

# Savannah Coastal Refuges

## Birds

There are seven national wildlife refuges (NWR) administered from the Savannah Coastal Refuges (SCR) office in Savannah, Georgia. The chain of coastal refuges comprising the SCR complex extends from Pinckney Island NWR, near Hilton Head, 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 over 54,019 acres.

The diversity of habitat within this acreage enhances the value of these coastal refuges, located strategically along the Atlantic Flyway, to a great variety of migratory birds. Within the complex there are freshwater and saltwater marshes, tidal rivers and creeks, bottomland hardwoods, maritime forests, barrier island beaches, and more.

The list of birds recorded on the seven coastal refuges includes 309 species, of which 25 are accidentals (species sighted less than six times over the last twenty years, and outside of their normal range). The following legend indicates the refuge on which each species is found, as well as the relative abundance and seasonal occurrence of each. Birds known to nest are designated with an asterisk (\*) preceding the refuge abbreviation. Birds classified as threatened or endangered are in italics.

This list incorporates the common names for birds recommended by the Sixth (1983) Edition of the A.O.U. Checklist and the 39th Supplement (1993). Species are also listed in the sequence set by the A.O.U.

REFUGE	RELATIVE ABUNDANCE
B.....Blackbeard Island	C.... Common, seen in good numbers in appropriate habitat and season.
H.....Harris Neck	
P.....Pinckney Island	FC.. Fairly common, seen in moderate numbers in appropriate habitat and season.
S.....Savannah	
T.....Tybee Island	
W.....Wassaw Island	U..... Uncommon, seen in small numbers and/or not seen every time in appropriate habitat and season.
Wo.....Wolf Island	
Complex.....all refuges	

SEASONAL OCCURRENCE	
PR.... Permanent resident, present year-round.	
SR.... Summer resident, breeds.	
SV... Summer visitor, present in summer, but does not breed.	
WV . Winter visitor, present in winter.	
M.... Migrant, transient during spring/fall migration.	

SPECIES	REFUGES	ABUND.	SEASON
<b>Loons</b>			
Red-throated Loon	B H P S T W Wo	FC	WV
Common Loon	Complex	C	WV
<b>Grebes</b>			
Pied-billed Grebe	Complex	C	PR
Horned Grebe	Complex	C	WV
Red-necked Grebe	Complex	R	WV
Eared Grebe	B H T W	R	WV

SPECIES	REFUGES	ABUND.	SEASON
<b>Gannets</b>			
Northern Gannet	B P T W Wo	FC	WV
<b>Pelicans</b>			
Brown Pelican	Complex	FC	PR
<b>Cormorants</b>			
Double-crested Cormorant	Complex	FC	PR
<b>Anhingas</b>			
Anhinga	*B *H *P *S T W Wo	C	PR
<b>Hérons</b>			
American Bittern	Complex	U	WV
Least Bittern	*B *H *P *S *W Wo	FC	SR
Great Blue Heron	*B *H *P *S T *W Wo	C	PR
Great Egret	*B *H *P *S T *W Wo	C	PR
Snowy Egret	*B *H *P *S T *W Wo	C	PR
Little Blue Heron	*B *H *P *S T *W Wo	C	PR
Tricolored Heron	*B *H *P *S T *W Wo	C	PR
Cattle Egret	B *H P *S T W Wo	C	PR
Green-Heron	*B *H *P *S T *W Wo	C	SR
Black-crowned Night-Heron	*B *H *P *S T *W Wo	C	PR
Yellow-crowned-Night-Heron	*B *H *P *S T *W Wo	FC	PR
<b>Ibises</b>			
White Ibis	*B *H *P *S W Wo	C	PR
Glossy Ibis	Complex	FC	PR
<b>Storks</b>			
<b>Wood Stork</b>	*B *H P S W Wo	FC	SR
<b>Swans, Geese, Ducks</b>			
Fulvous Whistling-Duck	H S	R	WV
Tundra Swan	S	U	WV
Greater White-fronted Goose	H S	U	WV
Snow Goose	B H S T	U	WV
Brant	H S	R	WV
Canada Goose	B *H P S W	FC	WV
Wood Duck	*B *H *P *S T *W Wo	C	PR
Green-winged Teal	Complex	C	WV
American Black Duck	B H P *S T W Wo	C	PR
Mottled Duck	B H P *S T W Wo	U	PR
Mallard	Complex	C	WV
Northern Pintail	Complex	C	WV
Blue-winged Teal	Complex	C	WV
Cinnamon Teal	Complex	R	WV
Northern Shoveler	Complex	C	WV
Gadwall	Complex	C	WV
Eurasian Wigeon	S	R	WV
American Wigeon	Complex	C	WV

