

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
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<http://www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee>

News Release



For Immediate Release

Date: January 31, 2015

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Supervisory Refuge Ranger

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge to Host 18th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

Folkston, GA... Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge will be hosting the Great Backyard Bird Count on Saturday, February 14th. This local bird count is part of an international event during the weekend of February 13-16, 2015. This will be the 18th year of the citizen science project organized by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society.

Visitors and birders can join refuge staff and volunteers beginning at 7:30 a.m. in the Environmental Education classroom located at the Suwannee Canal Recreation Area to participate. After an opening presentation from Sheila Willis, president of the Okefenokee Bird Club, participants are welcome to join refuge staff and volunteers on an hour long hike along the Cane Pole Trail. It will be an easy, round trip walk in search of wintering birds of the Okefenokee Swamp; perfect for beginning birders. Participants are invited to bird watch as long as they like and are welcome to come and go throughout the day. The count will include areas such as the Chesser Island Boardwalk, Chesser Island Homestead, and various refuge trails. All bird sightings will be recorded and entered into the eBird database, where birders can view sightings from the entire Great Backyard Bird Count event.

Attendees are invited to visit the refuge and encouraged to go bird watching during this free event. Registration is encouraged and can be made by contacting the Visitor Center at 912-496-7836 to sign up. In addition to the opportunities to bird watch, the refuge will be providing kid friendly crafts, activities, and programs at the Richard S. Bolt Visitor Center. Entrance into the refuge will also be FREE in honor of President's Day weekend. The event is family-friendly, and all ages and skill levels are encouraged to attend, even beginners. Dress appropriately for the weather, and bring binoculars and a field guide. The Visitor Center does have a loaner binocular program, but availability will be limited. Other suggested items to bring are snacks and water, as well as a camera. For more information, contact the refuge Visitor Center at 912-496-7836, or visit the refuge website at www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/OkefenokeeWildlifeRefuge.

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The Suwannee Canal Recreation Area (East Entrance) to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is the primary entrance managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is located 11 miles southwest of Folkston, GA off Hwy 121/23. The refuge is open daily and offers a variety of opportunities for the visiting public. Call 912-496-7836 or visit the refuge website at www.fws.gov/okefenokee for hours of operation, upcoming events, and entrance fee information.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to providing access to our events for all participants. Persons needing reasonable accommodations in order to attend and participate in our events should contact Susan Heisey at (912) 496-7366 ext. 233 or Susan_Heisey@fws.gov. In order to allow sufficient time to process requests, please contact us for assistance at least five business days before the event.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook pages at www.facebook.com/okefenokeewildliferefuge or www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast>.