



SEASONAL CALENDAR

Winter

Bear cubs (usually two) are born in late January through February. Great horned owls incubate eggs in late January and February. Redtailed and red-shouldered hawks begin to court and lay eggs. Red maple trees flower in February. Waterfowl migrate with some stopping over on Lake Drummond. Wood ducks pair up and search for nest cavities.



swamp. Two southern species, the Swainson's warbler and Wayne's warbler, are more common in the Great Dismal Swamp than in other coastal locations. Other birds of interest are the wood duck, barred owl, pileated woodpecker, and prothonotary warbler.

MAMMALS

The swamp supports a variety of mammals including otter, bats, raccoon, mink, grey and red foxes, and grey squirrel. White-tailed deer are common throughout the refuge and, although rarely observed, black bear and bobcat inhabit the area.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

The Great Dismal Swamp provides habitat for a variety of reptiles and amphibians. Three species of poisonous snakes - cottonmouth, canebrake rattlesnake, and the more common copperhead - occur here, along with 18 nonpoisonous species. Yellow-bellied and spotted turtles are commonly seen in ditches throughout the refuge. An additional 56 species of turtles, lizards, salamanders, frogs, and toads have been observed on the refuge.

Spring

Dwarf trilliums bloom in mid-March. Wood ducks incubate their eggs in April. Migrating songbirds peak early in May, with warblers being most abundant. White-tailed fawns (usually twins) are born. Occasional ospreys visit the lake. Orchids, coral honeysuckle, yellow jessamine, and yellow poplar are in flower. Cinnamon ferns develop fiddleheads. Silky camellia begin flowering in late May.

Summer

Black bears are active in early June as the breeding season peaks. White-tailed bucks are in velvet. Kingfishers and great blue herons are active along ditches. Trumpet and passion vines bloom. The swamp is usually dry, with fire danger high from June to October.

Fall

Autumn colors peak in late October through November. Large flocks of robins and blackbirds roost in the swamp. Wild fruits such as paw paw, blackgum, devil's walking stick and wild grapes are abundant.

VISITOR OPPORTUNITIES

Visitors to the refuge may participate in a variety of activities including hiking, biking, photography, wildlife observation, and fishing and boating. The refuge was established for the purpose of protecting and managing the swamp's unique ecosystem which includes wildlife and habitat. Therefore, portions of the refuge may be closed to public use activities in order to accomplish this objective.

Biking/Hiking

A variety of unpaved roads provide opportunities for hiking and biking with Washington Ditch Road the best suited for bicycle traffic. The Boardwalk Trail, located on Washington Ditch Road, meanders almost a mile through a representative portion of the swamp.

Fishing/Boating

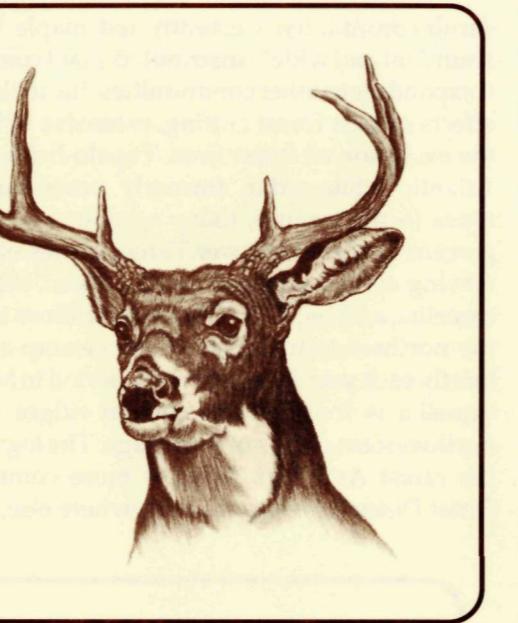
These activities are permitted year round on Lake Drummond. A Virginia fishing license is required. Access is via the Feeder Ditch, which connects Lake Drummond with the Dismal Swamp Canal. A public boat ramp is located north of the Feeder Ditch. Boats must be small enough to portage around the water control structure near the lake.

Hunting

A white-tailed deer hunt is held during the fall. Permits are required. Portions of the refuge are closed during the fall deer hunt. Additional information is available from the refuge office.

