



North Carolina

Birding Trail

mountains • piedmont • coast

Northern Blue Ridge Parkway

1

Cumberland Knob

Owner: Blue Ridge Parkway

Blue Ridge Parkway Milepost 217
336-372-8568

Surry County

www.nps.gov/blri

Site Description: The woods around the Cumberland Knob parking lot, visitor center and picnic area provide nice opportunities to see a variety of songbirds. The Gully Creek Trail is a steep 2-mile trail that descends along Gully Creek (800 foot elevation change) and then loops back through hardwood forests to the visitor center. Throughout the summer watch for Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Black-and-white, Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers, Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos, Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wood Thrush, Carolina Chickadees and Carolina Wren. The Cumberland Knob Trail is an easy 0.5-mile loop that goes from the visitor center to the top of the knob and back. Birds that may be found along this trail include Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Carolina Wren, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Ovenbird, Hooded Warbler, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe and Indigo Bunting.

Species of Interest: Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Ovenbird, Hooded Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Indigo Bunting

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

Special Concerns: Sections of the Blue Ridge Parkway are often closed during the winter months due to snow and ice. Other temporary closures may occur following storms as a result of hazardous road conditions. It is best to call ahead to get current road conditions (828-298-0398). The use of tapes to attract birds is prohibited.

Access & Parking: Cumberland Knob is open seasonally from about May 1 - November 1. Ample parking is available.

Directions: From Sparta, drive approximately 17 miles north on NC 18 to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Turn right on the Parkway and proceed about 0.25 miles. The Cumberland Knob entrance is on the left.

Coordinates: N 36° 33' 11" W 80° 54' 31" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 15





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Mahogany Rock

Owner: Blue Ridge Parkway

Blue Ridge Parkway Milepost 235
336-372-8568

Alleghany County

www.nps.gov/blri

Site Description: This area is best known as a spot to monitor the spring and, especially, fall migration of raptors through the southern Appalachians, as a regularly monitored hawk migration station since the 1970's. From mid-August through November, the site is usually staffed by knowledgeable volunteers and boasts high numbers of migrating raptors. Early migrating Osprey, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, and others keep watchers entertained. Mid- to late-September brings thousands of Broad-winged Hawk. Later in the season, Golden Eagle peak in number, along with Sharp-shinned, Cooper's and Red-shouldered Hawks. Migrating songbird movements at the site can also be impressive, with numerous warblers, tanagers, and grosbeaks winging their way past the gap. Red-headed Woodpecker often show up in September; large flights of Monarch butterflies can also occur at this time. The site is small, but it sits on the edge of the Blue Ridge Escarpment and hosts some interesting breeding species, including Black-throated Green and Chestnut-sided Warblers, Ovenbird and Cedar Waxwing. This site is just north of Doughton Park, which has amenities including a lodge, coffee shop, picnic facilities and camping.

Species of Interest: Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Broad-winged Hawk, Black-throated Green Warbler, Cedar Waxwing, Scarlet Tanager

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

Special Concerns: Sections of the Blue Ridge Parkway are often closed during the winter months due to snow and ice. Other temporary closures may occur following storms as a result of hazardous road conditions. It is best to call ahead to get current road conditions (828-298-0398). The use of tapes to attract birds is prohibited. Timber Rattlesnakes, which are protected by federal law on Parkway lands, are found on both Mahogany Rock and Folger's Knob and are occasionally seen, so watch where you step and put your hands.

Access & Parking: The site is open daily, except during Parkway closures. Parking is available at the overlook.

Directions: From the intersection of US 21 and NC 18 in Sparta, go south on US 21 for 6 miles to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Take the Parkway 5 miles south to the Mahogany Rock Overlook at Milepost 235.

Coordinates: N 36° 26' 28" W 81° 05' 43" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 14





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Northern Blue Ridge Parkway

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Doughton Park

Owner: Blue Ridge Parkway

Blue Ridge Parkway Mileposts 238.5-245
336-372-8568

Alleghany, Wilkes Counties

www.nps.gov/blri

Site Description: Doughton Park is a spectacular park located right on the edge of the Blue Ridge Escarpment. Visitors to the park have several hiking options and may choose to focus on mid-elevation species along the upper rim of the escarpment, or take a more strenuous approach to the base of the escarpment. For a good sampling of the upper edge of the escarpment, the Fodder Stack Trail provides a quick way to see Wild Turkey, Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos, Ovenbird, Chestnut-sided, Hooded, Black-throated Green and Black-and-white Warblers, Scarlet Tanager and many other woodland and shrubby field species. For a longer look at many of these species and others, hike the entire Bluff Mountain Trail. Grasshopper Sparrow and Horned Lark are often seen in the agricultural lands near the Parkway and close to the Bluffs Lodge. For the more adventurous, a hike to the bottom on the Grassy Gap Fire Road or Cedar Ridge Trail provide possible looks at mid- to low-elevation species like Acadian Flycatcher, Swainson's Warbler and Worm-eating Warbler. These lower sections may also be reached via Longbottom Road, off NC 18. The diversity of habitats, size of the park, and its amenities can provide many days of exploration and birding.

