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- 9. Five Runs Loop Trail
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- 11. Conecuh Trail
- 12. Chattahoochee Trail
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Southeast

Honorable Mentions

- E.
- F.

Alabama

The Southeast region of Alabama borders the states of Georgia and Florida. Geographically speaking, this region does not differ greatly from the Gulf Coast region. The hills are a bit higher, at times around 300 feet above sea level, but overall, the region is flat coastal plain.

Two distinct features make this region stand out. The first is the Chattahoochee River, which forms the eastern border between Alabama and Georgia. The river begins in northern Georgia at the con-

vergence of several small streams in the Blue Ridge Mountains and gathers stream before flowing into the Gulf of Mexico.

Hikers will encounter the Chattahoochee twice in this guide: first at the Eufaula Wildlife Refuge. Here, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has established an 11,184-acre wetland by building levees along the banks of the river. Bird watchers are in for a real treat here with over 300 species of birds to be found. In addition, the refuge is home to 40 species of animal life. The second stop along the Chattahoochee is at Chattahoochee State Park, located directly on the southeast corner of Alabama at the Alabama/Georgia/Florida state lines.

The second highlight of the Southeast region is the Conecuh National Forest. Although this is the smallest of the national forests in the state, Conecuh is renown for its crystal blue spring lakes and its cypress ponds. It is also known for the 20-mile long Conecuh Trail, an easy weekend hike through ponds and lakes and dogwood, holly, longleaf pine, magnolia, and cypress forests.

As with the Gulf Coast region, the weather in the Southeast is subtropical, and late summer heat and humidity can make outdoor activities impossible at times. If you're hiking the region during this time, carry plenty of water and of course, insect repellent. Much of the hiking in this region is around swamps and marshes and mosquitoes can be a nuisance. Also like the Gulf Coast region, being in close proximity of the Gulf of Mexico means that the warm moist Gulf air can produce brief but very heavy rain-fall unexpectedly.

Although this area is not known for getting the full force of hurricanes, its location near the Gulf still requires hikers to keep an eye on the weather during hurricane season (May through November). A hurricane pushing on shore from the Gulf can mean dangerous tornadoes and flooding to these inland areas.

The hot, humid summer gives way to great hiking weather in the fall and winter as the temperature moderates from the mid 60s to low 70s. It does get a bit colder in this region than in the Gulf Coast, with temperatures averaging in the 40s in January. Cold snaps of below 30 degrees are more frequent than in the Gulf Coast region.

8

Open Pond Trail

Hike Summary

The Open Pond Trail, at the southern end of Conecuh National Forest, travels around three ponds—Open Pond, Buck's Pond, and Ditch Pond. The travel is easy, and the scenery is beautiful. The trail begins along the grassy banks of Open Pond, where cypress trees line the banks and an occasional alligator may be seen. As the trail turns into a sandy footpath, it heads into the woods and around Buck's Pond. Finally, it follows a dirt Forest Service road as it rounds Ditch Pond, where herons and egrets abound.

Hike Specs

Start: From the parking lot at Open Pond Recreation Area

Length: 2.1-mile loop

Approximate Hiking Time: 1½ hours

Difficulty Rating: Easy, over low, gentle hillsides

Trail Surface: Dirt roads and sand-covered paths; grassy banks along Open Pond

Lay of the Land: Forests of longleaf and slash pine, magnolia, and dogwood; cypress ponds

Elevation Gain: [Need information]

Land Status: National forest

Nearest Town: Andalusia, AL

Other Trail Users: Motorists and cyclists

Canine Compatibility: Dog friendly over easy trails; permit and leash required

Keep an eye out while traveling around the ponds for a wake in the water, like an invisible boat moving across the surface. Look just below the surface, and you may see an American alligator.

In common with many of the hiking areas of the Gulf Coast and Southeast Alabama, Conecuh National Forest offers bird-watchers a wealth of subjects to feast their eyes upon. Wood ducks are the most prominent birds along the trail. Large herons and egrets soar above the ponds while blue kingfishers, doves, wrens, and goldfinches often dart out of the brush.

The Open Pond Trail begins by circling its namesake pond, running parallel with a paved service road. At the southern end of the pond, the trail becomes sandy before turning into a dirt footpath as it moves away from the pond. This portion of the trail is carefully designated by white-plastic diamond markers every 20 feet or so. Turns are marked by dark black arrows on the markers, pointing in the direction of travel. The trail passes by the Open Pond Campground, which can be crowded during summer and during hunting season.

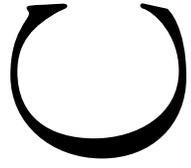
Heading away from the campground, the dirt path circles a marsh of Open Pond to the southeast. The trail crosses a footbridge over the marsh and a runoff area. The trail then crosses several feeder creeks until it reaches the second cypress pond on the trip, Buck's Pond. A T-shaped fishing pier juts into Buck's Pond, and many fishermen come here to launch their boats and spend an afternoon on the water.

The trail moves off to the northeast to reach Ditch Pond. This pond is farther from the campground and visited by fewer, so your chances are greater to see wildlife. The pond is home to gray and blue herons and white egrets. Their neighbors include swallows, doves, blackbirds, and kingfishers. Also watch for hawks and woodpeckers.

The trail circles Ditch Pond and heads back to Buck's Pond, where it then turns and travels back to the parking area.



The Conecuh Trail and the Open Pond Trail merge here at the Open Pond Campground.



As the Open Pond Trail passes the three separate cypress ponds, you'll encounter a big variety of plant and animal life. Dogwood, holly, longleaf pine, magnolia, and cypress line the trail. Animals that may be seen include white-tailed deer, red foxes, bobcats, river otters, and Eastern wild turkeys.

MilesDirections

0.0 START from the northwest end of the parking lot. Here, a cement sidewalk heads to the northwest for 50 feet toward the bathhouse. Continue past the bathhouse over the grass to the banks of Open Pond. At the pond, turn right and head to the northeast.

0.2 The trail starts a turn to the north as it passes the fee station at the entrance to the Open Pond Recreation Area to the right. At this point the trail is still following the grassy banks of the pond, but is running parallel with the paved forest service road. About 20 feet ahead, a boat ramp is passed. In another 20 feet, a parking area will be straight ahead. Turn to the west along the north side of the pond.

0.3 The travel begins to curve around the lake to the southwest. Along these banks, keep an eye out for alligator under the surface. Remember not to feed the alligators. Though they are naturally afraid of man, feeding them changes the rules.

0.5 Pass another parking area on the right.

0.6 Come to a T-intersection. This is a connector to the Conecuh Trail, marked with white diamond markers like the Conecuh. Turn left, heading south. Camping areas are to the right.

1.0 A T-intersection is reached. A spur of the Conecuh Trail heads off to the right to the north. Go left, continuing south. After

crossing a short footbridge, come to a sign reading "BUCK'S POND" and "DITCH POND." Head into the woods to the north.

1.2 Come to an intersection. This is where the Open Pond loop closes. Continue to the north 50 feet to the fishing pier at Buck's Pond. The trail turns to the south and heads around the west bank of the pond. The path is once again grass.

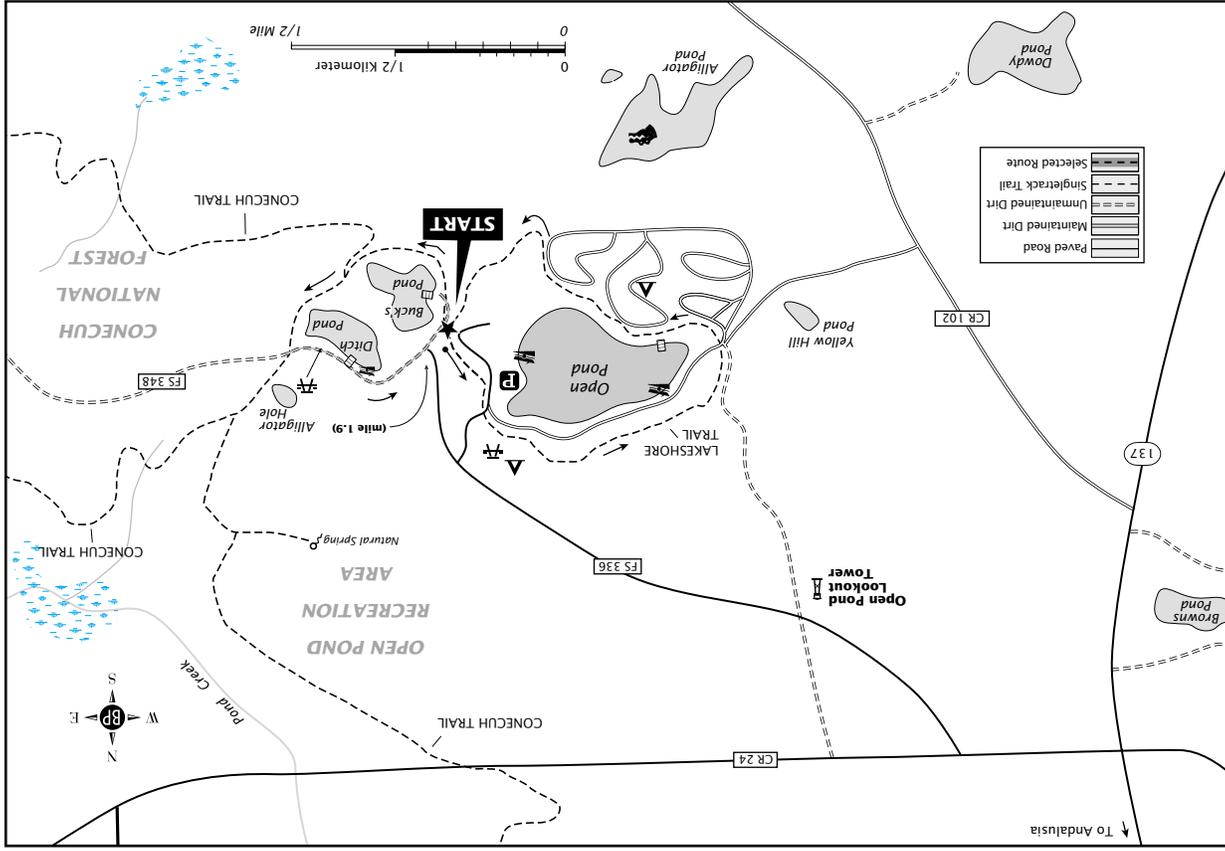
1.4 This is a sharp turn to the north. A Conecuh Trail marker points the direction.

