

About the Refuge

The Refuge System

Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge is the northern most part of the Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex. That 157,226 acre complex extends southward along the Georgia coast to include a number of islands, coastal areas and freshwater river marshes. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service oversee all refuges. This land was donated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service December 4, 1975. The refuge opened to the public in October 1985.

About three and half miles long and wide mile wide, Pinckney NWR has 4,053 acres and is comprised of Pinckney Island, Corn Island and Big and Little Harry Island. The latter three islands are located to the northeast of Pinckney Island across Mackay Creek. About two thirds of the refuge is salt marsh and the creeks therein, the rest is

- Sea Island Forest
- Brush land
- Fallow fields
- Freshwater ponds

Geology and Geography

Running along South Carolina's coast from Horry County southward are the barrier islands and the more interior islands, known as sea islands. These sea islands are older than the ocean facing barrier islands and were formed during the Pleistocene Epoch, which ended about 10,000 ybp. The Pleistocene Epoch was a time of sea level rise and fall.

Quoting from a UGA publication

"These islands were shaped before the last great continental ice sheet formed. At that time when sea level was about 6 feet above the present sea level, the beaches of the older islands formed. During the last freeze of the Pleistocene Epoch so much seawater was frozen that the sea level was lowered by 300 to 500 feet. At this time shoreline was nearly 80 miles offshore from the shoreline we have today." This publication gives the age of sea islands at about 35,000 years.

From Caolina Rocks, by Carolyn Hanna Murphy we learn

- Sea Islands are formed out of mainland sediments that were surrounded by water as sea levels rose.

- Some barrier islands attached to these isolated pieces of mainland
- Soils are rich enough to support forest of hardwood and pine as well as supporting farming. On these islands with a long growing season the famed long island cotton was grown.

Located at 32.2 N and 80.76W, the climate of Pinckney Island is humid subtropical; average rainfall amounts are 50 inches per year with the summer months being the wettest.