



# Newsletter



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Carvers Creek State Park

January 1, 2023

“On a trail, to walk is to follow.” Robert Moor, *On Trails, An Exploration*

In 2023, we will explore the trails you can find in Carvers Creek State Park, give you some tips for enjoying your hikes, and pass on some of the wisdom our Ranger staff has accumulated over the years. Our first exploration will be the 2 mile long Rockefeller Loop trail at the Long Valley Farm Access.

As Robert Moor noted in his book *On Trails*, on a trail you are following in the tracks of those that came before you. Others, maybe human, maybe animal, maybe wind and rain, have been there before and will be there after we pass through. Their steps, and ours, are all part of the same trail.

On the Rockefeller Loop trail our pathway will take us through old crop fields and cow pastures, past the homes of wild turkeys, down around the Rockefeller house and by the old millpond that was built before the Civil War. Along the way, we might see Eastern Bluebirds, and Towhees in the fields, hear the tap-tapping of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in the oaks, or see a bounding deer track crossing the trail at first light. The trail has many things to share and we'll talk about some of them as we walk.

The Rockefeller Loop trail starts at the parking lot of the Long Valley Farm Access in Spring Lake. There are two trailheads at the parking lot, so we'll start at the wide trailhead by the signboard. As you pass through the fence that edges the parking area, on your left you'll see one of our picnic areas just off the path, hidden in the oak and pine trees. The signboard on your right has a trail map, a copy of our upcoming events and some helpful information for your park visit.

Next to the signboard, you'll see a mown grassy area that people can picnic in, play frisbee or other sports, or just sit and enjoy the warm sunshine. A road to the right leads to the older areas that were in use when the park was a working farm, and which park staff now use as a maintenance and construction area. That road isn't open to the public, so we'll continue our journey on the main trail. As we reach the end of the grassy sward, you'll see a small stand of trees on the right. American holly, black cherry and others closely crowd together on the trail edge, forming a high perch for birds to keep an eye out for predators and food. Don't be surprised if you see a bright Goldfinch or loud Mockingbird keeping an eye out for a meal in one of the trees.

Further down the path on the left you'll find the first *wayside exhibit*, which is an educational display where you can see some of the different birds that live in the area. It tells you about how the area is an “edge habitat”, which is a place where two different habitats touch. All along the first half-mile of the trail, you'll see native grassland meadow on one side and long-



Picture by the author

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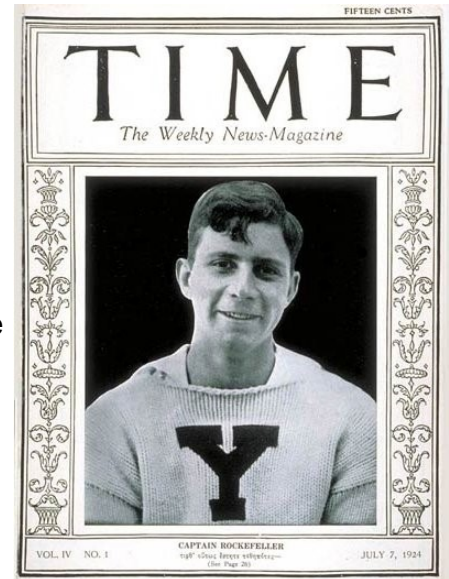
**Camouflage Hike**

leaf pine forest on the other. Edge habitats tend to support a greater variety of plants and animals than the interior areas of either one.

As you continue down the trail, you'll come to a small picnic area on the left side, where you can stop and rest if you like. Another hundred feet or so past the picnic table, you'll see a fireline (not a trail) on your left side, next to another wayside exhibit about how fire and the longleaf pine life cycle interact. Firelines are how the park staff, with the support of the regional Fire Management team, block off areas within the park to make them more manageable during prescribed fires. They are maintained by park staff throughout the year.

Continuing your trip, you'll see one of the old tobacco pack houses on the left. There is another picnic table and trash can nearby. From here you can see the Rockefeller house where James Stillman Rockefeller and his wife Nancy (Carnegie) Rockefeller made a vacation home in the late 1930's. In front of the house, by the trail, you'll see a wayside exhibit that discusses the history of Long Valley Farm and the McDiarmid Millpond behind it.