1.5 Reach Ditch Pond on the left side of the trail. Shortly, the trail turns to the south and a Conecuh Trail marker with one large arrow points the direction of the turn.

1.6 A side trail intersects the Conecuh Trail to the east. Of the two wooden signs, follow the one to the east that reads "Blue Lake Recreation Area 3 Miles." From here on out, there will be no trail markers. The trail circles around Ditch Pond and comes to a T-intersection with a dirt service road. Turn to the left and head west. This sandy road splits into two "lanes" as it heads around some thick brush. Take the left "lane" which follows the edge of the pond.

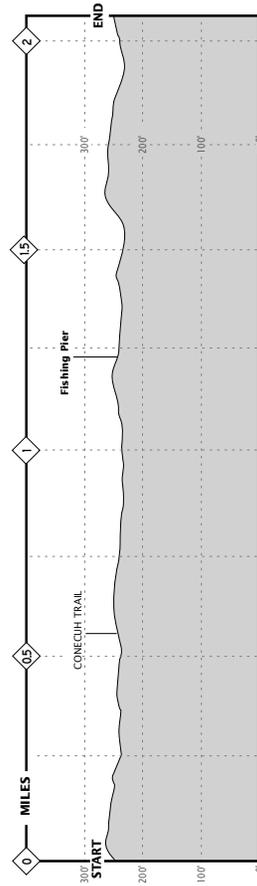
1.7 The road passes a picnic area, a dirt boat ramp, and a fishing pier

1.9 The road forks. Stay right. **[FYI.** The right fork is the dead-end of FS 336A.]



2.0 The road reaches the intersection passed earlier (mile 1.2). Turn right and head to the northwest.

2.1 Come to six wooden poles with yellow paint topping them. This is the end of the trail.



Quick and Too Easy Chicken Almondine

- 4 cups water
- 16 oz. canned chicken
- 4 cups instant rice
- 1/2 teaspoon onion salt
- 1/2 teaspoon celery salt
- 2 teaspoons chopped dried onion
- 1 package sliced almonds (2-3/4 oz.)
- 2/3 cup raisins

Place chicken and water in pot and bring to boil. Add remaining ingredients and return to a boil. Remove from heat. Let stand in pot for 10 minutes. Fluff with fork and serve. Makes three servings.



A beautiful fall sky reflects off Open Pond.

Ride Information

Trail Contacts:

Conecuh National Forest, Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-2555 • **Forestry Supervisor**, Montgomery, AL; (334) 832-4470

Schedule:

Open year round. The ranger station is open from 7:00 A.M.–4:30 P.M. Monday–Friday. Camping is allowed in primitive areas and along some sections of the Conecuh Trail. Keep in mind that camping is restricted during hunting season. Check with the forest rangers before making plans.

Railroad depot and features photographs, railroad memorabilia, authentic log cabins, and a one-room country store.

Accommodations:

Days Inn, Andalusia, AL; (334) 427-0050 • **Scottish Inn**, Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-7511 • **Winwood Inn**, Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-7511

Restaurants:

Golden Corral, Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-7749 • **Hunan Garden**, Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-3080

Fees/Permits:

\$2 per person day-use, \$1 for children. Camping at primitive sites is \$6 per day, \$12 at improved sites with electricity and water. State freshwater fishing license is required to fish in the ponds and lakes of the forest. A state hunting license is required for hunting.

Local Information:

Andalusia Chamber of Commerce, Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-2030 or www.alaweb.com/~chamber/city.html

Local Events/Attractions:

World Domino Championship, Annually mid-July, Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-5830 • **Three Notch Museum**, Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-2030 or www.alaweb.com/~chamber/3notch.html—This is a superb museum that is located in the 1899 Central of Georgia

Organizations:

Covington County/South Alabama Birding Association (334) 382-2680 or www.alaweb.com/~kenwood/saba/index.html—This organization provides a tour of the birding areas, bogs, and creeks of Conecuh National Forest in late March.

Local Outdoor Retailers:

Brightwell's Athletic House, Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-1411

Maps:

USGS maps: Wing, AL • **Trail maps**—available at the Conecuh National Forest Ranger Station, Andalusia, AL, or through their office by mail for \$5 at (334) 832-4470. Two brochures, one entitled "Carnivorous Plants of Conecuh National Forest" and the other called "Camping in Conecuh National Forest," are available at no cost.

9

Five Runs Loop Trail

Hike Summary

Although most of this hike along Five Runs Loop is along relatively level Forest Service roads, one hill during the final section of the loop is rather steep. Five Runs Creek and a section of Blue Spring flows near the trail, providing soothing opportunities to sit, relax, and daydream.

Hike Specs

Start: From the parking lot at Open Pond Recreation Area

Length: 3.2-mile loop

Approximate Hiking Time: 2 hours

Difficulty Rating: Easy; moderate in one short stretch due to steepness

Trail Surface: Clay, sand, and dirt roads
Lay of the Land: Forest of longleaf and slash pine, magnolia, and dogwood; marsh and ponds

Elevation Gain: [Need information]

Land Status: National forest

Nearest Town: Andalusia, AL

Other Trail Users: Equestrians and motorists

Canine Compatibility: Dog friendly over easy trails; permit and leash required.

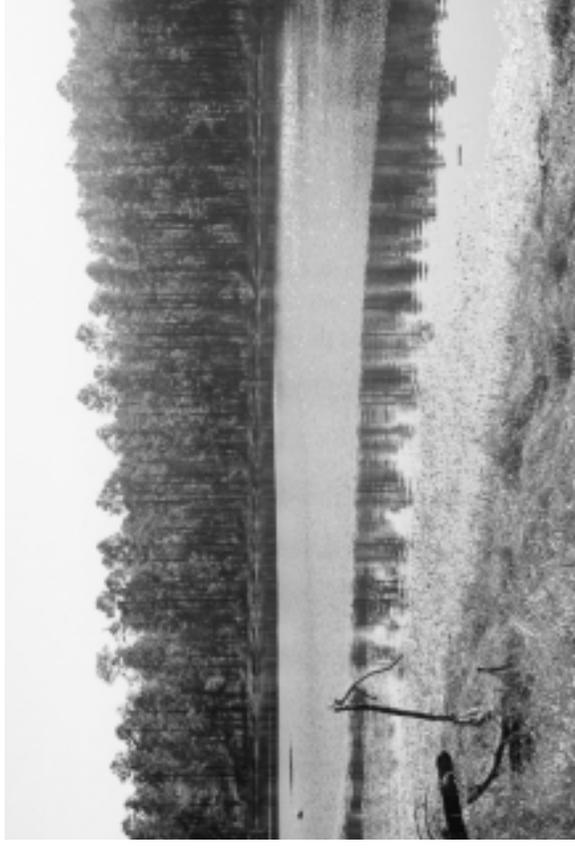
Getting There

From Andalusia: Take U.S. 29 south for 9.7 miles. Turn left and head south on AL 137 for five miles. Make a left onto CR 24 east and travel 0.5 miles. Make a right on FS 336A (CR 28) south. The road comes to a fee-station at a Y-intersection. Be sure to pay and place the receipt on your dash. Take the left fork. Travel one tenth of a mile and turn right. The parking area is the dead-end of this road about 50 feet ahead. **DeLorme: Alabama**

Atlas & Gazetteer: Page 58 FS

Many endangered species call the Conecuh National Forest home, including the flattened musk turtle and the red-cockaded woodpecker. This woodpecker was placed on the endangered species list in the 1970s due to timber cutting that resulted in rapid disappearance of the bird's habitat. The good news is that cooperation among timber companies, government agencies, and private organizations seems to be resulting in survival of both the red-cockaded woodpecker and the lumber industry.

This species differs from other woodpeckers in that it is only about six inches long, does not sport a red head, and resides in live trees instead of dead or dying ones. These woodpeckers prefer to burrow into live pines, taking advantage of the tree sap, which serves as a deterrent to predators and protection from fire.



Five Runs Loop Trail passes along the banks of Ditch Pond.

The woodpecker got its name during the Civil War. The Confederate Army distinguished the rank of its officers with a red feather, known as a cockade, on the side of their hats. The male woodpecker of the species has a small red cockade on the side of its head.

While you're in the Conecuh Forest you can expect to see all sorts of wildlife, such as white-tailed deer, bobwhite quail, and wild turkeys, as well as a variety of waterfowl including wood ducks, pied-billed grebes, and belted kingfishers.

