



North Carolina

Birding Trail

mountains • piedmont • coast

Orange-Durham

1 Hill Forest

Owner: NC State University, College of Natural Resources

915 State Forest Road, Rougemont, NC 27572

Durham County

<http://www.cnr.ncsu.edu/for/dept/hilldemo.html>

919-515-7576

Site Description: Forest management operations on the 2,450-acre property attract a diversity of birds year round. Regenerating timber harvests attract early-succession songbirds like Yellow-breasted Chat and Prairie Warbler. Eastern Wood-Pewee and Summer Tanager nest in the open stands of pine timber. Kentucky and Hooded Warblers and Louisiana Waterthrush are common along the Flat River floodplain. These species, together with Acadian Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, and Scarlet Tanager, are easily viewed around Camp Slocum located adjacent to the river. Blue-headed Vireo occurs in one of the species' easternmost nesting locales. Birders should be able to see or hear breeding Grasshopper Sparrow in the pastures on both sides of State Forest Road near the intersection with Moore's Mill Road. An incredible diversity of songbirds passes through the forest during migration, especially in the spring. In the spring and summer, Wild Turkey and possibly Northern Bobwhite can be seen foraging in the old-field habitats scattered around the forest. Birding usually is excellent along State Forest Road, which offers convenient access to a majority of Hill Forest's habitats and bird species.

Species of Interest: Wood Thrush, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting

Habitats: mixed hardwood/pine forest, early successional, floodplain forest

Special Features/Concerns: Birding and non-hunting recreation is open throughout the year, except during firearm season for deer and turkey. Forest management operations and university educational activities always have first priority and precedence for the property. 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: Access to Hill Forest requires an annual permit for hiking. Permit applications are available at the Web site. Parking is allowed along county roads throughout the property with a parking permit displayed. Do not block gates. The site is open during daylight hours. ATV access is prohibited.

Directions: Hill Forest is 12 miles north of Durham (from the I-85 exit) and 2 miles south of Rougemont, along US 501. Traveling north on US 501, turn right onto Moore's Mill Road (first right after Quail Roost Road, SR 1601). Go 0.2 miles to State Forest Road. State Forest Road is not marked, but there is a wooden sign marked "Hill Forest" at the intersection. The property begins about 0.5 miles down the State Forest Road.

Coordinates: N 36° 11' 57" W 78° 53' 43"

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2 Little River Regional Park and Natural Area

Owner: Orange and Durham Counties

301 Little River Park Way, Rougemont, NC 27572
www.co.orange.nc.us/RecParks/little_river_park.asp
919-732-5505

Orange/Durham County line

Site Description: Little River Regional Park is a 391-acre park created from a cooperative project between Orange and Durham Counties, with assistance from the Triangle Land Conservancy, Eno River Association, and other organizations. A designated 0.6-mile birding trail starts at the park office and passes through several different habitats. There are also 7 miles of hiking trails and 7 miles of single track mountain biking trails. Maps of the trails are available at the park office. Eastern Bluebird and Northern Mockingbird can be seen along the power lines. Look for Carolina Wren, sparrows, and Indigo Bunting in early successional habitats. The oak forest and mixed hardwood/pine areas are home to permanent residents like Carolina Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Cardinal, and Pileated Woodpecker. During summer Wood Thrush and Ovenbird serenade you along trails. Red-eyed Vireo and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher are common. American Redstart, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Summer Tanager are songbirds you can expect to encounter. Red-shouldered and Cooper's Hawks can be seen flying overhead or perched in trees. Around the parking area a butterfly garden and feeders attract Ruby-throated Hummingbird and American Goldfinch.

Species of Interest: Brown-headed Nuthatch, Hooded Warbler, Summer Tanager, Fox Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting

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

Access & Parking: The park is open 8am to 5pm, November – February; 8am to 6pm, March and October; 8am to 7pm, April and September; 8am to 8pm, May – August.

Directions: From Durham, take the Guess Road/NC 157 exit (Exit 175) off I-85. Follow Guess Road north and look for the park entrance on the right 1.1 miles into Orange County (about 10.1 miles from the I-85 exit).