As you stand next to the wayside exhibit, there are several things of interest you can see from here. To the East (the right as you face the Rockefeller House), you can see the former home of Miss Betty, the Rockefeller's live-in cook. Directly to your front, you can see the magnolia grove (*Magnolia grandiflora*) planted by Mrs. Rockefeller. To the West (left side), the trail continues and you can see the start of the Cypress Point Loop trail. There are two buildings to the left as well, a picnic shelter and our canoe storage building. Both are historical buildings that were built on the farm over the years and are still in use.



James Stillman Rockefeller, Yale Crew captain

To your right, take the short trail to the opening in the fence that surrounds the magnolia grove. Turn to your left after you pass through and you'll have a chance to take a rest in Mrs. Rockefeller's magnolia garden. Scattered throughout the garden are benches and several exhibits where you can learn about the history of the park, the Rockefeller House and the wildlife and plants in the area. The magnolia leaves form a thick carpet under the trees, along with last year's seed pods. After your break, keep going right around the Rockefeller House. As you walk, you may notice several bluebird houses set around the area, a result of an Eagle Scout project several years ago. Most of the houses are still in use today and we regularly check them and ensure they are ready for the next season's broods.

To the right of the Rockefeller House, you'll see the old spring house (covering a natural spring that was used for fresh water and natural cooling) and a gazebo. By the side of the fence there are two large Live Oak trees that were planted by the Rockefellers. Enjoy the peace and breeze under the Live Oaks as you look out onto the millpond, the dam, the old pavilion and at the far end, the grist mill.

As you continue around the Rockefeller House, notice the two large artillery shells placed near the door by Mr. Rockefeller, a nod to the beginnings of nearby Fort Bragg as an artillery reservation during World War I (originally called Camp Bragg). He served on Fort Bragg during World War II, and left the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Completing your circuit of the house, you'll pick up the trail at the signboard again, then continue past the sign for the Cypress Point Loop trail. Next month we'll talk about that trail, so for now, stay on the Rockefeller Loop trail. You'll climb a short rise, and see on your right the house that Ms. Mac, the Rockefeller's housekeeper, lived in. If you walk around the house, you'll find a small stand of Carolina Allspice which is very fragrant during the summer months.

Heading back to the trail, you'll walk through the pines with oaks and other trees mixed in the understory. Watch the trail for deer tracks and listen for birdsong as you pass through. This time of year, you might hear Cardinals, some of the various woodpeckers that live in the park, American Crows, a Tufted Titmouse, the Carolina Chickadee and others. Take a moment to pause and listen and just take it all in.



Tufted Titmouse

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Tufted\\_Titmouse/photo-gallery](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Tufted_Titmouse/photo-gallery)

The trail will soon turn hard to the left, and you'll begin to walk the boundary with the nearby neighborhood. The trail rises slowly until you reach the high point, where you'll see the other end of the fireline you passed earlier, and an ephemeral pool on your left. Ephemeral or vernal pools are temporary wetlands that may or may not have standing water, and serve as a protected place for amphibians and insects to breed and grow. Come back in April and look for the pool again, and you'll most likely find several hundred tadpoles scattered within it.

Now continue down the trail, enjoying the sights, sounds and smells of the forest. The woods are "lovely, dark and deep" indeed, but unlike our friend Robert Frost, you have less than a mile to go before you return to where you started. The trail stays straight and level for a time, then turns once again to the left. A fireline goes to your right, but isn't open to the public.

You only have about a quarter mile left now. Take your time and enjoy the walk. This moment won't come again. Practice walking as quietly as you can, phones silenced, voices hushed. What can you see? What can you hear? Engage all your senses as you finish your walk and come back out on the main road. The parking lot is to your left, and the old tobacco drying barn in front of you. Welcome back.

Would you like to follow along on the trail? **Join us at 4pm on February 1st at Long Valley Farm** to walk the Rockefeller Loop trail with a Ranger! See our events list for details.

### ***Ranger Tips from Ranger Anderson:***

When observing nature: [Observe with more than just your eyes, what's that sweet smell? Where is that bird calling from? Did you find something cool and want to know what it is? Take a picture and ID it with an app like "Seek" or "iNaturalist". You can even show a park ranger or park naturalist and we'll do our best to help you find an answer!](#)

### ***Books for outdoor education:***

We were recently asked about good books to help with outdoor education. Some of our favorites are:

[The Amateur Naturalist's Handbook](#) by Vinson Brown. (out of print but you can find used copies.)

