

# Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex

## *Hunting Regulations*

*Blackbeard Island NWR, Harris Neck NWR, Pinckney Island NWR, Savannah NWR, Wassaw NWR*

### **Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex**

The chain of National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) that forms the Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex (Complex) extends from Pinckney Island NWR near Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, to Wolf Island NWR near Darien, Georgia. Between these lie Savannah (the largest unit in the Complex), Wassaw, Tybee, Harris Neck, and Blackbeard Island refuges. Together, they span a 100-mile stretch of coastline and total 59,325 acres. The Savannah Coastal Refuges are administered from the headquarters office located at the Savannah NWR Visitor Center in Hardeeville, South Carolina.

The primary objective of a National Wildlife Refuge is to provide habitat for the conservation and protection of all species of wildlife. The harvest of surplus animals is one tool used to manage wildlife populations. Carefully managed hunts maintain wildlife populations at a level compatible with the environment, provide recreational opportunities, and permit the use of a valuable renewable resource. Public hunting is permitted, in designated areas, on five of the seven Complex refuges: Blackbeard Island, Harris Neck, Pinckney Island, Savannah, and Wassaw NWRs. **Hunters must obtain the current-year Complex hunt schedule for specific dates.**

### **Contact Information**

Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex

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Website: [www.fws.gov/refuge/savannah](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/savannah)

### **Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex Annual Hunt Permit**

All hunters, 16 years of age or older, are required to purchase, and carry while hunting, the Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex Annual Hunt Permit, which certifies they understand and will comply with the regulations contained in this brochure. This permit will allow hunters access to all "non-quota" hunts on any of the following National Wildlife Refuges: Blackbeard Island, Harris Neck, Pinckney Island, Savannah, and Wassaw NWRs. Annual Hunt Permits are \$25, non-transferable, and valid for the current hunt season only (September – May). Please visit the "Hunting" page at [www.fws.gov/refuge/savannah](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/savannah) for a schedule of all Complex hunt dates, as well as detailed information on how to purchase a permit on-line. If you are unable to access the internet, please call the refuge hunt coordinator at (843) 784-2468.

### **Youth and Specialty Hunts**

A number of youth hunts, as well as a wheelchair hunt, are offered at the Savannah NWR each year. These hunts do not require the purchase of the Annual Hunt Permit; however, for the youth hunts, a free hunt permit must be requested from the Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex headquarters (see "Contact Information"). If a lottery drawing is involved for any youth or specialty hunt, a \$5 application fee will be charged. See specific hunt section for details on these hunts.

### **General Hunting Regulations**

The regulations listed below supplement the general regulations which govern hunting on wildlife refuge areas as set forth in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations. In addition to Federal regulations, State game and fish laws and regulations are adopted and in effect unless they have been further restricted by Federal law or regulations ([www.gohuntgeorgia.org](http://www.gohuntgeorgia.org) or [www.dnr.sc.gov/hunting.html](http://www.dnr.sc.gov/hunting.html)). All Coast Guard and State boating regulations will be

enforced. **Licenses, permits, all hunting and fishing equipment and effects, and vehicles or other conveyances are subject to inspection by Federal and State officers.**

Hunters are required to have, in their possession, all appropriate State licenses, permits, and tags (i.e. hunting license, big game permit, migratory bird permit, ducks stamp, deer tags). State WMA permits are **not** required.

Personal identification (driver's license or official state identification card), in addition to all required State and Federal hunting licenses and permits, will be required at any hunt check-in.

Hunters are allowed to carry legally permitted handguns during all refuge hunts; however, they may only be used for hunting if listed as an authorized hunting weapon for a specific hunt. Firearms of any type are prohibited within refuge facilities. Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuges must comply with all provisions of state and local law.

Hunters 15 years of age or under (youth hunters) must be supervised by an adult 21 years of age or older, and must remain within sight and normal voice contact with the adult at all times. During the youth waterfowl and mourning dove hunts, the adult may supervise two youths; during all other refuge hunts, the adult may supervise only one youth.

Only designated game species may be taken; other wildlife may not be harmed or harassed in any manner.

All hunters must wear at least 500 square inches of solid, unbroken fluorescent orange material visible above the waistline during any firearm deer hunt or the hog-only hunt (including squirrel and rabbit hunters during the November deer hunt).

