

From top left to right, top to bottom: red shouldered hawk by Susan Heisey/USFWS; prothonotary warbler by Ken Jenkins; cypress trees in Cantey Bay by USFWS; alligator by USFWS; pintail by USFWS; wildlife drive by Marc Epstein/USFWS

Santee National Wildlife Refuge

Established in 1941, the Santee National Wildlife Refuge provides habitat and sanctuary for wildlife displaced by the Santee Cooper hydro-electric project that brought electricity to many rural areas of South Carolina. The four units of the refuge (Bluff, Dingle Pond, Pine Island, and Cuddo) lie within the Atlantic Coastal Plain and include approximately 13,000 acres of mixed hardwood and pine forests, freshwater marshes, forested wetlands, waterfowl impoundments, croplands, grassland fields and open water.

Hailed as one of the best birding areas in South Carolina, this refuge is home to 296 bird species as well as 45 mammals, 54 reptiles, 35 amphibians and more than 100 fish species. The brilliantly colored painted bunting breeds and nests here during the summer months as do many other neo-tropical migratory songbirds.

The refuge Visitor Center is open from 8 am until 4 pm, Tuesday - Friday.

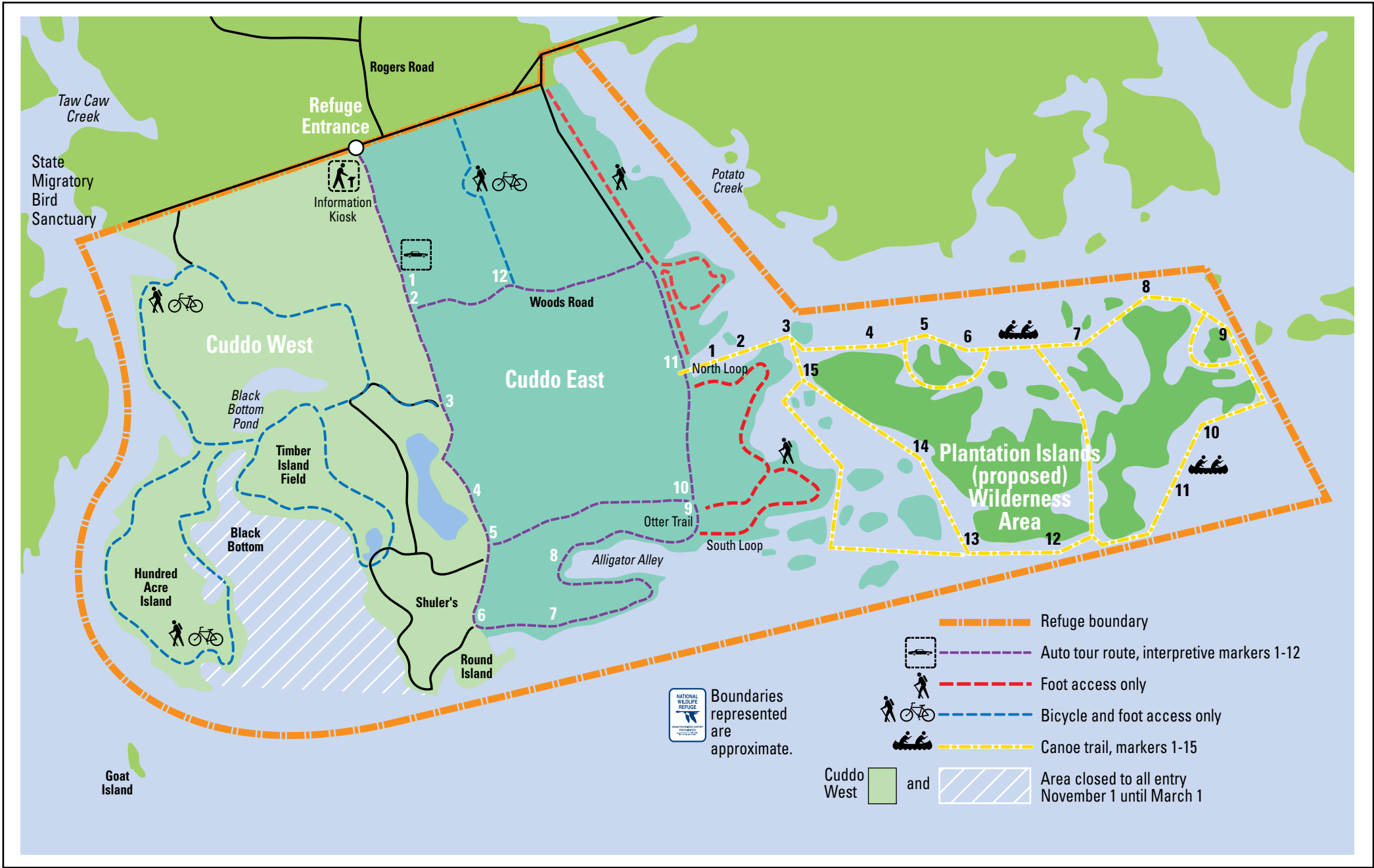
Exhibits on local wildlife are available in the Visitor Center.