Coordinates: N 36° 09' 42" W 78° 58' 30" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 19





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3 Eno River State Park

Owner: NC State Parks

6101 Cole Mill Road, Durham, NC 27705
919-383-1686

Orange, Durham Counties

www.ncparks.gov

Site Description: Eno River State Park is 4,131 acres of rugged and varied piedmont terrain. The park has approximately 24 miles of trails, opportunities for river fishing, picnicking, backcountry camping, nature programs, seasonal canoeing and kayaking. See the park map for information on distance and difficulty. The centerpiece of the park is the 14.5 miles of the Eno River and its chain of shallow and rocky riffles and pools. Hike the Cox Mountain Trail for a challenging climb through a hardwood forest. Travel along Bobbitt Hole Trail to one of the most scenic spots in the park, a place where water rushes around rocks and greenery overhangs stone-lined bluffs. The park's varied habitats create opportunities to see a diversity of birds. More than 150 species of birds have been recorded at the park, 62 of which are likely breeders. There have been 31 warbler species, alone, recorded in the park. A wildlife checklist is available from the park office.

Species of Interest: Black Vulture, Pileated Woodpecker, Kentucky Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Scarlet Tanager

Habitats: Oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, early successional, floodplain forest, river

Access & Parking: The park is open from 8am to 6pm, November – February; 8am to 7pm, March and October; 8am to 8pm, April and September; 8am to 9pm, May – August. Pleasant Green and Cabe Lands access areas open at 8:30am and Cole Mill access area opens at 9:00 am. All three areas close 30 minutes earlier than the main gate.

Directions: From Southbound I-85, take Exit 173 northwest onto Cole Mill Road, which ends at the park. From Northbound I-85, take Exit 170 to US 70 west. Turn right on Pleasant Green Road and then left on Cole Mill Road, which ends at the park.

Coordinates: N 36° 04' 40" W 79° 00' 25" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 39





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4 Indian Trail Park - West Ellerbe Creek Trail/17 Acre Wood Preserve

Owner: Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association

Indian Trail, Durham, NC
919-698-8161

Durham County

www.ellerbecreek.org

Site Description: This small woodland preserve is an excellent migrant trap that routinely hosts a variety of migrating warblers. With sightings of approximately 115 species, including 26 species of warbler, Ellerbe Creek is a good place to explore when time is limited. From the parking area, follow the paved trail south past the play area, to the footbridge over the creek. Just beyond the footbridge is the intersection of the West Ellerbe Creek Trail. This flat paved trail extends eastward, where, after crossing Albany Street, it passes through a rich patch of floodplain forest that includes the Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association's 17 Acre Wood Preserve. The preserve has two well marked nature trail loops. The nature trails meander through moist floodplain forest and connect back to the main paved trail that follows the creek. The creek is easily visible from the paved trail and the riparian habitat hosts both resident and migrating birds. The trail ends after approximately 0.3 miles at Westover Park, where additional parking is available. An information kiosk just east of Albany Avenue has overview maps and a seasonal bird checklist, as well as information on plant communities and other wildlife. Occasionally, guided bird walks are sponsored by the Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association.

Species of Interest: Great Crested Flycatcher, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Wood Thrush

Habitats: oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, floodplain forest, creek

Access & Parking: The site is open year round during daylight hours.

Directions: From the intersection of I-85 and Hillandale Road (Exit 174), travel south on Hillandale for 0.3 miles to Indian Trail. Turn left (east) and travel 0.3 miles to the parking lot on the right.

