

Biozone 1: Suwannee River Banks

The Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge, unlike other Refuges, was not established for the protection of one or a few species but to protect the high water quality of the Suwannee estuary.

Paddling upstream on the Suwannee River, two kinds of habitats are encountered. Where the current is strong, the riverbank is relatively steep, and open water directly adjoins the cypresses and hardwoods.

In other, shallower sites, emergent spatterdock, sawgrass and wild rice create habitats that support a variety of fish and wildlife species. Birds commonly seen are American coots, which winter in dozens or hundreds in the beds of spatterdock, and anhingas, often seen drying their wings on nearby perches or preparing to dive for small fishes.



Asters like these bloom in the fall

Biozone 2: Sandfly Creek

One of the most pleasing spots on the Refuge, isolated Sandfly Creek is a serene, supremely beautiful and easily navigated waterway. Flowering plants visited by butterflies line the banks. A notable cedar tree stands

perfectly erect about 60 feet tall with only a few branches at the top. This is the growth pattern of early logging days when cedars were a dominant tree along our coast. Alligators, turtles, river otters and red-shouldered hawks may be seen. An old logging ramp was used to haul trees out of the swamp and is a possible place to get out and stretch your legs.

Spotlight: Suwannee River Character

Acidic tannins from decaying vegetation in the Okefenokee Swamp give the Suwannee River its black-water characteristic. It remains tea-colored despite millions of additional gallons of clear alkaline water from springs and spring-fed tributaries.

The Suwannee is the only major river in the southeast unaltered by damming or dredging. The last 20 miles of the Suwannee, including Sandfly Creek, are protected by the Refuge and are influenced by twice-daily tides.

Salt and fresh water mix from Horseshoe Beach on the north to the Cedar Keys on the south to form one of the largest undeveloped delta-estuarine systems in the United States, a haven for fish and wildlife.

The Suwannee is noted for its recovering population of Gulf sturgeon, a Threatened subspecies of large primitive-looking fishes. Another large, primitive-looking animal, the Suwannee alligator snapping turtle, has recently been recognized as a separate species unique to this river basin.



A number of habitats are visible behind this raft of coots on the Suwannee, including spatterdock, sawgrass, wild rice, cypresses, swamp bay, ash, black gum, tupelo and others. These forests are certainly less than 100 years old, lacking giant cypresses and hardwoods that were present before logging.

Become a **FRIEND** today so —
the animals
the Suwannee
our way of life
 are here **TOMORROW**



You can join at www.FriendsofRefuges.org

As a membership organization, through voluntary action, Friends supports the Refuges and their work to conserve the region's wildlife and the places they need to thrive.

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THE REFUGE FROM THE WATER

SANDFLY CREEK

FRESHWATER PADDLE
 ALONG THE SUWANNEE
 RIVER AND PICTURESQUE
 FLOODPLAIN CREEK.

Length and Time:

- Round trip - 8 miles; 3-4 hours
- Tiny creeks along the way beckon to be explored.

Skill Level: Suitable for beginner paddlers.

However, winds stronger than 10 mph can create waves of 1-2 feet in the Suwannee River.

Creeks are usually passable at low tide, but may require caution due to fallen trees and mud flats.

Basic navigational skills are required and a GPS is recommended.



DIRECTIONS TO LAUNCH SITE

From CR 349, before you reach the village of Suwannee, turn left onto Southeast 371st Street.

Turn right onto Southeast 374th Street. The ramp is at the end of the road.

Parking is limited.

