



North Carolina

Birding Trail

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Pisgah

1 Pisgah Ridge

Owner: Blue Ridge Parkway

Blue Ridge Parkway Milepost s 404-418
828-271-4779

Transylvania, Haywood Counties

www.nps.gov/blri

Site Description: The Pisgah Ridge is one of the most popular sections of the Blue Ridge Parkway and is a wonderful area for birding from mid-April through mid-October. The variety of habitat and elevation provides a wide diversity of species. At the northeastern end, the Mills River Valley overlook is an excellent location for hawk-watching from mid- to late-September. Farther southwest along the Parkway, the trails around the Pisgah Inn (Milepost 408.6), picnic area, and campground are excellent for warbler watching. Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue and Canada Warblers are common, as are Blue-headed Vireo, Scarlet Tanager and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. At dawn and dusk, when traffic is low, Ruffed Grouse can often be seen along the road, especially in early spring. American Woodcock display around the Pisgah Inn in April and May, and Northern Saw-whet Owl can sometimes be heard calling in the area in the evening in late April and May. At the southwestern end of the ridge, stop at Graveyard Fields (Milepost 418.8). Least Flycatchers arrive here in late April or early May, Alder Flycatchers arrive in mid-May, and Northern Bobwhite can sometimes be heard in late spring. In September and early October, there are many good spots along the Parkway for watching migrating songbirds. The trails near the Pisgah Inn and the area along the road near the View Cold Mountain Overlook (Milepost 411.9) can be very productive, especially in early morning. In early fall, Tennessee Warbler are often the most common species.

Species of Interest: Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Veery, Canada Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Habitats: spruce-fir forest, northern hardwood/cove forest, oak forest & mixed hardwoods/pine, early successional

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: This area is open daily, except during Parkway closures. Parking is available at designated overlooks.

Directions: Access the Blue Ridge Parkway from one of several access points in Asheville and head south to the Mills River Valley Overlook at Milepost 404.5. This area continues on to Milepost 418 at the East Fork Overlook.

Coordinates: N 35° 24' 13" W 82° 45' 15" (Pisgah Inn)

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2 Devil's Courthouse

Owner: Blue Ridge Parkway

Blue Ridge Parkway Milepost 422.4
828-271-4779

Transylvania County

www.nps.gov/blri

Site Description: Peregrine Falcon nest on the rock face at Devil's Courthouse. The best viewing is from the parking area at Milepost 422.4. Northern Saw-whet Owl can reliably be found from Milepost 420 to Milepost 435. The stretch of Parkway from Silvermine Bald at Milepost 421 to Mt. Hardy at Milepost 425 includes about 1,200 acres of spruce-fir forest. Traveling this section of the Parkway provides opportunities to see Brown Creeper, Magnolia Warbler (during fall migration), Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red Crossbill, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Hermit Thrush. Visitors may chance upon an occasional Alder Flycatcher, especially in the area of the View Mt Hardy Overlook. Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue and Canada Warblers, Veery and Winter Wren are breeding species in this area. It's a great spot to go at dusk in spring and listen to Veery and Winter Wrens singing, while waiting for a Northern Saw-whet Owl to start calling.

Species of Interest: Peregrine Falcon, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Veery, Red Crossbill

Habitats: spruce-fir forest

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. Walking off the trail at Devil's Courthouse is prohibited due to rare plant communities and nesting Peregrine Falcons. Please obey all signs.

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

Directions: From Waynesville take US 23/US 74 south about 7 miles to the Parkway at Balsam Gap. Turn left on the Parkway. Proceed 19 miles to the Devil's Courthouse Parking Overlook at Milepost 422.4.

Coordinates: N 35° 18' 18" W 82° 53' 58"

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3 Pink Beds

Owner: Pisgah National Forest

US 276, 4 miles south of the Blue Ridge Parkway
828-877-3265

Transylvania County

www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc

Site Description: Pink Beds Loop Trail forms a “figure-eight” with the Mountains-to-Sea Trail Alternate Route, which runs across the center. The figure-eight may be hiked in either direction. Note that the bridge across the South Fork Mills River just east of the intersection of the Pink Beds Loop Trail and Mountains to Sea Trail is often out and impassable due to flooding or beaver damage. The best birding, for targets such as Appalachian Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Brown Creeper, is right at the bridge over the South Fork Mills River. Abundant snags are used here by a variety of woodpeckers, Great Crested Flycatcher, and other cavity nesters. Another good spot is along the northeast section of the trail.

