

# St. Vincent

*National Wildlife  
Refuge*



*The National Wildlife Refuge System is an extensive network of lands and waters protected and managed especially for wildlife and its habitat by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which protects and manages over 540 refuges for wildlife and for people to enjoy from above the Arctic Circle in Alaska to the subtropical waters of the Florida Keys and beyond to the Caribbean and South Pacific.*





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

St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge is one of over 540 refuges in a national system which encompasses over 95 million acres of wildlife habitat managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge includes a 12,300 acre undeveloped barrier island (known as St. Vincent) located just offshore from the mouth of the Apalachicola River and an 86 acre mainland unit in Franklin county, Florida as well as 45 acre Pig Island in St. Joe Bay, Gulf County, Florida.

The island is dissected by dune ridges, which are geological records of ancient beaches and fluctuating sea levels over the last 5,000 years. Many of the sand roads on St. Vincent follow these ridges, extending from east to west the length of the island.

The interdune areas vary from freshwater lakes and sloughs on the east end to dry upland pine forests on the western end of the island. The climate is mild and subtropical, typical of the Gulf Coast, with an average annual rainfall of 57 inches. Four miles wide at the east end and nine miles long, this triangular island is larger and wider than most of the northern Gulf Coast barrier islands.





The refuge has managed to preserve, in as natural a state as possible, its highly varied plant and animal communities. For instance: wetlands, consisting of tidal marsh and freshwater lakes and streams; dunes dominated by live oak/mixed hardwood overstory, scrub oaks, or live oak/scrub oak mix; relatively pure stands of cabbage palm; and four different slash pine communities, each with its own unique understory species.

Prior to becoming a National Wildlife Refuge, St. Vincent was used primarily as a private hunting and fishing preserve. Two of its previous owners introduced a variety of exotic wildlife to the island. A population of sambar deer, an elk native to Southeast Asia, still roams the island today. Adult sambar deer average 500-600 pounds—much larger than the native white-tailed deer, which average 100-130 pounds on the refuge. These two species have co-existed on St. Vincent by occupying different ecological niches. Generally, the white-tailed deer prefer drier upland habitats, while the sambar deer spend most of their time in the marshes and other wetlands.



Frank Zoutek

Initially, the refuge was established for waterfowl, but its mission has been broadened to include the protection of habitat for endangered species and to provide a variety of recreational activities.



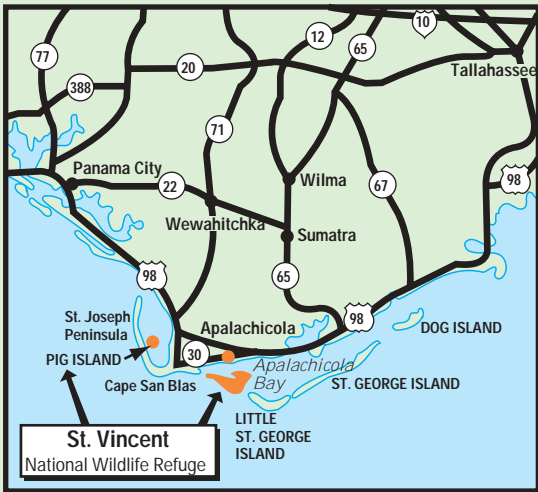
### **A Haven for Endangered Wildlife . . .**

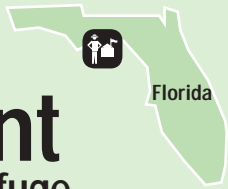
St. Vincent provides sanctuary for a number of endangered and threatened species. Bald eagles nest in pines near the freshwater lakes and marshes. Loggerhead, green, and leatherback sea turtles come ashore to nest on the pristine beaches. Wood storks stop here during their migrations.

In 1990, St. Vincent became one of several south-eastern coastal islands where endangered red wolves are being bred. When they have been weaned, the wild pups raised here are taken to reintroduction sites such as Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge in North Carolina. These solitary animals once roamed the Southeast, but predator control programs and habitat loss decimated their populations.



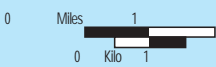
Don Pfitzer





# St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Office  
479 Market Street  
Apalachicola, FL 32320



Apalachicola Bay



Seasonal Closures are subject to change.  
Contact Refuge Office for current information.

