

2019 WETLAND TREASURES OF THE CAROLINAS

MERCHANTS MILLPOND STATE PARK

Property Owner: North Carolina State Parks
Recognitions & Designations: North Carolina Natural Heritage Area, NC
(NC Natural Heritage Program)

carolinawetlands.org



MERCHANTS MILLPOND WETLAND TYPES:

Photos courtesy of NC State Parks

Coastal Ponds, Cypress-Gum Swamp (Blackwater)

ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE

The 760-acre millpond (3'447 acres of swamp and hardwood forests) is more than 190 years old and has developed into complex, mature ecosystems. Here, coastal pond and southern swamp forest mingle, creating one of North Carolina's rarest ecological communities.. At the upper end of the millpond is Lassiter Swamp, an ecological wonderland containing remnants of an ancient bald cypress swamp. The Park provides habitat for a rich assemblage of wetland-dependent flora and fauna.

FLORA & FAUNA

Towering bald cypress and tupelo gum trees, displaying growths of Spanish moss and resurrection ferns, shade the pond's dark, acidic waters. More than 200 species of birds, ranging from graceful egrets to turkeys and owls, have been recorded in the park. Though beavers themselves are rarely encountered, dams, lodges, and teeth marks attest to their presence. Mink, river otter and bobcat are occasionally spotted. Numerous species of aquatic plants, such as the floating yellow cow lily and the submerged coontail, thrive in the pond. Surrounding the aquatic communities is an unspoiled wilderness. Mature stands of American beech highlight a mixture of pine and hardwood

forests. Carpenter frogs, leopard frogs, bullfrogs, cricket frogs and species of tree frogs thrive in the aquatic environment of the millpond. Several species of pond turtles and water snakes are present including water moccasins. The millpond is the northernmost home of the American alligator.

THREATS

Land use surrounding the park to the north and east is agricultural with some low-density residential areas. Associated impacts may include spread of invasive species, altered hydrology, and altered water quality.

ACCESS

Merchants Millpond State Park is located in Gates County in Northeastern NC, 12 miles from the Virginia border. The park may be reached from US 158, NC 32 and NC 37. Canoes can be rented or visitors can bring their own. Nine miles of trails offer a place to view the "enchanted forest" and Lassiter Swamp. Fishing is available from the bank, or small boats (trolling motors only) may be launched at the boat ramp. Three types of camping are available at family and group campgrounds, primitive backpacking sites and three remote canoe-in campgrounds reached by paddling trails. Please visit this [website](#) for more information.

SOURCES

North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation



*Wildlife at Merchants Millpond State Park.
Photo courtesy of Chuck Richardson, 2008.*

