



North Carolina

Birding Trail

mountains • piedmont • coast

Southern Foothills

1 Chimney Rock State Park

Owner: NC State Parks

431 Main Street, Chimney Rock, NC 28720
828-625-9611

Rutherford County

www.ncparks.gov

Site Description: Chimney Rock is the nearly 1,000-acre centerpiece of the developing Chimney Rock State Park, in Hickory Nut Gorge. The Park features 75-mile panoramic views from atop 315-foot Chimney Rock, four hiking trails ranging from easy to moderate, and 404-foot Hickory Nut Falls, one of the tallest waterfalls east of the Mississippi River. From riverbanks to high cliffs, a broad range of birds call Chimney Rock home, including nesting Peregrine Falcon. Deciduous forests on the north and east-facing slopes attract many summer-breeding birds, including Scarlet Tanager and as many as 15 species of warbler and vireo. Along the Rocky Broad River, floodplain trees and wet thickets attract Yellow and Yellow-throated Warbler, as well as Belted Kingfisher. The hawk migration every September and October is a spectacle not to be missed. More than 500 Broad-winged Hawks may be observed soaring together high in the sky on their way south. Smaller numbers of Sharp-shinned, Cooper's and Red-shouldered Hawks also pass through.

Species of Interest: Peregrine Falcon, Broad-winged Hawk, Cerulean Warbler, Scarlet Tanager

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

Special Feature: With 36 rare plant species and 14 rare animal species, the Hickory Nut Gorge is one of the most significant centers of biodiversity in the state.

Access & Parking: The ticket plaza is open 8:30am to 5:30pm, Eastern Daylight Time; 8:30am to 4:30pm, Eastern Standard Time. The park stays open 1.5 hours after the ticket plaza closes. The entrance fee is \$14 for adults, \$6 for youth.

Directions: From Asheville, take I-240 East to Exit 9 (Bat Cave and US 74A East). Stay on US 74A East for 20 miles and the Park entrance will be on the right. From Hendersonville, take US 64 East for 15 miles and the Park entrance will be on the right.

Coordinates: N 35° 25' 56" W 82° 14' 58" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 54





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2 Green River Game Land

Owner: NC Wildlife Resources Commission

Big Hungry Road, near Mount Valley, NC
919-707-0050

Polk County

www.ncwildlife.org

Site Description: With its position on the Blue Ridge Escarpment and a mosaic of managed habitats, Green River Game Land has a mix of typical “mountain” species, as well as some low country birds. Spring migration can bring Swainson’s Thrush and Blackpoll Warbler. Breeding season highlights include Swainson’s Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Blue Grosbeak, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Scarlet and Summer Tanagers. From the Big Hungry parking area, walk 75 feet east along the road, to a gate on the right at the Bishop Branch trailhead. At 0.4 miles, a roadbed to the left leads to wildlife fields and the Long Ridge trailhead. Bishop Branch Trail continues straight. When the roadbed opens up into a wildlife field, go straight across the field, to the foot bridge across the stream. Within 300 feet, the path crosses another small branch and then intersects another roadbed. Follow this, going parallel to the branch. The woods on either side of the trail have been prescribe burned, attracting a variety of birds. Continue to the intersection with Bear Branch Trail at an old clear-cut. From the intersection, either back-track on Bishop Branch Trail, or turn left to make a long loop on the Long Ridge Trail back to Big Hungry Road, or turn right to make a loop along the fireline to the Rock Hop Trail and then back to Bishop Branch Trail. On Green River Cove Road, Swainson’s Warbler can be found in the woods around the edge of the Fishtop Access parking lot. Prairie Warbler and Blue Grosbeak can be found in the early successional forest and fields along Green River Cove Road.

Species of Interest: Swainson’s Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Blue Grosbeak, Prairie Warbler, Common Yellowthroat

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

Special Concerns: Hunting is allowed on Green River 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.