Educational Opportunities

A refuge orientation, film presentations, slide programs and outdoor classroom activities are available to organized school, civic, and professional groups. Advance reservations are required for all programs and may be made by phoning the refuge headquarters.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR VISITORS

For the protection of refuge resources and to ensure a safe and enjoyable visit, please familiarize yourself with the following information:

- Refuge trails are open to hiking and biking only. Please stay on designated trails.
- Collecting or harming any plant or animal life is prohibited. For your safety and the animals' protection do not attempt to handle or feed any wildlife.
- The refuge is open daily from 1/2 hour before sunrise to 1/2 hour after sunset. No overnight use is permitted

DIRECTIONS TO REFUGE

South of Suffolk, VA, on Rt. 13 to Rt. 32, south for 4.5 miles, then follow signs.

Boardwalk Trail: Take White Marsh Road (Rt. 642) to Washington Ditch.

Boat Access: Adjacent to Rt. 17 at Dismal Swamp Canal.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Great Dismal Swamp is one of more than 470 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The National Wildlife Refuge System is a network of lands and waters managed specifically for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat and represents the most comprehensive wildlife management program in the world. Units of the system stretch across the United States from northern Alaska to the Florida Keys and include small islands in the Caribbean and South Pacific. The character of the refuges is as diverse as the nation itself.

The Service also manages National Fish Hatcheries, and provides Federal leadership in habitat protection, fish and wildlife research, technical assistance and the conservation and protection of migratory birds, certain marine mammals and threatened and endangered species.

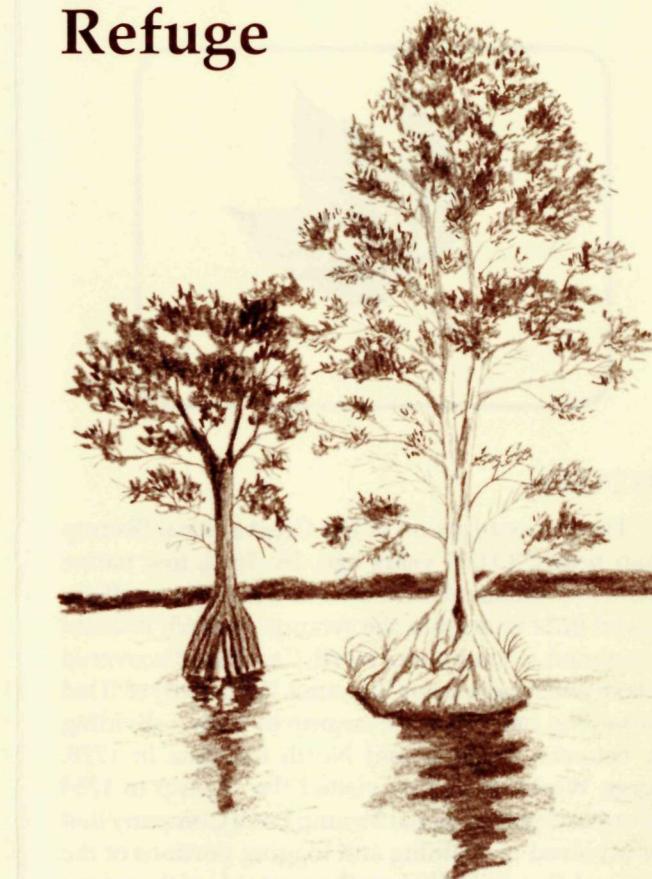
For further information, contact:

Refuge Manager
Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
Post Office Box 349
Suffolk, Virginia 23434-0349
Telephone: (804) 986-3705
Monday - Friday
7:00 am - 3:30 pm - CLOSED HOLIDAYS

Cover illustration by Mary Friel O'Connor
Other illustrations by Julien Beauregard



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



Virginia

DESCRIPTION

Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is located in southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina. Creation of the refuge began in 1973 when the Union Camp Corporation donated 49,100 acres of land to The Nature Conservancy. This land was then conveyed to the Department of the Interior, and the refuge was officially established through The Dismal Swamp Act of 1974. The refuge consists of almost 107,000 acres of forested wetlands that have been greatly altered by drainage and repeated logging operations. Lake Drummond, a 3,100 acre natural lake, is located in the heart of the swamp.