SPECIES	REFUGES	ABUND.	SEASON
Canvasback	Complex	FC	WV
Redhead	Complex	U	WV
Ring-necked Duck	Complex	C	WV
Greater Scaup	Complex	U	WV
Lesser Scaup	Complex	C	WV
Oldsquaw	B P T W Wo	U	WV
Black Scoter	B P T W Wo	C	WV
Surf Scoter	B P T W Wo	C	WV
White-winged Scoter	B P T W Wo	U	WV
Common Goldeneye	S	U	WV
Bufflehead	Complex	C	WV
Hooded Merganser	B H P *S T W Wo	C	WV/PR
Common Merganser	U	U	WV
Red-breasted Merganser	Complex	C	WV
Ruddy Duck	Complex	C	WV
<b>Vultures</b>			
Black Vulture	*B H P *S T *W Wo	C	PR
Turkey Vulture	*B H P *S T *W Wo	C	PR
<b>Kites, Hawks, Eagles</b>			
Osprey	*B *H *P *S T *W Wo	C	PR
Am. Swallow-tailed Kite	B H P *S W	U	SR
Mississippi Kite	B H P *S T W Wo	U	SR
<b>Bald Eagle</b>	B H P *S T W Wo	U	WV/M
Northern Harrier	Complex	C	WV
Sharp-shinned Hawk	*Complex	FC	PR
Cooper's Hawk	*B *H *P *S T *W Wo	FC	PR
Red-shouldered Hawk	B *H *P *S T W Wo	FC	PR
Broad-winged Hawk	P S W	U	SV/M
Red-tailed Hawk	*B *H *P *S *T *W Wo	C	PR
Golden Eagle	P S	R	WV
<b>Falcons</b>			
American Kestrel	Complex	C	WV
Merlin	Complex	U	WV
<b>Peregrine Falcon</b>	Complex	U	WV
<b>Quail, Allies</b>			
Wild Turkey	H P S	U	PR
Northern Bobwhite	*H *P *S	C	PR
<b>Rails, Allies</b>			
Yellow Rail	S	R	WV
Black Rail	S W	R	SR
Clapper Rail	*B *H *P *T *W	C	PR
King Rail	*B *S	FC	PR
Virginia Rail	B H P S W	FC	WV
Sora	B H S	FC	WV

SPECIES	REFUGES	ABUND.	SEASON
Purple Gallinule	*B *H *S	FC	SR
Common Moorhen	*B *H P *S	C	PR
American Coot	B H P S W	C	PR
<b>Plovers</b>			
Black-bellied Plover	Complex	C	WV
Lesser Golden-Plover	H T	R	M
Wilson's Plover	*B H P S T *W	Wo	C
Semipalmated Plover	Complex	C	PR
<b>Piping Plover</b>	B H P T W Wo	FC	WV
Killdeer	B H *P *S *T *W *Wo	C	PR
<b>Oystercatchers</b>			
Am. Oystercatcher	*B H *P *T *W *Wo	FC	PR
<b>Stilts, Avocets</b>			
Black-necked Stilt	H P *S W	U	SR
American Avocet	B H P S W	U	M
<b>Sandpipers, Allies</b>			
Greater Yellowlegs	Complex	C	WV
Lesser Yellowlegs	Complex	C	WV
Solitary Sandpiper	Complex	FC	M
Willet	*B *H *P S *T *W *Wo	C	PR
Spotted Sandpiper	Complex	C	M
Upland Sandpiper	P S T W Wo	R	M
Whimbrel	B H P T W Wo	U	M
Long-billed Curlew	H	R	WV
Marbled Godwit	B P	FC	WV
Ruddy Turnstone	B H P T W Wo	C	PR
Red Knot	B H P T W Wo	FC	WV
Sanderling	B H P T W Wo	FC	WV/M
Semipalmated Sandpiper	Complex	R	M
Western Sandpiper	B H P S W	C	PR
Least Sandpiper	B H P S W Wo	C	PR
White-rumped Sandpiper	P S W	U	M
Pectoral Sandpiper	B H P S T W Wo	FC	M
Purple Sandpiper	T	FC	WV
Dunlin	B H P S T W Wo	C	WV
Stilt Sandpiper	P S	U	M
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	S	R	M
Short-billed Dowitcher	Complex	C	M
Long-billed Bowitcher	B P S W Wo	U	M
Common Snipe	Complex	C	WV
Am. Woodcock	B H P S W	FC	WV
Wilson's Phalarope	P S	U	M
<b>Gulls, Terns, Skimmers, Allies</b>			
Parasitic Jaeger	B P W	R	WV