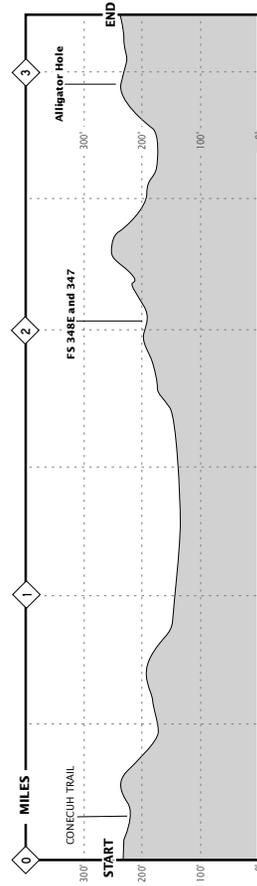
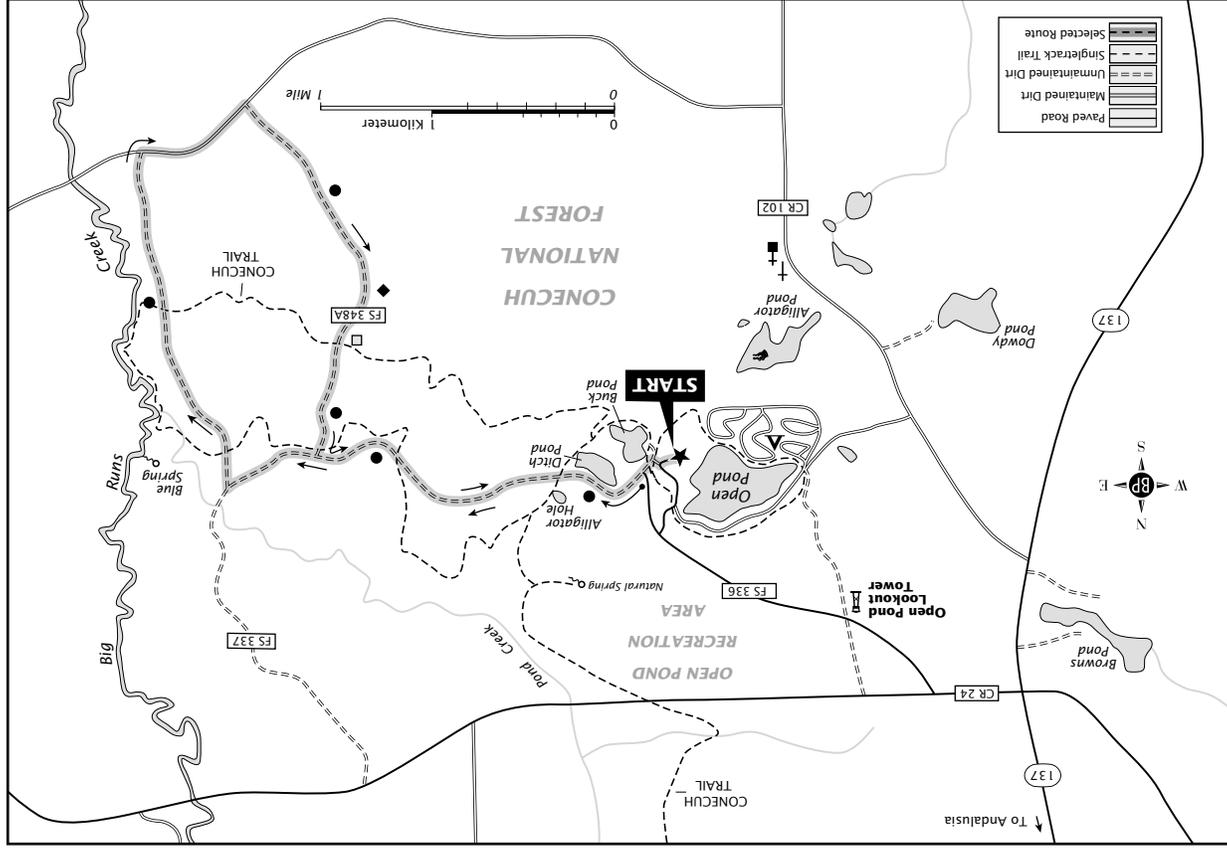
From the parking lot at Open Pond Recreation Area, the Five Runs Loop Trail travels along the banks of Buck's Pond, Ditch Pond, and Five Runs Creek. The creek, with an average width of 10 feet, is a feeder stream for the Yellow River that eventually joins the Blackwater River, which then flows to the Gulf of Mexico. One of the best times to visit this area is during the spring, when pitcher plants, orchids, and other wildflowers bloom along the banks of the creek and neighboring bogs.

One especially interesting pond near the trail is called Alligator Hole. This small pond is out of sight, about 50 feet from the trail, at a point only three-tenths of a mile from the start of the hike. Alligators are sometimes sighted here. Heed the posted warnings: Don't feed or molest the alligators. Watch from a safe distance.

Less than half a mile after leaving the trailhead, the loop passes through a wide marsh. The marsh is well worth the time for a visit, especially in the spring, to look for some of the amphibians, reptiles, and marsh plants that live here. On the return trip from Five Runs Creek, the trail ascends somewhat steeply for about two-tenths of a mile.

MilesDirections

- 0.0 START** from the parking lot by heading to the west on the paved road. In 100 feet, turn to the right (south) and notice the sign reading "Hiker's Trail." Follow the footpath to the south into the woods. This is a portion of the Conecuh Trail, identifiable by a white diamond metal marker. (We'll see this numerous times throughout this hike.) In 50 feet, the trail turns to the southeast. A short trail is passed to the to the south. Continue to the southeast heading toward Buck's Pond. In 20 feet, turn left onto FS 348. This is a sandy road that heads around the pond. In another 100 feet, a paved road is passed on the left. Continue on FS 348 to the northeast. After .05 miles, the trail turns to the east and heads around Ditch Pond.
- 0.2** Come to a T-intersection with an unmarked Forest Service road. Turn to the right and head to the east. In 20 feet, the road crosses the Conecuh Trail.
- 0.3** Come to a "Road Closed" sign to the east (left) and an abandoned forest service road.
- 0.5** Pass another abandoned road to the south.
- 0.6** Cross the Conecuh Trail.
- 0.7** Pass FS 348 on the right. This is where the road loops back around for the return trip.
- 0.9** Come to a T-intersection with another sand forest service road. Turn right. Just through the woods to the east, a section of Blue Spring joins with Five Runs Creek. **[FYI.** Anywhere along this 0.4-mile section is a good place to hike off the trail a short distance and relax by the creek banks.]
- 1.0** Cross the Conecuh Trail.
- 1.4** Reach a T-intersection and turn right, heading to the west on the gravel road.
- 1.7** At the top of a short hill, come to a house and FS 348 on the right. Turn here and head north.
- 2.0** The most difficult section of the hike is reached with the trail heading to the north up a rather steep incline for the next 0.2 miles.



MilesDirections (Continued)

- Once the southeast bank of the pond is reached, the road forks. Take the left fork and head to the west along the banks of the pond.
- 3.1** Pass the Ditch Pond fishing pier to the left.
- 3.2** Cross a short wooden bridge over a feeder creek for Buck's Pond. After crossing the bridge, come to a T-intersection. (To the left is Buck's Pond.) Turn right and head to the west. Shortly, you'll cross the Conecuh Trail one last time. Continue just a few yards farther and come to five metal pipes spaced a few feet apart. This is the west end of the parking lot and the end of the trip.
- 2.1** The road passes FS 348E to the left. In 50 feet, pass FS 347 to right.
- 2.2** Reach the top of the hill and cross the Conecuh Trail.
- 2.3** Reach a T-intersection (mile 0.7). This is the end of the loop. Turn left and head back.
- 2.6** Cross the Conecuh Trail and pass an abandoned road to the south.
- 2.8** Pass an abandoned road to the right.
- 2.9** The road now turns to the west and passes FS 322 to the south. In 100 feet, Alligator Hole can be seen to the right.
- 3.0** Cross the Conecuh Trail again and head west back to Ditch Pond. At the pond, the trail turns to the northwest.



Just off the trail is Alligator Pond.

Ride Information

- 📞 Trail Contacts:**
Conecuh National Forest, Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-2555 • Forestry Supervisor, Montgomery, AL; (334) 832-4470
- 🕒 Schedule:**
Open year round. The ranger station is open from 7:00 A.M.–4:30 P.M. Monday–Friday. Camping is allowed in primitive areas and along some sections of the Conecuh Trail. Keep in mind that camping is restricted during hunting season. Check with the forest rangers before making plans.
- 💰 Fees/Permits:**
\$2 per person day-use, \$1 for children. Camping at primitive sites is \$6 per day, \$12 at improved sites with electricity and water. State freshwater fishing license is required to fish in the ponds and lakes of the forest. A state hunting license is required for hunting.
- ❓ Local Information:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- 📍 Local Events/Attractions:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- 🏠 Accommodations:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- 🍽️ Restaurants:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- 🏢 Organizations:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- 🛍️ Local Outdoor Retailers:**
Brightwell's Athletic House, Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-1411
- 🗺️ Maps:**
USGS maps: Wing, AL • **Trail maps**—available at the Conecuh National Forest Ranger Station, Andalusia, AL, or through their office by mail for \$5 at (334) 832-4470. Two brochures, one entitled "Carnivorous Plants of Conecuh National Forest" and the other called "Camping in Conecuh National Forest," are available at no cost.

10

North Loop Trail

Hike Summary

This trail is actually the northern loop of the Conecuh Trail [see Hike 11]. The loop provides 14 miles of easy walking that can be completed in one day. The path winds in and out of open forests and sections of dense, shady tree cover. You're likely to see plenty of wildlife. Eastern wild turkeys dart from the brush, and hawks sail overhead. Along the loop, away from campgrounds, there's a better chance of seeing an alligator—assuming you want to.

Hike Specs

Start: From the trailhead on AL 137

Length: 14-mile loop

Approximate Hiking Time: 6–7 hours

Difficulty Rating: Easy, over flat to gently rolling hills

Trail Surface: Sandy and grass-covered paths

Lay of the Land: Forest of magnolia, dogwood, holly, and longleaf pine; cypress ponds

Elevation Gain: [Need information]

Land Status: National forest

Nearest Town: Andalusia, AL

Other Trail Users: Motorists along a portion of dirt road; cyclists along the path
Canine Compatibility: Dog friendly over easy trails; permit and leash required

Getting There

From Andalusia: Take U.S. 29 south for 9.7 miles. Turn left and head south on AL 137 for four miles. The parking area and trailhead will be on the left. **Delorme:** **Alabama Atlas & Gazetteer:** Page 58 E5

The Conecuh National Forest provides some interesting hiking along the Conecuh Trail, which runs for about 20 miles. The bulk of the Conecuh consists of this one segment, the North Loop Trail.

There is plenty to take in along this loop. Over its 14-mile length, you will be treated to large cypress ponds and marshes, wide-open spaces, thick forest, sandy trails, and opportunities to see wildlife.

A state highway, Alabama 137, cuts the loop cleanly in half, seeming to create two distinctly different experiences. To the west, towering longleaf pines and grassland are home to woodpeckers and wild turkeys. The eastern side features a thick dogwood and magnolia forest with two large cypress ponds, blue herons, and yes, alligators.

