through the Railroad Ditch entrance, a route of six miles along Railroad Ditch Road, West Ditch Road, and Interior Ditch Roads. A vehicle pass is needed and can be obtained from the refuge office on business days from 7:30 am to 2:30 pm. With a two week notice organized groups may secure a special use permit to allow access for small buses, up to 25 passengers. The best views of the lake can be seen from the Interior Ditch pier. A quick walk on the West Ditch Boardwalk Trail, located on West Ditch Road, offers wildlife viewing opportunities in a typically flooded wetland environment and a glance of a centuries old bald cypress tree. (This entrance is also the access to the Interior Ditch boat ramp by seasonal permit, April 1 through June 15).

### Feeder Ditch

Fishing and boating are permitted year-round on Lake Drummond with access via the Feeder Ditch, connecting

Lake Drummond with the Dismal Swamp Canal. A public boat ramp is located north of the Feeder Ditch on the Dismal Swamp Canal. A canoe and kayak launch is located south of the Feeder Ditch, adjacent to the Dismal Swamp State Park. Near the lake, at the Dismal Swamp Reservation, boats must be small enough to portage around the water control structure or to be lifted by electric tram to the higher level of the lake. Lift weight is restricted to a maximum of 1,000 lbs. Vessels are limited to 25 hp on the lake. A Virginia fishing license is required.

### Portsmouth Ditch

Located off Martin Johnson Road in Chesapeake, Virginia, the Portsmouth Ditch offers limited access to the northeast section of the refuge. More often used by nearby residents, hiking and biking are allowed, but there are no designated parking areas.

### Hunting

A white-tailed deer hunt is held on 13 days, selected Fridays and Saturdays plus the Thursday during opening week, from early October through mid November, with a scouting day the last Saturday in September. Deer hunt access is through the Jericho Lane, Railroad Ditch, and through an additional entrance, the Corapeake Ditch entrance which is located on Desert Road in Gates County, North Carolina. *The Washington Ditch Entrance, including the trail to the Lake and the Boardwalk Trail remain opened during the deer hunt, but all other trails are closed except for hunting.*

### Hours of Operation

**Refuge Trails** Open daily for hiking and biking, sunrise to sunset, or as otherwise posted. *(Portions of the refuge will be closed to all other public use activities during the scheduled hunt days-see Hunting).*

**Refuge Office** Open Monday-Friday, 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, closed federal holidays.

**Railroad Ditch Road** When available, vehicle passes are issued from the Refuge office, Monday- Friday, 7:30 am to 2:30 pm.



A quota black bear hunt is held on two designated days in late November/early December. *Portions of the refuge will be closed to all other public use activities during the scheduled bear hunt days.*

State and refuge permits are required for both hunts. Additional information is available from the refuge office or the refuge web site.

## Educational Opportunities

A refuge orientation is available for organized school, scout, civic, and professional groups by advance reservation. A typical visit would include a 15 minute orientation at the refuge headquarters (group size limited to a maximum of 35), or at the Washington Ditch or the Jericho Lane trail head (recommended for larger groups), followed by a teacher led activity or vehicle pass to Lake Drummond through the Railroad Ditch entrance.

Reservations for orientations may be made by contacting visitor services at the refuge headquarters.

### For your safety:

- The refuge is home to both wood and deer ticks. Insect repellent, a hat, and tucking your pant legs into your socks will keep ticks on the outside of your clothing. At the end of your visit, check yourself and children for ticks and other insects.
- Chiggers, or red bugs, are small insects that cause red, itchy welts for 1-2 weeks. Staying on the trail and away from tall grass will minimize exposure to these insects.
- As may be expected in a wet area, mosquitoes are common. Insect repellent, long pants, hats, and lightweight long sleeve shirts are all good ways to limit exposure.
- Over 20 species of snakes are found on the refuge, three of which are venomous. Typically, snakes, along with most other animals, would prefer not to have contact with you. Occasionally, you will encounter a snake or other wildlife. The important thing is not to panic, give the animal plenty of room and a way to escape.
- Poison ivy is abundant. Know how to identify both its leaves and vines; avoid contact with your skin and clothing.
- Cell phone coverage is limited.

Orientations are limited to staff availability and require a two week notice. Orientations and vehicle passes are not available on weekends.

## Camping/Picnicking

Camping and overnight use are prohibited on the refuge. There are no designated picnic areas on the refuge.

