

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Lower Suwannee

*National Wildlife Refuge
Canoe/Kayak Trail*

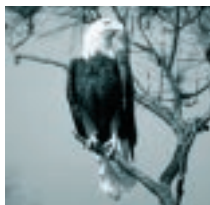


Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge was established on April 10, 1979, for the purpose of protecting, maintaining and enhancing a rare and beautiful ecosystem. The refuge encompasses 52,935 acres in Dixie and Levy counties, protecting 20 miles of river corridor from Yellow Jacket landing to the Gulf of Mexico. Refuge habitats, consisting of cypress swamps, floodplain hardwoods, oak hammocks, fresh and saltwater marsh, and upland pine forests, support diverse plant and animal communities. Each of these diverse vegetative communities contributes to making Lower Suwannee Refuge one of the largest undeveloped river delta-estuarine systems in the United States.

Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge



This blue goose, designed by J. N. "Ding" Darling, has become a symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.



USFWS

Bald eagle



Bruce Colin

White ibis

Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge is one of more than 520 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The mission of the system is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans. The refuge system encompasses more than 93 million acres administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The canoe/kayak trail was established to provide paddling enthusiasts with an opportunity to enjoy and learn about the Suwannee River delta and estuary. Winding its way along the river and several brackish and freshwater creeks, the trail provides an up-close view of pristine marshes and tidally flooded hardwood and cypress forests. Paddlers have the chance to explore a remote area of Florida wilderness and to observe numerous types of wildlife in their natural environment.

Several launch sites are found in the town of Suwannee, including a public boat ramp on McKinney Drive and several private marinas. Canoe signs, like the one on the front cover, guide you safely through the trail. With the exception of the town of Suwannee, the entire trail is bordered by refuge lands. It is a good idea to check tide charts before departing as some areas may become impassable at low tide. We hope you have a safe and enjoyable paddling trip.



Osprey

Wetlands are an essential component of our natural environment. At little cost to us, they provide many benefits. Wetlands control floods by storing and slowly releasing excess water. By filtering out silt and chemicals, wetlands reduce the pollution of our water supply. They also provide recreational opportunities for humans and essential habitat for many species of fish and wildlife.

Several species of freshwater fish inhabit these waters. Largemouth bass, catfish, and panfish, such as the bluegill and redear sunfish



(shellcracker), are present. The Suwannee River is also home to the threatened Gulf sturgeon, which spawn in the upper portions of the river in the spring.

Many species of reptiles use this area and are often seen "sunning." Reptiles are cold-blooded and must gain their

heat from the sun. Several species of snakes, turtles, frogs, and the American alligator can be observed along the trail.



Chicken turtle

Ken Sourbeer



Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge is home to many species of wading birds including herons, egrets, and white ibis. These, as well as shorebirds, songbirds, and occasional waterfowl may be observed along the