[The Nature Observer's Handbook](#) by John W. Brainerd

[Any good field guide \(Peterson, Audubon, Sibley\)](#). Just take it outside and start working on your identification skills!

If you would like to attend one of our upcoming programs please call 910-436-4681 to reserve your spots.

### StoryWalk

**Wednesday, Feb. 1st—Tuesday, Feb. 28th**

StoryWalk® is simply a book and a walking path combined. We will be posting "The Hike By: Alison Farrell.". The StoryWalk® will be along part of our Rockefeller Loop Trail, an easy 1 mile round trip hike and will be posted all month long.

### First Day Hike

**Wednesday, Feb. 1st @ 4:00 pm**

First Day (of the Month!) Hike: In honor of North Carolina celebrating the Year of the Trail, we will host a First Day of the Month hike every month this year. In February, we will hike the Rockefeller Loop Trail, which is also our newsletter topic for January. Bring your copy of the newsletter or stop by the office and get one and follow along with a Ranger to learn about the nature and history of the Rockefeller Loop trail. We'll meet at 4pm on Wednesday, February 1st outside the Long Valley Farm office. Please call (910) 436-4681 to sign up.

### 2 Mile Nature Hike

**Saturday, Feb. 4th @ 10:00 am**

Come out for our 2 mile nature hike. We will be exploring our fire-dependent longleaf pine ecosystem and observing numerous native species to the Sandhills. We will also see some longleaf pine trees with Red Cockaded Woodpecker cavities. Bring a bottle of water, a camera (if you like taking pictures), and your walking shoes! **This hike will be held at our Sandhills Access at 995 McCloskey Rd in Fayetteville.** YOU MUST SIGN-UP ahead of time.

### Nature Journaling

**Sunday, Feb. 5th @ 2:00 pm**

Come to the park to learn to make a nature journal! The Park Superintendent will lead a class on how to make the journals. After we finish, we will take a short hike to write in our journals. This class is suitable for all ages and families are welcome! Please call the park at (910) 436-4681 to reserve your space. This class is limited to 10 people. Due to the nature of the activity, this class may be rescheduled if there is inclement weather.

### Owl Prowl

**Saturday, Feb. 11th @ 6:30 pm**

Participants will be learning about owl adaptations, what they sound like, as well as looking for our own owls to identify! We ask participants bring their own flashlight.

### Volunteer Day

**Saturday, Feb. 18th from 9:00 am– 12:00 pm**

Carvers Creek State Park offers a wide variety of opportunities when you come to our Volunteer Days. Our prized volunteers help us with everything from our old farm fences, to culverts, to invasive species of plants, to leaf clean-up, trail creation, and many others. We will be meeting at the **Long Valley Access located in Spring Lake, NC 28390.** Call to sign up.

### Birdwatching in the Park

**Saturday, Feb. 19th @ 2:00 pm (Long Valley Farm)**

**Saturday, Feb. 26th @ 1:00 pm (Sandhills Access)**

Join a park naturalist at our Sandhills access for a bird watching walk around the Wiregrass loop trail. An easy 1.4-mile loop that starts and ends at the parking lot, the Wiregrass loop trail is a great place to find some of the birds that live year-round in our longleaf pine habitat, and maybe even see some of the less frequent visitors that are just passing through. We'll start early to help keep things cool but bring weather appropriate clothes and some water! We will be using the Merlin Bird ID app (free and available in both Android and IOS app stores). If you have binoculars, be sure to bring them! The hike will start at 1:00 pm For Sandhills access- meet at the trail head near the small parking lot. For Long Valley Farm Access the hike will be start at 2:00 pm and will meet in front of the Welcome Center. The event and access to the park are both free of charge. Please call our office at 910-436-4681 to sign-up!

### Camouflage Hike

**Saturday, Feb. 25th @ 2:00 pm**

Join a ranger for a short hike focusing on nature's camouflage. After discovering what animals might be hiding around the office, join in on a nature hide and seek game to see how well you can hide and how clothing colors can affect hiding skills. Feel free to wear camouflage or dress in your best flash coloration to see how you fair. This program is best for ages 12 and under but all are welcome. Please call the office to register.