Archery hunters are encouraged to wear a fluorescent orange outer garment while hunting on the ground or walking to and from stands.

The possession or use of poison or poison pods is illegal.

The distribution of bait, and hunting over bait, is prohibited.

Participating in "man drives" for deer is prohibited.

Hunting from a tree in which a metal object has been screwed or driven to support a hunter is prohibited.

On all Savannah NWR hunts, hunt stands and blinds must be removed from the refuge following each day's hunt. On Harris Neck and Pinckney Island NWRs, hunters may place one stand during the week preceding a hunt. On the barrier island hunts (Blackbeard Island and Wassaw NWRs), one stand per hunter may be placed up to one month prior to the opening day of each hunt. Hunters assume all responsibility for the loss or damage of personal property left on the refuge. Stands must be removed at the end of each hunt.

No flagging, blazing, painting, or trail marking devices or materials may be used to locate stands, or for any other purpose.

Pruning/limbing of live trees is prohibited.

Dogs will not be allowed on refuge hunts, except during migratory bird hunts.

The use of trail or game cameras is prohibited.

The possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited.

All forms of litter must be removed from the refuge.

Specific regulations governing specific refuges hunts are listed separately.

## **Blackbeard Island NWR**

### ***Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations***

Public hunting on Blackbeard Island NWR is permitted on approximately 4,500 acres. Certain areas are closed to hunting (see refuge hunt map, available on-line or at the Savannah NWR Visitor Center). Two, 3-day, archery-only deer hunts are held annually (hunters must obtain the current-year Complex hunt schedule for specific dates).

Five deer (no more than two antlered) may be taken (state bonus tags will be issued for two of these). Feral hogs (no bag limit) may also be taken with weapons legal for these hunts.

Only bows, in accordance with state regulations, will be authorized for hunting.

Deer harvested during scheduled hunts must be checked by refuge personnel before leaving the refuge.

Hunters must be on their stands from one-half hour before legal sunrise until 9 am and from two hours before sunset until one-half hour after legal sunset.

Bows may not be taken from the campground during authorized scouting period from check-in until the beginning of hunt hours.

Archery target practice will be permitted in designated areas only.

Hunters must check in at the refuge dock prior to setting up camp. Hunters may check in no more than one day in advance of the opening date of each hunt period. Hunters must be off the refuge by noon the day following the last day of the hunt period.

Transportation is not provided to, from, or on the refuge. Any movement within the refuge must be by foot or bicycle (**by foot only within the National Wilderness Area**). Entry and exit points are limited to designated check stations or other specified areas. Hunters are not allowed to leave by boat to reach other parts of the island. Boats may not be moored to the government dock except for loading and unloading purposes. Boats must be moored at the specified area near the government dock.

Blackbeard Island NWR will be closed to the general public on all hunt days.

### ***Camping Facilities***

All camping will be at designated camping areas only. All campsites are primitive. Potable water, flush toilets, and showers are available at the campground. A cooler unit is operated to store harvested deer. Fires must be confined to the camping area. Camping is allowed **only** during managed hunts.

In an effort to prevent the spread of tree-killing insects and disease, hunters are prohibited from bringing firewood to the refuge. Hunters may cut what they need from dead and downed wood in and around the campground area (cutting live or standing dead trees is prohibited.)

### ***Boater Caution***

Coastal waters are subject to extreme tidal fluctuations of six to ten feet. Hunters should be familiar with tide tables, and monitor coastal weather conditions before navigating to the barrier island refuge.

### ***Notice for Boaters Launching from Harris Neck NWR***

Barbour River Landing is open 24 hours (with a not to exceed 72 hours limit). Hunters do not need a permit to leave vehicles overnight during hunts. Hunters may exceed the limit during scheduled refuge hunts. Vehicles should be removed from the Landing by end of hunt.

## **Harris Neck NWR**

### ***Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations***

Public hunting on Harris Neck NWR is permitted on approximately 2,400 acres. Certain areas are closed to hunting (see refuge hunt map, available on-line or at the Savannah NWR Visitor Center). There are two hunts held annually; a 3-day, archery-only deer hunt and a 1-day gun hunt for deer (hunters must obtain the current-year Complex hunt schedule for specific dates).