## General Refuge Regulations

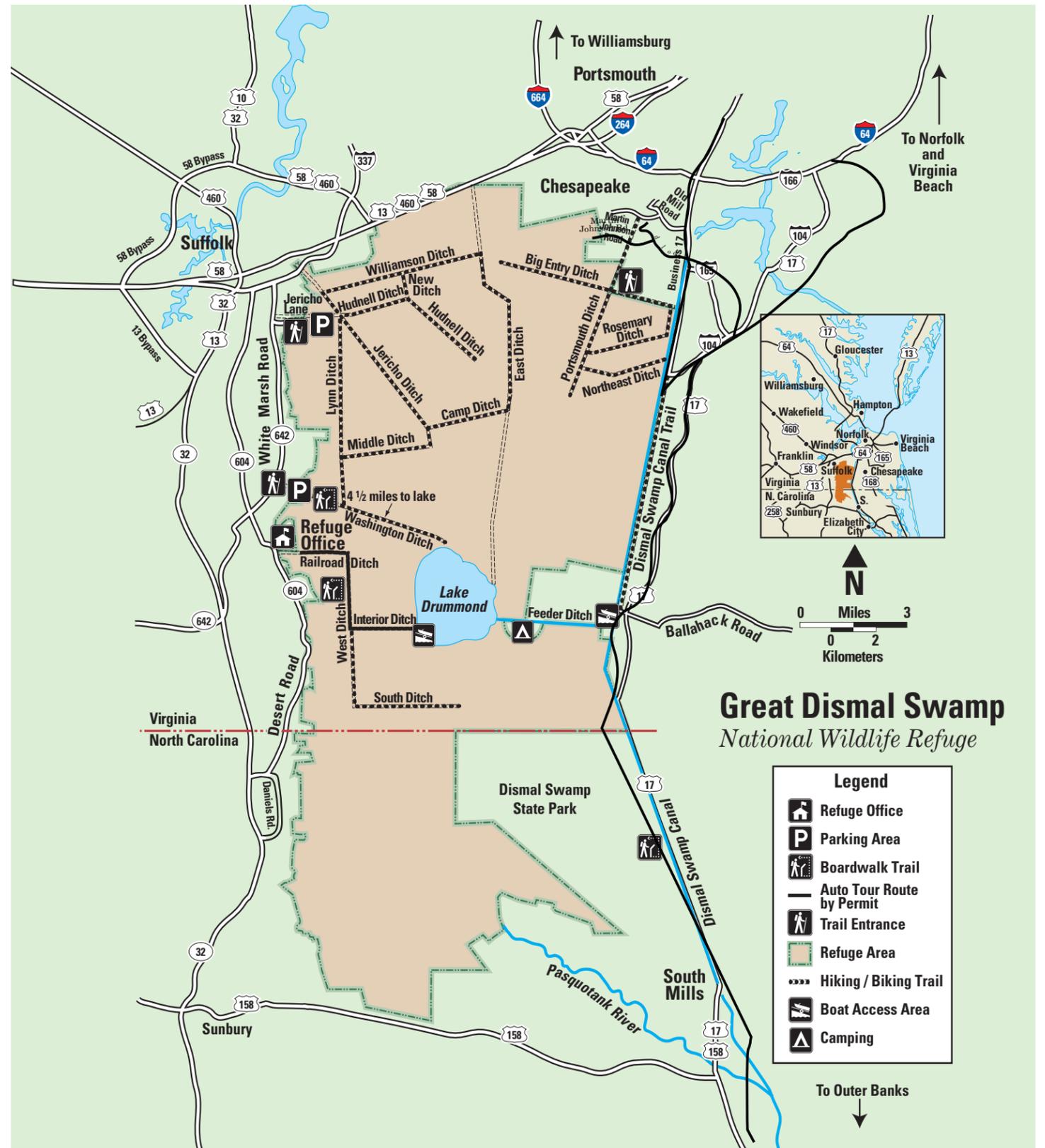
1. Pursuant to Title 18, Assimilative Crimes Act, Virginia and North Carolina state law **may** apply on the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

Example – Public consumption of alcohol is prohibited in Virginia.

2. Refuge trails are open to hiking and biking. Visitors must stay on designated trails.
3. Collecting (includes catch and release), attempting to handle or harming any plant or animal life is prohibited.
4. Feeding wildlife is prohibited.
5. All refuge entrances are open daily from sunrise to sunset. No overnight use is permitted.
6. All pets must be kept on a hand-held leash at all times.
7. Firearms and other weapons are prohibited except as authorized during refuge hunts.
8. Playback recorders or devices are prohibited because they adversely affect wildlife behavior.
9. Access to refuge at any location other than through designated trails and roads is prohibited.
10. ATV's are prohibited on the refuge.
11. Refuge wide speed limit is 25 MPH unless otherwise posted.

## National Wildlife Refuge System

Great Dismal Swamp is one of more than 540 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The National Wildlife Refuge System is a network of lands and waters managed specifically for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat representing the most comprehensive wildlife management program in the world. Units of the system stretch across the United States from northern Alaska to the Florida Keys and include small islands in the Caribbean and South Pacific. The character of the refuges is as diverse as the nation itself.



**Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge**  
 3100 Desert Road  
 Suffolk, Virginia 23434  
 757/986-3705  
[www.fws.gov/northeast/greatdismalswamp](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/greatdismalswamp)

July 2008