



North Carolina

Birding Trail

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Falls Lake

1 Falls Lake Trail

Contact: NC Wildlife Resources Commission, NC Division of Parks and Recreation, Wake County Parks and Recreation (joint managers), US Army Corps of Engineers (owner)

South shore of Falls Lake, north of Raleigh, NC
919-676-1027 (Falls Lake State Recreation Area)
919-846-9332 (US Army Corps of Engineers)
919-707-0050 (NCWRC Raleigh Office)

Wake County

www.ncmst.org/fallsmap.pdf

Site Description: The Falls Lake Trail begins at the Falls Lake US Army Corps of Engineers Visitor and Management Center and extends for 25 miles in Wake County along the south shore of Falls Lake, to the NC Division of Parks and Recreation Visitor Center. Plans exist to extend the trail into Durham County and eventually to Eno River State Park. The trail is divided into 10 segments of 1-3 miles lengths, which are part of the Mountains-to-Sea-Trail system. The route explores a variety of habitats. Sections of the trail that parallel the lakeshore offer opportunities for viewing wintering waterfowl, Osprey, and Bald Eagle. When the lake level is down, there is excellent birding for shorebirds and wading birds, especially in late summer. Birding for migrating songbirds is good during spring and fall, and summer offers chances to view breeding songbirds such as Acadian Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos, Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, Yellow-throated Warbler, as well as six woodpecker species.

Species of Interest: Bald Eagle, Great Crested Flycatcher, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Prothonotary Warbler, Hooded Warbler, wintering waterfowl

Habitats: dry coniferous woodlands, oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, floodplain forest, small wetland communities

Special Concern: The Falls Lake Trail passes through portions of the Butner-Falls of Neuse Game Land, where hunting is allowed during certain times of the year. Birders should be aware of current hunting regulations and seasons, and take adequate safety precautions during those times. For more on hunting precautions, see the hunting season information at the beginning of this guide.

Access & Parking: The Falls Lake Trail can be accessed during daylight hours. Parking is available at either end of the trail, and at multiple trail heads along the way. Visit the Mountains to Sea Trail website for a map of the trail segments. The Falls Lake Visitor Assistance Center is open year-round on weekdays, 8am to 4pm; on weekends between April and October, 8am to 5:30pm; closed on weekends, November – March.

Directions: To access the southern end of the trail at the Falls Lake Management Center (dam), follow NC 98 west from the intersection of US 1 in Wake Forest for approximately 0.75 miles. Turn left on Old NC 98 (SR 1967) and continue another 0.75 miles. Turn left on Falls of Neuse Road and follow it approximately 3.25 miles to the Management Center entrance.

To access the northern end of the trail at the NC Division of Parks and Recreation Visitor Center, follow NC 98 west from the intersection of US 1 in Wake Forest for approximately 8.5 miles. Turn right (north) on NC 50 toward Creedmoor and continue for approximately 1.5 miles. The trail head is located on the east side of the road, just past the entrance to the park office.

Coordinates: N 35° 56' 30" W 78° 34' 54 DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 40





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2 Blue Jay Point County Park

Owner: Wake County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Department

3200 Pleasant Union Church Road, Raleigh, NC 27614
919-870-4330

Wake County

www.wakegov.com/parks/bluejay/

Site Description: More than 120 bird species have been documented at this 236-acre park that has a primary focus of environmental education. Park attractions include 5 miles of hiking trails, picnic areas, a playground and open-play fields. The upland areas offer opportunities to view both Summer and Scarlet Tanagers during summer, and a variety of woodpeckers year-round. The Sandy Point and Blue Jay Point Trails lead to the shore of Falls Lake where Osprey are common during summer and migration. These routes also offer chances to see gulls, terns and wading birds during winter. Both the Sparkleberry and Azalea Loop Trails are nice, short walks for migrating songbirds during spring and fall. Open areas of the park are best for raptors, and there is a bluebird box trail that runs around the perimeter of the open-play fields. The bird feeder demonstration area around the Blue Jay Center is a productive spot year-round for casual birding at the beginning or end of the day. Here you can enjoy birding from the comfort of a rocking chair!

