

Pee Dee  
National Wildlife Refuge  
5770 Highway 52 North  
Wadesboro, NC 28170  
704/694 4424

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
1 800/344 WILD  
<http://www.fws.gov>

September 2019



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Pee Dee

*National Wildlife  
Refuge*



*Pee Dee is one of over 560 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System, which is the world's most outstanding network of lands dedicated to wildlife. Refuges provide habitat for over 280 endangered and threatened species as well as hundreds of other birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects and plants.*



*This blue goose, designed by “Ding” Darling, has become a symbol of the Refuge System.*

## **Welcome to your National Wildlife Refuge**

Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge is located in both Anson and Richmond Counties in south-central North Carolina just six miles north of Wadesboro. Situated in the Triassic Basin of the lower piedmont, the refuge's 8,500 acres of rolling hills covered with pines and hardwoods gently slope to the broad flood plain of the Pee Dee River. This area is surrounded by development with over six million people from Charlotte to Raleigh. The refuge is an active partner in efforts to maintain the natural heritage of this area.



*photo: Gary Stolz*

*Canada goose*

## **Part of a Network of Lands — Born of Necessity, Managed with Care**

Pee Dee is one of over 560 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System, which is the world's most outstanding network of lands dedicated to wildlife. Refuges

provide habitat for over 280 endangered and threatened species as well as hundreds of other birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects and plants.

The National Wildlife Refuge System, first started in 1903 by President “Teddy” Roosevelt, is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and encompasses over 150 million acres across the nation.

## **History**

The Pee Dee refuge is close to the once famous “Lockhart Gaddy’s Wild Goose Refuge,” located in Ansonville, North Carolina. Lockhart Gaddy, a one-time avid goose hunter, turned friend of the geese in the fall of 1934.

Using his four live decoys to attract the wild geese to his one acre pond, Mr. Gaddy was both surprised and delighted to see his decoys attract nine wild Canada geese. This was the beginning of the “Gaddy’s Goose Pond,” as it is known today.

By the early 1950’s the flock had grown to an estimated 10,000 Canada geese and 1,000 wild ducks spending the winter at the world’s most unusual goose refuge. Visitors from 47 states and 11 foreign countries signed the guest book in 1952. The tradition continued each year from 1934, with the first birds arriving each October flying with the full moon, and departing in mid-March. The Gaddy Goose Pond was closed to the public in 1975 after the deaths of both Mr. and Mrs. Gaddy. The pond currently remains closed to the public.

In the 1960’s numbers of both geese and ducks began to decline in south-central North Carolina. Fortunately, lands adjacent to the Pee Dee River and Brown Creek offered excellent potential for waterfowl habitat development. With local and State support, the Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge was established in October, 1963, to provide wintering habitat for migratory waterfowl.

The original purpose for which the refuge was established was “...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose for migratory birds.” Through new laws and executive orders, the mission of the refuge continues to expand. The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 Act states the “big six” public use objectives. Through this executive order the refuge offers the following opportunities to develop appreciation for fish and wildlife; hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation.



Dave Menke

*Eastern bluebird*



photo: Ginger Corbin

*Dogwood blooms*

## Wildlife Habitats

The variety of habitats on the refuge supports a diversity of wildlife species. The refuge contains 3,000 acres of contiguous bottomland hardwood forest along Brown

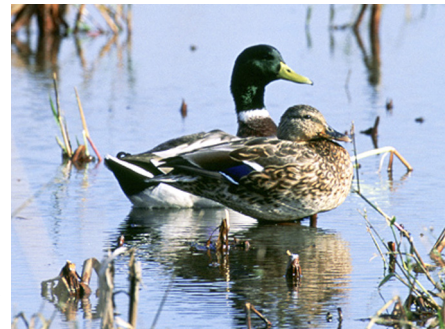
Creek. This area forms the core of the largest bottomland hardwood tract left in the Piedmont of North Carolina. A 2,000 acre tract along Brown Creek and Thoroughfare Creek bottoms has been deemed a Significant Natural Heritage Area and is listed in the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program.