HISTORY

Human occupation of the Great Dismal Swamp began nearly 13,000 years ago. By 1650, few native Americans remained in the area, and European settlers showed little interest in the swamp. In 1665, William Drummond, a governor of North Carolina, discovered the lake which now bears his name. William Byrd II led a surveying party into the swamp to draw a dividing line between Virginia and North Carolina in 1728. George Washington first visited the swamp in 1763 and organized the Dismal Swamp Land Company that was involved in draining and logging portions of the swamp. A five-mile ditch on the west side of the refuge still bears his name. Logging of the swamp proved to be a successful commercial activity, with regular logging operations continuing as late as 1976. The entire swamp has been logged at least once, and many areas have been burned by periodic wildfires. The Great Dismal Swamp has been drastically altered by humans over

the past two centuries. Agricultural, commercial, and residential development destroyed much of the swamp, so that the remaining portion within and around the refuge represents less than half of the original size of the swamp. Before the refuge was established, over 140 miles of roads were constructed to provide access to the timber. These roads severely disrupted the swamp's natural hydrology, as the ditches which were dug to provide soil for the road beds drained water from the swamp. The roads also blocked the flow of water across the swamp's surface, flooding some areas of the swamp with stagnant water. The logging operations removed natural stands of cypress and Atlantic white-cedar that were replaced by other forest types, particularly red maple. A drier swamp and the suppression of wildfires, which once cleared the land for seed germination, created environmental conditions that were less favorable to the survival of cypress and cedar stands. As a result, plant and animal diversity decreased.

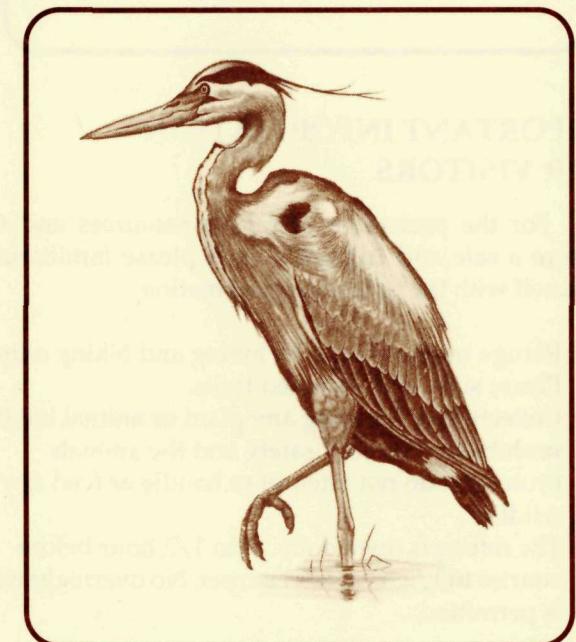
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The primary purpose of the refuge's resource management programs is to restore and maintain the natural biological diversity that existed prior to the human-caused alterations. Essential to the swamp ecosystem are its water resources, native vegetation communities, and varied wildlife species. Water is being conserved and managed by placing water control structures in the ditches. Plant community diversity is being restored and maintained through forest management activities which simulate the ecological effects of wildfires. Wildlife is managed by insuring the presence of required habitats, with hunting used to balance some wildlife populations with available food supplies.

PLANT COMMUNITIES

Five major forest types and three non-forested types of plant communities comprise the swamp vegetation. The forested types include pine, Atlantic white-cedar, maple-blackgum, tupelo baldcypress, and sweetgum-oak poplar. The non-forested types include a remnant marsh, a sphagnum bog, and evergreen

shrub community. Currently red maple is the most abundant and widely distributed plant community, as it expands into other communities due to the lingering effects of past forest cutting, extensive draining, and the exclusion of forest fires. Tupelo-baldcypress and Atlantic white-cedar, formerly predominant forest types in the swamp, today account for less than 20 percent of the total cover. Three species of plants deserving special mention are the dwarf trillium, silky camellia, and log fern. The dwarf trillium is located in the northwestern section of the swamp and blooms briefly each year for a two-week period in March. Silky camellia is found on hardwood ridges and in the northwestern corner of the refuge. The log fern, one of the rarest American ferns, is more common in the Great Dismal Swamp than anywhere else.



