



North Carolina

Birding Trail

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French Broad

1 Sandy Mush Game Land

Owner: NC Wildlife Resources Commission

Martin Candler Road, near Alexander, NC
919-707-0050

Buncombe, Madison Counties

www.ncwildlife.org

Site Description: Sandy Mush Game Land contains 2,600 acres of low elevation mountain habitats. The Game Land is actively managed with prescribed fire to restore native warm season grasses (NWSG) and forbs to benefit Northern Bobwhite and associated early successional species. The Turkey Creek and Sandy Mush Creek Gorges offer a unique opportunity to view various warblers, Wood Thrush and Acadian Flycatcher. Early successional species may be observed in the adjacent fields at the Martin Candler Road parking area. During winter, food plots attract numerous finches and winter sparrows, such as Field, Fox, Savanna and White-crowned Sparrows. On the north end of Cedar Hill Road, several parking areas are available next to fields and forested areas, where Mourning Dove and Wild Turkey may be observed. Check the power lines along Cedar Hill Road for Eastern Kingbird and Eastern Bluebird. At the Turkey Creek parking area on Old NC 20, the adjacent fields are excellent examples of the restoration management being conducted. The most diverse area is the clear-cut off Bear Creek Road. It was timbered in 2001 and is being managed to keep a shrub-scrub stage with NWSG fields intermixed. Prairie Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Northern Bobwhite are all abundant in this area. There are several roads that traverse the clear-cut, offering the birder outstanding viewing opportunities.

Species of Interest: Northern Bobwhite, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Kingbird, Prairie Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Field Sparrow

Habitats: early successional, oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, floodplain forest, rocky outcrop

Special Concern: Hunting is allowed on Sandy Mush Game Land 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 Game Land can be accessed daily during daylight hours. Entry is prohibited in and around any structures, such as barns, springhouses and old home sites.

Directions: In Leicester, from the intersection of New Leicester Highway (NC 63) and Alexander Road, go east on Alexander Road for 3.5 miles, to the intersection of Old NC 20. Turn left on Old NC 20 and go north 1.6 miles, to the junction of Cedar Hill Road. Old NC 20 bears left while Cedar Hill Road goes straight. Go straight (north) on Cedar Hill Road for 0.5 miles, to the junction of Martin Candler Road. Turn left on Martin Candler Road and go west 0.7 miles to the Martin Candler Road parking area on the right. Five additional parking areas can be found back along Cedar Hill Road, north of Martin Candler Road. Directions to other parking areas are as follows: From the intersection of Bear Creek Road and Old NC 20 go west 0.8 miles on Old NC 20 to the Turkey Creek parking area on the left, just past Turkey Creek. Keep going west on Old NC 20 for 1.3 miles to the junction of Jarrett Farm Road. Turn left on Jarrett Farm Road and go west 0.3 miles to the junction of Bear Creek Road. Turn right on Bear Creek Road and go north. There are places to park on the left at both cemeteries and at 1.0 miles is the clear-cut parking area.

Coordinates: N 35° 43' 09" W 82° 40' 16" (Martin Candler parking area) DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 31





North Carolina

Birding Trail

mountains • piedmont • coast

French Broad

2 Beaver Lake Bird Sanctuary

Contact: Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society (manager)

Merrimon Avenue at Dover Road, Asheville, NC

Buncombe County

www.main.nc.us.emas

Site Description: This 10-acre Sanctuary, managed by the Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society, is situated on the edge of Beaver Lake in north Asheville. The sanctuary attracts waterfowl (especially after storms), migrating species in spring and fall, and a nice array of breeding birds. Yellow Warbler, Gray Catbird and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher can be found from spring through fall. Great Blue Heron can be also seen regularly, and Green Heron have nested here in recent years. Three species of swallow and Chimney Swift are frequently seen over the lake. From the parking lot, a path leads around the small pond (an eco-filter pond designed to trap sediments before they flow into the lake) to a boardwalk loop that includes lake overlooks. Leaving the sanctuary, birders will also want to take the sidewalk northwest to a trail that leads along the lake edge. In season, both Baltimore and Orchard Orioles can be found here, along with Eastern Kingbird and, with luck, Warbling Vireo. In recent years, Brown-headed Nuthatch have nested in cavities in the pine trees. It's usually worthwhile to walk the full length of the lake.

