

The Nature Conservancy in South Carolina

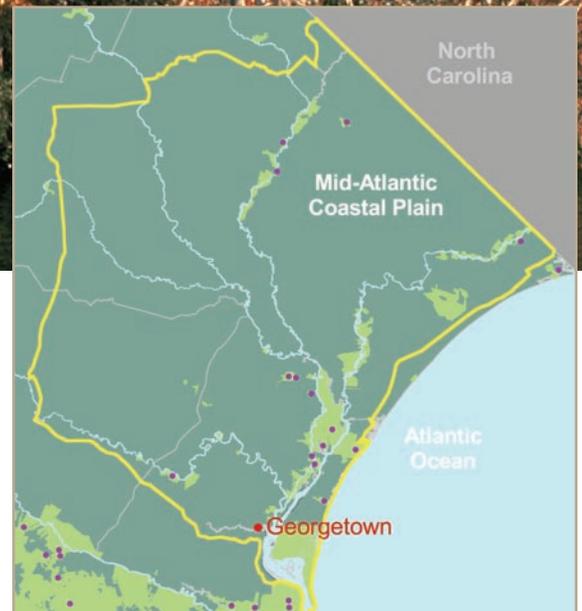
Winyah Bay



SANDY ISLAND © TOM BLAGDEN

At a Glance

- **Acres Protected:** The Nature Conservancy has helped protect 20,300 acres in the Winyah Bay project area.
- **Ecological Significance:** Contains the state's largest tidal freshwater wetlands; supports more than 66 songbird species and more than 1,000 nesting egrets and herons; 12,000 acres of mature longleaf pine forest and cypress-tupelo swamps
- **Threats:** Incompatible development practices; conversion of forestland to urban use



The Winyah Bay project area map indicates Conservancy projects in purple and federal, state, and private protected lands in green. The Winyah Bay project office is located in Georgetown.

Flowing through swamps and wooded areas, the slow moving waters of the Black, Big Pee Dee, Little Pee Dee, Sampit and Waccamaw rivers converge along the coast of Georgetown County to form the **third largest estuarine drainage area** on the Eastern Seaboard—Winyah Bay.



LITTLE PEE DEE RIVER © TOM BLAGDEN

Biological Diversity

Encompassing 525,000 acres, the Winyah Bay project area contains the state's largest tidal freshwater wetlands, including 146,000 acres of forested wetlands and tidal freshwater marshes. The Winyah Bay landscape harbors more than 66 songbirds, including painted buntings, prothonotary warblers and summer tanagers. The project area is also a preferred stopover for countless migratory birds such as waterfowl and birds of prey. The longleaf pine forests of the project area support the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. Secluded from increasing coastal development, more than 1,000 nesting egrets and herons find safe harbor in the rookeries on Sandy Island, the largest undeveloped freshwater island on the East Coast. The island's 12,000 acres includes mature longleaf pine forests and towering cypress-tupelo swamps, which support a remarkable collection of 59 species of amphibians and reptiles.

Protecting Winyah Bay

The Nature Conservancy has helped to protect 20,300 acres in Winyah Bay, including 4,000 acres in conservation easements. Easements are a vital conservation tool, which allow landowners to voluntarily protect the ecological features of their property in perpetuity through a legal agreement with a qualified conservation organization.

In recent years, the Conservancy has worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and private landowners to establish the Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuge. The Conservancy continues to assist with ongoing land acquisitions for the refuge.

The heart of the Winyah Bay project area, Sandy Island Preserve, is a prime example of the critical role partnerships play in protection. The 9,164-acre preserve, managed by the Conservancy, is in permanent protection due to the efforts of the Winyah Bay Task Force, the South Carolina Department of Transportation, the Conservancy and other environmental organizations.

Through a 30-year cooperative agreement with Brookgreen Gardens, the Conservancy has committed to manage 6,200 acres of longleaf pine and freshwater wetlands. With the use of prescribed fire, the Conservancy is restoring a piece of the South's natural heritage and ensuring the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker will always have a place to nest along South Carolina's coast.

Goals

The Nature Conservancy strives to work with public and private partners to protect ecologically significant areas throughout the Winyah Bay project area. Conservation easements, acquisitions and other tools are being used to conserve the ecological integrity of the area.



FEMALE PAINTED BUNTING © JOE HAMILTON/TNC



SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH

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