Coordinates: N 35° 01' 28" W 78° 55' 45" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 39





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5 Occonechee Mountain State Natural Area

Owner: NC State Parks

Virginia Cates Road, Hillsborough, NC 27278
919-383-1686

Orange County

www.ncparks.gov

Site Description: The best sunset view in the Triangle region is from the Occonechee Mountain overlook. This monadnock is the highest point in Orange County, with the summit at 867 feet above mean sea level and about 350 feet above the Eno River. There are 190 acres of mountainous terrain in this piedmont park, including heath bluffs and cliffs. The relatively undisturbed forest of the ridge top includes one of the best chestnut oak stands in the region. Offered are scenic views, hiking trails, pond and river fishing, picnicking, and nature programs. Many interesting and even unusual birds can be found within the Natural Area, including wintering Common Raven and Brown Creeper. Black-throated Blue Warbler is a common migrant. Summer and Scarlet Tanagers can be expected, as well as a variety of other songbirds. A birding checklist is available through the Eno River State Park office.

Species of Interest: Black Vulture, Pileated Woodpecker, Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, Blue Grosbeak

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

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

Directions: From I-85, take Exit 164. Travel north on Churton Street, and turn left at the stoplight on Mayo Street. At the next stop sign, turn left on Orange Grove Road. Turn right on Virginia Cates Road, and follow the signs to the parking area.

Coordinates: N 36° 03' 38" W 79° 07' 01" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 39





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6 Johnston Mill Nature Preserve

Owner: Triangle Land Conservancy

Mt. Sinai Road, Chapel Hill, NC
919-833-3662

Orange County

www.tlc-nc.org

Site Description: The Johnston Mill Nature Preserve protects land along the New Hope Creek corridor. The trail is 1.5 miles long, with an optional 1-mile loop. Start the hike from the Mt. Sinai Road parking area. At the overlook scan for Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos and migrants. Cutting through the preserve are two transmission powerlines. A side trip to the west along the occasionally mowed right-of-way provides access to edge thicket habitat. Look for Indigo Bunting and Yellow-breasted Chat. Return to the main trail. After crossing the Pullman-Ryals Bridge, a spur to the left leads to the confluence of Old Field Creek and New Hope Creek. Check for Hooded Warbler in summer, and sparrows and Hermit Thrush in winter. At the junction a 1-mile loop trail heads uphill, where you can search for Yellow-billed Cuckoo, tanagers, woodpeckers, and migrants. After the loop, the main trail crosses a bridge over Booth Branch. Listen for Pileated Woodpecker, and search for Kentucky Warbler in summer. Winter Wrens are possible during winter. Soon the woods transition to pine, a favorite habitat of Pine Warbler and Brown-headed Nuthatch. The Turkey Farm Road parking area is just ahead. If you did not opt to leave a car here, retrace your steps to Mt. Sinai.

Species of Interest: Brown-headed Nuthatch, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak

Habitats: dry coniferous woodlands, oak forest & mixed hardwood/pine, floodplain forest, creek

Access & Parking: The preserve is open daily during daylight hours.

Directions: From I-40 West, take Exit 266 and head north on NC 86. There are two entries and parking lots for the preserve. For the first, turn right (east) off NC 86 after 0.2 miles on Whitfield Road. Drive 1 mile, then turn left on Turkey Farm Road. After 1 mile, and just before a narrow bridge over New Hope Creek, there is a parking area on the left, marked with a Triangle Land Conservancy sign. The second entry is accessed by driving 1 mile north of US 40 on NC 86, to Mt. Sinai Road. Turn right (east) and continue for 1 mile. Parking, denoted with Triangle Land Conservancy signs, is on the right just before New Hope Creek Bridge.

Coordinates: N 35° 59' 43" W 79° 03' 15" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 39





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7 Duke Forest

Owner: Duke University

Whitfield Road, west of Durham, NC
919-613-8014

Orange, Durham Counties

www.env.duke.edu/forest/

Site Description: With over 7,000 acres of land, Duke Forest provides extensive teaching, research and recreational opportunities along its network of roads and fire trails. The Korstian Division trail is popular with local birders and passes several research plots that are marked with informational signs. Beginning at Gate 24, the Wooden Bridge Road gravel trail runs deep into the forest over rolling hills where, in winter, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown Creeper and Hermit Thrush may be found. The trail passes a clear-cut that is a good location to scan edges and new growth for Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue Grosbeak and other species during summer. The trail first crosses New Hope Creek with a footbridge but continuing on, it loops back across the creek at a concrete dam that is often underwater but fordable. During migration, linger and check the vegetation at the creek crossings for thrushes and warblers. The main trail continues uphill through oak-hickory forest before reaching Gate 25 at Whitfield Road and the roadside path leading back to the parking lot.

