

Carolina Sandhills

National Wildlife Refuge



photo: USFWS



photo: Ted Borg



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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1939.
- Acres: 45,348.
- Located in Chesterfield County, SC.
- Other management: conservation easements—ten in six counties totaling 1,051 acres; fee title tracts—1 totaling 210 acres in Marlboro County.
- Location: the refuge is located 4 miles north of McBee, SC on U.S. Highway 1.

Natural History

- The refuge lies along the fall line which separates the Piedmont Plateau from the Atlantic Coastal Plain. Rolling beds of deep sandy soils are host to an extensive longleaf pine forest. This refuge is a premier showcase area for progressive longleaf pine/wiregrass management and restoration efforts.
- The largest population of endangered red-cockaded woodpeckers within the refuge system are found here (more than 100 family groups); rare plants including several carnivorous plants are found on the refuge along with the unusual pine barrens treefrog.
- Thirty ponds and lakes along with 1,400 acres of fields and forest openings add diversity to the more than 42,000 acres of forested woodlands found on the refuge.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- 13-person staff with additional 3-5 seasonal employees.
- 50,000 - 60,000 visitors annually.
- Current budget (FY 03) \$1,221,900.
- Revenue sharing payments to Chesterfield County average \$200,000 annually; timber sales and other receipts average \$200,000 - \$250,000 annually.

Refuge Objectives

- Restore, maintain and enhance longleaf pine habitat and associated plant and animal species.
- To preserve, restore and enhance endangered or threatened species with special emphasis on the red-cockaded woodpecker.
- To provide habitat for migratory birds.
- To provide opportunities for environmental education, interpretation and wildlife-oriented recreation.
- To demonstrate sound land management practices that enhance natural resource conservation.

Management Tools

- Prescribed burning of 12,000 to 15,000 acres annually.
- Selective timber harvesting to improve diversity and meet habitat requirements of the red-cockaded woodpecker.
- Cooperative farming.
- Water management for waterfowl.
- Population management for deer, turkey and small game (managed hunting).
- Fisheries management.
- Partnerships.
- Outreach/interpretation/education.
- Law enforcement.

Public Use Opportunities

- Nine mile paved auto tour route.
- Three designated hiking trails (one half mile, one mile, and three miles).
- Numerous wildlife observation sites.
- Twenty fishing ponds.

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- Two observation towers and one photography blind.
- Hunting of white-tailed deer, turkey and small game.

Calendar of Events

April-June: fishing opportunities are at their best.

March-May: spring migration of neotropicals, spring wildflower displays.

April: red-cockaded woodpecker nesting begins. Turkey hunts.

May: Migratory Bird Day.

August: fall wildflower displays.

September: mourning dove hunting.

October: National Wildlife Refuge Week.

October-November: white-tailed deer hunting.

November: quail hunting.

Volunteer Opportunities

Red-cockaded woodpecker, waterfowl, and song bird management, trail and general maintenance projects, plant and animal inventories.

Contact Refuge Biologist Laura Housh at 843/335 6026

Questions and Answers

Where can I see the red-cockaded woodpecker?

Available fact sheets and maps depict the best locations, times, and circumstances for RCW observation.

Two of the very best areas are at the headquarters area on U.S. Highway 1 and at the Lake Bee Recreation Area on State Highway 145.

Where are the Sandhill cranes?

We have no Sandhill Cranes; our namesake is geographically based - the Sandhills region of the Carolinas.

Why do we do so much prescribed burning?

Prescribed burning increases habitat diversity, helps control wildfires, and is required to maintain the open, park-like situation preferred by the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. Many species of native Sandhills plants are also fire dependent.

When is the refuge open to deer hunting?

Limited hunting (5 days each for archery, muzzleloader, and modern weapons) is permitted in early October and mid November.

What makes the "Sandhills" special?

Because we have one foot in the Piedmont and one foot in the Coastal Plains, we host a great diversity of species (particularly plants, reptiles and amphibians) not found in many other areas. We are also one of the last great strongholds of the increasingly rare longleaf pine/wiregrass habitat.