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# News Release



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## **BLACKBEARD AND WASSAW ISLAND NWR CLOSED INTERMITTENTLY FOR BIOLOGICAL WORK**

Blackbeard Island and Wassaw National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) will be closed intermittently, to the public April 7-11, 2014. As part of a statewide effort to reduce the amount of feral hog damage to property, natural resources, and public health and safety, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be partnering with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (WS) to remove feral hogs from Blackbeard Island, Wassaw, and Wolf Island NWRs.

This hog control project will focus on Georgia's barrier islands. The islands are composed of sensitive habitats including dunes, salt marshes, and maritime forests. All of these habitats are negatively impacted by the rooting and wallowing behavior of feral hogs. These habitats support large numbers of native wildlife, including threatened and endangered species like the Piping Plover, Loggerhead Sea Turtle, and Leatherback Sea Turtle and are a high priority area for nesting shorebirds. Feral hogs compete with native wildlife for food and destroy sea turtle and shorebird nests while consuming the eggs.

The project will consist of aerial and ground work to reduce feral hog numbers, evaluate the habitats and assess the feral hogs for a variety of diseases. From April 7-11, the project will remove hogs from the islands which will require intermittent closure to the Refuges for public safety. For more information about this project, please contact Monica Harris at 843-784-9911 ext. 103.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, 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](http://www.fws.gov).

***National Wildlife Refuges...Where Wildlife Comes Naturally!***