Five deer (no more than two antlered) may be taken (state bonus tags will be issued for two of these).

Feral hogs (no bag limit) may also be taken with weapons legal for these hunts.

Only bows, in accordance with state regulations, will be authorized for use during the archery-only hunt. Shotguns (20 gauge or larger; slugs only), muzzleloaders, and bows, in accordance with state regulations, are the only hunt weapons permitted during the gun hunt.

Hunters must check in at refuge headquarters the morning of each hunt day; between 5 am and 6 am during the archery hunt, and between 4:30 am and 5:30 am during the gun hunt. Hunters will be allowed to exit and re-enter the refuge between 9 am and one hour prior to evening stand hours. Entry and exit must be through the entrance gate only.

Hunters must be on their stands from one-half hour before legal sunrise until 9 am and from two hours before sunset until one-half hour after legal sunset.

All hunters must be checked-out and off the refuge no later than 2 hours after sunset.

Hunting will not be permitted closer than 100 yards of Harris Neck Road, the refuge entrance drive, refuge headquarters, Barbour River Landing, Barbour River Landing Road and Gould's Cemetery.

Target practice is prohibited.

Vehicles are restricted to the designated auto tour route. Two-way traffic will be permitted.

Entry by boat is prohibited.

Camping is not permitted on the refuge.

Harris Neck NWR will be closed to the general public on all hunt days.

## **Pinckney Island NWR**

### ***Refuge-Specific Regulations***

Public hunting on Pinckney Island NWR is permitted on approximately 1,050 acres. Certain areas are closed to hunting (see refuge hunt map, available on-line or at the Savannah NWR Visitor Center). One, 1-day gun hunt for deer is held annually.

Five deer (no more than two antlered) may be taken.

Deer harvested during any scheduled hunt must be checked by refuge personnel before leaving the refuge. All deer must be tagged with state deer tags. Antlerless deer tags will be issued (free) at the deer check station.

Shotguns (20 gauge or larger; slugs only), muzzleloaders, and bows, in accordance with state regulations, are the only hunt weapons permitted.

Hunters must be on their stands from one-half hour before legal sunrise until 9 am and from two hours before sunset until one-half hour after legal sunset.

Hunting will not be permitted closer than 100 yards of U.S. Highway 278 or the check station area, nor closer than 200 yards of the residence area.

Hunters must be checked in at the designated check station by refuge personnel **between 5 and 6 am** the morning of the hunt. Entry by boat is prohibited. Camping is not permitted on the refuge.

All hunters must be checked-out and off the refuge no later than 2 hours after sunset.

Vehicles will be permitted only on the gravel road from the refuge entrance to Clubhouse Pond. Movement within all other areas of the refuge must be by foot or bicycle. Entry by boat is prohibited, and we do not allow hunters to leave by boat to reach other parts of the island.

The refuge will be closed to the general public any day on which a hunt is scheduled.

## **Savannah NWR**

### ***Refuge-Specific Regulations***

Public hunting on Savannah NWR is permitted on approximately 27,000 acres. Certain areas are closed to hunting (see refuge hunt map, available on-line or at the Savannah NWR Visitor Center).

No check-in or check-out is required (except during the wheelchair hunt, quota youth waterfowl hunt, and Youth Turkey Hunt & Learn Weekend). Transportation is not provided to, from, or on the refuge. Any movement within the refuge must be by foot, bicycle, or boat.

Hunting will not be permitted closer than 100 yards (90 m.) of U.S. Highway 17, GA Highway 25/SC Highway 170, refuge facilities and trails, or railroad rights of way, nor within any area marked as closed.

Hunters may not travel through areas adjacent to Savannah NWR Visitor Center and Laurel Hill Wildlife Drive to access hunting areas.

Camping is not permitted on the refuge.

### ***Deer***

Deer hunting is permitted, in areas designated on the refuge hunt map, during the months of October (archery only) and November (gun and archery).

Only bows, in accordance with state regulations, may be used during the archery-only hunt.

Only shotguns (20 gauge or larger; slugs only), center-fire rifles, center-fire pistols, muzzleloaders, and bows, in accordance with state regulations, may be used during the gun hunt.