Several species of frogs can be seen, and heard, along the North Loop Trail. These include the dusky gopher frog and the pine barren tree frog. The dusky gopher frog came close to being named the official state amphibian, but eventually lost out to the red hill salamander.

Because the trail is far removed from campgrounds and picnic areas, you may see foxes and will definitely see white-tailed deer. There is also a good chance of hearing a loud splashing sound as you pass the ponds. That's the sound of alligators retreating to safety.

A variety of plant life grows along the banks of the ponds, including the carnivorous pitcher plant, with its long tubular stem and covered cup at the tip. Water lilies blanket the surface of Gum Pond and Nellie Pond, blooming with large white flowers in the spring. Black-eyed Susan, honeysuckle, and blackberry bushes are also plentiful along the route.

Along the eastern half of the trail, the path crosses through several wooden cattle gates, used to keep cattle on designated grazing lands. Some farm fences are attached to the gates with plastic insulators, normally used for electrified fences. For safety, it's best to assume that all such fences are electrified.

Conecuh is the only national forest in the state to allow livestock grazing on the grasses of the forest—for a fee. Through this area, you'll see several areas that have been intentionally burned in recent years. The prescribed burns help increase the supply of grass for the cattle as well as reduce the chances of range wildfires.

Although the trail can readily be hiked in a day, some folks chose to camp out. The Forest Service permits camping, but asks that tents be pitched far from the trail. Be careful with fire. The best bet is to use a backpacking stove.

During hunting season, camping in Conecuh National Forest requires written permission of the Forest Service (except at Open Pond Recreation Area). Contact the Conecuh ranger office for dates of hunting seasons. If you hike the forest during hunting season, wear hunter orange.

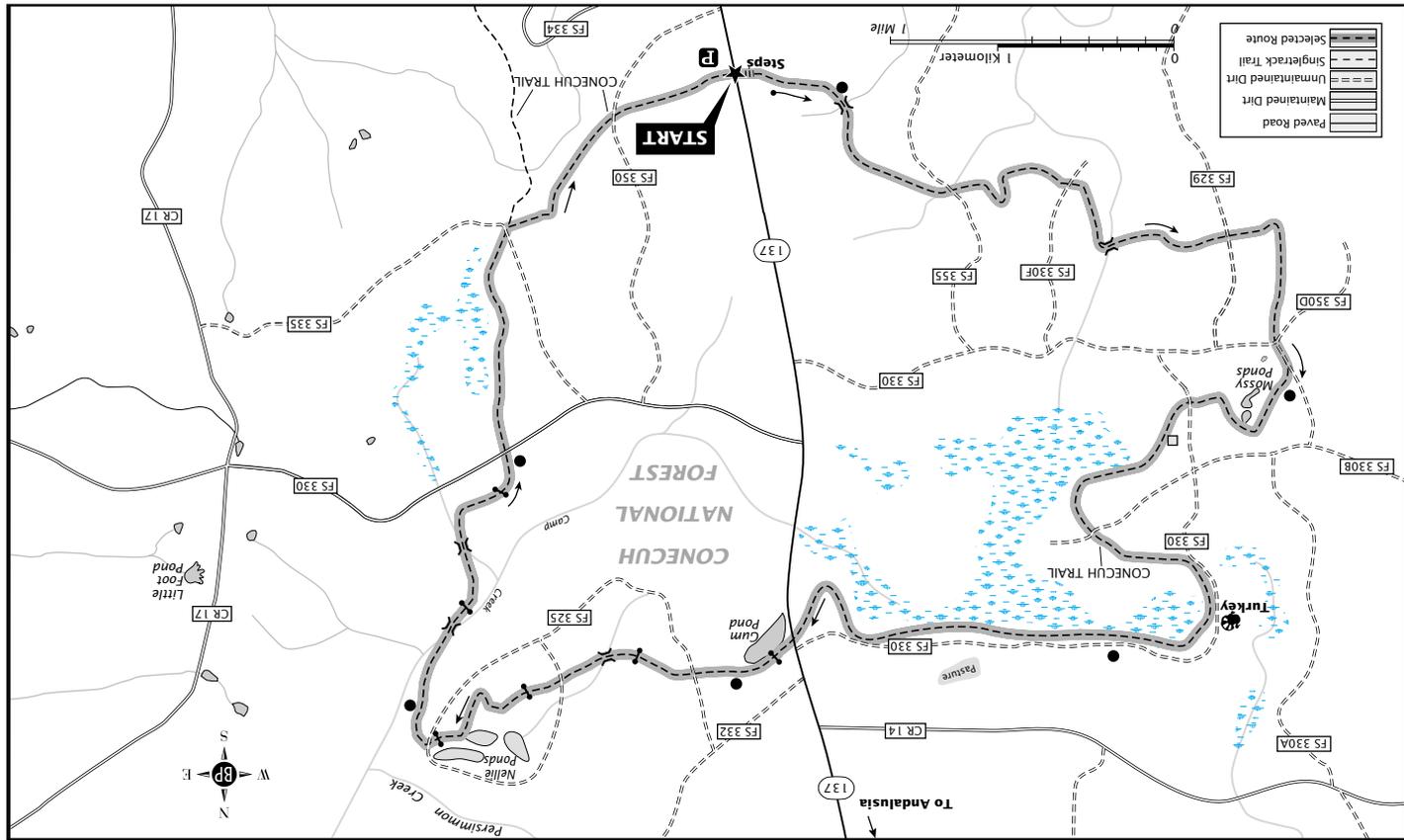
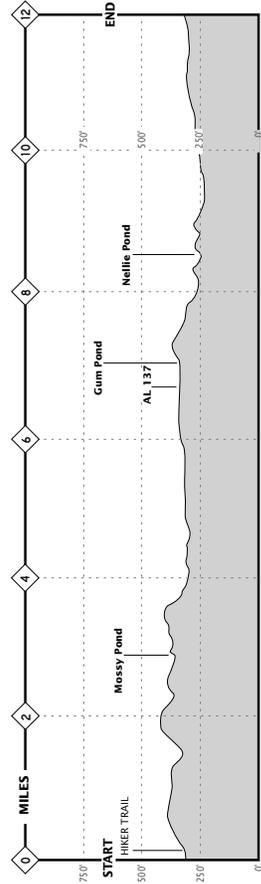


The trail at the trailhead is wide and open.

MilesDirections

0.0 START from the AL 137 trailhead by crossing the highway to the west. Here, the first of many "Hiker Trail" signs will be seen. These signs are posted on the opposite side of all road crossings showing where the trail crosses. Here, the trail walks up a series of four wooden steps that go over a barbed wire fence surrounding the forest. A sign here reads "Trail Pond 2½ miles, Mossy Pond 3 miles." After crossing the stairs, the trail turns to the southwest. This first section is very open with towering long leaf pines and open, grassy terrain. Trail markers are white plastic diamonds and can be seen up to a half mile away through this area.

- 0.6** Cross a bridge.
- 1.1** Cross a dirt road.
- 1.6** Cross a bridge.
- 1.7** Turn to the south.
- 2.0** Cross a dirt road.
- 2.7** Cross a bridge.
- 2.8** Come to a small marsh and pond on the left. This is Trail Pond. Many blue heron call these ponds home.
- 2.9** The trail forks with a dirt road. Take the right fork and continue northwest.
- 3.1** Cross a dirt road and follow the trail west.
- 3.2** Cross another dirt road and head west.
- 3.3** A dirt road merges with the trail from the northeast. Continue to the west and in 50 feet a sign reads "Road closed March 10–October 18." Mossy Pond is on the right.
- 3.9** Pass a pond on the left and in 300 feet cross dirt FS 330D.
- 4.4** Cross a dirt road.
- 4.6** Cross a dirt road.
- 4.7** From here to the crossing of AL 137—3.1 mile away—is a controlled-burn area.
- 5.0** Come to a trail marker with three arrows pointing to the right. Continue east.
- 5.2** Come to a trail marker with three arrows pointing to the left. Go left and pass a bench on the right. A lush field is on the right behind a barbwire fence.
- 5.3** Climb the steepest hill on the trip, which isn't that steep. In 100 feet, cross a dirt road.
- 5.7** Pass a bench on the left and come to a fork. Go right.
- 6.1** Go right at the trail marker.
- 6.5** Go right at the trail marker.
- 7.8** Come to a T-intersection with a dirt road. Turn right and follow the road 100 feet to AL 137. After crossing the highway, another short set of stairs crosses over a barbwire fence.



MilesDirections (Continued)

- 8.0 Gum Pond is to the right.
- 8.1 Come to a T-intersection with a dirt road. Turn right. In 100 feet, the trail comes to the edge of the pond. The road turns to the right and dead ends in 50 feet. Turn left and continue to the northeast along the edge of the pond.
- 8.4 Pass through a cattle gate. Farm fence is attached to the gate with plastic insulators that make it look like it might be electrified.
- 8.5 Cross a dirt road.
- 8.8 Pass through another cattle gate.
- 9.0 Cross a bridge.
- 9.4 Cross a bridge.
- 9.6 Cross a dirt road. In 50 feet, pass through a cattle gate.
- 9.7 Pass the banks of Nellie Pond.
- 9.9 Watch the pond for alligators.
- 10.0 Pass through another cattle gate and cross a dirt road. A sign here that reads "Nellie Pond" and points back in the direction you just traveled, and "Blue Pond Recreational Area 3 miles."
- 10.6 Cross a bridge. After crossing, travel 75 feet and cross another bridge over a large marsh.
- 11.1 Cross a bridge.
- 11.8 Climb over a short set of wooden stairs over a barbed wire fence and cross a dirt road. A sign here reads "Conecuh Trail."
- 12.7 Cross a dirt road. **[FYI.** By turning left and heading down the road 30 feet, the Conecuh Trail continues to the south.] A sign on the other side reads, "Highway 137 1 mile, Blue Pond Recreational Area ½ mile." Remember, the Conecuh, North Loop, and connectors all use the white diamond markers. Continue into the woods to the southwest.
- 12.9 Cross a bridge.
- 13.3 Cross a dirt road.
- 14.0 Arrive at the trailhead.