Directions: There are two major sections of the Game Land, accessible from different exits off I-26: (1) Big Hungry area, (2) Green River Cove area. *To the Big Hungry area:* From I-26, take Exit 53 (Upward Road). Between Upward Road and the main parking area, there are several turns to stay on Big Hungry Road: Turn left at the top of the interstate ramp onto Upward Road and drive 1.5 miles to Big Hungry Road (SR 1802). Turn right and go 0.5 miles to Jackson Loop Road (SR 1801). Turn left (stay on Big Hungry Road) and go approximately 0.3 miles to King Road. Turn right to stay on Big Hungry Road. Reset odometer at the bridge over Big Hungry River (dam visible upstream, to the left). From the bridge, drive 2.4 miles to the dirt-gravel parking area on the right, just before the pavement ends. *To the Green River Cove area:* From I-26, take Exit 59 (Saluda). Turn left off the ramp and drive 0.1 miles. Turn left on Green River Cove Road and drive down through the switchbacks to the Fishtop Access parking area on the left. There are additional pull-offs farther down Green River Cove Road that also allow access to the Game Land property.

Coordinates: N 35° 17' 28" W 82° 19' 29" (Big Hungry area) DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 54





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3 Pearson's Falls

Owner: Tryon Garden Club, Inc.

2748 Pearson's Falls Road, Saluda, NC 28773
828-749-3031

Polk County

www.pearsonsfalls.org

Site Description: This 267-acre property has been owned and maintained as a nature preserve by the Tryon Garden Club since 1931. Modest entrance fees partially offset the costs of operation. Proceeding from the parking area beyond the gatehouse, trails run in several directions. To the left of the picnic shelter, the main trail of this NC Natural Heritage site borders a rocky stream and leads through a mixed forest of hardwoods and hemlocks for 0.25 miles, to a 90-foot waterfall. The Pearson's Falls Glen along Colt Creek has long been noted for its abundance of native plants and wildflowers, but many bird species can also be seen and heard here. Watch and listen for birds typical of mountain forests, including a variety of wood warblers, thrushes and tanagers.

Species of Interest: Eastern Wood-Pewee, Black-throated Green Warbler, Ovenbird, American Redstart, Hooded Warbler, Scarlet Tanager

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

Access & Parking: From March 1 – October 31, the site is open 10am to 6pm, Tuesday through Saturday; 12pm to 6pm, Sunday; closed Monday. From November 1 – December 31 and the month of February (closed in January), the site is open 10am to 5pm, Wednesday through Saturday; 12pm to 5pm, Sunday; closed Monday, Tuesday. The gate closes 45 minutes prior to closing time. There is a \$3 admission fee/adult.

Directions: Pearson's Falls is located off NC 176, 4 miles north of Tryon and 3 miles south of Saluda. Signs mark the entrance.

Coordinates: N 35° 12' 54" W 82° 20' 09"

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4 Norman Wilder Forest

Owner: Pacolet Area Conservancy

US 176, between Tryon and Saluda, NC
828-859-5060

Polk County

www.pacolet.org

Site Description: Norman Wilder Forest consists of 185 acres of land owned and protected by the Pacolet Area Conservancy. The mature mixed hardwood forest is located on the steep, south-facing slopes of Little Warrior Mountain and along the Pacolet River Scenic Byway. Trails wind through beautiful vistas and provide hikers with a leafy canopy of shade trees and stunning views of sheer rock walls. A number of streams flow through the property on their way to the North Pacolet River. Bridges and steps along the trail loops make this a most enjoyable 2-3 mile moderate hike. Watch and listen for birds typical of mountain forests, including a variety of wood warblers, thrushes and tanagers. Visit the Website for a trail map and bird list.

Species of Interest: Wood Thrush, Black-throated Green Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Ovenbird, American Redstart, Hooded Warbler

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

Access & Parking: Parking for the Norman Wilder Forest is available at both trail heads (see directions). The site is open daily during daylight hours. Guided tours or interpretive programs are available upon request and by appointment.

