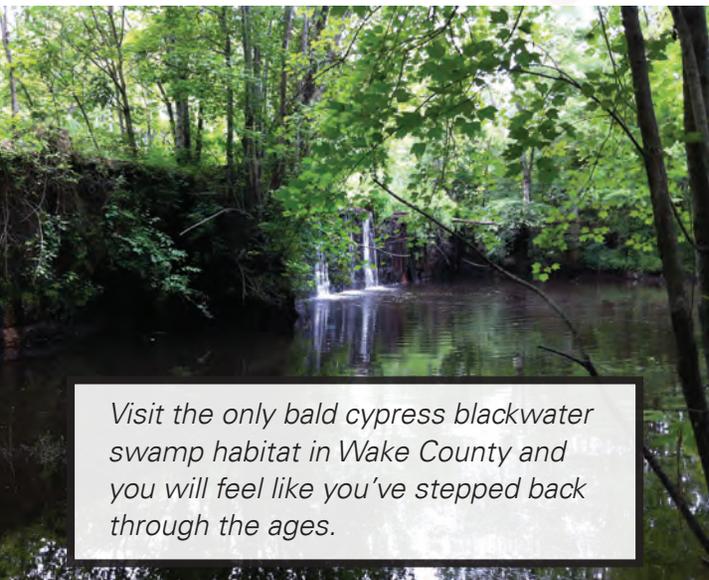


Transport yourself

...back to nature

...back to peace

...back in time



*Visit the only bald cypress blackwater swamp habitat in Wake County and you will feel like you've stepped back through the ages.*

## Tips & Rules for a Safe, Pleasant Visit

**Please come prepared!** There are no restroom facilities or drinking water at the preserve.

Safety and enjoyment go hand in hand. The following rules are in place to ensure a safe, pleasant visit and also to protect the preserve:

1. **PETS MUST BE KEPT ON A 6 FOOT LEASH**  
(Please clean up after your pet and help us keep the nature preserve a place for all citizens to enjoy)
2. **OPEN FIRES AND GRILLS ARE NOT ALLOWED**
3. **PARK ONLY IN DESIGNATED AREAS**  
(No parking on roadsides, grass or outside preserve gates)
4. **LIFE JACKETS REQUIRED WHILE BOATING**
5. **THE FOLLOWING ARE PROHIBITED:**
  - a. Alcoholic beverages
  - b. Hunting
  - c. Feeding of wildlife in the park
  - d. Swimming or wading
  - e. Collection or release of any animal, plant, or mineral material
  - f. Amplified music
  - g. Littering
  - h. Firearms  
This does not prohibit concealed handgun permit holders from legally carrying a concealed handgun in accordance with N.C.G.S. 14-415.11
  - i. Overnight parking and camping



Robertson Millpond Preserve  
6333 Robertson Pond Rd.  
Wendell, NC 27591  
(919) 604-9326  
naturepreserve@wakegov.com

[wakegov.com/parks/robertsonmillpond](http://wakegov.com/parks/robertsonmillpond)



# Robertson Millpond Preserve



Parks, Recreation  
and Open Space



Swamp Rose  
Photo Courtesy of Dr. Eugene Hester

We welcome you to

...paddle on the millpond

...explore the natural areas

...fish in designated places

## PRESERVE HOURS

SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS,  
8:00 A.M. — SUNSET



ROBERTSON MILLPOND IS ALSO OPEN  
MEMORIAL DAY

4TH OF JULY - IF IT FALLS ON A MONDAY OR FRIDAY  
LABOR DAY

Welcome to...

## Robertson Millpond Preserve

Transport yourself to a long-ago place and time when you visit Robertson Millpond Preserve, an 85-acre refuge for nature lovers, canoeists and kayakers. The area is significant for its rich cultural and natural history. When you look around, you'll think you are in the Great Dismal Swamp!