*Spring  
(March - May)*

## The Seasons of St. Vincent

Ospreys are nesting in dead snags around the fresh-water lakes. Soft-shell turtles are laying eggs in sand roads. Wood ducks can be seen around nest boxes. White-tailed deer bucks are dropping antlers. Young eagles begin to test their wings.

Tuck Stone



David Vogel



Thomas E. Lewis

*Summer  
(June - August)*

Loggerhead sea turtles are laying eggs on beaches. Female alligators are protecting nests in the marshes. Wood storks are passing through. Snowy plovers and American oyster-catchers are feeding on the beaches. White-tailed bucks are in velvet.

*Fall  
(September -  
November)*

Waterfowl, shorebirds and songbirds are migrating. Peregrine falcons may be seen. White-tailed bucks are polishing antlers, approaching rut.

*Winter  
(December -  
February)*

Waterfowl populations peak. Bald eagles and great horned owls begin nesting. On warm days alligators can be seen basking in the sun. White-tailed bucks are in rut.





Thomas E. Lewis

### **Refuge Regulations**

*Littering*

Please take your litter with you. No receptacles are provided on the refuge.

*Fires*

Due to high fire hazard, fires are not permitted unless allowed with camping permit only during refuge hunts.

*Collecting*

Removing of artifacts, plants, or animals is prohibited. Shelling is permitted only on gulf beaches.

*Weapons*

Firearms, weapons, or fireworks are prohibited.

*Pets*

Pets are prohibited on the island.

*Disturbance*

Disturbance of signed nesting areas is prohibited.

*Vehicles*

Motorized vehicles (except bicycles) and equipment are prohibited.



Monica Harris

## **A Look into the Past**

- 240 Oldest pottery shards found on St. Vincent indicate Indians inhabited the island at this time.
- 1633 Franciscan Friars named the island while visiting Apalachee tribes.
- 1750 Creeks and Seminoles, offshoots of the Creek nation, entered area and inhabited the island.
- 1868 George Hatch bought the island at an auction for \$3,000. Hatch's grave is the only marked grave on the island.
- 1908 New owner, Dr. Pierce, spent about \$60,000 importing Old World game animals.
- 1920 Island-grown beef cattle were sold to Apalachicola markets.
- 1940 First oyster lease granted. Pierce Estate sold first pine saw timber. St. Joe Lumber Company built a temporary bridge to island for timber removal.
- 1948 Loomis brothers bought island for \$140,000 and imported zebras, elands, black bucks, ring-necked pheasants, Asian jungle fowl, bobwhite quail and semi-wild turkey.
- 1968 St. Vincent purchased by Nature Conservancy for \$2.2 million. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service repaid Conservancy with money from "Duck" Stamp sales. Established as St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge.



Monica Harris



*All recreation is daylight use only:* Visitors are welcome to photograph, bird watch, fish, hike, and collect shells without live animals inside. The refuge is closed for general use during hunts, fires, and storms.

*Services:* There is no potable water, restrooms, nor public phones on the island.



*Access/Boat Ramp:* Access is by private boat or commercial charter. Indian Pass public boat ramp is located at the terminus of Florida Road C30B. The ramp is about 1/4 mile from the island.

*Refuge Office/Visitor Center:* Located in the Harbor Master Building on Market Street in Apalachicola. Hours are 8:00 am - 4:00 pm Monday through Friday.

*Information:* Also available at the outdoor exhibits located at the public boat ramp at Indian Pass.

*Fishing:* Permitted on refuge lakes but may be closed seasonally to protect nesting bald eagles. Only electric motors are permitted in refuge lakes. Check current refuge regulations before fishing.

*Primitive camping:* Allowed in conjunction with refuge hunts only. Contact the refuge manager for details.

*Management hunts for deer and feral hogs:* Held annually. Contact the refuge manager for information, permits, and regulations.

*Hiking and wildlife observation:* Permitted along refuge roads. Roads running north/south are numbered; roads running east/west are labeled with letters.

Larry Klimek



St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge  
P.O. Box 447  
Apalachicola, FL 32329  
850/653 8808  
saintvincent@fws.gov

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
1 800/344 WILD  
<http://www.fws.gov>

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