

## **Freshwater Wetlands and Ponds and Butterfly Garden**

Pinckney Island has 38 acres of freshwater habitat, comprised of between 30 and 50 small ponds/depressions, ranging from one-half acre up to four acres in size. Many of these hold water only during wetter periods of the year. Five of these ponds are accessible in a less than 4 mile round trip hike/bike ride. Two ponds, Ibis Pond and Starr Pond can be reached in 2 mile round trip journey

**Ibis Pond** \_Constructed in 1981-82 by wildfire staff for additional freshwater wetlands, it also serves a colonial nesting wading bird rookery. Nesting waders and related birds prefer to nest over water which is a sufficient depth to attract alligators. While these alligators do take any young that have fallen from the nest, they also kill and eat any nest robbing mammals that might venture into the water. Both the birds and alligators benefit from this arrangement since more young birds survive and the general health of the alligators is improved by these food sources. Within a few years of construction over 150 nests were counted. By 1990 the state's largest White Ibis rookery, with 300 nests was located at Ibis Pond. At that time water levels in all the ponds were dependent on rainfall. Drought conditions lowered water levels; some ponds dried up so nests were abandoned. A pump and well system was donated by volunteer Nini Chapin and installed in 1995 at Ibis Pond, by the wildlife service in order to keep a sufficient water level for nesting. At times of extreme drought the pump system cannot manage enough water to support a rookery. In recent years the drought has abated and water levels allow for nesting. The pond has also had to be cleared of choking vegetation, which gained a strong foothold during low water.

American Alligator *Alligator Mississippiensis*

<http://www.dnr.sc.gov/marine/mrri/acechar/speciesgallery/Reptiles/AmericanAlligator/index.html>

Colonial Nesting birds

<http://www.dnr.sc.gov/cwcs/pdf/Colonialnestingwadingbird.pdf>

To read about specific birds

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/search/>

## **Butterfly Garden**

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Located between the main road and Ibis Pond, a butterfly garden was planted in 2007 through a partnership forged between a former refuge volunteer, a local Hilton Head Island High School teacher, and the Hilton Head Audubon Society. Student's from the school's Environmental Club conducted research to determine the best plants to use, taking into consideration factors like avoiding invasive and/or exotic plants and using native plants that are drought and deer resistant, as well as good attractors for butterflies. Refuge volunteers prepared the garden site prior to the students joining them for the planting. A pump system was installed later, by refuge staff, to provide volunteers an easier way of watering the garden. Since planting, the routine maintenance of the garden has been conducted by the Lowcountry Master Gardener's Association. Throughout the summer and early fall months, the garden flourishes and changes colors, attracting around 20 species of butterflies. On the massive passion vine planted on the garden's trellis, visitors can view all four stages of the life cycle of the Gulf Fritillary.