Teachers or group leaders should contact the refuge office at 803/478 2217 a minimum of two weeks prior to anticipated activities.

Habitat Management

Water levels are manipulated to create optimum conditions for water birds, wintering waterfowl, and many resident and migratory species. Nest structures are provided for wood ducks and other species in areas lacking available natural cavities. Planting of supplemental crops along with periodic flooding of forested wetlands insures that adequate wildlife foods are available.

Prescribed burning is conducted in suitable areas to stimulate vegetative growth, create openings, and maintain low fuel loads.



Inquire at the refuge Visitor Center about current wildlife sightings and to find out more information about trails and visitor opportunities.

Prohibited Activities

- Searching, collecting, destroying, excavating, or removing any historic artifact, objects of antiquity, or archaeological resource on this National Wildlife Refuge is prohibited. All historic and archaeological sites and artifacts are protected.
- The use of metal detecting devices

- Camping
- Pets on hiking trails
- Littering
- Open fires
- ATVs, motorized dirt bikes, jet skis, and airboats
- Swimming or wading
- Entering closed areas
- Feeding or harassing wildlife
- Being on the refuge when under the influence of alcohol, or the use or possession of illegal drugs is prohibited.

Watching Wildlife

- Many animals are active at dawn and dusk.
- Cars make good observation blinds. Drive slowly and quietly.
- Stop frequently to scan places wildlife may hide.
- Signs of wildlife are often a good indication of animals that have been in the area: nest, tracks, feathers, or scat.
- Never feed or harass wildlife! Feeding animals causes them to lose their fear of humans and they may become aggressive.



Bluff Unit

The Bluff Unit is home to the Santee Indian Mound that dates back to 1200-1450. The remaining mound, which stands roughly 30 feet, was part of a ceremonial mound complex which consisted of several mounds around an open plaza. English settlers first encountered the Santee Indians in the 1700s and many of the Santees were shipped to the West Indies as slaves during the Yemassee War, while others escaped and joined the Catawba Nation. British troops erected Fort Watson atop the abandoned Mound during the Revolutionary War, only to have it taken by General Francis Marion’s troops in April of 1781. In 1969, the Santee Indian Mound was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Hiking the one-mile Wrights Bluff Nature Trail gives visitors the chance to observe a variety of wild flowers, songbirds, small mammals, and reptiles. The north side of this trail, along Cantey Bay, is a great place to observe wading birds, Canada geese, shorebirds, and other wetland species. An observation platform and a 15 foot observation tower give hikers good observation areas for wildlife. This area, along with both the Pine Island and Cuddo Units provide great opportunities for seeing the spectacular painted bunting and prothonotary warblers.

Dingle Pond

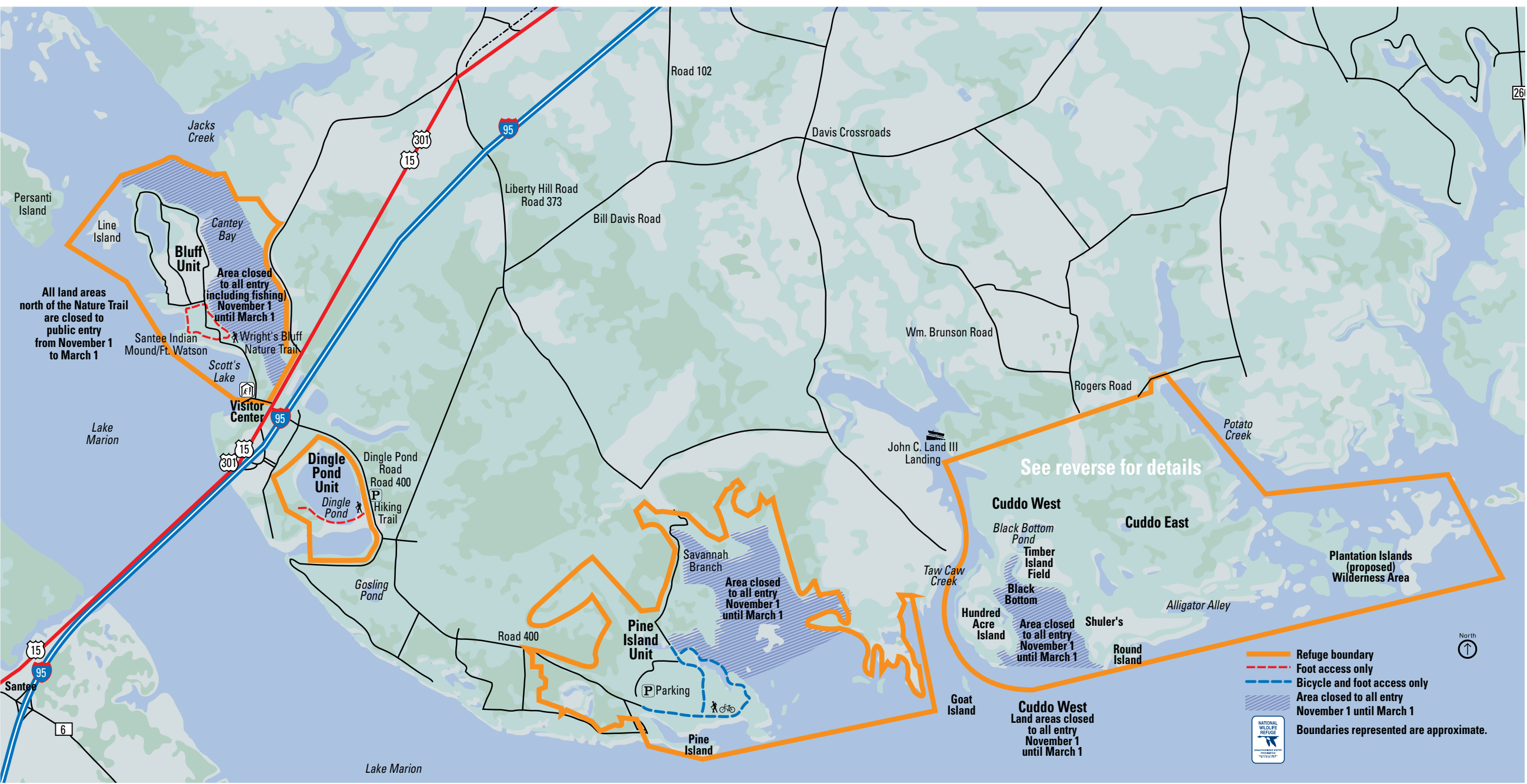
Home to a 350 acre Carolina Bay, Dingle Pond is a unique “depressional” wetland typically fed by rain and natural springs. This area is home to a variety of wildlife species including alligators, wood ducks, mallards, numerous songbirds, great blue herons and other wading birds. Some Bays may have unique fauna and flora, such as carnivorous plants. A one-mile dirt trail is open for hiking and provides access to an observation tower overlooking the bay.