Five deer (no more than two antlered) may be taken. "Bonus" tags will not be issued for deer taken.

Feral hogs and coyotes may also be taken (no bag limit) with weapons authorized and legal during this hunt.

All deer taken in South Carolina must be tagged with state deer tags before being removed from the refuge. These tags must be obtained from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (consult state hunting regulations booklet or SCDNR website for how to obtain).

### ***Small Game (squirrel and rabbit)***

Hunting for squirrel and rabbit is permitted, in areas designated on the refuge hunt map. Squirrel hunting is allowed from November 1 thru December 31; rabbit hunting is allowed from State opening day in November (GA or SC) thru December 31.

Only rim-fire rifles, rim-fire pistols, shotguns with #2 or smaller, non-toxic shot, or bows may be used for squirrel hunting. Only shotguns with #2 or smaller, non-toxic shot or bows may be used for rabbit hunting.

Georgia and/or South Carolina (Game Zone 3) bag limits will apply.

Feral hogs and coyotes may also be taken (no bag limit) with weapons authorized and legal during this hunt.

Throughout November, while small game hunting coincides with the refuge deer hunt, hunters must wear at least 500 square inches of solid, unbroken fluorescent orange material visible above the waistline.

### ***Feral Hog and Coyote***

Hunting for feral hogs and coyotes is permitted, in areas designated on the refuge hunt map, for two consecutive weeks in March (hunters must obtain the current-year Complex hunt schedule for specific dates). Feral hogs and coyotes may also be taken during other refuge hunts with weapons authorized and legal during those hunts.

A hunting license is required to hunt feral hogs and coyotes; however, there is no bag limit.

Only shotguns (20 gauge or larger; slugs only), center-fire rifles, center-fire pistols, muzzleloaders, and bows, in accordance with state regulations, may be used during the hog/coyote hunt.

### ***Turkey***

Turkey hunting is permitted, in areas designated on the refuge hunt map, beginning in April, thru the end of State seasons (hunters must obtain the current-year Complex hunt schedule for specific dates).

Only shotguns with #2 or smaller, non-toxic shot and bows, in accordance with state regulations, may be used for turkey hunting. Use of slugs or buckshot is illegal during the turkey hunt.

Hunters may harvest only three gobblers (male turkey).

Feral hogs and coyotes may also be taken (no bag limit) with weapons authorized and legal during this hunt.

### ***Waterfowl***

Waterfowl hunting is permitted in designated migratory bird hunting areas on the refuge hunt map. Georgia and South Carolina waterfowl seasons and State and Federal regulations apply.

Only shotguns with #2 or smaller, non-toxic shot or bows may be used for waterfowl hunting.

Hunters may use dogs as retrievers, but they must remain under direct and constant control at all times.

Blinds, decoys and other personal property must be removed from the refuge daily.

Feral hogs and coyotes may also be taken (no bag limit) with weapons authorized and legal during this hunt.

### ***Mourning Dove***

Dove hunting is permitted in designated migratory bird hunting areas on the refuge hunt map. Georgia and South Carolina dove seasons and State and Federal regulations apply.

Limited dove hunting is permitted in designated areas north of SC Hwy 170 in South Carolina during the dove season (Sep/Oct). Maps showing waterfowl hunting areas are also shown on the refuge hunt maps showing waterfowl hunting areas.

Limited dove hunting within the refuge impoundments north of SC 170 has been canceled this year due to poor conditions caused by reduced capability to control water levels within the impoundments.

North of SC Hwy 170, there are no designated dove hunting areas where hunting is required.

Only shotguns with #2 or smaller, non-toxic shot or bows may be used for dove hunting.

Hunters may use dogs as retrievers, but they must remain under direct and constant control at all times.

Feral hogs and coyotes may also be taken (no bag limit) with weapons authorized and legal during this hunt.

### ***Wheelchair Hunt***

A limited number of wheelchair hunters (permanently dependent on wheelchairs for mobility) will be permitted to hunt deer/hogs/coyotes within a portion of the refuge during a 2-day hunt in November (hunters must obtain the current-year Complex hunt schedule for specific dates). To apply, hunters must request or download the Wheelchair Hunt Information Packet and the Wheelchair Hunt Application (FWS Form 3-2354 – Quota Deer Hunt Application), and submit the application, required physician's statement (included in packet), and a \$5.00 application fee **by September 15** to the

refuge headquarters (see "Contact Information"). Only one application may be submitted per hunter; 15 permits will be issued.

