Exploring North Carolina: North Carolina State Parks, Trails, Lakes, Rivers & Natural Areas

The North Carolina State Parks system was launched on March 3, 1915 when the General Assembly passed legislation appropriating funds to buy land for a park at Mount Mitchell. A year later, following the acquisition of 795 acres at the mountain's summit, Mount Mitchell became the state's first park and the first park in the southeastern United States. Today the North Carolina State Parks system covers 225,000 acres from the mountains to the sea.

Background Articles
- State Park Facts
- State Parks Superintendents/Directors State Parks
- State Trails
- State Recreation Areas
- State Natural Areas
- State Rivers
- State Lakes
- Resources and Video Recordings

History of the North Carolina State Parks System

State Parks Facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Type</th>
<th># Park Units</th>
<th>Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Parks</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>156,900 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Recreation Areas</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13,256 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Natural Areas</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24,194 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Lakes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29,135 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Rivers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>146 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Trails</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2,052 acres, 806 miles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visitors to State Parks, 2015

17.3 million
State Parks Superintendents/Directors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superintendent/Director</th>
<th>Years Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas W. Morse*</td>
<td>1935 – 1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James S. Stevens, Jr.</td>
<td>1977 – 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William “Wes” Davis</td>
<td>1984 – 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis R. Ledford</td>
<td>2003 – 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael A. Murphy</td>
<td>2014 to present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*During the time Morse served in World War II, R.J. Pearce served in an Acting role.

State Parks, Recreation Areas, Rivers, Lakes, Trails and Natural Areas
(with links to NCpedia articles)

State Parks

- Cape Hatteras State Park[^5] (now part of the National Seashore)
- Carolina Beach State Park[^6]
- Carvers Creek State Park[^7]
- Chimney Rock State Park[^8]
- Crabtree Creek State Park[^9] (now Umstead State Park[^10])
- Crowders Mountain State Park[^11]
- Cliffs of the Neuse State Park[^12]
- Dismal Swamp State Park[^13]
- Elk Knob State Park[^14]
- Eno River State Park[^15]
- Fort Macon State Park[^16]
- Goose Creek State Park[^17]
- Gorges State Park[^18]
- Grandfather Mountain State Park[^19]
- Hammocks Beach State Park[^20]
- Hanging Rock State Park[^21]
- Haw River State Park[^22]
- Jockey's Ridge State Park[^23]
- Jones Lake State Park[^24]
- Lake James State Park[^25]
- Lake Norman State Park[^26]
- Lake Waccamaw State Park[^27]
- Lumber River State Park[^28]
- Mayo River State Park[^29]
- Medoc Mountain State Park[^30]
- Merchants Millpond State Park[^31]
- Morrow Mountain State Park[^32]
- Mount Mitchell State Park[^33]
- New River State Park[^34]
- Pettigrew State Park[^35]
- Pilot Mountain State Park[^36]
- Raven Rock State Park[^37]
- Reedy Creek State Park[^38] (now William B. Umstead State Park[^10])
- Singletary Lake State Park[^39]
- South Mountains State Park[^40]
- Stone Mountain State Park[^41]
- William B. Umstead State Park[^10]

[^5]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/cape-hatteras-state-park)
[^6]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/carolina-beach-state-park)
[^7]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/carvers-creek-state-park)
[^8]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/chimney-rock-state-park)
[^9]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/crabtree-creek-state-park)
[^10]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/umstead-state-park)
[^11]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/crowders-mountain-state-park)
[^12]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/cliffs-of-the-neuse-state-park)
[^13]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/dismal-swamp-state-park)
[^14]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/elk-knob-state-park)
[^15]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/eno-river-state-park)
[^16]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/fort-macon-state-park)
[^17]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/goose-creek-state-park)
[^18]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/gorges-state-park)
[^19]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/grandfather-mountain-state-park)
[^20]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/hammocks-beach-state-park)
[^21]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/hanging-rock-state-park)
[^22]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/haw-river-state-park)
[^23]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/jockeys-ridge-state-park)
[^24]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/jones-lake-state-park)
[^25]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/lake-james-state-park)
[^26]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/lake-norman-state-park)
[^27]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/lake-waccamaw-state-park)
[^28]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/lumber-river-state-park)
[^29]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/mayo-river-state-park)
[^30]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/medoc-mountain-state-park)
[^31]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/merchants-millpond-state-park)
[^32]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/morrow-mountain-state-park)
[^33]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/mount-mitchell-state-park)
[^34]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/new-river-state-park)
[^35]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/pettigrew-state-park)
[^36]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/pilot-mountain-state-park)
[^37]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/raven-rock-state-park)
[^38]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/reedy-creek-state-park)
[^39]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/singletary-lake-state-park)
[^40]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/south-mountains-state-park)
[^41]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/stone-mountain-state-park)
[^10]: [NCpedia article](https://ncpedia.org/place/william-b-umstead-state-park)
State Trails

Fonta Flora Loop State Trail
French Broad River State Trail
Mountains-to-Sea State Trail
Deep River State Trail
Yadkin River State Trail

State Recreation Areas

Falls Lake State Recreation Area
Jordan Lake State Recreation Area
Kerr Lake State Recreation Area
Fort Fisher State Recreation Area

State Natural Areas

Baldhead Island State Natural Area
Bear Paw State Natural Area
Bullhead Mountain State Natural Area
Bushy Lake State Natural Area
Hemlock Bluffs State Natural Area
Lower Haw River State Natural Area
Lea Island State Natural Area
Masonboro Island State Natural Area
Mount Jefferson State Natural Area
Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area
Pineola Bog State Natural Area
Run Hill State Natural Area
Sandy Run Savannas State Natural Area
Sugar Mountain Bog State Natural Area
Theodore Roosevelt State Natural Area
Weymouth Woods-Sandhills Nature Preserve
Yellow Mountain State Natural Area

State Rivers

Linville River
New River
Horsepasture River
Lumber River

State Lakes

Jones Lake
Lake Phelps
Lake Waccamaw
Salters Lake
Singletary Lake
White Lake

Resources and Video Recordings:

Video Recording: Earnhart, Tom; UNC-TV. 2015. "Saving the Best: North Carolina State Parks at 100." [51].

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, documents and images from North Carolina Digital Collections [52].
Subjects:
Natural resources [56]
Parks [59]
Places [60]
Rivers [61]

Authors:
Agan, Kelly [62]

From:
Government & Heritage Library, State Library of North Carolina [63]

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