Bruce Colin



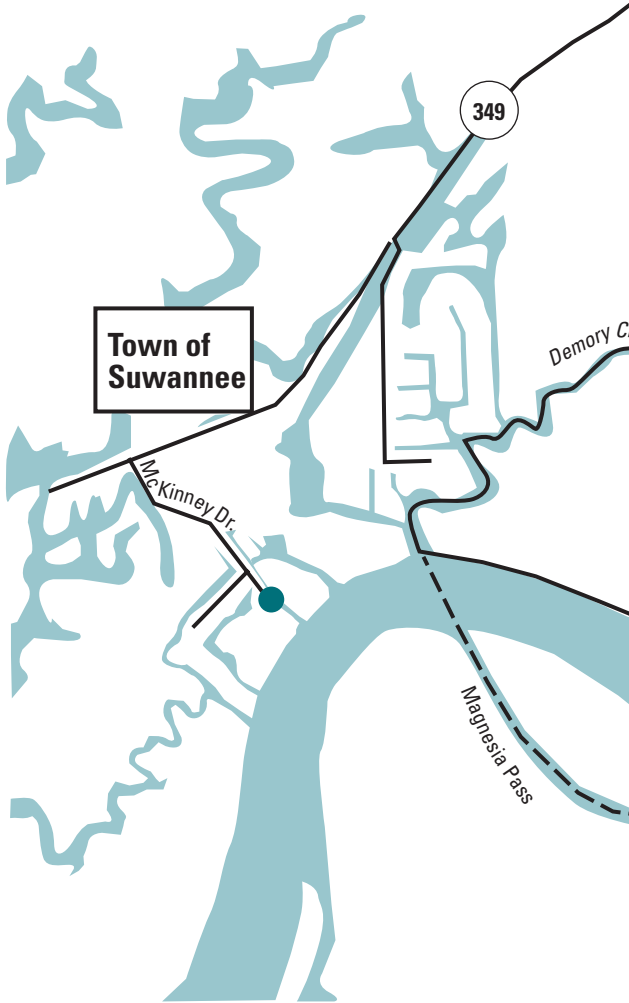
Great egret

canoe trail. Several birds of prey are also common on the refuge. In spring, keep your eyes peeled for newly-fledged bald eagles. Also, the swallow-tailed kite, a large black and white bird with a deeply forked tail, nests on the refuge from March to May. Finally, the refuge supports at least thirty pairs of osprey in the Suwannee River delta. Osprey are large birds of prey, well adapted to catching and eating fish.





Bruce Colin

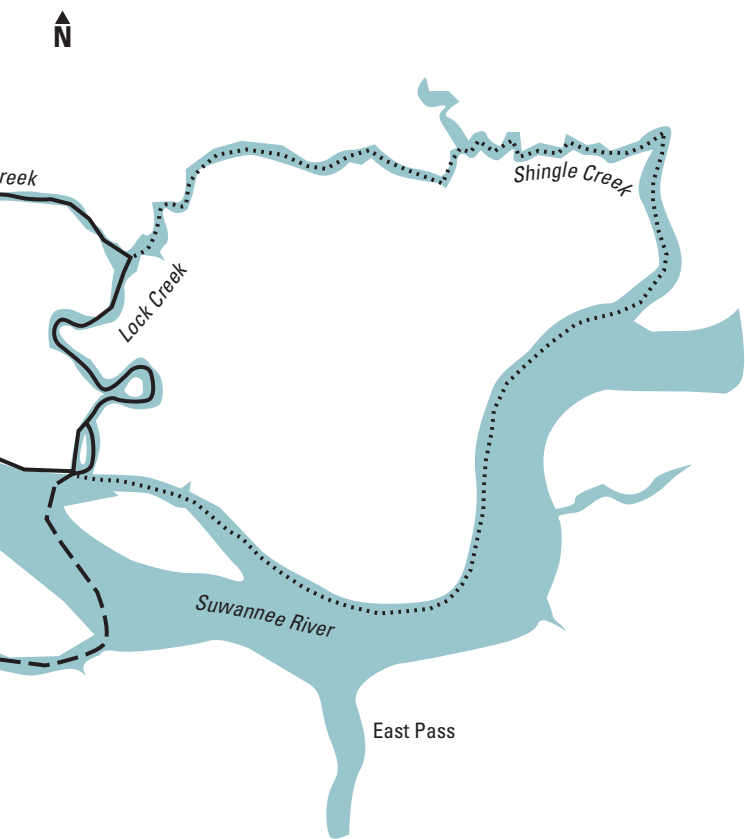


Great blue heron



Legend

-  Public Boat Ramp
-  Trail #1: 3 1/4 miles, takes approximately 1 1/2 hours
-  Trail #2: 4 miles, Trail 1 and Trail 2 take approximately 3 1/2 hours
-  Trail #3: 1 1/2 miles, Trail 1 and Trail 3 take approximately 2 hours



USFWS

American alligator

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National Wildlife Refuge
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