Species of Interest: Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, Blue Grosbeak

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

Special Feature: Duke Forest contains many other access areas that provide extensive opportunities for birding. For more detailed information on other sites to visit at Duke Forest, visit www.env.duke.edu/forest/ or <http://tbg.carolinanature.com/durham.html>.

Access & Parking: The site is open year round during daylight hours. From the parking lot, walk past the fire station along Whitfield Road for a short distance to the driveway leading to Gate 24 to access the trail. This trail can be birded as a 4-mile loop, although to do so requires a 0.5 mile walk along Whitfield Road at the end to return to the parking lot. A number of spurs and side trails can be confusing, so birders are encouraged to purchase a map before visiting.

Directions: From the intersection of US 15-501 Bypass and NC 751 west of Durham, take NC 751 north, away from the Duke Campus. At the roundabout, go south (left) on Erwin Road for 3.3 miles. At the Whitfield Road traffic light, turn right and travel 1.3 miles to the parking lot of the New Hope Fire Station/Community Center. Park in the upper lot by the community center, away from the emergency vehicle entrance. People using the New Hope Community Center have priority parking privileges, so if a group of more than 2 cars is expected, please contact the Community Center ahead of time (919-489-3779).

Coordinates: N 35° 58' 40" W 79° 01' 44" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 39





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8 Mason Farm Biological Reserve

Owner: North Carolina Botanical Garden, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Old Mason Farm Road, Chapel Hill, NC
919-962-0522

Orange County

<http://ncbg.unc.edu/pages/41/>

Site Description: Mason Farm Biological Reserve is a 367-acre tract managed by the North Carolina Botanical Garden for long-term ecological research, teaching, and for the quiet enjoyment of nature. Biologists have discovered a rich diversity of 216 species of birds and 800 species of plants. Birders can walk a 2-mile loop around the Reserve. Look for Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Field Sparrow, and Indigo Bunting during breeding season. White-throated and Swamp Sparrows are common in winter. The Big Oak Woods bottomland forest swamp area of the preserve is home to Barred Owl, Pileated and Downy Woodpeckers, Wood Thrush, and Hooded and Kentucky Warblers. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker can be found during winter. Listen and watch for Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and Summer Tanager. Check the skies for soaring Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks. Bluebird boxes are placed near the trail. To learn more about the rich history and wildlife of the Reserve read John Terres' *From Laurel Hill to Siler's Bog: The Walking Adventures of a Naturalist*.

Species of Interest: Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting

Habitats: oak forest & mixed hardwood/pine, early successional, floodplain forest, small wetland communities

Special Concern: The road into Mason Farm may be inaccessible during high water events following a heavy rain.

Access & Parking: A permit (free) and a gate card (free to NC Botanical Garden members, \$5 otherwise) are required for entry into the Mason Farm Biological Reserve. Permits can be picked up at the North Carolina Botanical Garden's Totten Center and must be carried during visits. Mason Farm is open daily during daylight hours. The Totten Center is open 8am to 5pm, Monday- Saturday; 1pm to 5pm, Sunday.

Directions: From I-40 West, take the US 15/501 South exit. After the intersection of NC 54, turn left on Old Mason Farm Road and watch for the brown Botanical Garden sign. To pick up a permit, turn right into the Botanical Garden parking lot. To reach Mason Farm, continue on this road until you see Finley Golf Course. Just before the road makes a sharp turn to the left, turn right into what looks like a parking lot behind the building on the corner. Follow the edge of the parking lot and turn right at the practice green. After continuing a short distance, bear right again, just past the little cemetery, to the entrance. Follow the gravel road approximately 0.25 miles and turn right to cross the ford to the visitor center parking lot.

Coordinates: N 35° 53' 32" W 79° 00' 59" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 39