Species of Interest: Great Crested Flycatcher, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Hooded Warbler, Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, woodpeckers

Habitats: oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, mesic forest, lake

Special Feature: Songbird Celebration, a day-long bird festival with classes, hikes and activities for all ages takes place annually the last Saturday of April. Year-round environmental education programs, mostly for school children, are offered.

Access & Parking: The site is open daily 8am to sunset. The visitor center is open daily, 8am to 5pm.

Directions: From the I-440 Beltline, take exit 8 (Six Forks Road) north. Stay on Six Forks Road for 8 miles and watch for the left-hand turn it makes in the community of Bayleaf. Just under 1 mile after the turn, Six Forks Road will cross a fork of Falls Lake. After this crossing, watch for the intersection of Pleasant Union Church Road. Turn right on Pleasant Union Church Road, which leads to the entrance of Blue Jay Point County Park.

Coordinates: N 35° 58' 06" W 78° 38' 37" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 40





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3 Falls Lake State Recreation Area – Holly Point / Shinleaf

Owner: NC State Parks

New Light Road, off NC 98, north of Raleigh
919-676-1027

Wake County

www.ncparks.gov

Site Description: Holly Point and Shinleaf Recreation Areas are located in the southeast end of Falls Lake. This section of the lake is very narrow and resembles the river the lake once was. Wild Turkey are common at both Shinleaf and Holly Point. In winter, Bonaparte's Gull forage along the lakeshore and can be seen perched on the Holly Point boat ramp poles. Winter irruptive species, such as Red-breasted Nuthatch and Pine Siskin, can be seen in the areas' many camping loops. The boat ramp at Holly Point is a good spot to witness warbler fallouts when the weather is right. Broad-winged Hawk nest in the inner reaches of the park and can be heard from the hiking trails. Eastern Kingbird patrol each beach area, and Ovenbird are numerous in the interior forests. At Shinleaf Recreation Area, watch for Barred Owl during any time of day. Yellow-billed Cuckoo and other migrating songbirds can be seen here, including Gray-cheeked Thrush and Indigo Bunting. New Light Road Bridge over Falls Lake is a good place to view Bald Eagle, Osprey, gulls, and Cliff and Barn Swallows seasonally. From the bridge, walk northwest through a small field to a beaver-dammed creek for chances to see Louisiana Waterthrush and Pileated Woodpecker.

Species of Interest: Bonaparte's Gull, Broad-winged Hawk, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Cliff Swallow

Habitats: oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, small wetland communities, lake

Access & Parking: The park is open 8am to 6pm, November – February; 8am to 7pm, March and October; 8am to 8pm, April and September; 8am to 9pm, May – August. The park visitor center is open 8am to 5pm, Monday – Friday, October – April; 8am to 5pm, daily, May –September. Separate fees are charged for picnic shelter reservations and campsites. Shinleaf and Holly Point Recreation Areas are for campers only, so day-use access may not be allowed during summer weekends and holidays. Note: Some facilities may close at certain times of the year. Contact the park office for updated information.

Directions: From the intersection of NC 98 and NC 50, take NC 98 east for 1.5 miles to the first stoplight. Turn left on New Light Road. After 0.5, miles watch for the Shinleaf Recreation Area entrance on the right. At 1 mile, cross New Light Bridge. The entrance to Holly Point Recreation Area is 1.0 miles farther on the right.

Coordinates: N 35° 59' 41" W 78° 39' 20" (Shinleaf) DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 40





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4 Falls Lake State Recreation Area – Woodpecker Ridge

Owner: NC State Parks

NC 50 (Creedmoor Road), north of Raleigh
919-676-1027

Wake County

www.ncparks.gov

Site Description: Situated in between the widest part of Falls Lake and NC 50, the habitat diversity and arrangement of land at Woodpecker Ridge produces excellent birding opportunities. Many hours can be spent exploring the numerous fire lines and trails. Spring migration is the most interesting time of year to bird here, with over 20 warbler species and a variety of vireos and thrushes possible. Numerous songbirds nest throughout the area, with a single stop producing over 30 calling birds. Osprey nest along the shore and Bald Eagle can be seen as well. Cavity nesters abound in the many snags created by the prescribed burns, and Wild Turkey populations are on the rise. In winter, the secluded lakeshore offers good viewing for a variety of waterfowl. In late winter, Great Horned Owl begin nesting in the interior forest. Nearby, the NC 50 boat ramp is a worthwhile vantage point for viewing grebes and waterfowl in winter. A variety of warblers can be seen from the parking lots. Belted Kingfisher nest on the steep slopes near the spillway, and Barn and Cliff Swallows nest under the NC 50 Bridge.