Pine Island

Key species to look for are the LeConte’s sparrow (winter), rusty blackbird (winter/spring), and American alligator. Visitor access on Pine Island is limited to foot and bicycle traffic only on approximately four miles of roads. A primitive boat launch area is provided for small boats, canoes, and kayaks.

Cuddo Unit

A 7-1/2 mile wildlife drive and five miles of hiking trails on the Cuddo Unit give visitors great opportunities for wildlife observation. Turkey, white-tailed deer and very large alligators are common. An additional 8.5 miles of hiking and bicycling trails let visitors explore the fields, woods, and wetlands of the Cuddo Unit, as well as over 8 miles of canoe and kayak trails. Current visitor use hours are posted at the entrance gate or may be



obtained by contacting the refuge office. An automatic gate on the wildlife drive controls hours of access to minimize disturbance to wildlife.

Visitor access on portions of the refuge is seasonally limited to provide migratory bird sanctuary areas for wintering ducks and geese. The waters of Cantey Bay, Savannah Branch, and Black Bottom are closed to all access from November 1 to March 1. The land areas north of the Wrights Bluff Nature Trail (Bluff Unit) and west of the Wildlife Drive (Cuddo Unit) are closed to all access November 1 to March 1. Visitors should check with the refuge office for details. General visitor access information is provided above.

Visitor Use Opportunities

- Hunting
- Fishing
- Birding/Wildlife Observation
- Wildlife Photography
- Environmental Education/ Interpretation
- Hiking
- Bicycling
- Canoeing/kayaking

Both hunting and fishing are permitted, subject to state, federal, and refuge regulations. Hunting opportunities exist for white-tailed deer and small game. Sport fishing is available year-round except that Cantey Bay, Black

Bottom, Savannah Branch, and ponds and impoundments are closed from November 1 until March 1 for migratory waterfowl management.

Fishing and hunting regulations and permits are available at the refuge office and from our website at no cost to visitors. The permit must be signed and in your possession while conducting these activities on the refuge.

Trail Lengths

Bluff Unit
Wright's Bluff: 0.9 mile, hiking
Bluff Unit Roads: approximately 4 miles, hiking
Dingle Pond: 0.8 mile (one way), hiking

Pine Island: 3.8 mile (main roads), hiking, biking

Cuddo Trails

North Loop: 1.9 miles, hiking
South Loop: 1.4 miles, hiking
Potato Creek: 1.5 miles, hiking
Bicycle Trails (West Side): 7.6 miles, hiking, biking
Midline Road: 1.5 miles, hiking, biking
Interior Canoe: 1.25 miles, canoeing
Plantation Islands: 7 miles, canoeing
Wildlife Drive: 7.5 miles, auto tour

Hours of Operation

The refuge is open daily from dawn until dusk with vehicular access on the Bluff and

Cuddo Units limited to the following times:
October 1 – February 28: 7 am to 5 pm
March 1 – September 30: 6 am to 8 pm

All land areas North of the Wrights Bluff Hiking Trail and on the West side of the Cuddo Unit are closed to visitor access from November 1 until March 1 to provide sanctuary for wintering waterfowl.

For More Information

Santee National Wildlife Refuge
2125 Fort Watson Road
Summerton, SC 29148
Phone: 803/478 2217
<http://www.fws.gov/santee>

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