



photo: Ray Paterra



photo: Ray Paterra



photo: Danny Bales



photo: Steve Hillebrand



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Welcome to Bulls Island at Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge

Bulls Island lies three miles off the mainland and is the largest of four barrier islands found within the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge. The Cape Romain Refuge is one of over 560 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System. This system, encompassing over 150 million acres, is a network of lands and waters managed specifically for wildlife. Bulls is a 5,000 acre island consisting of maritime forest, fresh and brackish water impoundments, salt marsh and white sandy beaches. Live oaks, sabal palmettos, cedar, loblolly pines and magnolias are the dominant trees found on the island. An abundance of wildlife including deer, alligators, otters, bobcat and black fox squirrels call Bulls Island home, but the bird life is what Bulls Island is known for throughout the world. Over 293 species of birds have been recorded on the refuge with most being found on or near Bulls. Gadwall, scaup, ring-necked, canvasback and teal can be found in the impoundments. Yellowlegs, plovers, dunlins and sanderlings are best viewed on the mud flats and beaches. Warblers, sparrows, woodpeckers and raptors abound in the lush forest of Bulls Island.

The island was originally known as Oneiscaw; a name given by the Sewee Indians. Throughout the 1600's and into the early 1700's, the Sewee tribe inhabited the area north of Charleston to the Santee Rivers and it was here they hunted game and fished the tidal creeks for food. Their name, it is believed, means island people. In 1669 the English settlers set sail to the province of Carolina which later became South Carolina. On March 15, 1670 they set foot on the island called Oneiscaw and were met by the Sewee. Shortly afterwards, they made their way down to the Kiawah River and settled the area which is now known as Charleston. One of the leaders among these early settlers was Stephen Bull, who was later made colonel of the militia for the province. Throughout Bull's life his name became so associated with Oneiscaw that it has ever since been known as Bulls Island.

Dominick House

The Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1932 for the purpose of providing habitat for wintering waterfowl as well as habitat for resident wildlife populations. In 1925 New York banker and broker, Gayer Dominick, purchased the island for a winter residence and constructed the house from native materials. For eleven years he and his family enjoyed the tranquil life on Bulls Island and then conveyed it to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1936. Beginning in

the early 1940's until the late 1960's, the Dominick House was operated as an inn for bird watchers, nature enthusiasts, and fishermen. Today, the house is used occasionally by refuge employees and volunteers while on special duty and for conservation workshops and conferences.

Dave Clough Wildlife Viewing Platform

Just a short walk off the Turkey Walk nature trail and situated on Upper Summerhouse Pond is the Dave Clough Wildlife Viewing Platform. From this platform, one can see a variety of wading birds such as the great and snowy egrets, great blue heron, black-necked stilt and black-crowned night heron. A variety of waterfowl can be seen from the platform as well as the American alligator. The threatened wood stork is a regular visitor to this area. Dave Clough was a wildlife enthusiast and a champion for national wildlife refuges. This platform is named in his honor.

Observation Tower

A 16' high observation tower located just 2.25 miles from the public dock provides a panoramic view of the 500 acre Jacks Creek impoundment with the picturesque Atlantic Ocean as a backdrop. The tower is located at the end of Sheepshead Ridge Road.

Boneyard Beach

Perhaps the most photographed location on Bulls Island is the area known as Boneyard Beach. This is a three mile stretch of beach on the northeast corner of the island. Here, hundreds of oaks, cedars and pines can be found strewn along the beach; all the result of an ever-changing beach which is in constant battle with the in-coming surf. Boneyard Beach gets its name from all the downed trees which have been bleached by the sun and salt water ultimately resembling a grave yard of bones. This is an excellent location to find sun bleached sand dollars, especially after an off-shore storm.

Martello Tower or Old Fort

During the 1600 and 1700's, pirates roamed the seas off the South Carolina coast, raiding and plundering ships and small coastal towns. In 1707, the South Carolina General Assembly passed an act authorizing the appointment of "lookouts." Lookouts were placed on at least six coastal islands. Generally, the lookouts maintained their watch from hills or high dunes. It is possible that lookouts built small forts.

The structure found on Bulls Island is probably the remains of a type of fort called a Martello Tower. Martello Towers originated in Italy to signal the approach of a pirate ship. The tower on Bulls Island consisted of "one white man and two Sewee or other neighboring Indians." Story has it that in the event of sighting a pirate vessel, the watch would fire three consecutive cannon shots to warn nearby English vessels and neighboring families. The men would then paddle to safety in the creeks behind Bulls. There were several Martello Towers of various constructions in this country prior to the Civil War. This particular tower was used during the war and served as a fort or perhaps a prison for Confederate soldiers. The structural remains of the Martello Tower (or Old Fort) are located on Old Fort Road on the edge of Jacks Creek.

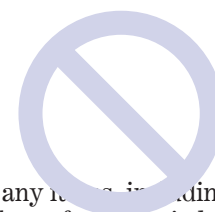
On December 28, 1862 – "...the first cutter with an armed crew and 70 pounds of powder was sent to destroy the fort on Bulls Island. At 1 p.m. the boat returned having destroyed the magazine shell room and set fire to all the woodwork"...Lt. Com. Uphur of the U.S. Navy, USS Flambeau.