Species of Interest: Bald Eagle, Wild Turkey, Great Horned Owl, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Red-headed Woodpecker, wintering waterfowl

Habitats: oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, dry coniferous woodlands

Special Concern: There are no developed facilities at Woodpecker Ridge. Restrooms are available across the street at the Highway 50 Boat Ramp Recreation Area. The fire lines and roads are unmarked and numerous.

Access & Parking: Park by the Woodpecker Ridge Management Area sign, across from the NC Highway 50 Boat Ramp Recreation Area. To the right of the sign for Woodpecker Ridge Management Area is a fire line leading into the complex. The site is open daily during daylight hours.

Directions: Take NC 50 (Creedmoor Road) north from Raleigh. Just north of the main bridge across Falls Lake, watch for a sign for the Highway 50 Boat Ramp Recreation Area. Park across the road, near the Woodpecker Ridge Management Area sign.

Coordinates: N 36° 01' 24" W 78° 41' 43" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 40





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5 Falls Lake State Recreation Area – Beaverdam Reservoir

Owner: NC State Parks

NC 50 (Creedmoor Road), north of Raleigh
919-676-1027

Wake County

www.ncparks.gov

Site Description: Beaverdam Reservoir is separated from Falls Lake by a small spillway. The spillway and adjacent amenities are part of the Highway 50 Boat Ramp Recreation Area. The Old Weaver Causeway offers viewing of waterfowl, as well as Bonaparte's and other gulls, in the winter. Loggerhead Shrike, American Woodcock, and Northern Bobwhite can be seen during the day near the fields by Old Beaverdam Road. Eastern Screech-Owl, Chuck-will's-widow and Whip-poor-will can be heard there at night. Cliff and Barn Swallows nest under the bridge at the causeway, while Orchard Oriole nest along the forest edges nearby. Look for wading birds at the north end of the causeway. Chimney Swift nest in most picnic shelter chimneys, and in wooden Chimney Swift Nest Towers. From the Highway 50 Boat Ramp Recreation Area, you can access the spillway in winter to watch for waterfowl and Bald Eagle. Mixed flocks of loons, grebes and mergansers can be viewed here during the winter. Belted Kingfisher nest in the steep bank southwest of the causeway.

Species of Interest: Northern Bobwhite, American Woodcock, Loggerhead Shrike, Chuck-will's-widow, Orchard Oriole

Habitats: oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, small wetland communities, early successional, reservoir

Access & Parking: Beaverdam Reservoir is separated from Falls Lake by a small spillway. The spillway and adjacent fishing area and boat ramp are part of the Highway 50 Boat Ramp Recreation Area. The western side of the lake is part of the Beaverdam Recreation Area. The eastern side and the northern ends are Game Lands. Old Weaver Road Causeway crosses the northern portion of the reservoir. Parking is available on the causeway and at the intersection of Old Beaverdam Road.

The park is open 8am to 6pm, November – February; 8am to 7pm, March and October; 8am to 8pm, April and September; 8am to 9pm, May – August. The park visitor center is open 8am to 5pm, Monday – Friday, October – April; 8am to 5pm, daily, May – September. From April – September, the weekend fee is \$5 per car, \$3 for senior citizens, and \$10 per bus. Separate fees are charged for picnic shelter reservations and campsites. Some facilities may close at certain times of the year. Contact the park office for updated information.

Directions: Beaverdam Reservoir can be accessed from a number of Falls Lake State Recreation Area access points. Take NC 50 (Creedmoor Road) north from Raleigh. The Highway 50 Boat Ramp Recreation Area is located just north of the bridge at Falls Lake. Almost 2 miles north on NC 50 is the entrance to the Beaverdam Recreation Area. Another 2 miles north turn right on Old Weaver Road to the causeway and east side lake access.

