Refuge Management

Refuge employees strive to provide high quality habitat conditions for a variety of native wildlife. When the refuge was established, more than 6,000 acres of uplands had been commercially managed. Projects designed to restore these areas to more natural conditions are underway. Hundreds of acres of slash pines have been selectively thinned - and in some cases clear-cut, to move toward reforestation to more native longleaf/wiregrass and mixed hardwood communities.

Much of the state of Florida consists of ecosystems that have adapted with fire, typically burning naturally every 3 to 10 years. Prescribed fire (controlled burning) is used on refuge uplands and wetlands to mimic the natural fire regime which improves habitat and food availability for many species of wildlife. Scrub habitat is being restored through mechanical cutting and the use of fire on high, dry sandy ridges to benefit species such as the gopher tortoise and eastern indigo snake.

Recreational Opportunities

Lower Suwannee NWR provides opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors through wildlife-oriented recreation including wildlife observation and photography, fishing, and self-guided programs. There is no admission fee and most of the refuge is open 24 hours a day 365 days per year.

More than 50 miles of primary roads are open for driving, hiking, or bicycling and 50 additional miles of secondary roads are open to foot and bicycle traffic. Observation towers and platforms, fishing piers, boardwalks, a canoe trail, and several boat launch areas provide excellent access to many refuge areas that are off the beaten path.

Hiking Trails


By Boat

Public boat ramps that provide access to the Suwannee River are available at Fowler’s Bluff and the town of Suwannee. Access to coastal waters is available at Cedar Key, St. Isaac Island, and also the town of Suwannee. Small boats and kayaks/canoes can be launched at McCormick Creek, Shell Mound, and Fishbone Creek.

Hunting and Fishing

Much of the refuge is open for hunting of deer, hogs, wild turkeys, and small game within State seasons. In addition to State hunting regulations, special Refuge regulations apply and a Refuge Hunting Permit is required. For additional details, contact the Refuge Headquarters at 352/493 0258. For information on State Hunting Regulations call 1-888-HUNT FLORIDA.

Fishing is allowed in coastal waters, tidal creeks, interior ponds, and the Suwannee River year-round as per State regulations. Universally accessible fishing piers are available at Shell Mound and Salt Creek. For a copy of State fishing regulations, contact the Florida Marine Patrol at 1-800-DIAL-FMP (saltwater) or 1-888-FISH FLORIDA (freshwater).

For Your Safety

■ Tell a friend or relative where you are going and when to expect your return.

Prohibited Activities

■ Camping is not allowed. Campgrounds are located near by in Levy and Dixie Counties.

■ Fires of any type.

■ Spotlighting.

■ Dogs off leashes.

■ Feeding or disturbing alligators or any other species of wildlife.

■ Entry into areas posted as closed.

■ Cutting of timber.

■ Release of any wild or domestic animal.

■ Use of metal detectors.

■ Taking artifacts.

■ Horseback riding.

■ Firearms, except as allowed during hunting season.

■ Off-road vehicles (ATV’s, unlicensed motorcycles).

■ Taking (live or dead) or injuring any plant or animal other than legally taken fish or game species.

For more information please contact:

Refuge Manager

Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge

16450 Northwest 31st Place

Chiefland, FL 32626

352/493 0258

Internet: www.fws.gov/lowersuwannee

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