Species of Interest: Appalachian Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown Creeper, Great Crested Flycatcher, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler

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

Special Concerns: Hunting is allowed on Pisgah National Forest 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 site can be accessed daily during daylight hours. There is no visitor center at the Pink Beds. However, there are two nearby visitor centers that most visitors will drive by during their travels in the area: 1) the Pisgah Ranger Station is 10 miles south of Pink Beds on US 276; open 8am to 4:30pm, Monday through Friday, seasonally open on Saturday; 2) the Cradle of Forestry in America is adjacent to the Pink Beds but charges an admission fee; open daily from 9am to 5pm, April – November, \$5 admission for adults 16 and older.

Directions: *From I-26 East*, take the Asheville Airport exit (Exit 40). Turn right off the exit ramp on NC 280 and drive approximately 16 miles to Pisgah Forest. At the intersection of NC 280 and US 64/276, turn right on US 276 and drive up into the National Forest. Pass the Ranger Station on the right and continue on US 276 for approximately 11 miles, going just past the Cradle of Forestry to the Pink Beds parking area on the right. The Pink Beds Loop Trailhead starts on the northeast corner of the parking lot. *From the Blue Ridge Parkway*, exit at Wagon Road Gap and head south on US 276 toward Brevard. The Pink Beds parking lot is 4 miles down US 276 on the left.

Coordinates: N 35° 21' 11"

W 82° 46' 46"

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4 Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education

Owner: NC Wildlife Resources Commission

1401 Fish Hatchery Road, Pisgah Forest, NC 28768
828-877-4423

Transylvania County

www.ncwildlife.org

Site Description: The Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education, located along the Davidson River within Pisgah National Forest, is surrounded by a variety of habitats that provide great birding opportunities throughout much of the year. From the parking lot, walk through the Bobby N. Setzer Fish Hatchery raceways to the exhibit loop trail. This short trail winds through a backyard wildlife habitat garden and into a mountain cove where a variety of species may be seen, including Black-throated Green Warbler, Wood Thrush and Cedar Waxwing. Be sure to check out the bird feeders along the trail, where Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Pine Siskin, and Red-breasted Nuthatch often stop to feed. Birders also have the option of hiking through the National Forest along a number of trails that are accessible from the parking lot. Trails vary in length, but even a short hike may reveal a number of species. During spring and early summer, birders may see or hear a variety of migrating warblers and vireos; during winter, numerous woodpeckers, Winter Wren and Brown Creeper may be seen. Stop in the Center for information about the trails and to learn more about the natural history of the region.

Species of Interest: Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Parula, Black-and-white Warbler

Habitats: northern hardwood/cove forest, river/stream, rocky outcrop

Special Features & Concerns: The Bobby N. Setzer State Fish Hatchery, the state's largest trout hatchery, is located on-site next to the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education. Hunting is allowed in Pisgah National Forest 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 Center and grounds are open daily from 8am to 4:45pm.

Directions: At the intersection of NC 280 and US 276/64 in Pisgah Forest, go north on US 276 into Pisgah National Forest. Drive approximately 5.5 miles and just after crossing the bridge, watch for a fork in the road and a sign for Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education. Turn left at the intersection onto FR 475. Drive approximately 1.5 miles and turn left at the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education sign.

Coordinates: N 35° 17' 03" W 82° 47' 30"

