

Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge

Hunting Regulations

Welcome

Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this 10,050-acre migratory bird refuge consists of a single barrier island (Wassaw Island), two smaller islands (Pine Island and Flora Hammock; collectively known as Little Wassaw Island), tidal salt marsh, and several small hammocks. The primary purpose of the refuge is to maintain and enhance habitat for migratory birds, nesting sea turtles, and other wildlife, and to preserve and protect this unique barrier island. The refuge is comprised of 76% salt marsh and only 24% upland, which includes beach dune and upland forest communities, roads, trails, and administrative land. Today, due to little development and few land management practices, Wassaw Island is said to be the best representation of what Georgia's barrier islands looked like before Europeans arrived.

Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge
c/o Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex
694 Beech Hill Lane, Hardeeville, SC 29927
843-784-9911, ext. 111 (Office)
843-226-5738 (Mobile)
Email: savannahcoastal@fws.gov
Website: www.fws.gov/refuge/wassaw
Facebook: www.facebook.com/SavannahCoastalRefugesComplex

The refuge is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a national network of lands and waters managed for the benefit of wildlife and people.

<http://www.fws.gov>

1-800-344-WILD

Accessibility

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. For more information, please contact the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, www.doi.gov/pmb/eo/public-civil-rights.

General Information

Permit Procedures

All hunters, 16 years of age or older, are required to purchase, and carry while hunting, the Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex Annual Hunt Permit. This permit will allow hunters access to all "non-quota" hunts on any of the following National Wildlife Refuges: Blackbeard Island, Harris Neck, Pinckney Island, Savannah, and Wassaw NWRs. Annual Hunt Permits are \$25, non-transferable, and valid for the current hunt season only (August 2023 – May 2024). To purchase a permit, please visit <https://www.recreation.gov/activitypass/savannah-complex-hunt-permit>. If it is your first time purchasing a permit through **Recreation.gov**, you will need to complete the one-time registration process. Once your account is set-up, you can purchase the permit. Please retain your user ID and password for **Recreation.gov** for future permit purchases. If you are unable to access the internet, please call the refuge hunt coordinator at (843) 226-5738.

State Licenses

All state license and tag requirements apply on the refuge, and hunters are responsible for acquiring all required state hunting licenses and tags. A state WMA permit is not required to hunt the refuge.

Access

Boats are needed to access the refuge, however during hunts, the only permitted entry point is the refuge dock located on Wassaw Creek. Access from other parts of the island is prohibited.

The refuge will be closed to the general public on all hunt days.

Boater Caution

Coastal waters are subject to extreme tidal fluctuations of six to ten feet. Hunters should be familiar with tide tables, and monitor coastal weather conditions before navigating to the barrier island refuge.

Camping

All camping will be at the designated camping area only. All campsites are primitive. Toilets and shower facilities are available at the campground. A cooler unit is operated to store harvested deer. Fires must be confined to the camping area and should not be any larger than 3 ft. in diameter. Burning of trash and large items is strictly prohibited. Camping is allowed only during managed hunts.

In an effort to prevent the spread of tree-killing insects and disease, hunters are prohibited from bringing firewood to the refuge. Hunters may cut what they need from dead and downed wood in and around the campground area (cutting live or standing dead trees is prohibited.)

Tree Stands

Hunters may place one stand on the refuge during the month preceding the hunt. Hunters assume all responsibility for the loss or damage of personal property left on the refuge. Stands must be removed at the end of each hunt.

Firearms

Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuge System lands must comply with all provisions of State and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific refuge regulations in 50 CFR Part 32).

General Hunting Regulations

Hunting regulations are designed to provide safe recreational opportunities through wise use of renewable wildlife resources. Hunting is permitted in accordance with Federal regulations governing public use on National Wildlife Refuges as set forth in Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Hunting will be in accordance with applicable state of Georgia regulations subject to the conditions stated below.

Public hunting at Wassaw NWR is permitted on approximately 2,000 acres. Certain areas are closed to hunting (see refuge hunt map below). One 3-day gun hunt for deer is held annually (see table below for dates).

Hunters must check in at the refuge dock prior to setting up camp. All persons entering the refuge during the hunts must possess a valid refuge hunt permit and all required state hunting licenses; anyone without these documents will be turned away. Hunters may check in no more than one day in advance of opening day of the hunt. Hunters must be off the refuge by noon the day following the last day of the hunt.

Transportation is not provided to, from, or on the refuge. Any movement within the refuge must be by foot or bicycle/e-bike. Entry and exit points are limited to the check-in station, located at refuge dock. Hunters are not allowed to leave by boat to reach other parts of the island. Boats may not be moored to the refuge dock except for loading and unloading purposes. Boats must be moored at the specified area near the refuge dock.

Deer harvested during the hunt must be checked by refuge personnel and tagged before leaving the refuge. State bonus tags will be issued for all deer harvested.

Field dressing/quartering is allowed, but all remains must be left off main trails, away from public view. Head and meat must be returned to check station.

Youth hunters (age 15 and under) must be supervised by a licensed adult and must remain within sight and normal voice contact with the adult at all times. An adult may supervise only one youth hunter.

All hunters must wear at least 500 square inches of solid, unbroken fluorescent orange material visible above the waistline.

Hunters must be on their stands from one-half hour before legal sunrise until 9 am and from two hours before sunset until one-half hour after legal sunset.

Hunt weapons may not be taken from the campground during authorized scouting periods from check-in until the beginning of hunt hours.

For additional regulations, see “Prohibited Activities” section.

Georgia hunting regulations and license/tag requirements apply to all refuge hunts.

Hunt Type	Season Dates	Method of Take	Bag Limit	Hunt Units	Other Regulations
Deer & Feral Hog (Firearm)	December 7, 8, & 9, 2023	State authorized firearm (buckshot prohibited), muzzleloader, and bow	5 deer (no more than 2 antlered) State bonus tags issued for all deer	See hunt map	Refuge hunt permit required for all hunters ages 16 and older State regulations apply

Prohibited Activities

- Possession or use of buckshot
- Possession or use of poison or poison pods
- Distribution of bait, and hunting over bait
- Participating in “man drives” for deer
- Trapping
- Harming, harassing, or killing any other wildlife than game species being hunted
- Hunting from a tree in which a metal object has been screwed or driven to support a hunter
- Pruning/limbing of live trees
- Use of trail or game cameras
- **Use of flagging, blazing, painting, or trail marking devices, including toilet paper, for locating stands or for any other purpose**
- Use of dogs for hunting
- Target practice
- Possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting
- Bringing firewood
- Fires larger than 3 ft. diameter and burning trash or large items

FOR QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL HUNT COORDINATOR AMY OCHOA AT 843-226-5738.

Revised July 2023

