

# POCOSIN LAKES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Property Owner: United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Recognitions & Designations: National Wildlife Refuge System, Significant Natural Heritage Area (USFWS, NC Natural Heritage Program)

carolinawetlands.org

## 2020 WETLAND TREASURES OF THE CAROLINAS



**POCOSIN LAKES NWR**

Loblolly Bay Pocosin

*Photos courtesy of USFWS*

### ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

The Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is located on the Albemarle-Pamlico peninsula in eastern North Carolina. The Refuge encompasses over 110,000 acres of natural lakes and wetlands including the 12,000 acre Pungo Unit within the Refuge. The vast array of habitats in this refuge include pocosin, bay forest, peatland Atlantic white cedar forest, mixed pine flatwoods, hardwood swamp forest, cypress/gum swamp, freshwater marsh, xeric sandhill scrub, cropland, moist soil units (managed wetlands), natural lake shoreline and open water. The pocosin and other peatland wetlands protected by the refuge have largely disappeared from the Carolina landscape due to development. This wetland type is characterized by shallow basins without natural drainage which develop organic soils (peat, muck). These areas are important for wildlife habitat, mitigating the severity of wildfires, carbon storage, flood protection, and protecting water quality in nearby estuaries.

### FLORA & FAUNA

The NWR habitats support 200 bird species, 40 mammal species, 40 reptile species and 36 amphibian species. The Pungo Lake Unit within the NWR is a historic waterfowl roost for resident and migratory bird species along the Atlantic Flyway. Important migratory species



*Atlantic White Cedar Swamp Restoration*

include Tundra Swans, Snow Geese, and a multitude of duck species. The NWR supports these populations through cooperative farming agreements and the moist soil management program which provide food sources from agricultural products and wetland plants, respectively.

The refuge was the site for reintroduction of the Red Wolf in 1987. The NWR, with its large areas of dense forest, is an important area for Black Bear, with the Pungo Unit reporting one of the highest bear densities reported in scientific literature.

### THREATS

Extensive ditching and draining for forestry, farming, and other land uses has artificially dried out peatlands throughout the Albemarle/Pamlico Region. Rewetting the peat soils on Pocosin Lakes Refuge has reduced the threat of catastrophic, long-duration ground fire, is sequestering copious amounts of carbon and nitrogen, and providing many other benefits in addition to enhanced wildlife habitat.

### ACCESS

The refuge Visitor Center is open 9 am to 4 pm; Tue – Sun in the spring and summer; Fri – Sun in fall and winter. The Pungo Unit and trails are generally open all year during daylight hours. See this [factsheet](#) for access /restrictions within the Pungo Unit.

### SOURCES

USFWS, NC WRC, Click [Here](#) and [Here](#) for more Info.

