



United States Department of the Interior



Santee National Wildlife Refuge
UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
2125 Fort Watson Road
Summerton, SC 29148
Phone: (803) 478-2217 FAX: (803) 478-2314

For immediate release:
October 1, 2009

For more information, contact:
Susan Heisey, Park Ranger
803-478-2217

Santee National Wildlife Refuge Celebrates National Wildlife Refuge Week

Summerton, SC...Fall has arrived, the days are cooler, the birds are migrating, and the Santee National Wildlife Refuge is celebrating National Wildlife Refuge Week. Come and be a part of the activities the refuge has to celebrate this annual event.

- Sunday October 11, the refuge will participate in the Big Sit! birding event at the refuge visitor center. This nationwide event is a great opportunity for new birders and seasoned birders alike.
- Tuesday October 13 at 10:00 am, refuge staff will lead a guided walk along the Wrights Bluff Nature Trail (approximately 1 mile) talking about native flora and fauna.
- Friday and Saturday October 16 and 17 the refuge is hosting the Family, Friends, and Kids hunt on the Bluff Unit of the refuge. **Spaces are still available;** call the refuge office at 803-478-2217 for information.
- Friday October 16 at 9:00 am the refuge will conclude the refuge week activities with a clean up of the Bluff Unit along Fort Watson Road and the banks of Lake Marion.

Individuals interested in attending any of these events should contact the refuge office at 803-478-2217 or email Susan_Heisey@fws.gov to register.

Santee National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1941 as a sanctuary for migratory birds. The refuge encompasses just over 15,000 acres of habitat along the banks of Lake Marion in four separate units. The refuge visitor center as well as the Santee Indian Mound and site of Fort Watson are located on the Bluff Unit, 8 miles south of Summerton on Hwy 15/301.

This year, Refuge Week also focuses on the health of the world's birds – especially those that depend on refuge lands and waters for nesting, foraging, wintering or rest stops on their migration routes. Last spring a national report by the Department of the Interior credited conservation efforts over the past four decades with saving some species from extinction. The bald eagle and peregrine falcon are among them. However, the “State of the Birds” report noted major population drops for several other bird species, particularly along the coasts, in Hawaii and in the North, where 38 percent of Arctic nesting birds are thought to be in decline. Threats to birds include climate change, loss of habitat and disease.

Meanwhile, the number of Americans enjoying birding as a hobby is on the rise. More than 40 million Americans feed wild birds at home or travel to see them. National Wildlife Refuges – many of which were first established as bird sanctuaries – are finding new ways to encourage and support birding.

“Birds are key indicators of our nation’s environmental health,” says U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Sam Hamilton. “Their ability to survive is a measure of the quality of our air and water, the fertility of our soil, the abundance of our natural resources – factors on which human health also depend. National Wildlife Refuge Week is a perfect time to remember how interdependent all species are.”

There are 550 national wildlife refuges across the country that make up over 150 million acres of land and water for fish and wildlife conservation. The refuge system also offers a variety of outdoor activities, including fishing, hunting, environmental education, wildlife observation and photography. Many wildlife refuges offer nature hikes, bird watching tours, wildlife drives and trails, and other adventures. Each year, about 40 million Americans discover the wonders of nature by visiting a wildlife refuge. There is at least one wildlife refuge in every state and one within an hour’s drive of most major cities.

For more information about Santee National Wildlife Refuge, contact the refuge office at 803-478-2217 or email Susan_Heisey@fws.gov .

-fws-
