

Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area May 7, 2016

By Lynn Moseley, Field Trip Leader

On a beautiful, sunny day in Orange County, 13 members of PBC and guests hiked the trails at Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area. At an elevation of almost 900 feet, the north-facing slopes of the preserve are home to extensive stands of rhododendron, mountain laurel, chestnut oak, and other flora more typical of the North Carolina mountains. Other parts of the park include different habitats such as pine forests, ponds, wetlands, and a rock quarry. We recorded 40 species, including four species of thrushes, seven warblers, and both Summer and Scarlet Tanagers.



Photo Credit: Lou Skrabec,

At the end of the hike, a stunning male Scarlet Tanager provided a parting gift as it posed for pictures atop a mulberry tree in the parking area, glowing in the sun. Thanks to Lou Skrabec for the photo. All participants agreed that this small preserve, opened as part of the state parks system just 19 years ago, is a little-known gem in the Piedmont and a rewarding destination for seeing great birds, rare butterflies, and beautiful native plants.

Bird List:

Canada Goose
Great Blue Heron
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-throated Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Carolina Wren

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Eastern Bluebird
Veery
Swainson's Thrush
Wood Thrush
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
Northern Parula
Yellow Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Pine Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Ovenbird
Summer Tanager
Scarlet Tanager

Chipping Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Northern Cardinal

Common Grackle
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow