

# Santee

## National Wildlife Refuge



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**Marc Epstein, Refuge Manager**  
**Santee NWR**  
2125 Ft. Watson Road  
Summerton, SC 29148  
Phone: 803/478 2217  
Fax: 803/478 2314  
E-mail: FW4RWSantee@fws.gov

### Refuge Facts

- Established: 1941.
- Acres: 15,095. Refuge owns 4,400 acres fee title; the remaining acreage is managed under a lease agreement with the South Carolina Public Service Authority (a.k.a. Santee-Cooper).
- Office location: eight miles south of Summerton, SC on U.S. Highway 301.
- Other lands managed: Ten conservation easements totaling 458 acres in Bamberg, Barnwell, Clarendon, and Orangeburg counties.

### Natural History

- The refuge is located on the north shore of Lake Marion in the upper coastal plain region of Clarendon County, South Carolina.
- Major wintering area for ducks, geese and swans. Nesting and stopover area for neo-tropical migratory birds, raptors, shorebirds and wading birds. Endangered/threatened species include bald eagle and wood stork. Numerous other species of wildlife indigenous to this area.
- Habitat types: Wetlands and open water (10,622 acres) comprise most of the refuge. Woodlands (2,350 acres) and croplands and old field areas (1,895 acres) provide additional diversity.

### Financial Impact of Refuge

- Full time employees: seven.
- Annual visitation: 100,000.
- Current budget (FY 06): \$516,300.

### Refuge Objectives

- Provide habitat for migratory waterfowl consistent with the objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.
- Provide habitat and protection for neo-tropical migratory birds and endangered/threatened species.
- Provide habitat for a natural diversity of indigenous wildlife species.
- Provide opportunities for fish and wildlife-oriented recreation and environmental education.

### Management Tools

- Water level management in impoundments by use of pumps and water control structures.
- Cooperative and force account farming programs.
- Moist soil management.
- Prescribed fires.
- Mechanical and chemical control of noxious plants.
- Managed hunt program for deer, upland game and mourning doves.
- Law enforcement.
- Refuge interpretation, education, and recreation programs.
- Waterfowl banding.

### Calendar of Events

**February:** raccoon hunting.

**April:** Earth Day Event.

**May:** International Migratory Bird Day Celebration.

**October:** white-tailed deer hunting (archery and muzzle loading); National Wildlife Refuge Week - "Victory at Ft. Watson" celebration.

**December:** Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

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## Questions and Answers

### *What can I see on the refuge?*

During most times of the year there are numerous opportunities to observe a variety of wildlife species. With almost 300 species recorded, Santee NWR is an outstanding area for bird watching and is considered one of the best inland birding areas in the South Carolina. The brilliantly colored painted bunting nests here as do a number of other neo-tropical migrants. Significant waterfowl concentrations winter on the refuge and the refuge hosts the largest group of Canada geese belonging to the Southern James Bay population in the state.

Nesting bald eagles and an abundance of osprey are evident along with several other birds of prey.

Deer are abundant, even around the visitor center. Pine Island and Cuddo Units provide the best opportunities for observing alligators.

Bobcat, turkey and coyote are also common.

The Santee Indian Mound/Fort Watson site is located one-half mile from the visitors center.

### *Is camping permitted? Can I make reservations for a cabin?*

To lessen impacts to native and migratory wildlife, camping is not permitted on the refuge. Santee State Park on the south side of Lake Marion offers cabins and campsites. In addition, several commercial campgrounds are located in the area.

### *Are tours and programs available?*

Staff led tours of the refuge are not available. On and off site programs are available for school groups and other organizations when staff time permits. The refuge hosts special programs and demonstrations for International Migratory Bird Day, National Wildlife Refuge Week, and other special events.

### *When and where are the best opportunities for observing wildlife?*

November through February is the best time to observe waterfowl.

March through May and September and October provide the best opportunities for observing neotropical migratory birds. Alligators are most easily observed from late March through the summer months.

On the Bluff Unit, visitors may use the one-mile Wrights Bluff Nature Trail to get a closer look at wildlife. Field areas and an observation point alongside Cantey Bay are excellent vantage points for viewing waterfowl, wading birds and other species.

The Pine Island and Cuddo Units provide the greatest diversity of habitats of the four refuge units. Pine Island is open only to foot and bicycle traffic, but the Cuddo Unit has a wildlife drive that affords visitors access to several good wildlife observation areas. Two hiking trails are also available.

The Dingle Pond Unit is home to a Carolina Bay and provides unique habitat for several wetland species including alligators, wood ducks and other waterfowl, and many songbirds. Visitors may park at a gate and walk a one mile woods road.

### *When is the refuge open?*

The refuge is open year-round during posted hours :

8:00 am - 5:00 pm  
October - March

7:00 am - 7:00 pm  
April - September

Some areas of all refuge units may be closed to public access to provide total sanctuary for wildlife during critical periods. Cantey Bay, Black Bottom, Savannah Branch and part of the Bluff Unit are closed from November 1st until March 1st to minimize disturbance to waterfowl concentrated in these areas.

An automatic gate on the Cuddo Unit controls hours of access.

The refuge visitor center is open from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm, Tuesday through Saturday, except on Federal holidays.