

Harris Neck

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: Robert Chauri



photo: Debra Barnard-Keimath



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photo: David Goeke

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Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge is part of the Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex headquartered in Savannah, Georgia. The complex is comprised of seven national wildlife refuges, totaling 56,949 acres, along a 100-mile stretch of coastline in Georgia and South Carolina. The seven refuges are Pinckney Island and Tybee NWRs in South Carolina; Savannah (located in both states along the Savannah River), and Wassaw, Harris Neck, Blackbeard Island, and Wolf Island NWRs in Georgia.

Refuge Facts

- Established: 1962
- Acres: 2,824 (157 man-made fresh water ponds; 705 open fields; 663 pine/oak forests; two acres of forested wetland; and 1,297 salt marsh).
- Harris Neck is one of 20 sites forming the Colonial Coast Birding Trail, inaugurated in 2000. The site was chosen for its accessibility and bird diversity.

- Location: McIntosh County, GA, five miles north of Eulonia, GA, then seven miles east on Harris Neck Road.

Refuge History

- Land grant ownership to Scottish settlers in 1750.
- Settled by freed slaves after Civil War.
- Lands condemned; used as World War II army air training base.
- Ownership given to McIntosh County after World War II.
- County ownership revoked; established as wildlife refuge.
- Notable concentrations of waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, songbirds, raptors, deer, turkey, quail, and alligators.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- 130,000 visitors annually.

Refuge Objectives

- Provide habitat and protection for migratory birds.
- Provide protection and habitat to promote resident and migratory wildlife diversity.
- Provide protection and management for endangered and threatened plant and animal species (Wood stork, American bald eagle, and American alligator).
- Provide wildlife education and interpretation and recreational opportunities to the visiting public.
- Provide protection and management necessary to sustain and promote colonial nesting bird populations that use the refuge.

Management Tools

- Water level management for waterfowl, shorebirds, wood storks, and other wading birds.
- Mowing and disking.
- Prescribed fire.
- Mechanical and chemical control of noxious plants.
- Timber cutting.
- Public hunting for deer management.
- Education/interpretation.
- Law enforcement.
- Partnerships.

Public Use Opportunities

- Hiking/biking/trails.
- Auto tour route.
- Wildlife observation.
- Wildlife photography.
- Hunting.
- Fishing/shrimping/crabbing.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

- Environmental education / interpretation.

Calendar of Events

May: Migratory Bird Day.

July: Butterfly survey.

September: Non-quota archery deer/hog hunting.

October: National Wildlife Refuge Week; Georgia's Colonial Coast Birding & Nature Festival.

November: Quota deer/hog gun hunt.

December: Christmas Bird Count.

Questions and Answers

How do I get to the refuge?

Harris Neck NWR is located on Harris Neck Road, seven miles east of Interstate 95 off of Exit 67 (South Newport).

When is the refuge open?

The refuge is open to the general public during daylight hours, seven days a week.

Are there any costs associated with a visit?

There are no fees charged to visit the refuge.

Where and when are my best chances of seeing a painted bunting?

Painted buntings are typically present on the refuge from late April until late September. Birds can usually be observed while touring the refuge's four-mile wildlife drive.

Is hunting permitted on the refuge?

Hunting is permitted on the refuge for deer and feral hogs. A three-day, non-quota archery hunt is typically held during September and a one-day, quota shotgun hunt is held during November. For more information on refuge hunts and how to participate, please contact the Savannah Coastal Refuges office (912/652 4415) or visit our website:
www.fws.gov/harrisneck

Is fishing permitted on the refuge?

The refuge has six freshwater impoundments that are managed for wading birds and endangered wood storks that are not open to fishing. However, the refuge has two public boat ramps and two fishing piers that provide public access and opportunities for saltwater fishing.