



Forested Wetlands for Waterfowl on National Wildlife Refuges in the Southeast



credit: Nick Wirwa

Forested wetlands on National Wildlife Refuges are a haven for wintering waterfowl. They meet special habitat needs by providing roosting and loafing sites, cover from harsh weather, protection from predators, and isolation for courtship and pair-bonding.

- Forested wetlands provide habitat resources for numerous species of wildlife, including waterfowl, many other bird species, amphibians, reptiles, floodplain fish, and mammals.
- Flood water is temporarily stored in these floodplain wetlands and can reduce the negative effects on surround communities during periods of high water.
- Wetlands can improve water quality by filtering or removing nutrients, sediment, and pollutants from our rivers and streams.

- These wetlands provides opportunity for unique environmental education and outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g., hunting and birding).
- Bottomland hardwood floodplain forests are extremely productive because water levels fluctuate throughout the year allowing for the growth oak, elm, hickory, and other species.

- Acorns and other hard mast provide waterfowl with a much needed high-carbohydrate meal.

The loss of 75% of bottomland hardwood forest in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley equates to a loss of at least two billion duck energy days.

Forested wetlands with more persistent water levels year-round are dominated by gum and cypress, hence the nickname “cypress swamp.”

In the Southeast, wood ducks nest in tree cavities in bottomland forests and raise their young in cypress swamps and other more permanent wetlands.



credit: USFWS

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