The refuge also contains about 1,200 acres of upland pine forest and an approximate 4,300 acre mosaic of croplands, old fields, moist-soil units, and mixed pine-hardwood forest that intermingle with creeks, ponds, lakes and the Pee Dee River. Reforestation efforts in the old fields have provided habitats essential for many species of wildlife.

## Wildlife on the Refuge

Peak populations of waterfowl in the fall and winter can exceed 10,000 birds, with the majority being mallards, ring-necked ducks and wood ducks. Other ducks often seen are the

American wigeon, Northern pintail, gadwall, green-winged teal and black ducks. Unfortunately, the large flocks of Southern James Bay Canada geese have dwindled significantly.



photos: Gene Nieminen

*Mallards*

However, several hundred of these migrants still use the refuge, as well as a growing flock of resident Canada geese. Both color phases of snow geese, scaup, Northern shovelers, redheads, canvasbacks and tundra swans are seen occasionally.

### *Other Migratory Birds*

Other than ducks and geese, the refuge is a stopping point or destination each year for snipe, woodcock, hawks, owls, herons and egrets. Due to the decline of suitable habitat the refuge is considered a very important area for neo-tropical migratory songbirds, especially along the Brown Creek bottomlands. The colorful blue grosbeak, goldfinch and indigo bunting are often seen along the roadsides and field borders. The refuge bird list contains 188 species found with varying regularity, including 92 breeding/probable breeding species.

### *Resident Wildlife*

The refuge is home to many mammal species including the white-tailed

deer, red and gray fox, bobcat, beaver, gray and fox squirrel, and Eastern cottontail rabbit. Many species of amphibians and reptiles live on the refuge and include spotted salamander, American toad, pickerel frog, river cooter,

Eastern box turtle, green anole, and copperhead. The refuge waters are also full of fish such as catfish, largemouth bass, and redear sunfish.

The Peregrine falcon is an occasional visitor to the refuge. The Southern bald eagle is commonly seen on the refuge, and nesting along the Pee Dee River. Eagles can be seen during the winter months on the refuge near the flooded waterfowl impoundments.

### *Providing for a Diversity of Plants and Animals*

A variety of management programs enhance wildlife habitat. Local cooperative farmers assist with the refuge croplands on a share basis, leaving part of their crops in the field for wildlife. Only crops that are beneficial to wildlife, such as corn, soybeans, and winter wheat are grown.

Wide field borders are left around the edge of the refuge farm fields. Refuge personnel plant these areas in beneficial crops such as sunflowers, buckwheat, millet and chufa. These crops are both food and cover for a variety of wildlife including quail, dove, turkey, rabbits and a wide variety of birds. Warm season grass fields replicate open areas that occurred historically through natural disturbances. Few people realize there were once open prairies located in the Piedmont of North Carolina.

These natural grasses are more beneficial to wildlife as opposed to exotic grasses that are more often planted. The “biological” farm program, with its low chemical use, no-till planting method, wide field borders, and other wildlife-friendly practices, serves as a model farm and study site for farmers, educators, and agricultural extension specialists.

Moist soil impoundments are managed by lowering and raising water levels, disking, mowing, or burning every few years to maintain plants in an early-successional stage. These areas are shallowly flooded starting in mid-October to achieve the proper water level desirable for migrating waterfowl, and are drained over a period of weeks beginning in late March to create the proper germination conditions for favorable moist soil plants, such as smartweed and wild millet.

During the draining period, mudflats are produced, which are used by migrating shorebirds in early Spring.



Dave Menke

*Indigo bunting*



Ryan Hagerity

*Eastern box turtle*

Selected impoundments are drained, disked, and shallowly flooded in mid-July to create mudflats again for the early fall migration of shorebirds.