Directions: From Tryon, take US 176 west, toward Saluda. From the intersection of NC 108 and US 176, the first trailhead parking area is approximately 4 miles west on US 176, on the right. A second parking area is located off Tau Rock Vineyard Road. Access this area by traveling a bit farther on US 176 from the first trailhead. Turn right on Tau Rock Vineyard Road. The trailhead and parking area is approximately 0.25 miles on the left.

Coordinates: N 35° 13' 28" W 82° 16' 26"

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5 Weaverbarton Shuford Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary

Owner: Pacolet Area Conservancy

213 Shuford Road, Columbus, NC 28722
828-859-5060

Polk County

www.pacolet.org

Site Description: Weaverbarton Shuford Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary is an 85-acre tract of land protected by Conservation Agreement with the Pacolet Area Conservancy. The Sanctuary is located in the town of Columbus, in a developing urban landscape. The Sanctuary contains diverse habitats, including upland hardwoods, slope hardwoods, river bottom hardwoods, scrub pine, thickets, dead standing and down trees, and a meandering stream, Weaver Branch. These habitats provide excellent habitat for resident and migratory songbirds, as well as a diversity of other local wildlife. With three interconnecting loop trails, you can design your ideal walk. Along the trail, there are resting benches that allow the opportunity to quietly enjoy the stream, the woodland, and its inhabitants. You may also wish to extend your walk, visiting habitats not found in the Sanctuary, by connecting to the St. Luke's Tom Raymond Fitness Trail and the Isothermal Community College Trail.

Species of Interest: Blue-headed Vireo, Hermit Thrush, Black-throated Green Warbler, American Redstart, Black-and-white Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler

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

Access & Parking: Parking for the Sanctuary is available at three access points (see directions). The site is open daily during daylight hours. Guided tours or interpretive programs are available upon request and by appointment.

Directions: From Columbus, take NC 108 (W. Mills Street). Cross over I-26 and make the first left on Shuford Drive. Follow Shuford Drive for about 0.25 miles to the trail head on the right. Two additional access points are from St. Luke's Hospital and Isothermal Community College/Polk County Library, both just a short distance west on NC 108. St. Luke's Hospital is approximately 0.3 miles west of Shuford Drive, on the left. Follow signs toward Emergency; parking is on the right. There are signs for the Tom Raymond Fitness Trail and Weaverbarton Shuford Memorial Sanctuary Trail near the parking lot. Isothermal Community College (ICC)/ Polk County Library is approximately 0.5 miles west of Shuford Drive, on the left. There are signs for both trails at the south side of the parking lot, closer to ICC.

Coordinates: N 35° 14' 21" W 82° 12' 32"

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6 Foothills Equestrian Nature Center

Owner: Foothills Equestrian Nature Center

3381 Hunting Country Road, Tryon, NC 28782
828-859-9021

Polk County

www.fence.org

Site Description: Foothills Equestrian Nature Center is a 384-acre property protecting a mix of hardwood forest, meadow, and wetlands. Nine nature trails cross the grounds. The longest, Southside Trail, is just over 1 mile in length; most of the others are much shorter. During the spring migration, watch along the trails for a variety of wood warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks and sparrows. The summer breeding season brings nesting woodpeckers, American Woodcock, Northern Bobwhite, Eastern Wood-Pewee and Wood Thrush. At the start of your visit, check in at the Nature Center to get a bird list for the property and be sure to check out the range of seminars and programs offered on-site.

Species of Interest: Broad-winged Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wood Thrush, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Black-and-white Warbler

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

Access & Parking: The site is open daily during daylight hours. The visitor center is open 8am to 5pm, Monday – Friday.

Directions: From Tryon, travel south on US 176 to the South Carolina state line. Bear left on Ridge Road. Cross the railroad tracks and bear left on Hunting Country Road. Continue 3.4 miles to the Foothills Equestrian Nature Center entrance on the left.

Coordinates: N 35° 12' 02" W 82° 10' 29" DeLorme (NC Gazetteer) Page: 54