The trail passes some thick pasture land.

Ride Information

- 📞 Trail Contacts:**
Conecuh National Forest,
Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-2555 •
Forestry Supervisor, Montgomery,
AL; (334) 832-4470
- 🕒 Schedule:**
Open year round. During hunting season, hunter orange is required to be worn and camping is restricted to Open Pond Recreational Area. The ranger station is open from 7:00 A.M.–4:30 P.M. Monday–Friday.
- 💰 Fees/Permits:**
Camping is allowed along the trail following National Forest Service guidelines. Camping is restricted to the Open Pond Recreational Area during hunting season. Camping at either Blue Pond or Open Pond Recreation Area is \$6 per day at primitive sites is \$6 per day, \$12 at improved sites with electricity and water. State freshwater fishing license is required to fish in the ponds and lakes of the forest.
- 📍 Local Information:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- 🎪 Local Events/Attractions:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- 🏠 Accommodations:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- 🍽️ Restaurants:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- 🏢 Organizations:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- 🏪 Local Outdoor Retailers:**
Brightwell's Athletic House,
Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-1411
- 🗺️ Maps:**
USGS maps: Carolina, AL • **Trail maps**—available at the Conecuh National Forest Ranger Station, Andalusia, AL, or through their office by mail for \$5 at (334) 832-4470. Two brochures, one entitled "Carnivorous Plants of Conecuh National Forest" and the other called "Camping in Conecuh National Forest," are available at no cost.

Conecuh Trail

Hike Summary

The Conecuh Trail provides the best opportunity for an overnight hike in the Southeast and Gulf Coast regions of Alabama. The trail is just over 20 miles long and travels point-to-point, but connector trails allow for loop trips. The trail passes cypress ponds, and wildlife abounds.

Hike Specs

Start: From the trailhead on AL 137

Length: 19.2-mile point-to-point

Approximate Hiking Time: 10–12 hours

Difficulty Rating: Easy, over Forest Service roads and gentle footpaths

Trail Surface: Sandy and grass-covered paths

Lay of the Land: Forests of hickory, dogwood, magnolia, and longleaf pine; cypress ponds

Elevation Gain: [Need information]

Land Status: National forest

Nearest Town: Andalusia, AL

Other Trail Users: Cyclists on North Loop
Canine Compatibility: Dog friendly over easy trails; permit and leash required.

Getting There

From Andalusia: Take U.S. 29 south for 9.7 miles. Turn left and head south on AL 137 for four miles. The parking area and trailhead will be on the left. **Delorme:** *Alabama Atlas & Gazetteer*: Page 58 E5

Shuttle Point

From Andalusia: Take U.S. 29 south for 9.7 miles. Turn left and head south on AL 137 for five miles. Make a left onto CR 24 east and travel 0.5 miles. Make a right on FS 336A (CR 28) south. The road comes to a fee-station at a Y-intersection.

Be sure to pay and place the receipt on your dash. Take the left fork. Travel one tenth of a mile and turn right. The Open Pond parking area is the dead-end of this road about 50 feet ahead. **Delorme:** *Alabama Atlas & Gazetteer*: Page 58 F5

The North and Central regions of Alabama may have the most challenging hikes in the state, but the Southeast and Gulf Coast weigh in with wild and scenic landscapes. And the wildlife is especially diverse here. The Conecuh Trail, which winds through the Conecuh National Forest, provides an opportunity to take it all in over an easy trail.

Among the wildlife along the Conecuh Trail are white-tailed deer, red foxes, bobcats, and river otters. Eastern wild turkeys are plentiful, often popping out of the brush without warning. And of course, everyone who comes here wants to see an alligator. Well, the American alligator calls the ponds of Conecuh National Forest home. On the North Loop portion of the trail, listen for the loud splashes of alligators getting out of your way. (Although alligators are naturally afraid of humans, don't take chances: Stay a safe distance away.)



Conecuh Wildflowers will be found everywhere along the trail from early spring to early fall.

The vegetation is as varied as the wildlife. Dogwood, holly, longleaf pine, magnolia, and cypress trees line the trail and ponds. Wildflowers such as black-eyed Susans brighten the landscape. At the ponds, look for the carnivorous pitcher plant. Many of the ponds are covered to overcrowding with water lilies.

The bulk of the Conecuh Trail uses the North Loop Trail [see Hike 10]. This 14-mile loop takes you far from campgrounds and recreation areas, past remote cypress ponds and marshes over predominantly sandy trails. Here is the best chance to see wild turkeys, herons, and alligators.

The next part of the Conecuh Trail passes by Blue Pond and Open Pond. Blue Pond is popular for fishing, canoeing, and picnicking, and provides a swimming beach. You'll find campsites near Open Pond.

The Conecuh Trail's lower portion, about five miles long, is a smaller version of the Five Runs Loop Trail [see Hike 9]. The Five Runs Trail uses Forest Service roads, while the Conecuh takes to the woods. This portion travels past three other ponds: Alligator, Ditch, and Buck's.

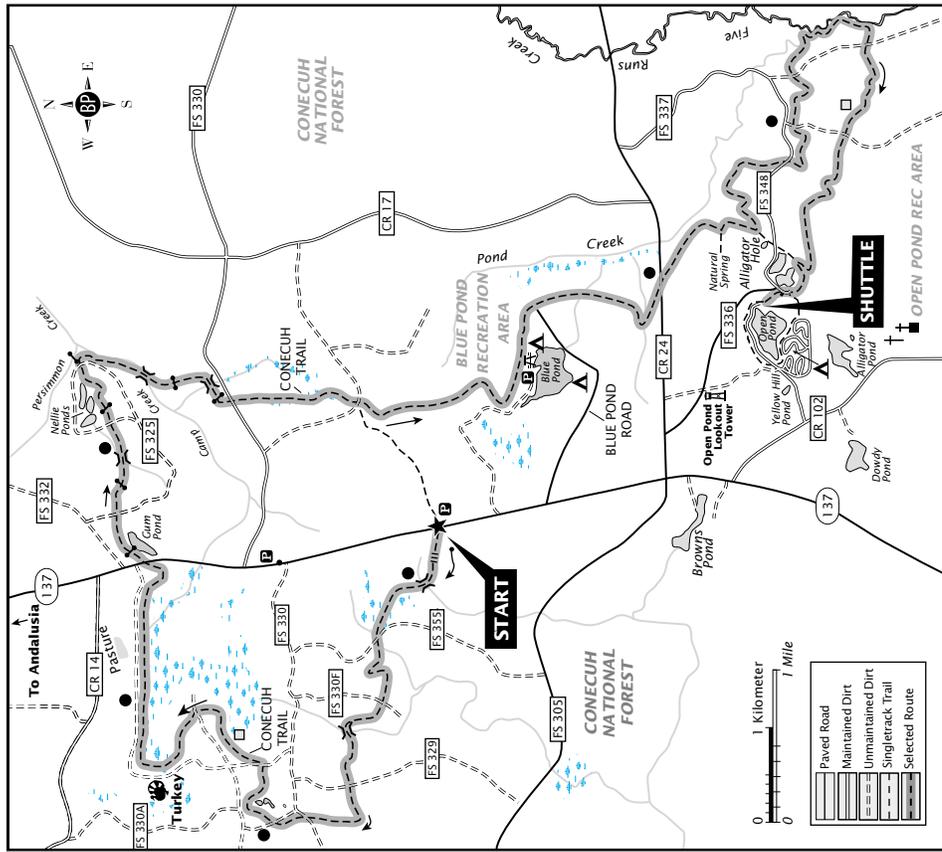
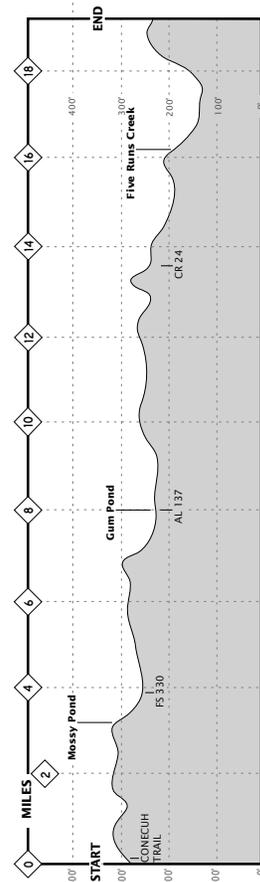
The trail also hits the banks of Five Runs Creek, a feeder stream for the Yellow River. A good time to hike here is during spring when wildflowers, pitcher plants, and orchids bloom on the banks of the creek and neighboring bogs. The Conecuh Trail then swings around to end at the bathhouse at Open Pond.

The trail is well blazed with white diamond markers on trees, spaced about 50 feet apart. Keep in mind that some connecting trails that help create loops also use an identical marker, such as the path just to the east of Open Pond [see *Hike 8*].

MilesDirections

0.0 START from the AL 137 trailhead by crossing the highway to the west. Here, the first of many "Hiker Trail" signs will be seen. These signs are posted on the opposite side of all road crossings showing where the trail crosses. Here, the trail walks up a series of four wooden steps that go over a barbed wire fence surrounding the forest. A sign here reads "Trail Pond 2½ miles, Mossy Pond 3 miles." After crossing the stairs, the trail turns to the southwest. This first section is very open with towering long leaf pines and open, grassy terrain. Trail markers are white plastic diamonds and can be seen up to a half mile away through this area.

- 0.6** Cross a bridge.
- 1.1** Cross a dirt road.
- 1.6** Cross a bridge.
- 1.7** Turn to the south.
- 2.0** Cross a dirt road.
- 2.7** Cross a bridge.
- 2.8** Come to a small marsh and pond on the left. This is Trail Pond. Many blue heron call these ponds home.



- 5.3** Climb the steepest hill on the trip, which isn't that steep. In 100 feet, cross a dirt road.
- 5.7** Pass a bench on the left and come to a fork. Go right.
- 6.1** Go right at the trail marker.
- 6.5** Go right at the trail marker.
- 7.8** Come to a T-intersection with a dirt road. Turn right and follow the road 100 feet to AL 137. After crossing the highway, another short set of stairs crosses over a barbwire fence.