Species of Interest: Warbling Vireo, Brown-headed Nuthatch, American Redstart, Yellow Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, wintering waterfowl

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

Access & Parking: The site is open daily during daylight hours. Bird walks are held the first Saturday of each month, beginning at 8am, May – September; 9am, October – April. The Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society depends on private donations to pay for maintenance costs and make improvements at the sanctuary.

Directions: From downtown Asheville, take Merrimon Avenue (US 25) north from I-240. The Sanctuary is on the left in about 2.5 miles, where Dover Road enters Merrimon Avenue from the right.

Coordinates: N 35° 38' 01" W 82° 33' 24"

DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 31, 53





North Carolina

Birding Trail

mountains • piedmont • coast

French Broad

3 French Broad River Greenway

Owner: City of Asheville Parks & Recreation

508 Riverview Drive, Asheville, NC 28806 Buncombe County www.ashevollenc.gov/residents/parks_rec%20828-259-5800

Site Description: The French Broad River Greenway includes a series of parks along the French Broad River and continues to expand. The French Broad River Park is fairly wooded, with a grove of trees, walkways, and a river overlook. The trees in the park and the shrubs along the river attract many migrating songbirds. This is often a good place to find a variety of migrating warblers in the spring, including a large number of Yellow-rumped and Blackpoll Warblers in May. Fall can also be a good spot for migrating songbirds. Walk down the trail under the bridge and scan underneath the bridge to see nesting Cliff Swallow from early April through June. Continue on down the trail into Carrier Park. Yellow-throated Warbler, and sometimes Warbling Vireo and Baltimore Oriole, nest in the trees along the river. In late winter and early spring, Wilson's Snipe and migrating egrets and night herons can be found in the various stormwater wetland ponds.

Species of Interest: Cliff Swallow, Cedar Waxwing, Tennessee Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Baltimore Oriole

Habitats: floodplain forest, early successional, river/stream, bog/wetlands

Access & Parking: Access to the French Broad River Park is on Amboy Road, near the corner of Lyman Street. Adjacent Carrier Park is also accessed from Amboy Road. Ample parking is available at both parks. The greenway can be accessed daily during daylight hours.

Directions: *From Patton Avenue in Asheville:* turn right on Clingman Avenue. Veer right at Gray Eagle to stay on Clingman and at the stop light, turn right over the train tracks on Lyman Street. At the light, turn right on Amboy Road and watch for the French Broad River Park entrance immediately on the right. *From I-40 west of Asheville:* get on I-240 East and get off at the second exit – Amboy Road. Carrier Park will be on the right side of the road next to the river. French Broad River Park will be on the left side of the road, just before crossing the bridge over the French Broad River.

Coordinates: N 35° 34' 09" W 82° 33' 51" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 53





North Carolina

Birding Trail

mountains • piedmont • coast

French Broad

4 Biltmore Estate

Owner: The Biltmore Company

1 Approach Road, Asheville, NC 28803
828-225-6776

Buncombe County

www.biltmore.com

Site Description: The Biltmore Estate was the family retreat of George and Edith Vanderbilt. The Biltmore House is the largest home in the US and is surrounded by nearly 8,000 acres of farmland (pasture, cropland, and vineyard), meadows, forest, and parkland. The Gardens, Bass Pond and nearby trails, the Lagoon, and Deer Park Trail are all good birding spots at Biltmore. Estate maps are available at the Welcome Center and trail maps are available at the Outdoor Center. In the spring, many migrating birds pass through the Estate, including a variety of warblers, waterfowl and shorebirds. Watch for Double-crested Cormorant, Osprey, Blue Grosbeak, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Eastern Kingbird, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Meadow Lark and others. Wood Duck, American Woodcock, Pine Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Red-eyed Vireo, and Indigo Bunting all nest on the Estate. The fall migration includes a variety of warblers, hawks, waterfowl, and nighthawks. And in winter, visitors can watch for numerous woodpecker species, along with Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Wild Turkey, Red-tailed Hawk, and Great-horned and Eastern Screech-Owls. Biltmore's Outdoor Center offers a variety of recreational opportunities and will customize guided hikes, biking treks or float trips, seasonally, upon request.

