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Craig Sasser



*Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge, located along the Waccamaw, Great Pee Dee and Little Pee Dee Rivers, encompasses a diversity of habitat including a black water river swamp, alluvial river floodplain, forested wetlands, longleaf pine ecosystems, and tidal and managed historic ricefields.*

**Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge**

Welcome to Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), one of 550 National Wildlife Refuges that form a network of lands and waters managed specifically for wildlife. Refuges provide habitat – food, water, cover, and space – for millions of migratory birds, 280 threatened and endangered species, and thousands of other species of native plants and animals.

Waccamaw NWR was established in 1997. The Refuge was established for the following purposes:

- to protect and manage diverse habitat components within an important coastal river ecosystem for the benefit of threatened and endangered species, freshwater and anadromous fish, migratory birds, and forest wildlife, including a wide array of plants and animals associated with bottomland hardwood habitats; and
- to provide compatible wildlife-dependent recreational activities including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation for present and future generations of Americans.

Presently, the refuge encompasses approximately 23,000 acres that include large sections of tidal emergent wetlands, forested wetlands, and upland forests associated with the Waccamaw and Pee Dee Rivers.

The wetland diversity of Waccamaw NWR is what sets it apart from other refuges found along the east coast. Wetland habitats range from historical and actively managed tidal rice fields to black water and alluvial flood plain forested wetlands of the Waccamaw and Great Pee Dee Rivers. These tidal freshwater wetlands are some of the most diverse freshwater wetland systems found in North America and offer many important habitats for migratory birds, fish, and resident wildlife. Species such as swallow-tailed kite, osprey, wood stork, white ibis, prothonotary warbler, and many species of waterfowl can be observed on a seasonal basis.

The variety of refuge habitats support more than 400 species of animals including four endangered species. The refuge and surrounding area supports the highest density of nesting swallow-tailed kites in South Carolina and is the northernmost documented nesting site for this species. Additionally, refuge wetlands play a critical role in filtering storm water runoff and supplying a primary drinking water resource for the greater Grand Strand region.

**Facilities**

The Refuge headquarters and environmental education center is located 20 miles north of Georgetown, South Carolina and 15 miles south of Conway, South Carolina at 21424 N. Frasier Street, (U.S. Highway 701). The environmental education center is a state-

of-the-art facility which includes a fully equipped wetlab, exhibit hall, auditorium, and nature store. The facility offers opportunities for environmental education to local schools and communities as well as interpretation and information specific to Waccamaw NWR.

The Cox Ferry Recreation Area is located on Gary Lake Blvd., accessible from Jackson Bluff Road. It offers the public three miles of interpretive nature trails, a boardwalk, kiosks, and a weather shelter with picnic tables. The nature trails are accessible from both parking areas and lead visitors through a variety of habitats and are open year round for hiking, biking, environmental education and nature photography.

**Activities**

Compatible wildlife dependent activities are allowed in specific areas according to Refuge rules and regulations. Activities that are incompatible to the mission of the system or the Refuge are prohibited.

Additional information concerning recreational activities is available at the Refuge Headquarters.

**Permitted Activities**

- Boating, canoeing, and kayaking in the rivers and creeks throughout the Refuge.
- Excellent opportunities for wildlife observation and photography can be found by boating through Big and Little Bull Creeks.

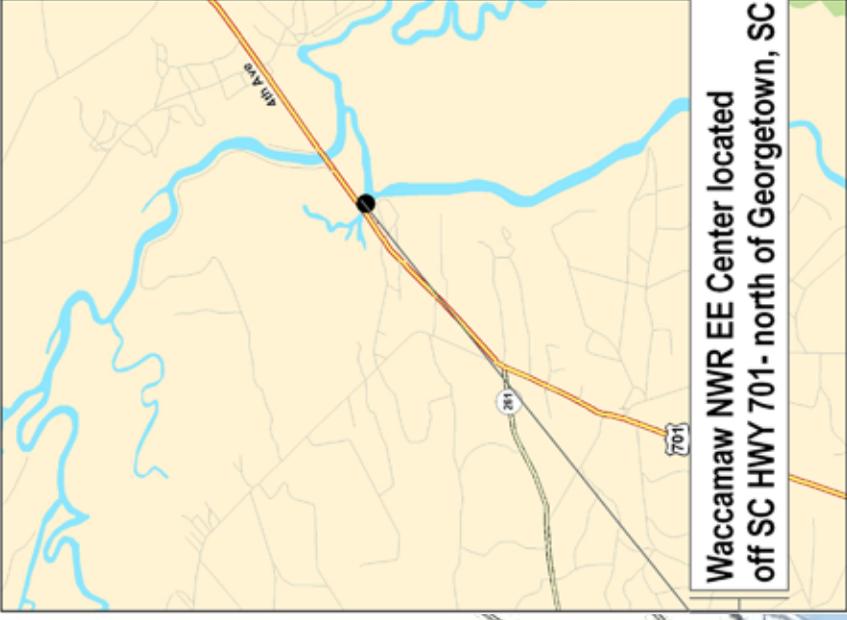
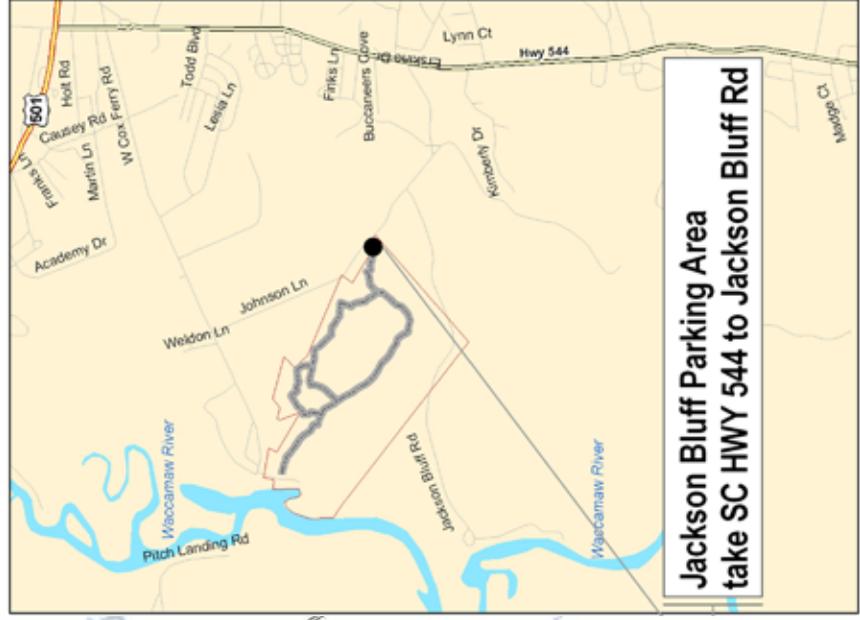
- Hiking is permitted along the Great Pee Dee River and Bull Creek at the Highway 701 bridge just north of Yauhannah Lake. Additional hiking trails and boardwalks are available at the Cox Ferry Lake Recreation Area adjacent to the Waccamaw River in Conway.

- Freshwater fishing opportunities are available year-round.
- Hunting is permitted on the refuge. For more information please reference the refuge hunt brochure.
- Environmental education activities are available at the Refuge. Contact the refuge for more information.
- All pets must be on a leash.

**Prohibited Activities**

- Camping.
- Fires.
- Feeding, enticing, collecting or disturbing plants and wildlife.
- Firearms or weapons of any type, except approved firearms used in conjunction with Refuge hunts.
- Littering.
- Entering closed areas.

*All photos not credited are courtesy of Karen Beshears.*



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