- 8.0** Gum Pond is to the right.
- 8.1** Come to a T-intersection with a dirt road. Turn right. In 100 feet, the trail comes to the edge of the pond. The road turns to the right and dead ends in 50 feet. Turn left and continue to the north-east along the edge of the pond.
- 8.4** Pass through a cattle gate. Farm fence is attached to the gate with plastic insulators that make it look like it might be electrified.
- 8.5** Cross a dirt road.

Miles Directions (Continued)

- 8.8** Pass through another cattle gate.
- 9.0** Cross a bridge.
- 9.4** Cross a bridge.
- 9.6** Cross a dirt road. In 50 feet, pass through a cattle gate.
- 9.7** Pass the banks of Nellie Pond.
- 9.9** Watch the pond for alligators.
- 10.0** Pass through another cattle gate and cross a dirt road. A sign here that reads "Nellie Pond" and points back in the direction you just traveled, and "Blue Pond Recreational Area 3 miles."
- 10.6** Cross a bridge. After crossing, travel 75 feet and cross another bridge over a large marsh.
- 11.1** Cross a bridge.
- 11.8** Climb over a short set of wooden stairs over a barbed wire fence and cross a dirt road. A sign here reads "Conecuh Trail."
- 12.7** Come to a dirt road. [FYI. By crossing the road to the southwest, the trail completes the North Loop in 1.3 miles.] Turn left here and head down the road 30 feet. A sign reads "Conecuh Trail" where the trail turns right and heads back into the woods. Don't be confused here! The Conecuh Trail, North Loop Trail, and connectors all use the white diamond markers.
- 13.0** The trail merges with a dirt road for 50 feet and reenters the woods to the southeast. In 200 feet, the brush and trees thicken as you reach a marshy area. Cross a creek.
- 13.2** Cross another creek.
- 13.3** Cross a dirt road and head up a short hillside.
- 13.5** The trail arrives at the Blue Pond Rec. picnic area. In 200 feet, cross the Blue Pond Road.
- 13.6** Cross a creek.
- 14.0** The trail bottoms out and crosses a creek.
- 14.2** Cross CR 24.
- 14.9** Come to a fork in the trail and go left fork. [FYI. The right fork is a connector that forms a loop around Open Pond.]
- 15.6** Cross a dirt road.
- 15.7** The trail merges with a dirt road for about 50 feet and then parts.
- 15.8** Cross a dirt road.
- 16.2** Cross a dirt road. In 100 feet, the path meets the banks of Five Runs Creek. The trail follows the creek for the next 0.6 miles.
- 17.3** Cross a dirt road. In 50 feet, cross a creek.
- 17.6** Cross another creek.
- 18.2** Reach a T-intersection and turn left toward Buck Pond. [FYI. The right fork is part of the Open Pond Loop Trail.]
- 18.9** Come to a fork and go right. [FYI. The left fork is used for the Open Pond Loop.] In 200 feet, cross a wooden bridge over a creek that feeds Buck Pond. After crossing, make a right turn and head to the north.
- 19.2** Arrive at the eastern Open Pond parking area and your shuttle car.

Although a fast traveler could easily hike the Conecuh in a single day, the hike is best enjoyed as an overnight trip. You can camp along the way, as long as you keep tents well off the trail itself. Use a backpacking stove in order to help prevent fires. Camping along any trail in Conecuh National Forest during hunting season requires written permission of the Forest Service (except at Open Pond Recreation Area). The Conecuh ranger office can supply the applicable dates. Plan to wear hunter orange if you hike during hunting season.

Ride Information

- Trail Contacts:**
Conecuh National Forest,
Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-2555 •
Forestry Supervisor, Montgomery,
AL; (334) 832-4470
- Schedule:**
Open year round. During hunting season, hunter orange is required to be worn and camping is restricted to Open Pond Recreational Area. The ranger station is open from 7:00 A.M.–4:30 P.M. Monday–Friday.
- Fees/Permits:**
Camping is allowed along the trail following National Forest Service guidelines. Camping is restricted to the Open Pond Recreational Area during hunting season. Camping at either Blue Pond or Open Pond Recreation Area is \$6 per day at primitive sites is \$6 per day, \$12 at improved sites with electricity and water. State freshwater fishing license is required to fish in the ponds and lakes of the forest.
- Local Outdoor Retailers:**
Brightwell's Sporting Goods,
Andalusia, AL; (334) 222-1411
- Maps:**
USGS maps: Wing, AL; Carolina, AL • **Trail maps**—available at the Conecuh National Forest Ranger Station, Andalusia, AL, or through their office by mail for \$5 at (334) 832-4470. Two brochures, one entitled "Carnivorous Plants of Conecuh National Forest" and the other called "Camping in Conecuh National Forest," are available at no cost.
- Local Information:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- Local Events/Attractions:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- Accommodations:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- Restaurants:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]
- Organizations:**
[See Hike 8: Open Pond]

Chattahoochee Trail

Hike Summary

The Chattahoochee Trail provides an enjoyable stroll through the woodlands of the southeastern corner of Alabama. This hike actually combines several trails, providing close-up looks at a variety of plant and animal life. This is excellent flatland hiking for families with small children.

Hike Specs

Start: From the northwest end of the parking lot at Chattahoochee State Park ranger station

Length: 1.5-mile loop

Approximate Hiking Time: 1 hour

Difficulty Rating: Easy, along flat roads

Trail Surface: Clay and sand roads

Lay of the Land: Forest of dogwood, muscadine, oak, and loblolly and slash pine

Elevation Gain: [Need information]

Land Status: State park

Nearest Town: Dothan, AL

Other Trail Users: Equestrians and motorists

Canine Compatibility: Dog friendly over a level route; bring water, because it is available only at the lake; leash not required

Getting There

From Dothan: Take U.S. 84 south for 14 miles to AL 95. Turn right and travel nine miles to the Chattahoochee State Park entrance on the left. Turn left between two stone walls and travel down the dirt road (Upper Road) for 0.3 miles. Come to a fork in the road. Take the right fork (Chattahoochee State Park Road). The ranger station is located just to the right. An honor box for the entrance fee is here. Park and begin the hike here.

DeLorme: Alabama Atlas & Gazetteer: Page 61 G10

The 600-acre Chattahoochee State Park is one of the smaller parks in the state, though it still provides an excellent hiking experience along trails lined with dogwood, muscadine, and oak. The park is situated close to the Chattahoochee River, which forms the mutual boundaries of Alabama, Georgia, and Florida.

The Civilian Conservation Corps built the facilities at Chattahoochee in the late 1930s. Throughout the park are remnants of CCC occupation, including a chimney where the main dining room was located, bunkhouses, and a star-shaped flagpole. Creeks in the park flow into the Chattahoochee River, and eventually into the Gulf of Mexico. The CCC built a stone dam to form a pond on one of these creeks.

The routes that combine to make up the Chattahoochee Trail include the Dogwood Trail (with a dogwood tree marking the start of the path), the



CCC Trail (where many camp remains can be found), and the K.O. Smith Trail, named for a former ranger of the park. The Buck Fever, Tortoise, and Scout trails round out the circuit. Individually each trail is very short, but they can be combined in many ways to provide hiking variety.

Some of the trails use a fire lane that forms the boundary around the park. Areas outside of the lane are privately owned, so visitors should not travel outside the boundary, especially during hunting season. (Hunting is not allowed within the park.)



Many of the trails pass through lightly forested grassy areas. These are excellent places for viewing white-tailed deer and Eastern wild turkeys. Other park inhabitants include opossums, foxes, and coyotes. Of particular interest is the gopher tortoise, which is one of only four species of tortoise in the United States. The gopher tortoise is known for burrowing in the sand. Hikers can examine the burrows firsthand—and perhaps a tortoise—along the Tortoise Trail.

MilesDirections

0.0 **START** at the parking lot at the ranger station and head to the northwest about 50 feet, crossing the dirt Upper Road. Come to a wooden sign that reads “Dogwood Trail” and the tree that gives the trail its name. Turn left onto the trail and head into the woods. At this point, the trail is an abandoned dirt road. Come to a fork—this is the intersection of the CCC Trail and the Dogwood Trail. Take the right fork onto the CCC Trail. The CCC Trail is marked with orange ribbons tied to trees. Two ribbons together indicate a turn in the trail just like painted blazes. The trail meanders through ruins of the old CCC camp.

0.1 The trail runs into a T-intersection with Upper Road. Turn to the left on the dirt road. Head up the road .05 miles and turn left on the K.O. Smith Trail.

0.3 Come to a split in the trail that reconnects.

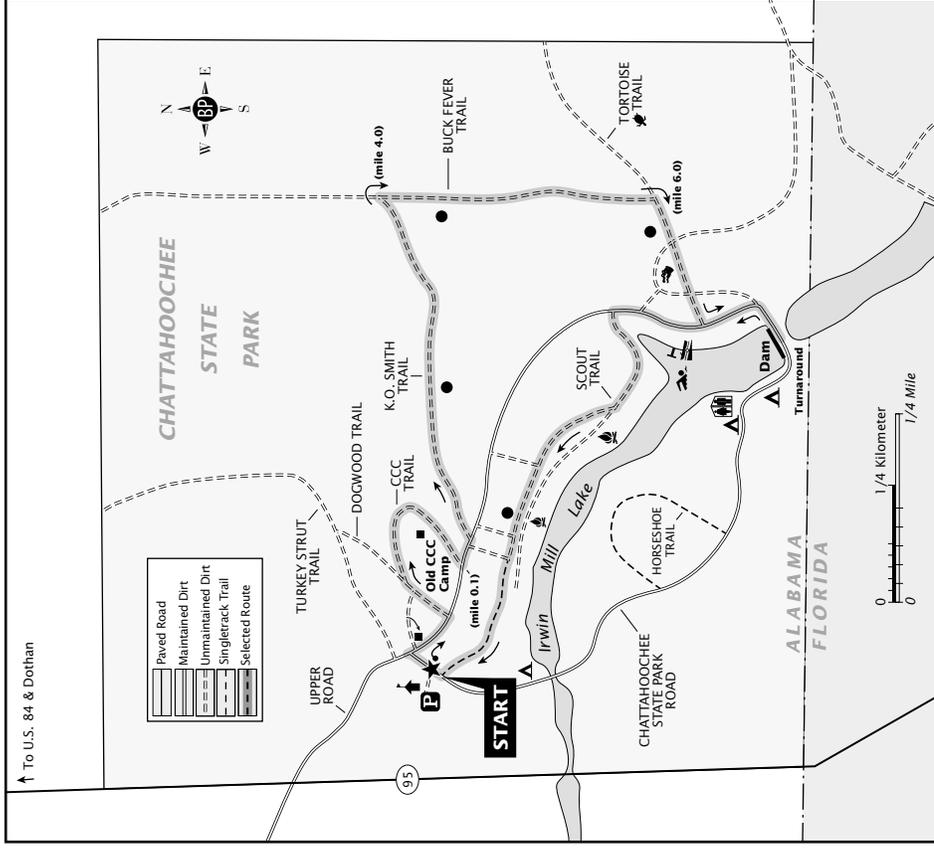
0.4 Come to a T-intersection with the Buck Fever Trail and turn right. Small birds such as finches and cardinals dart

back and forth along this stretch of the trail through the thickets.

