

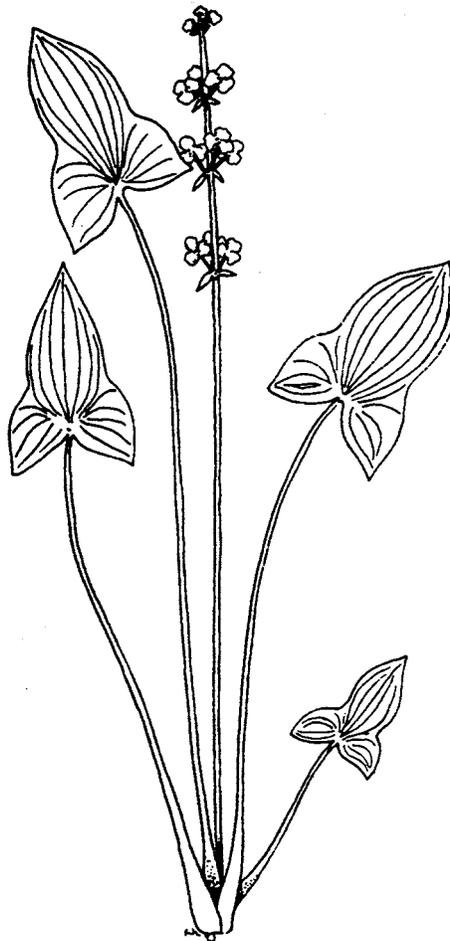
GEORGIA

Adopt-A-Stream

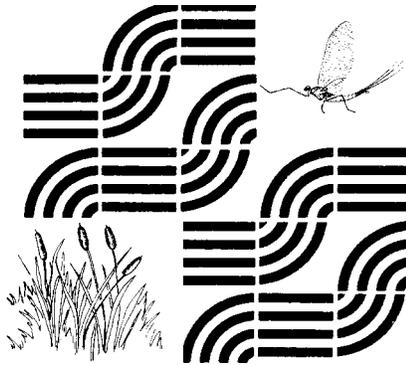
Department of Natural Resources
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Wetland Monitoring

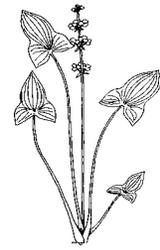


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Georgia Wetlands

Various assessments of Georgia's wetlands have identified from 4.9 to 7.7 million acres, including more than 600,000 acres of open water habitat found in estuarine, riverine, palustrine, and lacustrine environments. Estimates of wetland losses since colonial settlement beginning in 1733 and expanding over the next two and one-half centuries are between 20-25% of the original wetland acreage.

Georgia has approximately 100 miles of shoreline along the south Atlantic, with extensive tidal marshes separating the barrier islands from the mainland. Georgia's coastline and tidal marshes are well preserved compared to other South Atlantic states.

Georgia's interior ranges in elevation from sea level to 4,788 feet in the Blue Ridge Mountain Province. At the higher elevations, significant, pristine cool-water streams originate and flow down steep to moderate gradients until they encounter the lower elevations of the Piedmont Province. Many of the major tributaries originating in the mountains and piedmont have been impounded for hydropower and water supply reservoirs. These man-made lakes constitute significant recreational resources and valuable fishery habitat. Palustrine wetlands in floodplains and beaver ponds are found in Piedmont river corridors. At the fall line, streams flowing southeasterly to the Atlantic Ocean or south-southwesterly to the Gulf of Mexico have formed large floodplains as each encounters the soft sediments of the upper Coastal Plain.

Other significant wetlands found in the state are associated with blackwater streams originating in the Coastal Plain, lime sinkholes, springheads, Carolina bays, and the Okefenokee Swamp, a bog-swamp covering approximately one-half million acres in south Georgia.

In the flatwoods of the lower Coastal Plain, seven tidal rivers originate in the ancient shoreline terraces and sediments of the Pleistocene age. Scattered throughout the flatwoods are isolated depressional wetlands and drainages dominated by needle-leaved and broad-leaved tree species adapted to long hydroperiods.

Due to considerable variation in the landscape in topography, hydrology, geology, soils, and climatic regime, the state has one of the highest levels of biodiversity in the eastern United States. It provides a diversity of habitats for nearly 4,000 vascular plant species and slightly less than 1,000 vertebrate species. Numerous plant and animal species are endemic to the state, and of these, many of the rarer species are dependent upon wetlands for survival.

Introduction

The Georgia Adopt-A-Wetland program is designed to heighten awareness of the nature, functions, and values of wetlands in Georgia. Much like Adopt-A-Stream, the Adopt-A-Wetland manual will guide volunteers in adopting a wetland and monitoring it. This manual involves getting to know the chosen wetland and its watershed, learning the importance of wetland functions and values, and monitoring wetland hydrology, plants and soils.

Before monitoring your wetland, be sure to obtain a copy of ***Getting To Know Your Watershed***. ***Getting To Know Your Watershed*** is the first in a series of manuals produced by Georgia Adopt-A-Stream. Whether you have a stream, wetland, lake or river you wish to monitor, this manual will guide you through the important first steps. Included in this manual is all the information and activities you will need to adopt a stream, wetland or lake!

Wetlands are areas where water is the primary factor controlling the environment and the associated plant and animal life.

These transitional habitats occur between upland and aquatic environments where the water table is at or near the surface of the land, or where the land is covered by shallow water that may be up to six feet deep (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). Legal definitions may be broad, including areas which meet the following criteria: vegetation similar to that of traditional wetlands, soils heavily influenced during some portion of the year by water, and complete ground or surface water saturation during a portion of the growing season.