



United States Department of the Interior



Santee National Wildlife Refuge
UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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SEARCHING FOR ARTIFACTS WITHIN SANTEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE IS NOT ALLOWED

Summerton, S. C.As reported in this past week's Charleston Post and Courier, prolonged drought conditions in South Carolina and throughout the Southeast region have created a unique situation on many of our waterways. According to the S. C. Department of Natural Resources, "14 of 17 streams they monitor are at extreme drought levels and some lakes have declined to water levels lower than experienced during the extended drought period of 1998 - 2002".

The extended drought has exposed miles of shallow bottoms and hundreds of feet of shoreline in Lakes Marion, Moultrie, and Murray. Most of these areas have not been exposed for many, many years. This situation has tempted numerous individuals to take advantage of exposed, dry shorelines to search for pottery shards, arrowheads, and other artifacts.

Marc Epstein, refuge manager of the Santee National Wildlife Refuge, would like to remind the public that collecting, searching for, removing, or destroying artifacts or possession of metal detecting devices is strictly prohibited within the boundaries of the Santee National Wildlife Refuge. This prohibition applies to shoreline areas on all refuge units, not just areas adjacent to the Santee Indian Mound/Ft. Watson site.

Any person who, without official permission, searches for, collects, destroys, excavates, appropriates or removes any historic artifact, object of antiquity, or archaeological resource on Santee National Wildlife Refuge is in violation of one or more of the following: **The Antiquities Act of 1906, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, the American Battlefield Protection Act of 1996, and 16 USC 50 CFR.**

Criminal penalties for violation of these statutes for a first offense may be as severe as two years of imprisonment, fines up to \$250,000, and potentially the cost of restoration and repair plus payment of any archaeological value. In addition, persons found guilty of violating these statutes may be subject to forfeiture of personal property such as vehicles, boats, metal detectors, etc. used in the commission of the violation.

The refuge urges individuals interested in finding out more about Native Americans who once lived in the vicinity of Lake Marion to study available historical information. Nearby Santee State Park hosts an excellent exhibit on the Santee Indian Mound and Santee Indian culture. Please help us to conserve and protect invaluable natural and culturally significant resources entrusted to our care by respecting our cultural heritage and obeying all laws.

Call Santee National Wildlife Refuge at 803-478-2217 to obtain information and maps showing refuge boundaries or to learn about wildlife observation and public use opportunities on the refuge. National Wildlife Refuges protect some of our nation's most unique, spectacular and truly wild places. Learn more about your National Wildlife Refuge System by visiting one of the eight refuges found in South Carolina. Follow the links from <http://refuges.fws.gov> to find information on your favorite refuge destination.

We also encourage you to check out the Friends website at www.santeerefugefriends.org to find out how to join the Friends of Santee National Wildlife Refuge.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 96-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 Fish and Wildlife Management offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

*****10/19/07*****