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5 Davidson River

Owner: Pisgah National Forest

US 276 to the Blue Ridge Parkway, near Brevard, NC
828-257-4200

Transylvania County

www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc

Site Description: This very beautiful and easily accessible section of the Pisgah National Forest is crisscrossed by numerous trails and roads, all of which can provide excellent birding from mid-April through mid-October. A wide variety of migratory bird species nest in the area. Louisiana Waterthrush are common along the Davidson River and its tributaries, as are a variety of warblers, vireos and thrushes in spring. There are numerous pull-off areas along US 276, but for quieter, low traffic birding, follow some of the gravel side roads such as FR 475B (Headwaters Road). Follow US 276 to the turn off for the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education and Bobby N. Setzer Fish Hatchery on the left, 5.2 miles from the entrance to the Pisgah National Forest. Stay to the right past the Fish Hatchery and the Forest Road begins at this point. The road forms an arc and rejoins US 276 in about 8 miles. Other gravel roads to explore include FR 477, which arcs on the east side of US 276 (across from the Davidson River Campground) to the Pink Beds. At 0.4 miles from the Pink Beds, FR 1206 (Yellow Gap Road) follows southeast into Henderson County for 13 miles, to the North Mills River Campground.

Species of Interest: Ruffed Grouse, Peregrine Falcon, Whip-poor-will, Louisiana Waterthrush, Rose-breasted Grosbeak

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

Special Concerns: US 276 is a paved road in good condition, but climbs from 2,170 feet to 4,530 feet from the base to the Blue Ridge Parkway. This requires many switchbacks and sharp curves. Drive the speed limit at all times. Recommended side roads are gravel and can be muddy and slick following heavy rains. Some side roads may be closed in winter or following severe storms.

Access & Parking: There are numerous pull-off areas from US 276, but the traffic can be distracting. For quieter, low traffic birding, follow some of the gravel side roads, such as FR 475B (Headwaters Road). There are also numerous excellent trails throughout this area. Obtain a trail map at the Pisgah District Ranger Station (on US 276) or at a nearby camping store.

Directions: From Brevard, take US 64/276 north to the intersection of NC 280 and US 64/276. Turn left on US 276. The Davidson River area follows US 276 for about 15 miles to the Blue Ridge Parkway entrance at Wagon Road Gap.

Coordinates: N 35° 17' 05" W 82° 43' 38" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 53





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6 DuPont State Forest

Owner: NC Division of Forest Resources

Staton Road (DuPont Road), east of Brevard, NC
828-877-6527

Transylvania, Henderson Counties
www.dupontforest.com

Site Description: DuPont State Forest contains 10,400 acres between Hendersonville and Brevard. Elevations range from 2,240 feet at Cascade Lake to 3,620 feet at the peak of Stone Mountain. The Little River runs through the forest, with four major waterfalls along its course. The forest also contains five lakes. The largest is 99-acre Lake Julia. Birds commonly sighted year-round include Eastern Bluebird, Carolina Chickadee, American Goldfinch, Red-tailed Hawk, White-breasted Nuthatch, Tufted Titmouse, Eastern Towhee, Wild Turkey, and Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers. In spring or summer, also be on lookout for Indigo Bunting, Bald Eagle, Ruffed Grouse, Broad-winged Hawk, Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher, Barred Owl, Scarlet Tanager, Black-throated Blue, Hooded, Black-and-white and Pine Warblers, and Whip-poor-will. Bufflehead and Ring-necked Duck are a common sight on Lake Julia during the cold days of winter; Common Loon and Hooded Merganser are also possible. Golden-crowned Kinglet and Red-breasted Nuthatch may occasionally be found in wooded areas from November through March. The forest contains over 80 miles of roads and trails open to birders, but trails must be shared with hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians.

Species of Interest: Hooded Merganser, Bufflehead, Pied-bill Grebe, Scarlet Tanager, Black-throated Blue Warbler

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

Special Concerns: Hunting is allowed on DuPont State Forest 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 and check the DuPont Website for specific hunting dates. Rock climbing and wading above waterfalls is not allowed.

Access & Parking: There are six parking lots located around the perimeter of the forest. Motor vehicles are not allowed on interior forest roads and trails. The forest is open daily during daylight hours, year-round.

Directions: *From Brevard:* take US 276 south to Cedar Mountain and turn left on Cascade Lake Road for 2.5 miles. Turn right on Staton Road/DuPont Road for 1.5 miles to the Buck Forest access area. *From Hendersonville:* Take US 25 Business (Church Street) south to Kanuga Road. Turn right on Kanuga Road, which becomes Crab Creek Road, and go 11 miles. Turn left on DuPont Road for 3.1 miles.

Coordinates: N 35 11' 28" W 82 37' 22" (Buck Forest Access Area)

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