ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE
Once a flourishing rice plantation, the Santee Coastal Reserve is now a sprawling patchwork of forested uplands and freshwater, brackish, and tidal wetlands located along the Santee River near McClellanville, South Carolina. The reserve, which is managed by SCDNR, consists of 24,000 acres of diverse wildlife habitat, and was donated to the state by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in 1974. This area is divided by a network of waterways, and landmarks include Cedar Island, Murphy Island, and The Cape. Nestled within the Santee Coastal Reserve is an additional property, owned and co-managed by TNC, called Washo Reserve. Washo Reserve provides a home for more than 150 breeding pairs of endangered wood storks. These storks, whose population has declined severely over recent decades, are the only native species of stork in North America. Additionally, many species of migratory waterfowl and wading birds call Cedar Island and Murphy Island home during wintering or nesting seasons, including piping plovers, red knots, and eastern black rail.

THREATS
Fire suppression due to urban development pose concerns for fire dependent species like longleaf pine. Smoke management has also become a challenge with highways and communities. Without fire, many flora and fauna would be lost from this landscape. Sea level rise and saltwater intrusion encroach on upland habitat, as native plants, trees, and shrubs die from salt exposure. Also, invasive plant species threaten critical species like cypress, which wood storks depend on for successful nesting in the reserve.

ACCESS
The preserve is open to the public from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset, except during hunting seasons. Please visit this website for more information.

SOURCES
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources