

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
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News Release



For Immediate Release

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Okefenokee Announces Winner of Nature Photography Contest Winning Photo to be featured on the 2017 Refuge-Specific Annual Pass

Folkston, GA.... Nature photography is unmatched at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge with beautiful landscapes, abundant wildlife, and unique flowering plants. Last fall, Okefenokee NWR hosted a contest for non-professional photographers to enter photos taken on the refuge, where the winning entry would be featured on the 2017 refuge-specific annual pass. The judging was conducted by refuge personnel prior to the annual Pioneer Day in November, and the winner, Jay Blanton, received his recognition during the event.

Jay Blanton is a resident of Lake Park, Georgia and frequents the western entrance of the Okefenokee (Stephen C. Foster State Park) specifically to take wildlife and landscape photography. Jay shares his love of photography with his wife, Erin, who was present with him when he received his award. Blanton states whether he's "in the mood to capture wildlife, landscape, or any type of nature photography, the Okefenokee provides endless opportunities to photograph." He went on to explain that Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is truly a "unique place here in Georgia that provides such a diverse variety that attracts not only photographers, but anyone that has an appreciation for nature."

Blanton said that his favorite type of nature photography is "photographing the amazing night skies inside of the Okefenokee when entering the refuge through the western entrance near Fargo. The clear nights provide amazing view of the stars creating stellar conditions for astrophotography."

The winning photo will be featured on the refuge-specific annual pass for all of 2017. To purchase a refuge-specific annual pass for \$15.00, visit Okefenokee Adventures at the Main Entrance near Folkston or the Stephen C. Foster State Park near Fargo. For questions or for more information about the refuge, call the Richard S. Bolt Visitor Center at 912-496-7836 or Stephen C. Foster State Park at 912-637-5274.

Additionally, we would also like to announce the 2017 Fee Free dates where visitors may receive free entrance to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (Main Entrance – Suwannee Canal Recreation Area and Stephen C. Foster State Park):

January 16, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February 20, Presidents' Day
September 30, National Public Lands Day
October 8, First Sunday of National Wildlife Refuge Week
November 11–12, Veterans Day Weekend

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The Suwannee Canal Recreation Area is the main entrance to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is located 11 miles southwest of Folkston, GA off Hwy 121/23. Entrance fees are \$5 per vehicle/\$1 per bicycle for a daily pass (good for 7 days). Annual passes are also available. 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/refuge/okefenokee for hours of operation, upcoming events, and entrance fee information.

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