0.5 The trail, still a dirt road, continues south but travels through a marshy area. On damp days, this could make travel rather muddy. Scrub and slash pines begin becoming more prevalent.

0.6 Reach a T-intersection with the Tortoise Trail and turn right. Look carefully for the tracks and burrows of the gopher tortoise along this section. In .05 miles, reach a picnic area at the CCC pond. Continue straight to the banks of the pond. A dirt road is here. Turn left and head down the road. Remember the warnings about the alligators! They do live here, so don’t feed or bother them in any manner. At the pond there are swings for the kids, grills, a swimming area, a fishing pier, and restrooms.

0.7 Come to a T-intersection with another dirt road. Turn left. Travel over the stone dam built by the CCC to form the pond to the north. Head to the sluice at the middle of the dam for excellent views



of the pond and the marsh to the north. Turn around here and head back across the dam retracing the previous path.

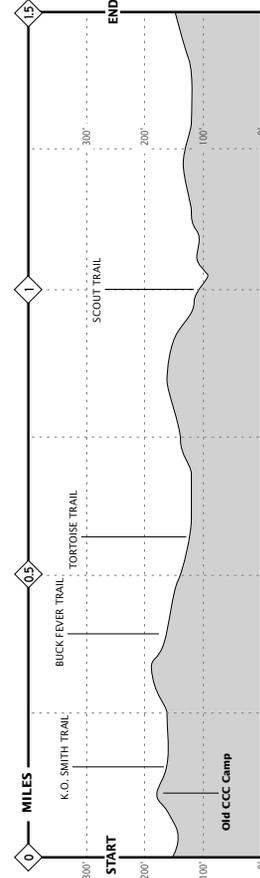
0.8 A few feet after stepping off the dam, the dirt road veers off to the left. Turn left here. In .05 miles, pass the Tortoise Trail on the right.

1.0 Come to a fork. The main dirt road continues to the northeast and a smaller, unused dirt road (the Scout Trail) heads off into the woods to the north. Take the Scout Trail to the left. Fifty feet into the woods, pass the first of three

side roads on your right that lead back to the Chattahoochee State Park Road. By the third side road the main Scout Trail is hard to discern. There are no markings. The trail narrows to a small footpath, and the thick leaves make the trail look more like a deer trail.

1.4 Encounter another Scout Trail sign. Reach a T-intersection with the clay Chattahoochee State Park Road. Turn right.

1.5 Reach the parking lot at the ranger station.



The Scout Trail portion of the Chattahoochee Trail takes you to the 25-acre spring-fed pond built by the CCC. There is excellent bass fishing here (a freshwater license and park permit are required). You can also rent a boat. A short walk to the center of the dam provides excellent views of the pond to one side and the marsh and its wildlife on the other.

While in the area, consider visiting the nearby town of Dothan and its revitalized historic district, which includes the Wiregrass Museum of Art, the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens, and the Grits on the Side Dinner Theater.



The other side of the dam where a marsh is home to many species of wildlife.

Ride Information

- T** **Trail Contacts:**
Chattahoochee State Park, Gordon, AL; (334) 522-3607
- C** **Schedule:**
Year round
- S** **Fees/Permits:**
\$1 entrance fee for adults, 50 cents for senior citizens and children 12 and younger. \$2 fishing freshwater license. \$6.50 camping at primitive sites.
- ?** **Local Information:**
Dothan Area Conventions and Visitor's Bureau, Dothan, AL; 1-888-449-0212
or www.dothanalcvb.com
- !** **Local Events/Attractions:**
National Peanut Festival, early November, Dothan, AL; 1-888-449-0212; www.dothanalcvb.com/natlpnut.html—Dothan is known as the "Peanut Capital of the World." Each November, the town celebrates with this festival featuring rides, music, plenty of food, and of course, peanuts. • Landmark Park and Planetarium,
- Dothan, AL (334) 794-3452 or www.landmarkpark.com—a unique mixture of an 1890's farmstead, wildlife studies, and planetarium all in a 100-acre park • **Adventureland Theme Park,** Dothan, AL; (334) 793-9100—a variety of activities for the family including two 18-hole miniature golf courses, bumper boats, arcades, and a go-cart track.
- !** **Restaurants:**
Basketcase Dinner Theater, Dothan, AL; (334) 671-1117—a unique restaurant that four to five times each year features the Opus Nostrum Dinner Theater. Reservations are required.
- !** **Local Outdoor Retailers:**
Neil's Sport Shop, Inc., Dothan, AL; (334) 793-0009 • **Southern Outdoor Sports,** Dothan, AL; (334) 793-4590
- N** **Maps:**
USGS maps: Saffold, AL • **Park brochure**—available free of charge at one of the honor boxes

Wildlife Drive

Hike Summary

Wildlife Drive can be driven, but the best viewing is clearly on foot. The waterfowl and wildlife of the area are simply more approachable by foot. The scenery is varied, from areas of hardwood and pine to grasslands and cropland to marshes and the banks of the Chattahoochee River. More than 300 species of birds and 40 species of mammals have been spotted here.

Hike Specs

Start: From the parking lot at the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge ranger station

Length: 7-mile loop

Approximate Hiking Time: 3½–4 hours

Difficulty Rating: Easy, due to flat walking

Trail Surface: Gravel road

Lay of the Land: Forests of longleaf and slash pine, hickory, and live oak; aquatic plants; farmlands

Elevation Gain: [Need information]

Land Status: National wildlife refuge

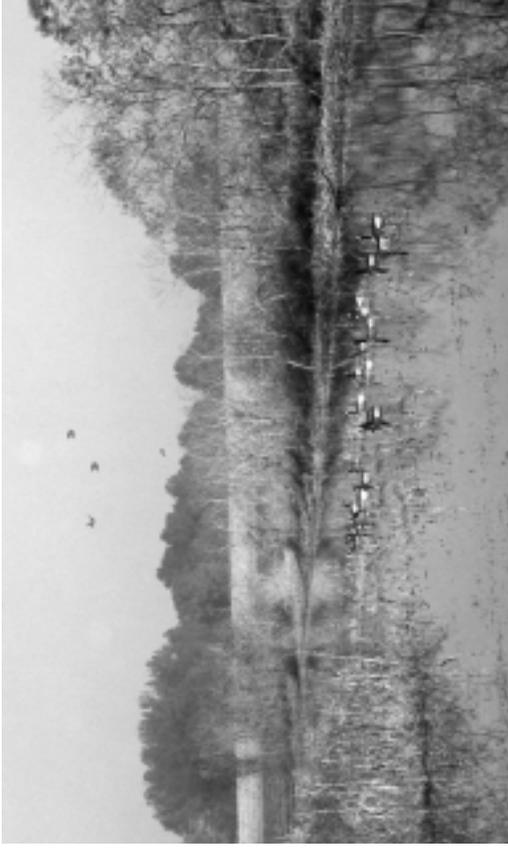
Nearest Town: Eufaula, AL

Other Trail Users: Motorists and cyclists

Canine Compatibility: Not dog friendly, due to the wildlife in the refuge; if you do take a dog, leash required.

Getting There

From Eufaula: Take U.S. 431 north for 7.1 miles. Turn right onto AL 285. Travel 1.9 miles and take a right onto Refuge Road. Travel 0.1 to a fork in the road. A sign that lists permitted activities separates the forks. Take the right fork and travel 0.2 miles to the ranger station and parking lot. **Delorme:** *Alabama Atlas & Gazetteer*: Page 54 B5



Canadian geese down for the winter.

The 11,184-acre Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge is situated along the banks of the Chattahoochee River, which forms the border between Alabama and Georgia. Maintained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Eufaula Wildlife Refuge is a multifaceted preserve. The refuge oversees 2,200 acres of hardwood and pine forest and 1,100 acres of cultivated land. Farmers produce a variety of crops, like corn and short-grass hay, within the refuge, providing both income for the farmers and food for wildlife.

Eufaula Wildlife Refuge also has water, and lots of it: more than 4,000 acres of open water along the Chattahoochee River and its feeder creeks, plus more than 3,000 acres of marshland. Wildlife Drive take you past all of this.

Although Wildlife Drive is touted as the driving tour of the refuge, the best way to experience the multitude of animal and bird life is on foot. The beauty of this hike is to walk quietly through the refuge and come upon a marsh or pond where ducks or Canada geese are going about their daily business, or a family of white-tailed deer is foraging for food. Patience and quietness are rewarded with surprising and beautiful encounters.

Short gravel footpaths take you from Wildlife Drive to the two observation platforms within the refuge. Walking along the flat road is easy, and the most difficult part of the trip may be just the distance covered. Most of the areas you'll pass are wetlands, and in summer that could mean mosquitoes—so bring repellent.

