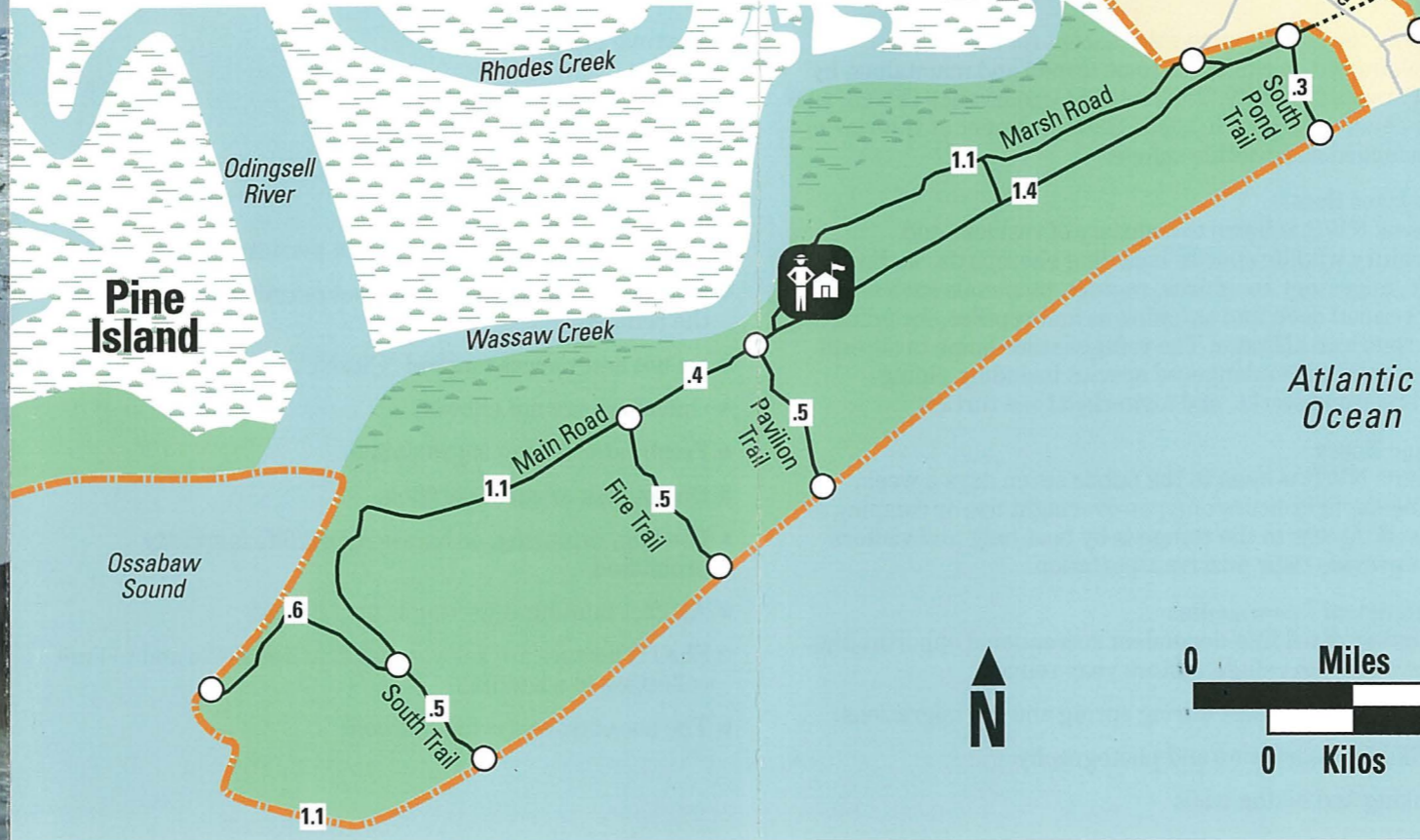
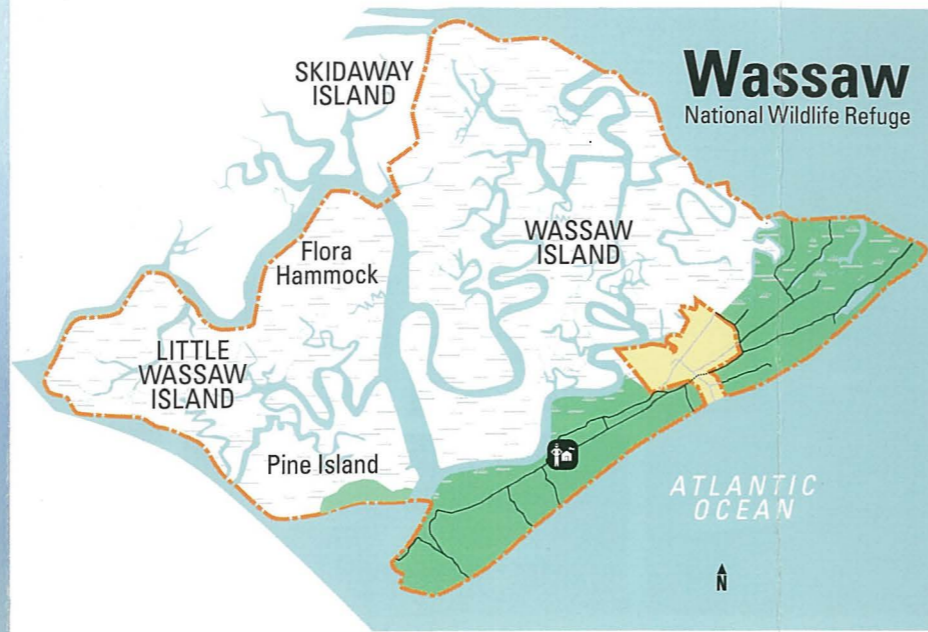