Species of Interest: Blue-headed Vireo, Black-and-white Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Hooded Warbler

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

Special Concerns: Sections of the Blue Ridge Parkway are often closed during the winter months due to snow and ice. Other temporary closures may occur following storms as a result of hazardous road conditions. It is best to call ahead to get current road conditions (828-298-0398). The use of tapes to attract birds is prohibited.

Access & Parking: The site is open daily, except during Parkway closures. Parking is available at the Bluffs Coffee Shop.

Directions: From Laurel Springs, head south on NC 18 for 2 miles, to entrance for the Blue Ridge Parkway. Enter the Parkway at Milepost 248.1 and head north. Proceed 7 miles to the Bluffs Coffee Shop. Coming from the north, enter the Parkway at US 21 (Milepost 229.6), about 7 miles south of Sparta. Head south on the Parkway for about 12 miles to get to the Coffee Shop.

Coordinates: N 36° 26' 01"

W 81° 10' 38"

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Northern Blue Ridge Parkway

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Stone Mountain State Park

Owner: NC State Parks

3042 Frank Parkway, Roaring Gap, NC 28668
336-957-8185

Alleghany, Wilkes Counties

www.ncparks.gov

Site Description: Stone Mountain State Park consists of over 15,000 acres. The park is bordered to the north by the Blue Ridge Parkway, and by Thurmond Chatham Game Land to the west. Elevations in the park range from 1,900 feet to around 3,500 feet. The park's main feature is a 600 foot granite dome and approximately 17 miles of designated trout waters. Along these trout waters you might see a Belted Kingfisher or hear the song of a Louisiana Waterthrush. Forests dominated by chestnut oak cover the slopes of the park's rock-faces, while scarlet and black oaks, red maple, hickory, white pine and dogwood populate the woodlands. The understory is made up of blueberry, rhododendron and mountain laurel. Small, slow-growing pines and cedar fringe the rock, while mats of lichens, mosses and small ferns grow on areas of open, exposed granite. Along the Stone Mountain Loop Trail you will pass through these different community types. A variety of woodpeckers inhabit the area, including Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers, and Northern Flicker. Also be on the lookout for Scarlet Tanager, Whip-poor-will, Ruffed Grouse and Wild Turkey.

Species of Interest: Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Whip-poor-will, Scarlet Tanager

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

Access & Parking: The park is open from 8am to 6pm, November – February; 8am to 7pm, March, October; 8am to 8pm, April, May, September; 8am to 9pm, June – August.

Directions: From Elkin, follow US 21 North approximately 12 miles. Turn left on Traphill Road, then right on John P. Frank Parkway to the park entrance.

Coordinates: N 36° 22' 46" W 81° 01' 32"

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Thurmond Chatham Game Land

Owner: NC Wildlife Resources Commission

Longbottom Road, near Traphill, NC
919-707-0050

Wilkes County

www.ncwildlife.org

Site Description: Thurmond Chatham Game Land is adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway and Doughton Park. Habitat management on the Game Land, including prescribed burning, timber harvest and thinning, mowing, and food plot management, supports a variety of forest and shrub-scrub bird species, including Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos, Indigo Bunting, Scarlet Tanager and Eastern Wood-Pewee. From Long Bottom Road, walk up Bell Branch Road for 0.6 miles to some small fields. At 1.1 miles, a wet, brushy area attracts a variety of birds, including numerous wood warblers, thrushes and vireos. A full 2 miles up the road are some larger fields. During the spring migration, watch and listen for Swainson's Thrush.

Species of Interest: Acadian Flycatcher, Black-throated Green Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush

Habitats: oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, dry coniferous woodlands, early successional, river/stream

Special Concerns: Hunting is allowed on Thurmond Chatham 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 first gate at Bell Branch Road is open year round. A short distance up Bell Branch Road (less than 0.5 miles) is a hunter parking area. When the gate is closed (January – August), park at the gate without blocking it. The Game Land can be accessed daily during daylight hours.

Directions: From I-77 near Elkin, exit left on US 21 North Bypass and go approximately 13 miles. Turn left on Traphill Road and continue approximately 5 miles. Turn right on Long Bottom Road and travel for approximately 9 miles. Turn right on the gated access road (Bell Branch Road) by the brown house.

Coordinates: N 36° 22' 46" W 81° 09' 59" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 14