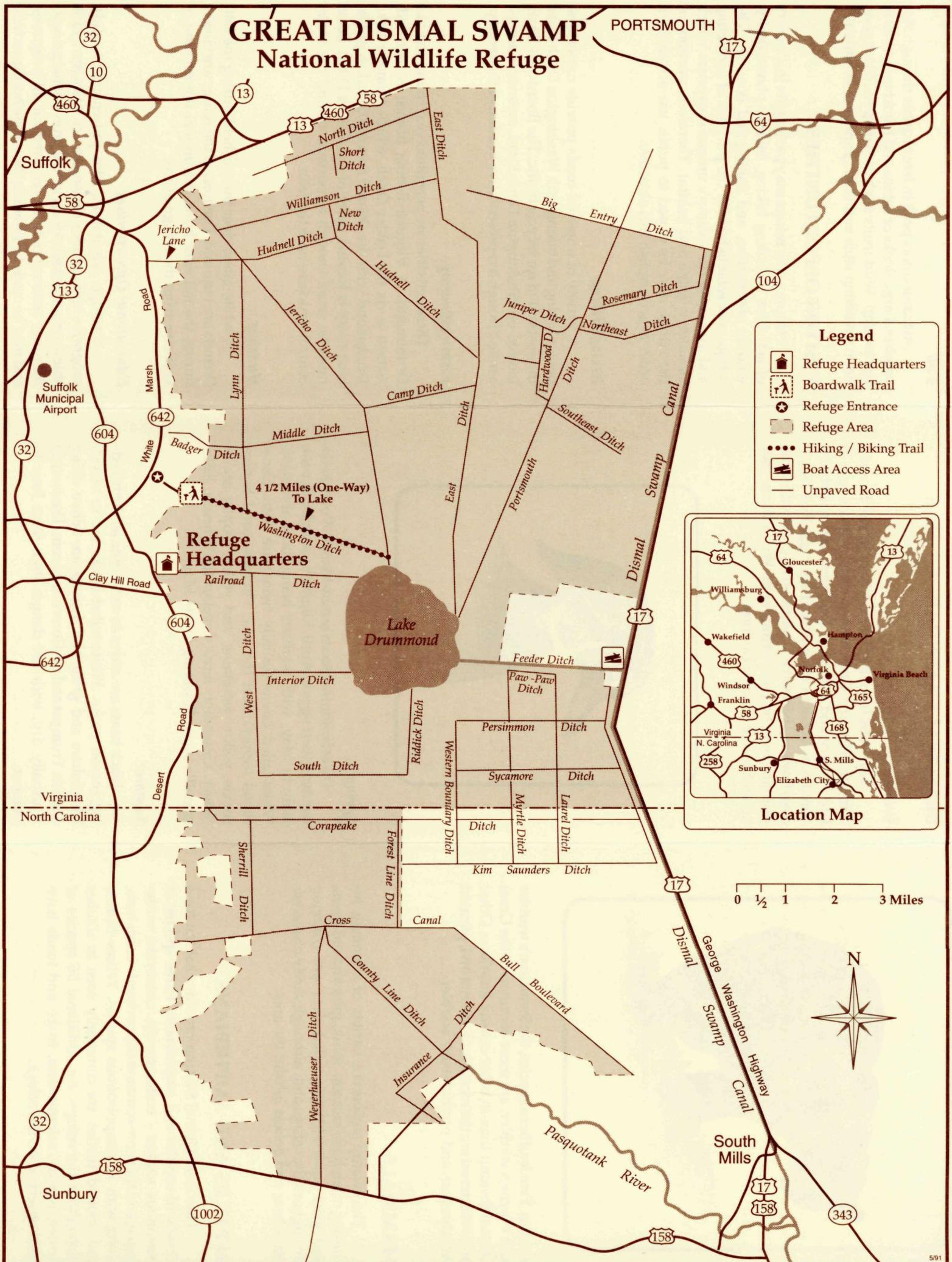
BIRDS

Over two hundred species of birds have been identified on the refuge since its establishment; ninety-three of these species have been reported as nesting on the refuge. Birding is best during spring migration from April to June when the greatest diversity of species (particularly warblers) occurs. Winter brings massive movements of blackbirds and robins to the

GREAT DISMAL SWAMP

National Wildlife Refuge

PORSCMOUTH



Legend

- Refuge Headquarters
- Boardwalk Trail
- Refuge Entrance
- Refuge Area
- Hiking / Biking Trail
- Boat Access Area
- Unpaved Road

Location Map

0 $\frac{1}{2}$ 1 2 3 Miles