SPECIES	REFUGES	ABUND.	SEASON
Laughing Gull	Complex	C	PR
Bonaparte's Gull	Complex	C	WV
Ring-billed Gull	Complex	C	PR
Herring Gull	Complex	C	PR
Great Black-backed Gull	B P S T W Wo	U	WV
Gull-billed Tern	B H *P S T W Wo	FC	SR
Caspian Tern	Complex	U	SR
Royal Tern	B H P S T W Wo	C	PR
Sandwich Tern	Complex	FC	SR
Common Tern	Complex	U	M
Forster's Tern	Complex	C	PR
Least Tern	*Complex	C	SR
Sooty Tern	B P T W Wo	R	SV
Black Tern	Complex	FC	M
Black Skimmer	Complex	C	PR
<b>Pigeons, Doves</b>			
Rock Dove	B H P S T W	C	PR
Mourning Dove	*B *H *P *S T *W	C	PR
Common Ground-Dove	*B *H *P *S T *W	U	PR
<b>Cuckoos</b>			
Black-billed Cuckoo	S W	U	M
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	*B *H *P *S T *W	C	SR
<b>Owls</b>			
Common Barn Owl	*B H P *S W	U	PR
Eastern Screech Owl	*B *H *P *S *W	C	PR
Great Horned Owl	*B *H *P *S T *W	FC	PR
Barred Owl	*B *H *P *S *W	C	PR
Long-eared Owl	P S	R	WV
Short-eared Owl	P S	U	WV
<b>Nightjars</b>			
Common Nighthawk	*B *H *P *S T *W	Wo	C
Chuck-will's widow	*B *H *P *S *W	Wo	C
Whip-poor-will	B H P S W	FC	M
<b>Swifts</b>			
Chimney Swift	*B H *P *S T W	C	SR
<b>Hummingbirds</b>			
Rudy-throated Hummingbird	*B *H *P *S T *W	Wo	C
<b>Kingfishers</b>			
Belted Kingfisher	B H *P *S *W	Wo	C
<b>Woodpeckers</b>			
Red-headed Woodpecker	*B *H P S W	FC	PR
Red-bellied Woodpecker	*B *H *P *S *W	C	PR
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	B H P S W	FC	WV
Downy Woodpecker	*B *H *P *S *W	C	PR