Species of Interest: Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Hooded Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Baltimore Oriole

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

Access & Parking: Biltmore Estate is open daily 8:30am to 5pm. Winter gate hours are generally 9am to 4pm. Estate admission (adult and youth) varies seasonally. 12 month passes are also available. Check the Website or call ahead to inquire about particular dates.

Directions: From I-40, take Exit 50 and follow US 25 North to the Biltmore Estate entrance.

Coordinates: N 35° 33' 42" W 82° 33' 10"

DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 53





North Carolina

Birding Trail

mountains • piedmont • coast

French Broad

5 North Carolina Arboretum

Owner: University of North Carolina

100 Frederick Law Olmsted Way, Asheville, NC 28806
828-665-2492

Buncombe County

www.ncarboretum.org

Site Description: The North Carolina Arboretum is a 434-acre public garden located in the Bent Creek Experimental Forest of the Pisgah National Forest. Stop at the Baker Exhibit Center when you first arrive at the Arboretum to find out about daily programs and to pick up a Trail and Gardens Map, exhibit brochure, and a list of the Birds of the North Carolina Arboretum. From the Baker Exhibit Center, walk through the many Arboretum garden exhibits. The Stream Garden represents a western North Carolina mountain stream and plant communities associated with these habitats; this area often attracts a variety of birds. The Arboretum's Nature Garden Trail and National Native Azalea Repository are other good places to visit. The spring and fall months offer great opportunities to see a variety of migrating species passing through on their way to or from their breeding grounds to the north. The Arboretum is also a model for sustainable practices, including green building design, sustainable landscaping, rain gardens, water conservation, and alternate energy technology.

Species of Interest: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Blue-headed Vireo, Black-throated Green Warbler, American Redstart

Habitats: northern hardwood/cove forest, oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, early successional, river/stream

Access & Parking: The Arboretum is open 8am to 9pm, April – October (incoming gate closes at 8pm); 8am to 7pm, November – March (incoming gate closes at 6pm). The visitor center is open 9am to 5pm, Monday – Saturday; 12pm to 5pm, Sunday. The parking fee is \$6/car; on Tuesdays, parking is free to all visitors.

Directions: From Asheville, take I-26 to Exit 33 and travel 2 miles south on NC 191/Brevard Road to the Arboretum entrance road on the right.

Coordinates: N 35° 29' 53" W 82° 36' 32"

DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 53





North Carolina

Birding Trail

mountains • piedmont • coast

French Broad

6 North Mills River

Owner: Pisgah National Forest

Wash Creek Road (FR 279), near Hendersonville, NC
828-257-4200

Henderson County

www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc

Site Description: The Mills Rivers section of the Pisgah National Forest is largely lower and middle elevation oak, hickory, and hemlock forest. It's a good location to begin birding for migrating songbirds in early spring. The first to arrive are usually Louisiana Waterthrush, in late March, followed by Black-throated Green and Black-and-white Warblers at the end of March or early April. Worm-eating and Hooded Warblers arrive by mid-April and most of these species can be found in this area through early or mid-September. Acadian Flycatcher are also common along the larger streams from late April through July. Wash Creek Road has many pull-off areas that are convenient spots to stop and bird, but there are also several hiking trails. At about 2 miles from the campground, pull onto the road on the left that leads to the Trace Ridge Trail. The trails at the end of this road are out of the way of traffic and can be good for close-up views of warblers and vireos during the breeding season. Continue up Wash Creek Road toward the Blue Ridge Parkway. In early spring, when traffic is still light, watch for Ruffed Grouse in the road and Broad-winged Hawk sitting in the trees or flying through the forest. Listen for Whip-poor-will at dusk on moonlit nights along Wash Creek Road and the Trace Ridge area from April through June.

Species of Interest: Broad-winged Hawk, Blue-headed Vireo, Black-throated Green Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Hooded Warbler

Special Concern: Hunting is allowed on Pisgah National Forest lands 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.

Habitats: northern hardwood/cove forest, oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, river/stream

Access & Parking: Parking is available at numerous campsite pull-offs along Wash Creek Road. The gravel roads are narrow and winding. Drive slowly and do not park on curves.

