

2009 Calendar of Events

January	The wintering waterfowl population has reached its peak on all Savannah Coastal Refuges. Nineteen species of waterfowl have been recorded in January on Savannah National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), the best of the refuges for viewing an abundance of ducks.
February	Wintering waterfowl begin to leave Savannah Coastal Refuges. Wood ducks begin nesting on Savannah, Wassaw, Harris Neck, and Blackbeard NWRs – most readily seen at Savannah NWR. Male wood ducks frequently stand atop nest boxes during early morning hours offering easy viewing.
March	Freshwater fishing within all canals and impoundments of Savannah NWR opens March 1. Wood duck nesting is at its peak on all Savannah Coastal Refuges. Migrating songbirds begin returning from southern wintering grounds. The closed portions of the Savannah NWR dike system north of S.C. 170 open March 1 to hiking/biking. A shotgun hunt for feral hogs is held at Savannah NWR (March 14 – 22, 2009)*.
April	Large flocks of migrating shorebirds are resting and feeding on the beaches of Wassaw and Blackbeard NWRs. Summer breeding birds begin arriving in numbers. Wintering songbirds depart for northern breeding grounds. During this period, when wintering birds may linger while summer residents and migrant species arrive, birdwatching is excellent on all Savannah Coastal Refuges. A turkey hunt is managed at Savannah NWR (April 4 – 24, 2009)*.
May	Excellent birdwatching conditions continue throughout the complex – weather is generally mild and biting insect populations are fairly low. Egrets and herons begin nesting and are most easily seen at the rookeries on Harris Neck NWR. Participants with the Caretta Research Project (CRP) launch their nightly patrols on Wassaw to locate loggerhead sea turtles and nests. The public is permitted to assist in the research under the supervision of qualified CRP staff. Selected participants must pay a fee covering transportation and lodging expenses. For more information, visit CRP on the web at www.caretta-researchproject.org or call (912) 447-8655.
June	Wading birds continue to nest throughout the complex. At the Harris Neck rookeries, wood storks, great egrets, tri-colored herons, and anhingas are most common. Opportunities for photographing these species are excellent. Alligators are conspicuous along the canals of Savannah NWR.
July	Summer breeding birds such as painted buntings are abundant at Harris Neck. Purple gallinules are common at Savannah NWR and can be seen walking over the mats of lily pads which blanket some impoundments. Alligators are highly visible in the canals and pools of Savannah NWR. Information regarding the upcoming hunting season is available. Hunters may obtain applications or permits for complex hunts.* The Savannah Science Museum's Caretta Research team begins releasing loggerhead turtle hatchlings. Black skimmers, laughing gulls, Wilson's plovers, and least terns are best seen on the beaches of Blackbeard Island and Wassaw NWRs.
August	Research teams continue releasing loggerhead hatchlings on Wassaw and additional nests are located and protected. Blue-winged teal begin arriving on Savannah Coastal Refuges. Large flocks of white ibis are particularly common at the Savannah and Harris Neck refuges where they roost together in the wooded wetlands.
September	Caretta Research Project concludes on Wassaw: most hatchlings have been released. Songbirds and shorebirds are arriving from northern breeding grounds. Migrant warblers are abundant in the woodlands of all Savannah Coastal Refuges. Additional flocks of teal arrive. Large concentrations of dunlin, dowitchers, and black-bellied plovers are found on Wassaw, Blackbeard, and Harris Neck. A non-quota archery hunt for deer is managed on Harris Neck (September 16 – 18, 2009).* National Wildlife Refuge Week (October 10 – 17, 2009) is a great time to visit with special interpretive tours and programs being held on some refuges in the complex. Please call our headquarters office (912/652-4415) for details. Coinciding with refuge week is the 7th Annual Georgia's Colonial Coast Birding & Nature Festival, October 8 – 12, 2009, which is based on Jekyll Island, Georgia. This family event offers a variety of events suited to all levels of birders and nature lovers including educational seminars, exciting field trips and fun children's activities. Visit the festival web site (www.coastalgeorgiabirding.org) or call the Jekyll Island Welcome Center at 1-877-4JEKYL for further information.
October	Songbird and shorebird migration continues. A variety of dabbling and diving ducks are present on Savannah NWR. Marsh hawks are seen throughout the refuges' freshwater and saltwater marshlands. Many nesting neotropical birds such as painted buntings and yellow-billed cuckoos may still be present on Harris Neck. A three-day archery hunt for deer is managed on Blackbeard Island NWR (October 22 – 24, 2009). Savannah NWR's archery deer/feral hog hunt and a youth hunt are held October 1-31, 2009.*
November	Wintering waterfowl are found in good numbers on Savannah NWR. Other regular winter residents are present – the greatest variety of sparrows and wrens can be found beginning in November and through the winter months. One day gun hunts for deer are held on Harris Neck NWR (November 20, 2009) and Pinckney Island NWR (November 13, 2009). Wheelchair-dependent hunters are permitted to hunt deer at Savannah NWR November 17 – 18, 2009. A three-day primitive weapons hunt for deer is managed on Wassaw NWR (November 5 – 7, 2009). Savannah NWR's gun hunt for deer/hog/squirrel is held November 1-30, 2009.* Freshwater fishing season concludes November 30 in Savannah NWR's impoundments north of SC Highway 170. (See December for youth waterfowl hunt opportunity)
December	Opportunities for viewing waterfowl are excellent on Harris Neck and Savannah NWRs. Loons and large rafts of scaup are commonly seen from the beaches of Wassaw and Blackbeard Islands. Parts of the Savannah NWR impoundments north of S.C. 170 close December 1 to all public use. The final archery hunt of the season is managed on Blackbeard Island NWR (December 3 – 5, 2009). A three-day gun hunt for deer is managed on Wassaw NWR (December 10 – 12, 2009). Three days of youth waterfowl hunts will be held on November 28 and December 5 and 12, 2009.*

*Permits are required to participate in all refuge hunts. Call the Savannah Coastal Refuges headquarters office at (912) 652-4415 to request hunt brochures to be mailed to you. Hunt applications and permits may also be downloaded from the web at <http://www.fws.gov/savannah/hunting.html>

NOTICE: "Area Closed" signs may be posted seasonally on Savannah Coastal Refuges to prevent disturbance to wildlife.