

# About the Southeast Reserves



The **North Carolina** National Estuarine Research Reserve was established to preserve the fragile natural areas that make up the third largest estuarine system in the country and the variety of life found there. Ninety percent of the commercial seafood species caught in the state spend at least part of their lives in an estuary. The state is representative of two major biogeographic regions located north (Virginian) and south (Carolinian) of Cape Hatteras. The four components of the North Carolina Reserve represent both of these regions. Currituck Banks is in the Virginian, while Rachel Carson, Masonboro Island and Zeke's Island are Carolinian. The reserve protects 10,000 acres of barrier islands, inlets and estuaries.



The **North Inlet-Winyah Bay** National Estuarine Research Reserve protects more than 12,327 acres of habitats ranging from tidal and transitional marshes to oyster reefs, beaches, and inter-tidal flats and from coastal island forests to open waterways. With more than 90 percent of North Inlet estuary's watershed in its natural forested state, its relatively pristine salt marshes and ocean-dominated tidal creeks have higher water and habitat quality than those in adjacent Winyah Bay. As the estuary with the third largest watershed on the east coast, Winyah Bay's brackish waters and marshes have been greatly influenced by agriculture, industry and other human activities. The reserve is home to many threatened and endangered species, including sea turtles, sturgeons, least terns and wood storks.



The **ACE Basin** National Estuarine Research Reserve is one of the largest undeveloped estuaries on the East Coast. It's named for the Ashepoo, Combahee and Edisto rivers, which meander past cypress swamps, historic plantation homes, old rice fields and abundant tidal marshes to meet at South Carolina's biologically rich St. Helena Sound. The reserve protects 134,710 acres of the natural beauty, abundant wildlife and unique cultural heritage of the area. In addition, the reserve preserves habitat for many endangered or threatened species, such as shortnose sturgeon, wood storks, loggerhead sea turtles and bald eagles.



The **Sapelo Island** National Estuarine Research Reserve occupies just over one-third of Sapelo Island, the fourth largest Georgia barrier island and one of the most pristine. The reserve's 6,110 acres contain the Duplin River and its estuary, and several upland tracts. The Reserve comprises 2,110 acres of upland maritime forest and hammock land and 4,000 acres of tidal salt marsh. The upland maritime forest of the reserve is composed of a mix of native hardwoods and about 90% of the reserve's marshland is covered by smooth cordgrass. The most conspicuous animals of the salt marsh are the graceful egrets and herons, fiddler crabs, and raccoons; however, many other less visible creatures live within the reserve, including mollusks. Endangered and threatened species of Sapelo Island include the Southern bald eagle, peregrine falcons, ospreys, brown pelicans, woodstorks, Wilson's plovers, American Alligators, loggerhead sea turtles, the northern right whale and manatees. Not only is the island rich in natural history, but also in human history dating back 4,000 years.



The **Guauna Tolomato Matanzas** National Estuarine Research Reserve encompasses approximately 73,352 acres of salt marsh and mangrove tidal wetlands, oyster bars, estuarine lagoons, upland habitat and offshore seas in Northeast Florida. The GTM Reserve is located in the East Florida subregion, south of Jacksonville and sandwiching St. Augustine. It contains the northernmost extent of mangrove habitat on the east coast of the United States, some of the highest dunes in Florida, measuring 30-40 feet, and one of the few remaining "inlets" in northeast Florida not protected by a jetty thus presenting an easy study of what an inlet might have looked like in the past. The coastal waters of the GTM Reserve are also important calving grounds for the endangered Right Whale.