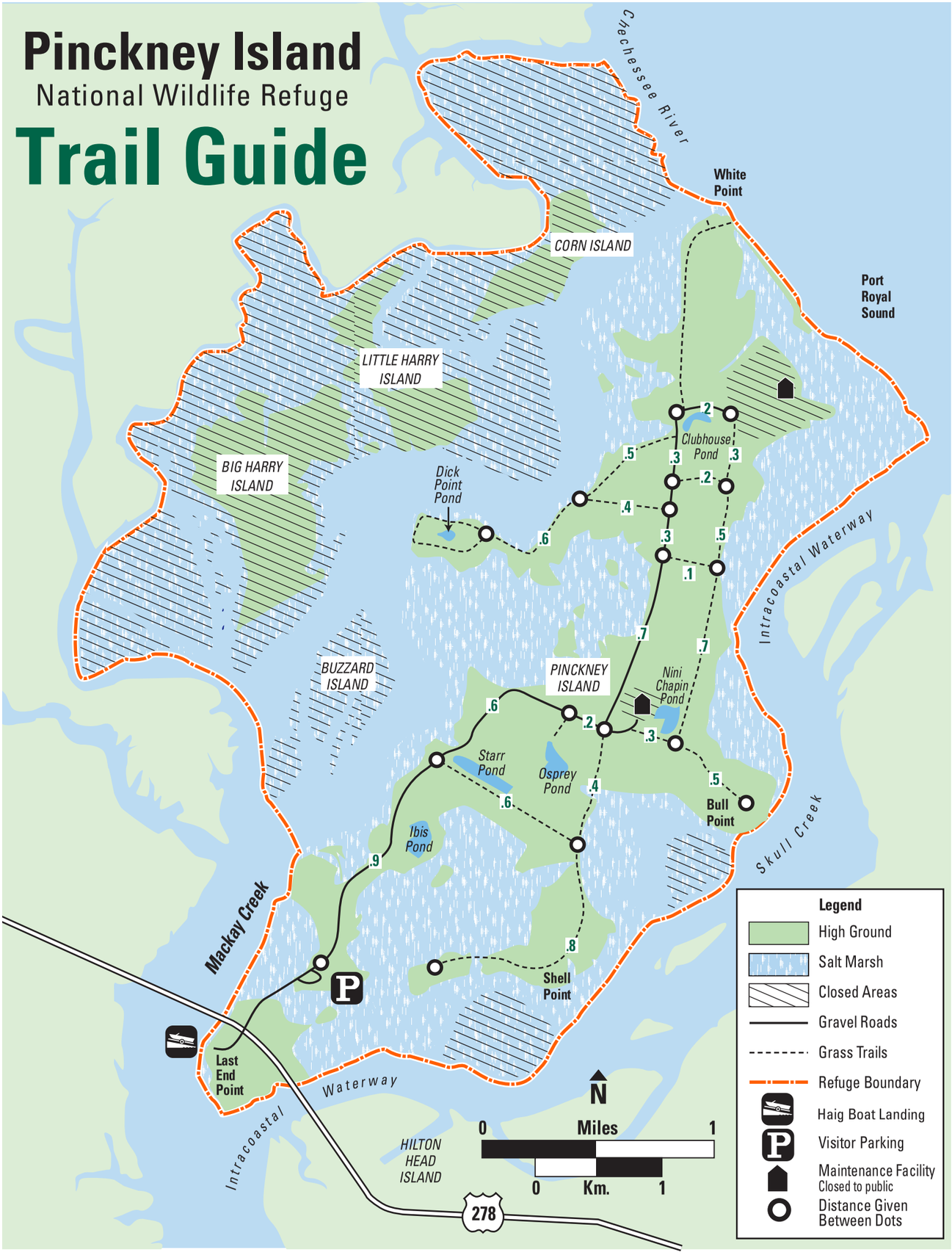
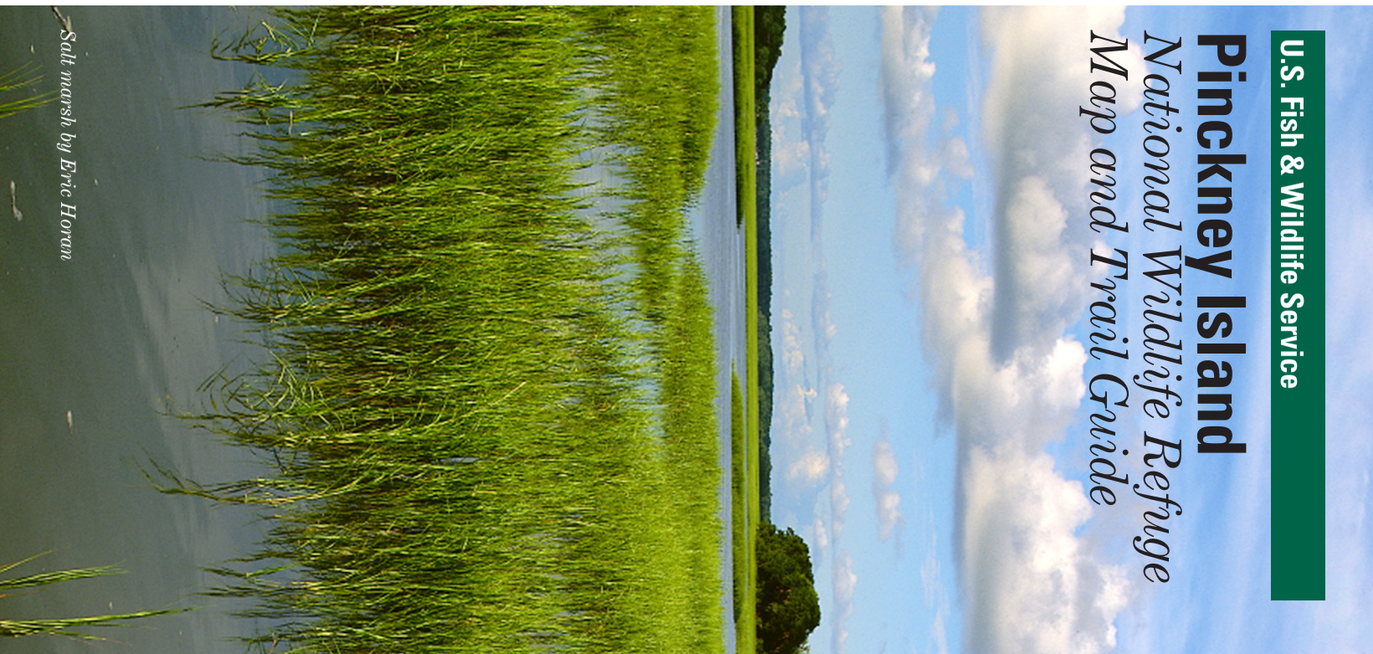
Pinckney Island
National Wildlife Refuge
Trail Guide



