



Emergent Marshes on National Wildlife Refuges in the Southeast for Waterfowl

Emergent marshes on National Wildlife Refuges provide year-round habitat resources for waterfowl and other wetland-dependent species. In particular, dense, emergent vegetation in semi-permanent marshes provide brood-rearing and molting habitat for wood ducks and many other waterbirds during summer:



credit: William Powell



Credit: Forbes Biological Station, Illinois Natural History Survey

Semi-permanent emergent marshes are wetlands that remain flooded throughout the year. They are often dominated by submersed and emergent vegetation including pondweeds, cattails, waterlilies, sedges, and rushes.

With plenty of vegetation, permanent marshes are used as feeding and resting areas by ducks, geese, and coots during migration.

Due to year-round flooding, semi-permanent emergent marshes support a diverse population of invertebrates, thus offering a protein food source for waterfowl. Additionally, many waterbirds and secretive marsh birds nest in dense emergent vegetation during late spring and summer.

Emergent marshes may also be important to waterfowl in mid- to late summer when adult waterfowl are molting their flight feathers; the deep water and dense cover provide protection from predators.

Mid to late summer, this habitat resource is also important for brood rearing, when other wetlands have dried up or been dewatered to produce moist-soil vegetation.

This type of wetland is ideal for a diversity of wildlife, including mink, muskrat, great blue herons, reptiles, amphibians, dragonflies, and many species of songbirds just to name a few.



credit: Heath Hagy

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