

2018 WETLAND TREASURES OF THE CAROLINAS

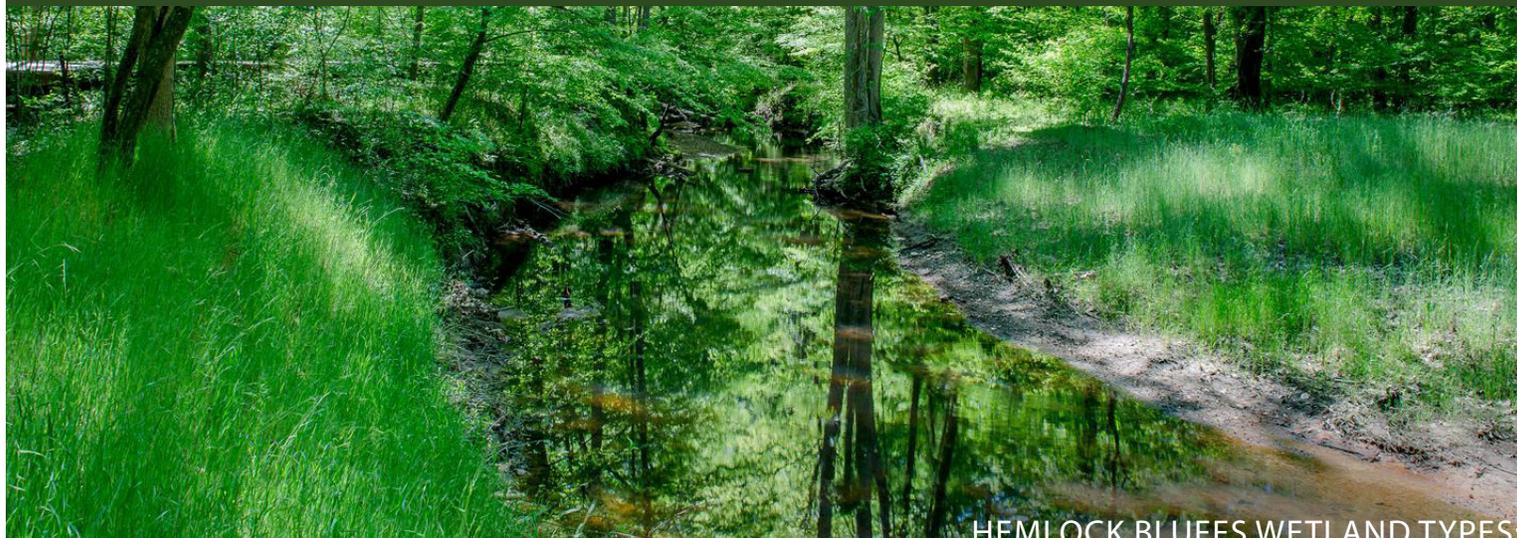


Photo by Bill Stice

HEMLOCK BLUFFS WETLAND TYPES:
Floodplain pools, bottomland hardwood forest



HEMLOCK BLUFFS

Property Owner: State of North Carolina, Town of Cary
Recognitions & Designations: Registered State Natural Area (NC Natural Heritage Program)

carolinawetlands.org

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

Hemlock Bluffs Nature Preserve has been open to the public for access via the trail system only during normal hours of operation since 1993 when the Town of Cary opened the Stevens Nature Center on site for environmental education programming year-round. The wetlands at the nature preserve are valuable habitat for many species of wildlife, especially birds, reptiles and amphibians. This site is a 'living laboratory' for classes given by nature center staff and is used by many universities, public schools and other groups for ecological field trips. The wetlands are protected from direct development and the temporary pools are surrounded by wide upland forested buffers.

FLORA & FAUNA

The alluvial floodplain forest around Swift Creek is largely intact in the 140-acre nature preserve. A large population of red-backed salamanders is unique to the Piedmont of NC in surrounding uplands. Four-toed salamanders are present in small numbers in the temporary



Spotted salamanders—photo by Bill Stice

pool system. Decent numbers of spotted and marbled salamanders breed in the wetlands near Swift Creek. Common frogs include Cope's gray treefrog, green treefrog, upland chorus frog, spring peeper, southern leopard frog, green frog, pickerel frog and American bullfrog. Spotted turtles are present and Eastern box turtles are common. Copperheads are abundant.

THREATS

Habitat fragmentation is a primary problem for the plants and animals at this site. Hemlock Bluffs is surrounded by neighborhoods and roads in Cary, NC on three sides. Polluted runoff, particularly runoff carrying sediment and nutrient pollution from adjacent land use, is also of concern.

ACCESS

Explore this site using the Swift Creek Loop Trail, which is open during nature preserve operating hours only. In order to protect sensitive areas within the preserve, hikers are not allowed off trail. For more information, call 919-387-5980.

SOURCES

Hemlock Bluffs Nature Preserve

**Carolina
Wetlands
Association**