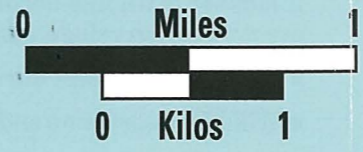
Wassaw

National Wildlife Refuge
Map and Trail Guide



Legend

- Area open to the public
- Private property
No trespassing
- Marshland
- Refuge information/dock
- Refuge boundary
- Hiking/biking trails
- Public access road (through-traffic only)



Welcome to Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge

Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this 10,050-acre migratory bird refuge consists of a single barrier island (Wassaw Island), two smaller islands (Pine Island and Flora Hammock; collectively known as Little Wassaw Island), tidal salt marsh, and several small hammocks. The primary purpose of the refuge is to maintain and enhance habitat for migratory birds, nesting sea turtles, and other wildlife, and to preserve and protect this unique barrier island. The refuge is comprised of 76% salt marsh and only 24% upland, which includes beach dune and upland forest communities, roads, trails, and administrative land. Today, due to little development and few land management practices, Wassaw Island is said to be the best representation of what Georgia's barrier islands looked like before Europeans arrived.

History

Native Americans are believed to have used Wassaw Island for hunting and fishing; artifacts dating to A.D. 500-600 have been found. The islands' recorded history began with Anthony Odingsell, a black planter who owned Little Wassaw Island during the early 1800's. In 1846, in an attempt to escape a cholera epidemic, 300 slaves from Liberty County, Georgia, were brought to Wassaw only to suffer and die in isolation. According to the records, all were buried on the big island, but the locations of the burial sites are unknown.

During the Civil War, Wassaw Island was successively occupied by Confederate and Union troops. Cannon balls were found the full length of the northern end of the island indicating heavy shelling, possibly by Union troops. Blowing sand once revealed the unmarked grave of a soldier, bones intact, along with a .56 caliber bullet and a uniform button of the First Georgia Regiment.

In 1866, the islands were purchased by a wealthy businessman named George Parsons, who built a housing compound as a private hideaway for his family and friends. These houses reflect the New England background of the Parsons and are still used by the family today.

A battery was built on Wassaw's north beach during the Spanish-American War (1898) to protect the southern approach to Savannah. Built by civilians under the supervision of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, the ruins of Battery Morgan are still partially visible today, although continually threatened by erosion.



The blue goose is the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.



Left to right: painted bunting by Kirk Rogers; kayaking by SE Adventure Outfitters; loggerhead sea turtle by USFWS; salt marsh by Kirk Rogers; and Battery Morgan by USFWS

In 1969, the islands were sold (except for a 180-acre in-holding which continues to be owned and maintained by the Parsons family) to The Nature Conservancy (TNC), who then deeded the land to the U.S. Department of Interior to be managed as a wildlife refuge.

Who Lives Here?

Wassaw NWR is home to a variety of resident and migratory wildlife species including shorebirds, wading birds, migratory songbirds, raptors, mammals such as white-tailed deer, and amphibians and reptiles, including the American alligator. The refuge is also home to several threatened and endangered species including piping plovers, wood storks, and loggerhead sea turtles.

Refuge Hours

Wassaw NWR is open to the public seven days a week, during daylight hours only; no overnight use or camping is allowed. Access to the refuge is by boat only, and visitors must provide their own transportation.

Recreational Opportunities

A number of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities are available to refuge visitors year-round:

- Bird watching (best during spring and fall migrations)
- Wildlife observation and photography
- Hiking and biking trails

- Daytime beach use
- Saltwater kayaking
- Saltwater fishing
- Scheduled hunts (permit required)

Regulations Reminders

- Camping and overnight use is not permitted.
- Dogs, cats, and other pets are not permitted anywhere on the refuge.
- Do not enter areas marked "Closed".
- Open fires are not allowed.
- Freshwater fishing is prohibited.
- Do not pick or cut vegetation.
- Feeding, capturing, or harassing wildlife is strictly prohibited.
- Artifact hunting/collecting is not allowed.
- Shell collectors are asked to take no live shells and to limit collecting to a handful.
- The use of drones is not allowed.

Safety Reminders

- Drinking water and restrooms are not available on the island.
- There are no shelters for visitor protection from the sun or inclement weather.
- Overgrowth on trails may conceal snakes, poison ivy, or stinging insects.
- Alligators may be encountered on the refuge; it is potentially dangerous (and a violation of state and federal law) to feed or molest this reptile in any way.
- Beware of falling trees and limbs.
- Insect repellent and sunscreen are recommended.
- Tell a friend or relative where you are going and when to expect your return.

For more information contact:

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