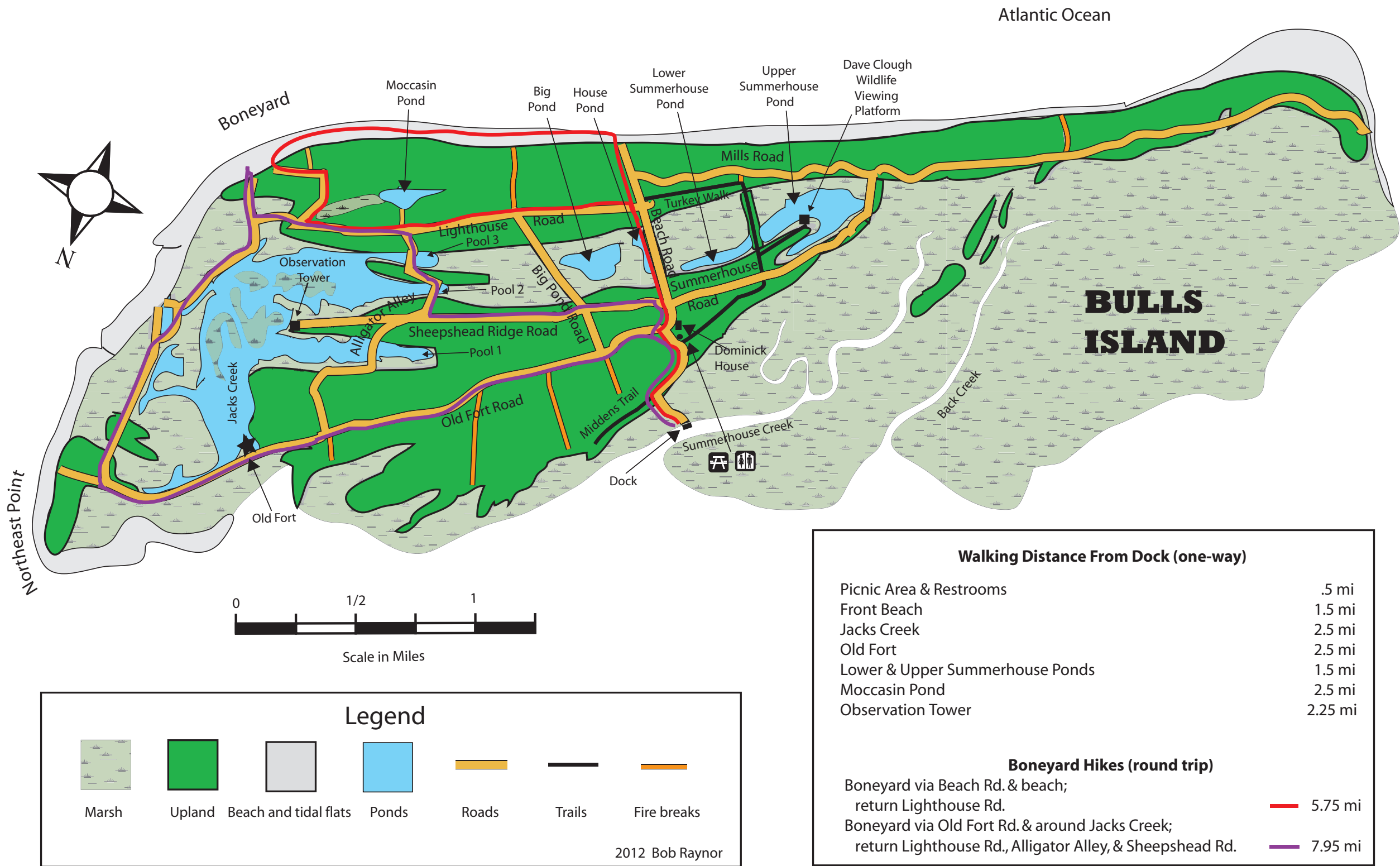
Permitted Activities

- Saltwater Fishing, Clamming, Shrimping, Oystering, and Crabbing – in accordance with State regulations
- Hiking, Photography, Wildlife Observation, and Picnicking
- Hunting – a refuge hunting leaflet is available to inform you of hunting opportunities
- Bikes are allowed on service roads. Bikes are not permitted on the two designated walking trails or beach.

Prohibited Activities

- Camping
- Fires
- Pets
- Collection – Taking of any natural or historic items of antiquity is prohibited. One small bag of unoccupied shells may be taken. *Commercial shelling is prohibited.*
- Littering





This blue goose, designed by J.N. "Ding" Darling, has become the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.



Bulls Island and the remainder of the refuge is Day Use Only. Bulls Island is accessible only by passenger ferry service (or private boat). Call 843/881 4582 or 843/928 3368 for information.

Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge
5801 Highway 17 North, Awendaw, SC 29429
Headquarters phone: 843/928 3264
Sewee Center phone: 843/928 3368

www.fws.gov/refuge/cape_roman
www.fws.gov/refuge/sewee_center

Ferry Service to Bulls Island – phone 843/881 4582