Just the Facts... about Alabama

Nickname: Heart of Dixie

Motto: Audemus Jura Nostra Defendere (We Dare Maintain Our Rights)

Entered the Union: Dec. 14, 1819, as the 22nd state

Capital: Montgomery

Population: 4,062,608

Area: 51,705 square miles, including 938 square miles of water surface

Highest elevation: Cheaha Mountain (2,407 feet)

Lowest elevation: Sea level along the Gulf of Mexico

Temperature-extreme averages:

Birmingham—January 46°F; July 80°F.

Mobile—January 52.5°F; July 81.3°F

Annual rainfall averages:

Birmingham—51.86 inches.

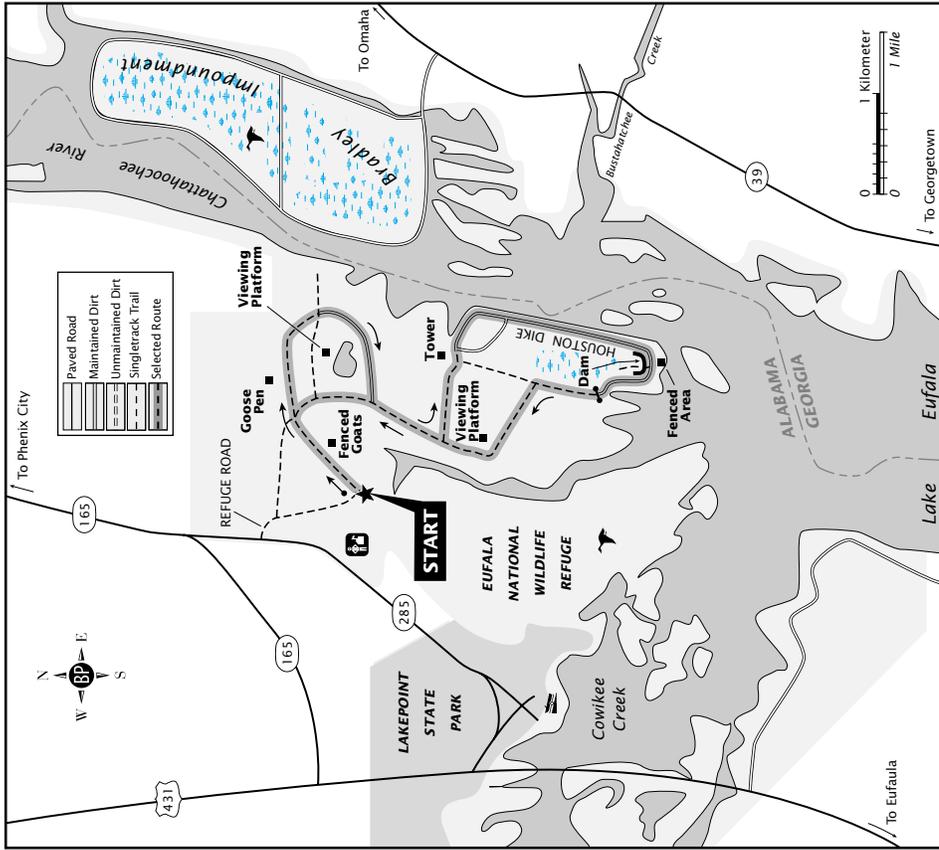
Mobile—62.23 inches



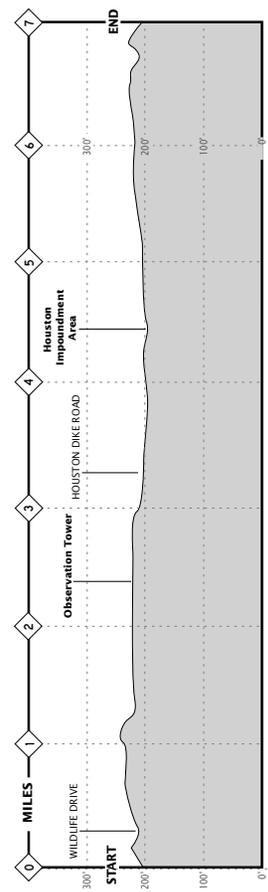
The route described here is the summer route. Between November 15 and March 1, however, portions of the route are closed to protect wintering birds and to allow them to rest before heading north in the spring. Wildlife Drive is then shortened to about five miles.

MilesDirections

- 0.0 START** from the parking lot at the ranger station and head to the northeast. Shortly, reach a T-intersection. Take a right. Pass a fenced equipment area with goats keeping the grass in shape. Alongside the road are short-grass hay fields, used not only as hay for cattle and horses but also to provide food for the wildlife that roam the refuge.
- 0.4** Come to a sign that reads "Wildlife Drive." The road makes a right and heads to the southeast.
- 0.7** Reach a fork. Turn left. [FYI. To the right and southwest is the Winter Route, open year round to visitors. The left fork to the east is the Summer Route. This route is closed between November 15th and March 1st to allow wintering birds the chance rest before heading back north.] Pass the Goose Pen to the north—this is a large marshy area that's home to many migrating birds.
- 1.4** Pass another pond area. Flocks of Canadian geese, wood ducks, and cranes call this pond home.
- 1.5** The road intersects Wildlife Drive. Turn left and head to the southeast.
- 1.7** Come to a fork. Take the left fork and head to the southeast.
- 2.2** Come to a gravel side-road and turn onto it, heading northeast.
- 2.3** The road turns into a short gravel path and leads to the Houston Observation Tower a few feet ahead. The tower provides excellent views of a marsh area and the banks of the Chattahoochee River. After viewing, turn back to the southwest on the same path and road just traveled.
- 2.9** Return to Wildlife Drive and turn to the southeast. Come to a fork a few feet down the road and go left.
- 3.1** The road makes a turn to the south and heads along the banks of the Chattahoochee River along a levee called the Houston Dike. White Tail Deer love this area and it is not uncommon to see several walking along the banks.
- 3.4** Pass a dirt road on the right—this is the Winter Route loop.
- 4.4** Cross a small dam. On the north side is a pond that is part of the Houston Impoundment Area. On the south side is the Chattahoochee River.



- 4.8** Pass through a gate that marks where the Winter Route ends.
- 5.3** Come to a fork in the road. Go left. [FYI. The right fork heads to the northeast and back to the Houston Observation Tower (this is the Winter Route for Wildlife Drive).]
- 5.7** Pass a side road. (This is the road taken back at mile 2.2 that leads to the Houston Observation Tower.)
- 6.2** Pass by the exit road from the Summer Route that was exited at mile 1.7 and continue to the northeast.
- 6.6** Pass a side road on the right. [FYI. This is a short 0.2-mile out-and-back that travels to the Upland Waterfowl Viewing Platform. This platform (complete with FREE binoculars) overlooks the Upland Impoundment area.]
- 6.7** Pass the entrance road of the Summer Route that was taken at mile 0.7.
- 7.0** Come to a fork and go left, back to the ranger station parking lot.



From the ranger station, the road heads southeast to the Summer Route Road. This road leaves Wildlife Drive and loops around the upland impoundment area and what is called the Goose Pen. These areas are used to grow corn during spring and summer and then are flooded in the fall to provide additional resting areas for wintering waterfowl.

Shortly after rejoining Wildlife Drive, the route turns east and heads toward the Chattahoochee River. Before it gets there, however, you'll reach the Houston Observation Tower. This tower provides views of the Chattahoochee River and surrounding wetlands.

After the tower, the road travels on top of the Houston Dike along the banks of the Chattahoochee. Be on the lookout for white-tailed deer foraging along the river. To the west of the river is the Houston impoundment area, a wetland created by the man-made dike. The wetland harbors wood storks, sand cranes, and other shorebirds.

The road circles the Houston impoundment area and begins to head back north on the return trip. This section features longleaf pine, slash pine, hickory, and live oak to the west of the road. Through here, bobcats, coyotes, and white-tailed deer are among the animals that call the refuge home.

A second observation deck, the Upland Waterfowl Viewing Platform, rounds out the trip and provides a panoramic view of Goose Pen and the upland impoundment wetlands that were circled earlier. The platform is a favorite spot for early-morning bird-watchers. A set of binoculars is mounted at the platform, and they are available for use without charge.



One of many bird observation decks, this one overlooking the Chattahoochee River.

Ride Information

Trail Contacts:

Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Eufaula, AL; (334) 687-4065—Office is open Monday–Friday 7:00 A.M.–4:30 P.M.

Schedule:

Open year round. The trail is shortened to five miles in the fall and winter to protect wintering birds as they prepare to return to the north. Also, portions of the trail are closed in the fall for hunting. Check with the refuge office for exact dates.

Local Information:

Eufaula-Barbour County Chamber of Commerce, Eufaula, AL; (334) 687-6664; www.ebcchamber.org/default.htm

There are also picnic areas, playgrounds, tennis courts, and campgrounds. • **Tom Mann's Fish World**, Eufaula, AL; (334) 687-3655—This attraction features what is billed as the world's largest freshwater aquarium. In addition, a large number of Native American artifacts are on display.

Accommodations:

Kendall Manor Inn, Eufaula, AL; (334) 687-8847 • **Lakepoint State Park Resort**, Eufaula, AL; 1-800-544-5253

Restaurants:

Phil's Bar-B-Que of Eufaula, Eufaula, AL; (334) 687-3337 • **Willy T's Chicken Fingers**, Eufaula, AL; (334) 616-0075

Other Resources:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC www.fws.gov/r4eao/

Local Outdoor Retailers:

Hummingbird Factory Outlet, Eufaula, AL; (334) 687-1930

Maps:

USGS maps: Georgetown, AL; Twin Springs, AL • **Drive map and interpretive brochure**—available free of charge at the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge office for free.

Local Events/Attractions:

Annual Eufaula Pilgrimage, first weekend of April, Eufaula, AL; 1-888-EUFAULA or www.zebra.net/~pilgrimage—This annual event coincides with the blooming of the azaleas and dogwoods each spring and features tours of historic homes and churches, period costumes from when "Cotton was King," arts and crafts, and an antique show. • **Blue Springs State Park**, Clio, AL; (334) 397-4875—The big attraction at Blue Springs is a crystal clear spring water swimming hole.