

MORE HERE THAN MEETS THE EYE

The refuge is home to many animals, including over 200 species of birds, 90 species of butterflies, and 47 species of mammals. Several endangered or rare species, like the red-cockaded woodpecker, live in the swamp. The refuge also has one of the largest concentrations of black bears in the eastern United States!

PEARL CRESCENT



BALD EAGLE

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER



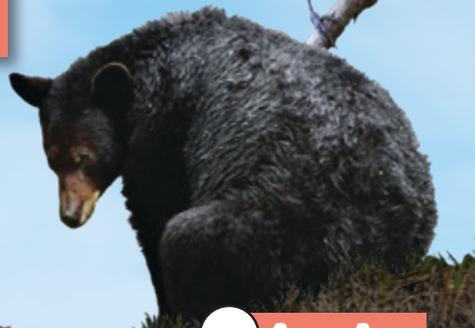
RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER



CANEBRAKE RATTLESNAKE



BLACK BEAR



DISMAL SWAMP SHREW



NATURE'S BALANCE

Everything is connected - the water, soil, plants, and animals make up the pieces of this special ecosystem. Human activities, combined with natural forces like hurricanes and wildfires, have left their mark on this landscape as well. All of these factors have shaped the unique diversity of wildlife and habitats within the Great Dismal Swamp. **Can you find these relationships?**

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THE GREAT DISMAL SWAMP



The Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1974 to protect wildlife and habitat. The refuge is important because it helps protect and conserve a very complex ecosystem of soil, water, vegetation and animals that have many benefits to wildlife and people.

THE GREAT DISMAL SWAMP ECOSYSTEM

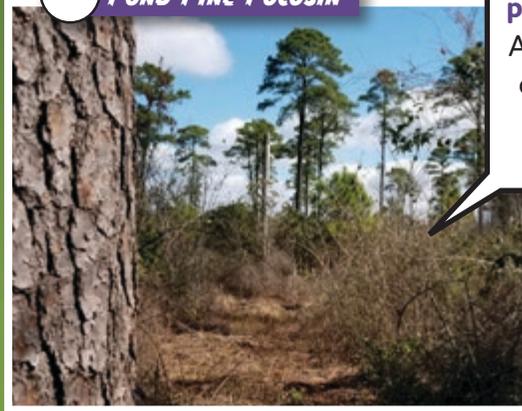
The Great Dismal Swamp ecosystem was once over 1,000,000 acres; however, the area has been split up, drained, and developed for over 200 years. The largest remaining piece of this ecosystem, around 113,000 acres of forested habitat, is now part of the National Wildlife Refuge.



ABOVE YOUR HEAD

The forests around the swamp are home to communities of diverse species of special and rare plants.

POUND PINE POCOSIN



The Great Dismal Swamp has a unique forest community called **pond pine pocosin**. Pocosin is a Native American term for "wetland on a hill." This community grows on the deeper peat soils in the swamp.

Virginia switch cane is a native plant, which at one time was so dense across the dismal swamp area; it was called the "green sea."

VIRGINIA SWITCH CANE



There are also many other trees and plants that are rare, such as the **Virginia dwarf trillium**.

VIRGINIA DWARF TRILLIUM



BENEATH YOUR FEET

Underfoot in the Great Dismal Swamp is almost 15 feet of peat soil; layers of dying plant material that fall to the ground and break down very slowly because of the wet conditions in the swamp. When wet, it can feel like walking on layers of sponge.

SWAMP PLUMBING

The swamp soil acts like a sponge, absorbing water from the surrounding area when there are heavy rains. This helps prevent flooding around the swamp. The water in the swamp itself is stained dark by the peat soil and is often referred to as "tea water."

"TEA" WATER



PEAT SOIL



MANY FEET OF PEAT

Peat makes up only 3% of the soil on earth, so it is super special and important to preserve. It takes about 300 years for one foot of peat to form. So, in some parts of the swamp, the soil can be thousands of years old! How old are you in peat years?

15FT

10FT

5FT



HOW DOES THE GROUND FEEL TODAY?

circle the best answer

HARD

MEDIUM

SPONGEY

CALCULATE YOUR AGE IN PEAT YEARS

your height

FT

X 300 =

age in peat years