Directions: From Hendersonville, take NC 191 west to the NC 280/191 intersection. Turn right onto NC 280/191 and drive about 0.5 miles to North Mills River Road and turn left. Continue 5 miles to the North Mills River campground. Turn right on Wash Creek Rd (FS 279). Continue up Wash Creek Road, stopping at numerous pull-offs for campsites. The road ends at the Blue Ridge Parkway at Bent Creek Gap.

Coordinates: N 35° 24' 20"

W 82° 38' 31"

DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 53





North Carolina

Birding Trail

mountains • piedmont • coast

French Broad

7 Jackson Park

Owner: Henderson County Parks & Recreation

801 Glover Street, Hendersonville, NC 28792
828-697-4884

Henderson County

www.hcprd.com

Site Description: Jackson Park is a 212-acre park located conveniently near downtown Hendersonville. A variety of habitats in the park, including open field, woodland floodplain, ponds and streams, make the area attractive to many migrating birds in spring and especially in fall. Migrating warblers, vireos, and thrushes, as well as Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, flycatchers, and many others occur in April and May, and especially in September and early October. Occasionally in spring or fall, species seen only infrequently in North Carolina, including Connecticut, Wilson's, and Mourning Warbler, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Black-billed Cuckoo, and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, are seen at the park. Follow the road through the park to the fence line next to the Glover Street entrance, near baseball fields 1 and 2. There is an extensive drainage area nearby that sometimes attracts Sora and Virginia Rail during migration, and Yellow Warbler and Willow Flycatcher during the breeding season. There are several trails in the park and it is worth exploring all of them, but the Nature Trail and the trails that follow the various waterways are often the most productive.

Species of Interest: Sora, Black-and-white Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak

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

Access & Parking: The park can be accessed daily during daylight hours. The visitor center is open 8:30am to 5pm, Monday – Friday.

Directions: From downtown Hendersonville, take 4th Avenue east, directly into the park. Parking is available at the visitor center on the left at the top of the hill. From Four Seasons Blvd (US-64), turn on Harris Street at the sign for Jackson Park. When Harris Street dead ends, turn left into the park.

Coordinates: N 35° 19' 06" W 82° 26' 47" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 53





North Carolina

Birding Trail

mountains • piedmont • coast

French Broad

8 Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site

Owner: National Park Service

81 Carl Sandburg Lane, Flat Rock, NC 28731
828-693-4178

Henderson County

www.nps.gov/carl

Site Description: The Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site is a 264-acre site that includes 22 historic buildings, 40 acres of pasture, and several miles of wooded trails. The site is mainly oak and mixed hardwood forest, with two small lakes, several creeks and some bog and wetland areas. Over 120 species of birds have been documented on-site. Near the parking lot you can bird along the main lake perimeter (0.3 mile loop) and either of the two trails leading up toward the house (0.3 miles with a 500 foot incline). There are excellent birding spots right around the Sandburg home, as well as behind the historic barn area going down toward and around the side lake. The Sandburg's were avid birders and they maintained several bluebird boxes on the property. The National Park Service continues that tradition and several successful clutches hatch each year. Spring and fall migration are the best times for birding. The changing weather brings tanagers, orioles, thrushes, vireos and a variety of warblers. On top of Big Glassy Trail (1.3 miles from the parking lot) you can view hawks during fall migration. Summer breeders include Ovenbird, Pine, Yellow-throated, Hooded and Black-and-white Warblers, Scarlet Tanager, Red-eyed Vireo and Indigo Bunting. In winter, watch for Winter Wren, as well as White-throated and Fox Sparrows, Hermit Thrush, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, and Green Heron.

Species of Interest: Hooded Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Scarlet Tanager

Habitats: oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, bog/wetland, river/stream, rocky outcrop

Access & Parking: The site is open daily from 9am to 5pm. Tours of the historic Sandburg home are available daily (fee).

Directions: The site is approximately 3 miles south of Hendersonville. From I-26, take Exit 53 (formerly Exit 22) and turn west on Upward Road. At the intersection with US 176/Spartanburg Highway, continue straight. Upward Road turns into Highland Lake Road. At the light, turn left on NC 225/Greenville Highway South. At the next light, turn right on Little River Road. Visitor parking is on the left.

Coordinates: N 35° 16' 22" W 82° 27' 10"

DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 53