SPECIES	REFUGES	ABUND.	SEASON
Hairy Woodpecker	*B H *P *S W	FC	PR
<b>Red-cockaded Woodpecker</b>	S	U	PR
Northern (yellow-shafted) Flicker	*B *H *P *S *W	C	PR
Pileated Woodpecker	*B *H *P *S T *W	C	PR
<b>Flycatchers</b>			
Eastern Wood-Pewee	*B *H *P *S *W	C	SR
Acadian Flycatcher	*B *P *S *W	C	SR
Eastern Phoebe	B H P S W	C	WV
Great Crested Flycatcher	B *H *P *S *W	FC	SR
Eastern Kingbird	B *H *P *S *W	C	SR
Gray Kingbird	P W	U	SV
<b>Swallows</b>			
Purple Martin	*B H *P *S W	C	SR
Tree Swallow	B H P S W Wo	C	PR/M
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	B H P S W	C	SR
Bank Swallow	P S	U	M
Barn Swallow	B H P *S W	C	PR
<b>Jays, Crows</b>			
Blue Jay	B H *P *S *W	C	PR
Am. Crow	*B *H *P *S T *W Wo	C	PR
Fish Crow	*Complex	C	PR
<b>Chicadees, Titmice</b>			
Carolina Chickadee	*B *H *P *S *W	C	PR
Tufted Titmouse	B *H *P *S W	C	PR
<b>Nuthatches</b>			
Red-breasted Nuthatch	H P S W	U	WV
White-breasted Nuthatch	H P S W	FC	WV/SR
Brown-headed Nuthatch	B H *P *S W	C	PR
<b>Creepers, Wrens</b>			
Brown Creeper	B H P S W	U	WV
Carolina Wren	*H *P *S *W	C	PR
House Wren	B H P S W	C	WV
Winter Wren	B H P S W	U	WV
Sedge Wren	B H P S W Wo	C	WV
Marsh Wren	*Complex	C	PR
<b>Kinglets, Gnatcatchers</b>			
Golden-crowned Kinglet	B H P S W	FC	WV
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	B H P S W	C	WV
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	*B *H *P *S *W	C	PR
<b>Bluebirds, Thrushes</b>			
Eastern Bluebird	*B *H *P *S W	C	PR

SPECIES	REFUGES	ABUND.	SEASON
Veery	P S W	FC	M
Gray-cheeked Thrush	H P S W	FC	M
Swainson's Thrush	H P S W	FC	M
Hermit Thrush	B H P S W	C	WV
Wood Thrush	*H *P *S *W	C	SR
American Robin	B H P S W	C	WV
<i>Mimic Thrushes</i>			
Gray Catbird	B *H *P *S W	FC	PR
Northern Mockingbird	*B *H *P *S *T *W	C	PR
Brown Thrasher	Complex	C	PR
<i>Pipits</i>			
Water Pipit	B H P S	U	WV
<i>Waxwings</i>			
Cedar Waxwing	B H P S W	C	WV
<i>Shrikes</i>			
Loggerhead Shrike	*B *H *P *S W	C	PR
<i>Starlings</i>			
European Starling	*H *P *S W	C	PR
<i>Vireos</i>			
White-eyed Vireo	*B *H *P... *S *W	FC	PR
Solitary Vireo	B H P S W	FC	WV
Yellow-throated Vireo	*B *H *P *S *W	FC	SR
Warbling Vireo		U	M
Philadelphia Vireo		U	M
Red-eyed Vireo	*B *H *P *S *W	C	SR
<i>Emberizids</i>			
Blue-winged Warbler		R	M
Golden-winged Warbler		R	M
Tennessee Warbler		R	M
Orange-crowned Warbler	B H P S	FC	WV
Nashville Warbler		R	M
Northern Parula	*B *H *P *S *W	C	SR
Yellow Warbler	B H P S W	C	M
Chestnut-sided Warbler	B P S W	R	M
Magnolia Warbler	B H P S W	U	M
Cape May Warbler	B H P S W	FC	M
Black-throated Blue Warbler	B H P S W	C	M
Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler	Complex	C	WV
Black-throated Green Warbler		U	M
Blackburnian Warbler	B P S W	R	M
Yellow-throated Warbler	*B *H *P *S *W	C	PR
Pine Warbler	*B *H *P *S *W	C	PR

