U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge Map and Trail Guide

Harris Neck
National Wildlife Refuge

South Newport River
Airfield Perimeter Loop
Goose Pond
Goose Pond Loop
Greenhead Pond
Historical Trail
Wildlife Drive (1-way auto route)
Snipe Pond
Teal Pond
Thomas Landing Loop Road (2-way auto route)
West Woody Pond Trail
Woody Pond
Bunting Loop
Wildlife Drive (1-way auto route)
Swain River
To Hwy 17 and I-95
Entrance
131
Bluebill Pond
Bluebill Pond Loop
Harris Neck Road
Wildlife Drive
Exit
Barbour River Road
Gould's Cemetery
Barbour River Landing
Barbour River
Harris Neck Creek
0
1/4 mile
N

Map Legend

- Refuge Office
- Ecological Services Office
- Wildlife Observation Point
- Marshland
- Refuge Boundary
- Refuge Road
- County Road
- Secondary Trail (unmarked)
- Wildlife Drive
- Entrance

Trails - hiking or biking

- Bluebill Pond Loop (1.1 miles)
- West Woody Pond Trail (.6 miles 1-way)
- Airfield Perimeter Loop (3 miles)
- Goose Pond Loop (1.4 miles)
- Historical Trail (.5 miles 1-way)
- Bunting Loop (.6 miles)
- Informational Panel

Refuge Hours

Refuge Office/Visitor Contact Station:
Normally open weekdays, 8 am - 4:30 pm

Wildlife Drive: sunrise to sunset

Barbour River Landing:
Open year round, 4 am - 12 midnight

Regulation Reminders

- Some areas may be closed seasonally to protect wildlife from human disturbance. Such areas are posted "Area Beyond This Sign Closed."
- Saltwater fishing and shellfishing are permitted in refuge tidal waters only.
- All freshwater ponds are closed to fishing.
- Feeding, capturing, or hunting wildlife is strictly prohibited unless authorized by permit.
- All of the refuge's archaeological and natural resources are protected. Artifact hunting/collecting is not allowed.
- Do not pick or cut vegetation.
- Dogs, cats, and other pets are not permitted on the refuge.
- Automobiles must remain on the Wildlife Drive. Hikers are encouraged to stay on marked trails.
- The refuge, unless otherwise posted, is open to hiking, biking, wildlife observation, interpretation, environmental education, and photography. It is also open certain times of the year to hunting and fishing; review refuge regulations for details.

For general information, visit the refuge website at http://www.fws.gov/harrisneck or contact:

Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge
5000 Wildlife Drive NE
Townsend, GA 31331
Phone: 912/832 4608

Safety Reminders

- Overgrowth on the trail shoulders and pathways off the wildlife drive may conceal snakes, poison ivy, or stinging insects. Alligators may be encountered near any pond. Do not feed or molest this reptile in any way.
- There are no shelters for visitor protection from the sun or inclement weather, except at the refuge office/visitor contact station.
- Bicyclists should be cautious of potholes, puddles, and cactus when leaving the paved wildlife drive.

The blue goose is the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Harris Neck-Yesterday and Today

Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge (2,824 acres) is one of seven refuges administered as part of the Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex. The refuge is located in McIntosh County, Georgia, 45 miles south of the port city of Savannah. Harris Neck serves as an important link in the chain of refuges along the eastern seaboard, and is the inland base for two neighboring barrier island refuges, Blackbeard Island and Wolf Island.

Archaeological and historical records show that many different populations have benefited from Harris Neck's resources over the centuries:

- Gaule Indians inhabited these areas, collecting fish, shellfish, and game from 1500 - 1715 AD.

- Beginning in 1750, English and Scottish settlers farmed the land intensively, producing many crops including renowned high quality Sea Island cotton.
- African American families established a farming and shell-fishing community following the Civil War. Their historic cemetery is still in use and can be visited from Barbour River Landing.
- In the early 20th century, a wealthy family from the northeast founded an estate that had a large mansion, formal gardens, and a dock for yachts.
- During World War II, the U.S. military purchased the land for an airfield and pilot training facility. Remnants of the runways can still be seen.

Since its designation as a wildlife refuge in 1962, Harris Neck has served as a premier nesting, foraging, and wintering habitat for many species of wildlife. Signature species include wood storks, which nest in a large colony on Woody Pond, and the colorful and uncommon painted bunting, which favors nesting habitat in the refuge's maritime scrub areas.

The refuge encompasses six man-made freshwater ponds as well as extensive salt marsh, open fields, forested wetland, and mixed hardwood/pine forest. This diversity of habitat makes the refuge an important resource for migratory birds (342 species of birds have been seen on the refuge and 83 species breed here).

All photos credit Sharon Lindsay/ USFWS volunteer