Accepted payment methods for the \$5.00 application fee are credit/debit cards (call 843/784 2468 to make payment by phone), check or money order (made payable to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service). All payments must be received at the time application is submitted to guarantee entry into the drawing.

### **Youth Hunts**

Savannah NWR offers youth hunting opportunities annually that are open only to hunters 15 years of age and under. For details on how to participate in these hunts, please visit the "Hunting" page at [www.fws.gov/refuge/savannah](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/savannah) or call the refuge hunt coordinator at (843)784 2468.

Youth hunters must be supervised by an adult 21 years of age or older, who will participate in a non-hunting capacity. Youth hunters must remain within sight and normal voice contact with the adult at all times. During the quota youth waterfowl, the adult may supervise two youths; during all other refuge hunts, the adult may supervise only one youth.

### **Special Information**

Portions of the refuge lying in both Georgia and South Carolina are open to hunting. Therefore, hunters should familiarize themselves with the area they wish to hunt and obtain the appropriate state license/licenses.

Much of the land surrounding the Savannah NWR is privately owned. Please respect our neighbors by not trespassing to reach the refuge and making sure you are within refuge boundaries while hunting.

### **Boater Caution**

Boats are needed to access all of the Georgia portions of the refuge that are open to hunting, as well as some areas on the South Carolina side. Some areas in South Carolina are accessible by foot. ATVs and other motorized land vehicles may not be used.

Coastal waters are subject to extreme tidal fluctuations of six to ten feet. Hunters are urged to be familiar with tide tables, carry adequate safety equipment, and exercise caution when participating in any refuge hunt.

## **Wassaw NWR**

### **Refuge-Specific Regulations**

Public hunting on Wassaw NWR is permitted on approximately 2,000 acres (see refuge hunt map, available on-line or at the Savannah NWR Visitor Center). One, 3-day primitive weapons deer hunt and one, 3-day gun hunt for deer are held annually (hunters must obtain the current-year Complex hunt schedule for specific dates).

Five deer (no more than two antlered) may be taken (state bonus tags will be issued for two of these). Feral hogs (no bag limit) may also be taken with weapons legal during these hunts.

We allow only bows and muzzle-loading rifles, in accordance with state regulations, during the primitive weapons hunt. For the gun hunt, we allow only shotguns (20-gauge or larger; slugs only), center-fire rifles, center-fire pistols, bows and primitive weapons, in accordance with state regulations.

Deer harvested during scheduled hunts must be checked by refuge personnel before leaving the refuge.

Hunters must be on their stands from one-half hour before legal sunrise until 9 am and from two hours before sunset until one-half hour after legal sunset.

Hunt weapons may not be taken from the campground during authorized scouting periods from check-in until the beginning of hunt hours.

Target practice is prohibited.

Hunters must check in at the refuge dock prior to setting up camp. Hunters may check in no more than one day in advance of the opening day of each hunt period. Hunters must be off the refuge by noon the day following the last day of the hunt period.

Transportation is not provided to, from, or on the refuge. Any movement within the refuge must be by foot or bicycle. Entry and exit points are limited to the check station. Hunters are not allowed to leave by boat to reach other parts of the island. Boats may not be moored to the government dock except for loading and unloading purposes. Boats must be moored at the specified area near the government dock.

Wassaw NWR will be closed to the general public on all hunt days.

### ***Camping Facilities***

All camping will be at the designated camping area only. All campsites are primitive. Toilets and shower facilities are available at the campground. A cooler unit is operated to store harvested deer. Fires must be confined to the camping area. Camping is allowed **only** during managed hunts.

In an effort to prevent the spread of tree-killing insects and disease, hunters are prohibited from bringing firewood to the refuge. Hunters may cut what they need from dead and downed wood in and around the campground area (cutting live or standing dead trees is prohibited.)

### ***Boater Caution***

Coastal waters are subject to extreme tidal fluctuations of six to ten feet. Hunters should be familiar with tide tables, and monitor coastal weather conditions before navigating to the barrier island refuge.

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