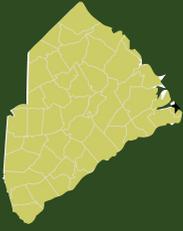


2021 WETLAND TREASURES OF THE CAROLINAS



PINCKNEY ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Property Owner: US Fish and Wildlife Service

Recognitions & Designations: National Wildlife Refuge, Audubon Important Bird Area

carolinawetlands.org



PINCKNEY NWR

Low Tidal Marsh

Photos courtesy of USFWS and Eric Horan

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

Pinckney Island NWR, established December 4, 1975, was once included in the plantation of Major General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, a prominent lawyer active in South Carolina politics from 1801 to 1815. The 4,053 acre refuge includes Pinckney Island, Corn Island, Big and Little Harry Islands, Buzzard Island and numerous small hammocks. Pinckney is the largest of the islands and the only one open to public use. Nearly 67% of the refuge consists of salt marsh and tidal creeks. A wide variety of land types are found on Pinckney Island alone: salt marsh, maritime forestland, brushland, fallow field and freshwater ponds. In combination, these habitats support a diversity of bird and plant life. Salt marshes are a mosaic of snaking channels called tidal creeks that fill with seawater during high tides and drain during low tides. Pinckney NWR also has approximately 38 acres of freshwater habitat, comprised of between 30 and 50 small ponds/depressions, ranging from one-half acre up to 4 acres in size. Many of these only hold water during wetter periods of the year.

FLORA & FAUNA

Wildlife commonly observed on Pinckney Island include waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, raptors, neo-tropical migrants, white-tailed deer and American

alligators, with large concentrations of white ibis, herons, and egrets. Salt marshes are covered with salt-tolerant plants, or halophytes, like salt hay, black needlerush, and smooth cordgrass. However, these plants do not grow together in the same area. Marshes are divided into distinct zones, the high marsh and the low marsh. The difference in elevation between these two areas is usually only a few centimeters, but for the plants that inhabit each of these zones, a few centimeters makes a world of difference.

THREATS

Several issues of concern are being addressed as related to habitat on Pinckney Island NWR. Past hurricane damage has caused a decrease in the nesting structure for colonial nesting birds on Ibis Pond. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is looking at options to enhance the conditions on Ibis Pond. Starr Pond has experienced an overpopulation of a water plant called Frog-bit, which has formed a dense floating mat on the pond. The thickness of the mat has changed the quality of the pond environment and species diversity. It may also be affecting predator-prey dynamics.

ACCESS/SOURCES

The refuge is located in Beaufort County, South Carolina and is 1/2 miles west of Hilton Head Island off of U.S. Highway 278. The Preserve is closed on Tuesdays and for special scheduled hunts. More information may be found at [Home - Pinckney Island - U.S. Fish and Wildlife](#)



Oyster Beds at Mudflats adjacent to Saltmarsh



Wetland
Treasures
of the Carolinas