SPECIES	REFUGES	ABUND.	SEASON
Prairie Warbler	B H P S W	C	SR
Palm Warbler	B H P S W	C	WV
Bay-breasted Warbler		R	M
Blackpoll Warbler	B H P S W	C	M
Black-and-white Warbler	B H P S W	U	PR
American Redstart	B H P S W	C	M
Prothonotary Warbler	B H P *S W	FC	SR
Worm-eating Warbler	B H P S W	U	M
Swainson's Warbler		U	SR
Ovenbird	B H P S W	C	M
Northern Waterthrush	B H P S W	C	M
Louisiana Waterthrush	H P S W	U	M
Kentucky Warbler		FC	SR
Connecticut Warbler		R	M
Common Yellowthroat	*B *H *P *S *W	C	PR
Hooded Warbler	B H P *S W	C	SR
Wilson's Warbler		R	M
Canada Warbler		R	M
Yellow-breasted Chat		C	PR
Summer Tanager	*B *H *P *S *W	C	SR
Scarlet Tanager		U	M
Northern Cardinal	*B *H *P *S *W	C	SR
Rose-breasted Grosbeak		R	M
Blue Grosbeak		R	M
Indigo Bunting	B H P *S W	C	SR
Painted Bunting	*B *H *P *S *W Wo	C	SR
Rufous-sided Towhee	*B *H *P *S *W	C	WV
Bachman's Sparrow		U	PR
Chipping Sparrow	B H P S W	C	WV
Field Sparrow	B H P S W	C	WV
Vesper Sparrow	B H P S W	C	WV
Savannah Sparrow	Complex	C	WV
Grasshopper Sparrow		U	WV
Henslow's Sparrow		U	WV
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	B H P T W Wo	U	WV
Seaside Sparrow	*B *H *P *W *Wo	C	PR
Fox Sparrow	B H P S W	FC	WV
Song Sparrow	B H P S W	C	WV
Lincoln's Sparrow		R	WV
Swamp Sparrow	B H P S W	C	WV
White-throated Sparrow	B H P S W	C	WV
White-crowned Sparrow		R	WV
Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco	B H P S W	C	WV

SPECIES	REFUGES	ABUND.	SEASON
Lapland Longspur	H	R	WV
Bobolink	B H P S W	C	M
Red-winged Blackbird	*B *H *P *S *T *W	C	PR
Eastern Meadowlark	*B *H *P *S *W	C	PR
Western Meadowlark	H S	U	WV
Rusty Blackbird	H P S W	C	WV
Brewer's Blackbird		R	WV
Boat-tailed Grackle	*B *H *P *S T *W Wo	C	PR
Common Grackle	*B *H *P *S *W	FC	PR
Brown-headed Cowbird	*B H P S *W	C	PR
Orchard Oriole	*B *H *P *S *W	C	SR
Northern (Baltimore) Oriole	B P S W	FC	WV
Purple Finch	B H P S W	C	WV
Pine Siskin	H P S	FC	WV
American Goldfinch	B H P S W	C	WV
Evening Grosbeak		U	WV
House Sparrow	*H *P *S	C	PR
<i>Accidentals</i>			
These additional 25 species are considered accidental, very rarely seen on the refuge with only one or two sightings:			
Wilson's Storm Petrel	B P W		
Am. White Pelican	B P S T W Wo		
Great Cormorant	B W Wo		
Magnificent Frigatebird	B W Wo		
Reddish Egret	S		
Roseate Spoonbill	B H S W		
Mute Swan	S		
Rough-legged hawk	P		
Limpkin	S		
Sandhill Crane	H S		
Red-necked Phalarope	S		
Red Phalarope	S W		
Ruff	S		
Groove-billed Ani	S		
Snowy Owl	S		
Olive-sided Flycatcher	S		
Vermillion Flycatcher	H		
Western Kingbird	H S		
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	B H S		
Common Raven	S		
Sprague's Pipit	H S		
Clay-colored Sparrow	B S		
Lark Sparrow	B		
Snow Bunting	T		
Yellow-headed Blackbird	S		

**Sighting Notes**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ to: \_\_\_\_\_

Weather: \_\_\_\_\_

No. of species: \_\_\_\_\_

Route or area: \_\_\_\_\_

Observers: \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks: \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethics for Birdwatching**

Take care not to disturb nesting birds, exposing eggs and young to extreme temperatures and predation.

Disturb wintering wildlife as little as possible, particularly during critical feeding and resting periods. They need all of their energy reserves to withstand the stresses of harsh weather and migration.

**Do not litter.** Many birds die when they become entangled in fishing lines, 6-pack rings and other trash, or when they mistake garbage for food.

To report unusual sightings or for further information contact:

Savannah Coastal Refuges  
 Parkway Business Center - Suite 10  
 1000 Business Center Drive  
 Savannah, Georgia 31405

**Acknowledgments**

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**Cover Photo:** Wood Stork adult and juvenile in nest at Harris Neck National Wildlife Refuge, by Jonas Jordan.



# Birds of the Savannah Coastal Refuges

