

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge
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News Release



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Okefenokee Announces Winner of Nature Photography Contest Winning Photo to be featured on the 2018 Refuge-Specific Annual Pass

Folkston, GA.... Nature photography is unmatched at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) with beautiful landscapes, abundant wildlife, and unique flowering plants. Last fall, Okefenokee NWR hosted a contest for non-professional photographers, where the winning entry would be featured on the 2018 refuge-specific annual pass. The judging was conducted by refuge staff and the winning photo, by Stefan Mazzola, was announced at the Pioneer Day Festival the Saturday before Thanksgiving. Mazzola's photo was taken on a three-day overnight trip to Monkey Lake and features the beauty of the night sky in the Okefenokee. "I would highly recommend this trip to anyone that enjoys the outdoors," states Mazzola. Mazzola started with photography about 15 years ago using a film camera and slide film and he enjoys exploring and photographing the lakes, rivers, and wetlands in the southeastern United States.

The photos from the photo contest were displayed during the Pioneer Day event where visitors were also able to participate in the People's Choice award. Ballots were cast over the two weeks following and the winner of the People's Choice Award goes to Joe Doherty for his picture of a recently-fledged screech owl. Doherty lives in Jacksonville and visits Okefenokee where he says his favorite is photographing birds. "Now focusing (pun intended) on action shots of birds in flight," says Doherty. "I always try to think that the next photo I take will be my best or one of the best." Obviously, the visitors to the Okefenokee believe that his photo of the fledgling screech owl is one of his best!

Mazzola's winning photo will be featured on the refuge-specific annual pass for all of 2018. To purchase a refuge-specific annual pass, 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 visit www.fws.gov/refuge/okefenokee/.

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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