

Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center's
Wilderness Investigations
High School

Wilderness Profile #2
Okefenokee Wilderness

Common Core Standard Connections

Standards addressed will vary depending on how the teacher chooses to approach the lesson and/or activities.

Teacher background:

The Okefenokee Wilderness was designated as such by Congress in 1974. It has a total of 353,981 acres and is located in Georgia. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manage this wilderness area. This National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness encompasses the Okefenokee Swamp that is one of the oldest and best-preserved freshwater areas in the country. The Suwannee and St. Mary's Rivers originate here.

Instructions for the teacher:

To help students become familiar with the Okefenokee Wilderness choose one or more of the following:

- Use information from *Teacher Background* and the *Student Information Sheet* to prepare and present a mini-lesson about this wilderness.
- If students have already started their *U.S. Wilderness Area Field Guide* (started in Wilderness Profile #1) have them add entries for the Okefenokee Wilderness by choosing items from the list below:
 - Photocopy the *Student Information Sheet*, have students go through it and then conduct a discussion about the information found there.
 - Using the *Student Information Sheet*, have students propose and complete creative ways to share information about this wilderness.
 - Use the wilderness map, included with *Wilderness Investigations*, and have students locate Georgia and the Okefenokee Wilderness. Provide blackline maps of the Southern United States. Have students identify and label each state and draw in/label this wilderness.
 - Have students choose one of the common animals of the Okefenokee Wilderness (found on the *Student Information Sheet*) and have them research information about the animal.

Next, using their research findings have them prepare a creative way to share what they've learned.

- Compare and contrast this wilderness with other wilderness areas. Have students respond to: How are they similar? How are they different?
- Create a *U.S. Wilderness Area* classroom display or place on class webpage. Continue to add information as new areas are focused on.
 - Just a few wilderness areas are focused on as part of *Wilderness Investigations*. Have students choose non-focused areas to research, present and post on the bulletin board.
- For more information about the Okefenokee Wilderness go to www.wilderness.net.



Okefenokee Wilderness
(from Wilderness.net; Image #1509)

Wilderness Profile #2

Okefenokee Wilderness

Student Information Sheet



Canoeing in the Okefenokee Wilderness
(from Wilderness.net; Image #507)

What's the story?

- Designated by Congress as wilderness in 1974.
- Located in Georgia and administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Made up of mostly wet-prairie or cypress forest. It is a vast bog measuring 38 miles long and 25 miles wide (353,981 acres).
- *Okefenokee* is a European interpretation of a local Indian description of the area meaning *land of the trembling earth*. This description comes from the fact that unstable peat deposits tremble when walked on.

- Animals commonly found in the Okefenokee Wilderness: Black bear, herons, egrets, alligators, mallard ducks, greater sandhill cranes, osprey, tree swallows, Florida sandhill cranes, red-cockaded woodpeckers, Florida softshell turtles, chorus frogs, green tree frogs, wood storks, wood mouth perch, white ibis, nighthawks and many others.
- The headwaters of two rivers are here:
 - Suwannee River: Originates in the swamp and flows towards the Gulf of Mexico.
 - St. Mary's River: Originates in the southeast and flows to the Atlantic Ocean.
- Many habitats: Islands, lakes, cypress forests, scrub-shrub areas, open wet prairies.
- Rain water replenishes the swamp. During drought years fire sweeps through the area.