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Pinckney Island
National Wildlife Refuge
Map and Trail Guide



Salt marsh by Eric Horan

Welcome to Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge

Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this 4,053-acre refuge includes Pinckney Island, Corn Island, Big and Little Harry Islands, Buzzard Island, and numerous small hammocks. Pinckney is the largest of the islands and the only one open to public use. These lands were donated to the federal government in 1975 by private landowners for the sole purpose of preserving their wildlife resources. Nearly 67% of the refuge consists of salt marsh and tidal creeks. However, a wide variety of land types, including forests, grasslands, and freshwater ponds, is found on Pinckney Island. In combination, these habitats support a diversity of wildlife species.

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

History

Pinckney Island has a rich history of human occupation dating back to the Archaic Period (8000-1000 BC). Native Americans lived here and flourished because of ample food supply. Historic artifacts indicate that small scale, impermanent settlements were made by French and Spanish groups in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Permanent settlements did not occur until 1708 when Alexander Mackey, an Indian trader, obtained title to 200 acres of Pinckney Island. By 1715, Mackey had acquired the rest of Pinckney and most of the other islands which comprise the present refuge. In 1736, Mackey's widow sold the islands to Charles Pinckney, father of General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney. General Pinckney was a commander during the Revolutionary War, a signer of the U.S. Constitution, and in 1804 and 1808, a presidential candidate. The Pinckney family developed the islands into a plantation, removing much of the maritime forest and draining and tiling the fertile soil. By 1840, nearly 400 slaves were being used to produce fine quality Sea Island cotton. The plantation flourished until the Civil War when it was occupied by Union Troops.

After the war, the plantation did not prosper, and by the 1930s, was virtually abandoned. In 1937, after 200 years of Pinckney ownership, the plantation was sold to James and Ellen Bruce, who used the property as a hunting preserve. Trees were planted, ponds were built to attract waterfowl and for irrigation, and 70 percent of the farm fields were placed back into cultivation.

Edward Starr and James Barker purchased the islands in 1954 and continued to manage them as a game preserve. In 1975, the islands were donated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to be managed exclusively as a nature and forest preserve for aesthetic and conservation purposes.

Left to right: bicyclists by USFWS; gulf fritillary by Texas Eagle; American alligator and great egrets by Mary Ellen Urbanski.

Refuge Hours

Pinckney Island NWR is open to the public seven days a week, during daylight hours only; no overnight use or camping is allowed.

Recreational Opportunities

Studying, viewing, and photographing the island's wildlife and scenery are popular activities throughout the year. Over 14 miles of trails are open to hiking and bicycling. Saltwater fishing is permitted year-round in the estuarine waters adjacent to the refuge (fishing is not allowed in refuge ponds). Boat access is available at the county-managed boat landing on Last End Point.

Suggested Hiking/Biking Trips

All trips begin and end at the parking area half a mile from the refuge entrance; distances are round-trip, and estimated times are based on a leisurely walking pace, allowing for periodic stops to observe wildlife.

Ibis Pond – 1.2 miles; 1 ½ hours

Shell Point – 4.6 miles; 4 hours, 15 minutes

Starr Pond – 2.0 miles; 2 ½ hours

Osprey Pond – 3.0 miles; 3 hours

Nini Chapin and Barker Ponds – 3.6 miles; 3 ½ hours

Bull Point – 5.0 miles; 5 hours

Dick Point – 7.4 miles; 6 ½ hours

White Point – 7.8 miles; 7 hours

Regulation Reminders

- Camping and overnight use are not permitted.
- Freshwater fishing is prohibited.
- Feeding, capturing, or hunting wildlife is strictly prohibited.
- Antique and artifact hunting/collecting is not allowed.
- Do not pick or cut vegetation.
- Dogs, cats and other pets are not permitted on the refuge.
- Do not enter areas marked as "Closed".

Safety Reminders

- For assistance with medical emergencies, please call 911
- Tell a friend where you are going and when to expect your return.
- Do not leave valuables in vehicle.
- Drinking water and restrooms are not available on the refuge.
- There are no shelters for visitor protection from the sun or inclement weather.
- Overgrowth on trails may conceal snakes, poison ivy, or stinging insects.
- Alligators may be encountered on the refuge; it is potentially dangerous (and a violation of state and federal law) to feed or harass this reptile in any way.
- Hikers are urged to stay on the paths at all times.
- No off-road or off-trail biking is permitted.
- Bicyclists should be cautious of loose gravel, potholes, and puddles.

Questions regarding specific refuge activities, such as hunting, should be directed to:

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savannahcoastal@fws.gov
http://www.fws.gov/refuge/pinckney_island