

Sauta Cave

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



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Photos (top to bottom)

Cave entrance.

Gray bat.

Inside of cave.

Refuge Facts

- Established: 1978.
- Acres: 264.
- Complex headquarters: Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, Decatur, AL.
- Location: the refuge is located just above the Sauty Creek embayment of TVA's Guntersville Reservoir, 7 miles west of Scottsboro, AL.

Natural History

- Sauta Cave Refuge consists of 264 acres of hardwoods.
- The cave has a double entrance located on a hillside within the refuge. It serves as a minor hibernation cave and historically a major maternity cave for federally endangered gray and Indiana bats. In 1997, a summer emergence count for gray bats documented more than 200,000 gray bats.
- Sauta Cave served as a saltpeter mine during the Civil War.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Presently unstaffed.
- Administered by Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, Decatur, AL.
- 5,000 visitors annually.

Refuge Objectives

- Protect gray and Indiana bats and their critical habitat.
- Provide habitat for a natural diversity of wildlife and plants, especially species associated with cave systems.
- Provide opportunity for compatible outdoor recreation, environmental education/interpretation.

Management Tools

- Community partnerships.
- Law enforcement.
- Education/interpretation.
- Research.

Public Use Opportunities

- Wildlife observation.
- Hiking.
- Photography.
- Limited entry into cave for research is allowed by permit.

Questions and Answers

Where is Sauta Cave National Wildlife Refuge?

Sauta Cave Refuge is located just above the Sauty Creek embayment on TVA's Guntersville Reservoir, seven miles west of Scottsboro in Jackson County, Alabama. There is an entrance gate to the refuge on the south side of Highway 72.

Is the cave open to the public?

Sauta Cave itself is gated and not open to the public due to the potential for disturbance of federally endangered gray bats. Other portions of the 264-acre refuge are open to the public. Persons wishing to visit the cave may park outside the refuge entrance gate and walk in to the cave entrance.

What is there to see and do at Sauta Cave Refuge?

Hiking, wildlife observation, and wildlife photography are all activities that are available to the public.

How can I see the bats emerging from the cave?

Sauta Cave serves as a major maternity cave for gray bats where recent counts have documented up to 200,000 emerging from the cave. This natural phenomenon only occurs June - August and lasts for approximately one hour near dusk. To view bats emerging from the cave, park at the refuge entrance gate and walk approximately 100 yards to the cave entrance on your right. The best viewing will be from either side of the cave entrance.