Prescribed burning is conducted in upland pine stands to mimic the natural fires that historically burned

through these areas every two to four years. These fires suppress hardwood trees, such as sweet gum, leaving an open stand of pines that are preferred by certain plants and animals.



photos: Ginger Corbin

*Prescribed burn*

Artificial nesting boxes with predator shields are placed in open areas for bluebirds, and near water for wood ducks. These boxes help duplicate natural cavities that are scarce because trees are often cut down before they reach an age where natural cavities develop. Refuge staff and volunteers monitor these boxes on a regular basis.

Wood ducks are trapped and banded as a means of monitoring the population of these year round residents. Waterfowl surveys are conducted every two weeks during the winter months to monitor waterfowl populations on the refuge.



photo: USFWS

## Public Use Opportunities

Three hiking trails are available for daily use. The Tall Pines Nature Trail (3/4 mile) and Brown Creek Nature Trail and boardwalk (1/4 mile) are accessible from the Wildlife Drive. The Gaddy Covered Bridge Nature Trail includes two 1/4 mile segments accessible from Gaddy Road.

The portion of the Pee Dee River that runs through the refuge is part of a larger canoe trail down the Yadkin/Pee Dee River system. A popular section to paddle runs from Tillery Dam (north of the refuge) downstream to the 109 bridge (just south of the refuge), and can be accessed from the refuge. Visitors may put in seasonally at the end of Griffin Road.



photo: KA King

*White tailed deer*

Fishing is open from March 15 to October 15 on several ponds, Brown Creek and the Pee Dee River. Sullivan Pond is open for fishing year round. A primitive boat ramp is provided

at Arrowhead Lake. All other fishing areas are open to boats, but boats must be loaded and unloaded by hand. No gasoline motors are allowed. Fishing is allowed seven days a week from one hour before sunset until one hour after sunset. Consult refuge fishing regulations for more details. A valid NC fishing license and a free refuge permit are required for fishing.

Hunting season generally runs from early September to late February for a variety of species. A free refuge permit is required for all hunts. A special quota hunt permit is required for all deer gun hunts and turkey hunts. Consult the refuge

hunting regulations for season dates, application procedures and other hunting information.

### **Volunteer Information**

A growing number of volunteers assist the refuge with a variety of biological and maintenance projects, including wildlife surveys, checking nesting boxes, building trails and conducting education programs.

In 1997, a group of people from all walks of life and varying distances from the refuge came together and organized Friends of the Pee Dee NWR. This non-profit group is responsible for the building of Gaddy's Covered Bridge. The Friends have partnered with the refuge to sponsor annual events, including the Christmas Bird Count, Kids' Fishing Day and a Night Prowl. For volunteer opportunities and information on the friends group, call the refuge office.

### **Enjoying the Refuge**

The public is welcome to visit the refuge any time of the year from one hour before sunrise until one hour after sunset. Some areas may be closed by the refuge manager for specific refuge activities. There are several motels and numerous restaurants within a 15 minute drive.

For more information, contact  
Anson County Chamber of Commerce  
P.O. Box 305  
Wadesboro, NC 28170  
or by phone at 704/694 4181

Layered clothing is recommended during cooler months and using insect repellent during the warmer months is recommended. Ticks, chiggers and mosquitoes are common from April to September. Binoculars, spotting scopes and field guides are also highly recommended as you travel through the refuge on foot or by vehicle.

### **Prohibited Activities**

All government property including natural, historic, and archaeological features are protected by Federal Law. Searching for and removal of these objects is strictly prohibited. Please do not pick flowers or vegetation.

*Pets* - Pets must be on a leash or under control of owner at all times.

*Littering* - Littering is prohibited. Please take your litter with you.

*Vehicle Access* - The use of motor vehicles is permitted only on designated roads. ATV's are prohibited.

*Weapons* - Discharging weapons is prohibited on the refuge, except as authorized during scheduled hunts.

*Camping and Open Fires* - Camping and open fires are prohibited on the refuge. Camping facilities are located near the refuge. Consult the refuge office for details.

*Alcohol* - The use or possession of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.

**The refuge office is located on Highway 52 North, six miles north of Wadesboro, NC.**

**Refuge office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 am until 4:30 pm.**

*Birding and general wildlife observation are the fastest growing activities on the refuge.*