

..... Welcome to

SANDY ISLAND PRESERVE



PHOTO © CARLTON WARD JR.

About Sandy Island Preserve

The 9,165-acre Sandy Island Preserve is part of the largest protected freshwater island on the east coast and The Nature Conservancy's largest preserve in South Carolina. Comprised of tidal freshwater marsh and wetland forests (3,600 acres) and interior upland habitat (5,565 acres), the Preserve is home to the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and longleaf pine forests, among other rare plants and animals. The Conservancy and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) partner in managing recreation and ecosystem health on Sandy Island.

History & Culture

Sandy Island is surrounded by the Waccamaw River, the Great Pee Dee and tidal creeks that were instrumental in supporting the Winyah Bay rice plantation culture that thrived during the 18th and early 19th centuries. The island's forests were also used for shipbuilding and the turpentine industry, evidenced by the "cat-faced" tree markings on some of the older longleaf pines. Sandy Island is home to a small community of people, and a school "bus" boat ferries students to-and-from the mainland. In 1997, Sandy Island Preserve was created as a wetlands mitigation project of the South Carolina Department of Transportation, which the Conservancy managed for DOT. In 2011, the Conservancy became both owner and manager, and in 2012, USFWS and TNC entered a formal agreement to co-manage the Preserve.

Wildlife Habitat

Today Sandy Island's abandoned ricefields and wetland habitats are home to abundant wildlife, including swallow-tail kites, screech owls and great blue herons. Black bear, deer, feral hogs, alligators and other reptiles (turtles, snakes) make their home in the Preserve's forests and wetlands. Native plant species of interest include longleaf pine, pitcher plants, sandhill rosemary and orchids. In order to maintain healthy longleaf pine forests, prescribed fires are conducted annually on different pieces of the Preserve. Fire helps reduce hazardous fuels and competing vegetation and promotes rich plant diversity. The island's sandy roads and trails make for excellent viewing of wildlife tracks. Sandy Island is home to more than 40 families of the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. You can view the cavity trees where these birds live along hiking trails and experience longleaf forests, oak bluffs, and wetlands pocosins.



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SANDY ISLAND
VISIT OUR WEBSITE www.nature.org

The Nature Conservancy 
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™



Enjoying Your Visit

The Nature Conservancy hopes visitors to Sandy Island will enjoy the easy hiking terrain, pristine forest and wetland habitats of the Preserve. Here are some tips for making the most of your visit.

- The Preserve is open to the public from sunrise to sunset.
- Access to Sandy Island Preserve is by boat only, and there are no restrooms, running water or trash removal service.
- There is no bridge to Sandy Island. The closest boat access is from landings along the Waccamaw River. Bull Creek (1), Vaux Creek (2), and Thoroughfare Creek (3) landings on the Island (yellow diamonds on adjacent map) provide access to hiking trails and informational kiosks.
- Visitors to Sandy Island Preserve are welcome to: hike, observe wildlife, picnic, take photos, fish.
- Visitors are on their own but guided tours may be pre-arranged with local tour companies.
- Visitors are asked to refrain from: camping, littering, lighting fires, hunting without a permit, and removing cultural or animal/plant artifacts. Please respect private property outside of the Preserve.
- Call Waccamaw NWR Visitor's Center 843-527-8069 or TNC 843-937-8807 with questions about your visit.

