

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 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 56,949 acres. The Savannah Coastal Refuges are administered from headquarters located on Savannah NWR 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 Savannah Coastal 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

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Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex Annual Hunt Permit

All hunters, 16 years of age or older, are required to possess 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, Savannah, and Wassaw NWRs. This permit is non-transferable and is also required if drawn for the lottery hunt at Pinckney Island NWR. Annual Hunt Permits are \$25 and valid for the current hunt year only. Please visit www.fws.gov/savannah for a schedule of all Complex hunt dates, as well as detailed information on how to purchase a permit.

Youth and Specialty Hunts

A number of youth hunts, as well as a mobility-impaired hunt are offered at the Savannah NWR each year. These hunts do not require the purchase of the Annual Hunt Permit. However, 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 or 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 and permits (i.e. hunting license, big game permit, migratory bird permit, ducks stamps). State WMA licenses 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 15 years of age or under (youth hunters) must be supervised by an adult 21 years of age or older and must remain in sight and normal voice contact with the adult. During youth waterfowl 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 molested in any manner.

In accordance with State law, all hunters must wear at least 500 square inches of solid, unbroken fluorescent orange material visible above the waistline during any firearm deer hunt (including squirrel 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 daily. On Harris Neck and Pinckney Island NWRs, hunters may place one stand during the week preceding the 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 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 waterfowl 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). 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.

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 normally open daily from 4 am - midnight. However, during the archery hunts on Blackbeard

Island NWR, the landing will be open for 24-hour use. Hunters do not need a parking permit to leave their vehicles there overnight throughout the hunt periods.

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). One, 3-day archery-only deer hunt and one, 1-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.

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

Hunters must check-in at refuge headquarters the morning of each hunt day; between 5 am and 6am during the archery hunt, and between 4 am and 5 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.

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.

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

Target practice is prohibited.

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

Entry by boat is prohibited.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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). One, 1-day gun hunt for deer is held annually. This is a limited draw hunt (80 permits), and hunters must submit an application by **July 31** to be entered into the drawing (a \$5 application fee will be charged). Visit www.fws.gov/pinckneyisland for detailed instructions on how to apply.

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. Does must be tagged with state doe tags. These tags will be issued (free) at the deer check station.

Shotguns (20 gauge or larger; slugs only) 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 4 and 5 am the morning of the hunt. Entry by boat is prohibited. Camping is not permitted on the refuge.

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. We prohibit entry by boat, and we prohibit 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 20,000 acres. Certain areas are closed to hunting (see refuge hunt map).

No check-in or check-out is required (except during mobility-impaired hunt, youth waterfowl hunt, and Youth 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 the areas marked as closed.

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

Camping is not permitted on the refuge.

Deer

Deer hunting is permitted, in all 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), rifles, 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 may also be taken (no bag limit) during refuge deer hunts.

Does taken in South Carolina must be tagged with state doe tags before being removed from the refuge. These tags must be purchased from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (application provided in the state hunting regulations booklet or may be downloaded from SCDNR website).

Squirrel

Gun hunting for squirrel is permitted, in all areas designated on the refuge hunt map, during the months of November and December.

Only rim-fire rifles or shotguns with #2 shot or smaller will be authorized for squirrel hunting.

Georgia and/or South Carolina (Game Zone 6) bag limits will apply.

Throughout November, while squirrel 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

Hunting for feral hogs is permitted, in all areas designated on the refuge hunt map, during the October and November refuge deer hunts and for two consecutive weeks in March (hunters must obtain the current-year Complex hunt schedule for specific dates).

Only shotguns (20 gauge or larger; slugs only), rifles, muzzleloaders, and bows, in accordance with state regulations, will be authorized for hog hunting.

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

Turkey

Turkey hunting is permitted, in all areas designated on the refuge hunt map, for three (3) consecutive weeks in April (hunters must obtain the current-year Complex hunt schedule for specific dates).

Only shotguns with #2 shot or smaller, and bows, in accordance with state regulations, will be authorized for turkey hunting.

Use of slugs or buckshot is illegal during the turkey hunt.

Hunters may harvest three gobblers only.

Waterfowl

Hunting of waterfowl (ducks and coots) is permitted in designated areas north of GA Hwy 25/SC Hwy 170 (see refuge hunt map.)

Georgia and South Carolina waterfowl seasons and State and Federal regulations apply.

Hunters are encouraged to use dogs as retrievers, but they must be under control at all times.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Decoys and other personal property must be removed from the refuge daily.

Hunting will not be permitted within 100 yards (90 m.) of GA Hwy 25/SC Hwy 170.

Mobility-Impaired Hunt

A limited number of mobility-impaired hunters (permanently dependent on wheelchairs for mobility) will be permitted to hunt deer/hogs 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 Mobility-Impaired Hunt Packet and the Mobility-Impaired Hunt Application (FWS Form 3-2354 – Quota Deer Hunt Application), and submit the application, required physician's statement, and a \$5.00 application fee **by August 31** to the refuge headquarters (see "Contact Information"). Only one application may be submitted per hunter; 15 permits will be issued. Hunters selected by drawing will be notified by mail (applicants not drawn will not be notified).

Accepted payment methods for the \$5.00 application fee are credit/debit cards (call 843/784 2468 to make payment by phone), cashier's check or money order (made payable to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service). **No personal checks will be accepted**, and 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 (for deer, waterfowl, and turkey) that are open to hunters 15 years of age and under. For details on how to participate in these hunts, please request or download each hunt's information packet by calling (843)784-2468 or visiting www.fws.gov/savannah.

Youth hunters must be supervised by an adult 21 years of age or older and must remain in sight and normal voice contact with the adult. During youth waterfowl hunts, 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 hunt the Georgia portions of the refuge; some areas in South Carolina are accessible by foot. 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 hunts on the refuge.

Wassaw NWR

Refuge-Specific Regulations

Public hunting on Wassaw NWR is permitted on approximately 2,000 acres (see refuge hunt map). 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.

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 (.22 caliber or larger), 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. Chemical toilets are available at the nearby check station. A cooler unit is operated to store harvested deer. **Potable water is not available.** 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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