Coordinates: N 36° 02' 32" W 78° 41' 02" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 40





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6 Falls Lake State Recreation Area – Sandling Beach

Owner: NC State Parks

NC 50, north of Raleigh
919-676-1027

Wake County

www.ncparks.gov

Site Description: When you beat the crowds, Sandling Beach is a good birding destination. This state park has a popular swimming area that receives large numbers of visitors during the summer. The main park road parallels the lake with several parking and access areas. Sandling Beach occupies the eastern side of the widest part of Falls Lake, resulting in good opportunities to view birds on the water. Mixed flocks of ducks, loons, grebes and mergansers are easily viewed during the winter. Gulls are present on the lake from winter through spring, and flock numbers peak in mid-winter at over 15,000. Spring brings a variety of shorebirds and several Caspian Terns to the swim beach. Indigo Bunting sing in the fields while Eastern Kingbird, Great Crested Flycatcher and Osprey patrol the shoreline property. Bald Eagle can be seen any time of year in flight or perched. Wild Turkey can be seen quite reliably throughout the year and nest in several areas of the park. Chimney Swift nest in the chimneys of the picnic shelters.

Species of Interest: Bald Eagle, Wild Turkey, Great Crested Flycatcher, Indigo Bunting, wintering waterfowl

Habitats: oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, small wetland communities, floodplain forest, lake

Access & Parking: The park is open 8am to 6pm, November – February; 8am to 7pm, March and October; 8am to 8pm, April and September; 8am to 9pm, May – August. The park visitor center is open 8am to 5pm, Monday – Friday, October – April; 8am to 5pm, daily, May – September. From April – September, the weekend fee is \$5 per car, \$3 for senior citizens, and \$10 per bus. Separate fees are charged for picnic shelter reservations and campsites. Some facilities may close at certain times of the year. Contact the park office for updated information.

Directions: Take NC 50 (Creedmoor Road) north from Raleigh. Approximately 2 miles north of the bridge over Falls Lake, turn left into the park. There is a map display at the entrance.

Coordinates: N 36° 02' 21" W 78° 42' 39" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 40





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7 Falls Lake State Recreation Area - Rollingview

Owner: NC State Parks

Baptist Road, off NC 98, east of Durham
919-676-1027

Durham County

www.ncparks.gov

Site Description: Rollingview is a peninsula in the middle of Falls Lake, dividing its deep southeastern side from the shallow northwestern end. This dividing point provides for a good diversity of birds. The Rollingview Recreation Area and Marina at the end of the peninsula has a large campground and day-use area. Rollingview is probably the best place to view Bald Eagle at Falls Lake. Eagles can be seen from most areas, especially across from or on the tip of the peninsula. The B-loop fishing pier in the campground is a great place to scan the lake for waterfowl in winter. Be sure to time your visit on a day when duck hunting is not allowed, as this site is popular with hunters. Common duck species include Mallard, American Black Duck, American Wigeon, Gadwall, and many diving ducks. The topography turns the Rollingview point into a great fallout zone for spring and fall migrants. Watch for gulls and terns from the boat ramp and point area during migration.

Species of Interest: Bald Eagle, American Black Duck, American Wigeon, Gadwall

Habitats: oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, early successional, lake

Access & Parking: The park is open 8am to 6pm, November – February; 8am to 7pm, March and October; 8am to 8pm, April and September; 8am to 9pm, May – August. The park visitor center is open 8am to 5pm, Monday – Friday, October – April; 8am to 5pm, daily, May –September. From April – September, the weekend fee is \$5 per car, \$3 for senior citizens, and \$10 per bus. Separate fees are charged for picnic shelter reservations and campsites. Some facilities may close at certain times of the year. Contact the park office for updated information.

Directions: From US 98 east of Durham, turn north on Baptist Road and follow it until it dead-ends at the park. Once you enter the park, turn right for the marina or stay straight to get out to the point.

Coordinates: N 36° 01' 22" W 78° 43' 40" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 40

