

Ernest F. Hollings ACE Basin

National Wildlife Refuge



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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1990.
- Acres: 11,815.
- Made up of two separate units, the Edisto River Unit (7,200 acres) and the Combahee River Unit (4,564 acres).
- Located in Beaufort, Charleston, Colleton, and Hampton counties, SC.
- Refuge is part of the ACE Basin Project, a joint venture in which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, and Ducks Unlimited are working with private landowners to protect and enhance the natural resources of a 350,000-acre area.
- Location: refuge office is located 25 miles south of Charleston off of Highway 17. From Highway 17 take SC 174 through the town of Adams Run. At intersection with flashing light, turn right onto Willtown Road. Entrance road to refuge is approximately 2 miles on left and next to Refuge sign. Office is located in the Grove Plantation House approximately 2.2 miles down the gravel road.

Natural History

- The refuge area consists of 3,950 acres of tidal marsh, 3,000 of managed wetland impoundments, 1,200 acres of bottomland hardwoods, 2,800 acres of upland forest, and 700 acres of grass and shrublands.
- Bald eagles nest on both refuge units. Endangered wood storks utilize the area during the summer months. Concentrations of up to 30,000 ducks use the impoundments in winter months. Large numbers of wading birds, shorebirds and raptors are present in seasons.
- Songbird (neo-tropical migrants) use in all areas of uplands and bottomland forests.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- Six-person staff.
- 25,000 visitors annually (and growing).

Refuge Objectives

- Assist in the preservation of the ACE Basin area.
- Manage for migratory birds.
- Preserve, protect and manage habitats for endangered and threatened species such as wood stork, American alligator and bald eagle.
- Manage refuge for native species.
- Provide recreational and environmental education for the public.
- Provide protection and preservation of historical buildings and archaeological sites.

Management Tools

- Partnerships.
- Water management.
- Prescribed fire.
- Law enforcement.
- Building restoration/preservation.
- Timber cutting operations.
- Mechanical control of vegetation.

Public Use Opportunities

- Trails.
- Fishing.
- Hunting.
- Wildlife observation.
- Photography.
- Historical interpretation.

Calendar of Events

May: Migratory Bird Day.

September-November: deer hunting.

October: National Wildlife Week.

November-January: waterfowl hunting.

Questions and Answers

Can you tell us about the ACE Basin?

The ACE (Ashepoo, Combahee, and Edisto rivers) Basin is a 350,000 acre area made up of many different habitat types such as brackish water tidal marshes, fresh water wetlands, bottomland hardwoods, pine and hardwood uplands, barrier islands and beaches. It is one of the largest undeveloped estuaries on the East Coast of the United States.

It is extremely important to migrating ducks, other migrating birds, and endangered species such as wood storks and shortnose sturgeon.

What is the background of the Plantation House?

It was built in 1828 as the main house of a working rice plantation. It was one of only three in the basin to survive through the Civil War. The house stayed in private ownership until 1991 and then became part of the National Wildlife Refuge. Now serving as office for the National Wildlife Refuge and field office of The Nature Conservancy, it is on the National Register of Historic Places.

What kinds of wildlife do you have out here?

Ducks (in the fall and winter), songbirds, deer, alligators, herons, egrets, wood storks, bald eagles, snakes, and many others.

Who owns the house and grounds?

The area is owned by the U.S. Government and administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.