The site offers:

- Vehicle parking
- Nonmotorized boat unloading area
- A few shaded picnic tables
- Launch to pond from dock or shoreline
- Nonpotable water to wash boats and feet

Future projects include a short boardwalk to experience the pond's environment and an interpretative display next to the mill site foundation.

The millpond is a blackwater swamp that was purchased under the Wake County Open Space Program in September 2013. As vegetation decays in this slow moving river and swamp, tannins leach into the water, making it transparent, acidic, and darkly stained like tea or coffee. The pond is 8-12' deep in many areas, with an average depth of 7', which surprises most people when looking at this forested pond.

Learn about the natural resources found in Wake County Parks and Preserves.



WCnrid.WakeGov.com



## A Rich Cultural History

The millpond is part of Buffalo Creek, named for the herds of buffalo once seen watering there. Native Americans in the region would have likely lived and hunted along the creek.



In the 1820s, William Avera operated a 600-acre farm and gristmill with his wife and two children. The family originally lived in a Federal-style house.

William's son, Thomas, grew to be farmer and doctor who later served as a surgeon in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Thomas built an Italianate style home in the early 1870s, and moved the original family home to a new site on Robertson Pond Road, where it still stands today.

Land sales in 1887 and 1914 led to the Robertson family ownership, for which the road and pond are named.

The Robertson family farmed the land west of the pond and probably also operated the mill until the 1940s. In 1960, the Charles Robertson estate was divided into eleven tracts for surviving heirs. The millpond was inherited by Nettie Robertson Fowler, whose family operated a boathouse on the pond in the 1960s, renting wooden boats for fishing.

The dam, part earthen and part masonry, dates to the 1820s and is still in place. The mill was removed in the mid-1970s.



## A Significant Natural Area

The site has been identified by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program as one of 47 significant natural areas in Wake County. This blackwater cypress-gum swamp is unique this far north and this far west in North Carolina and has many species from the coastal plain present.

The bases of the cypress trees provide habitat for swamp rose and several coastal plain plants, shrubs and vines, including the coastal fetterbush and sweetspire. In the spring, you can see Virginia blue flag blooming near the boat dock, which is another species found primarily in the coastal plain.



Photo Courtesy of Dr. Eugene Hester

There are numerous wood duck and prothonotary warbler boxes in the swamp, put in by Dr. Eugene Hester and NCSU students. If you are lucky, you might get to see both of these species along the paddling trail.

The cypress swamp provides habitat for many animals. Look for a large variety of birds, beaver, muskrat, turtles, and fish such as swamp darters and sunfish.



Nettie Robertson Fowler's husband John P. Fowler with his catch of sunfish from the pond.

If you have pictures or information about the gristmill site, please contact us at: [naturepreserve@wakegov.com](mailto:naturepreserve@wakegov.com)

# Robertson Millpond Preserve



THEN...

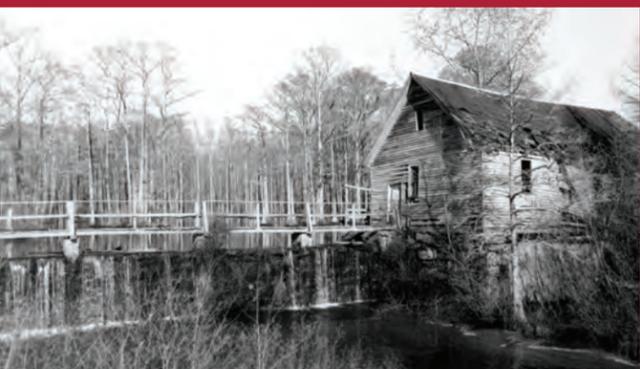
## Recreation

Fishing was popular in the 1940s. The millpond was featured in sport fishing magazines. At that time, one could catch crappie, bluegill, and largemouth bass and there was a place to cook fish along the pond banks. In the 1960s, there was a boat house renting wooden boats.



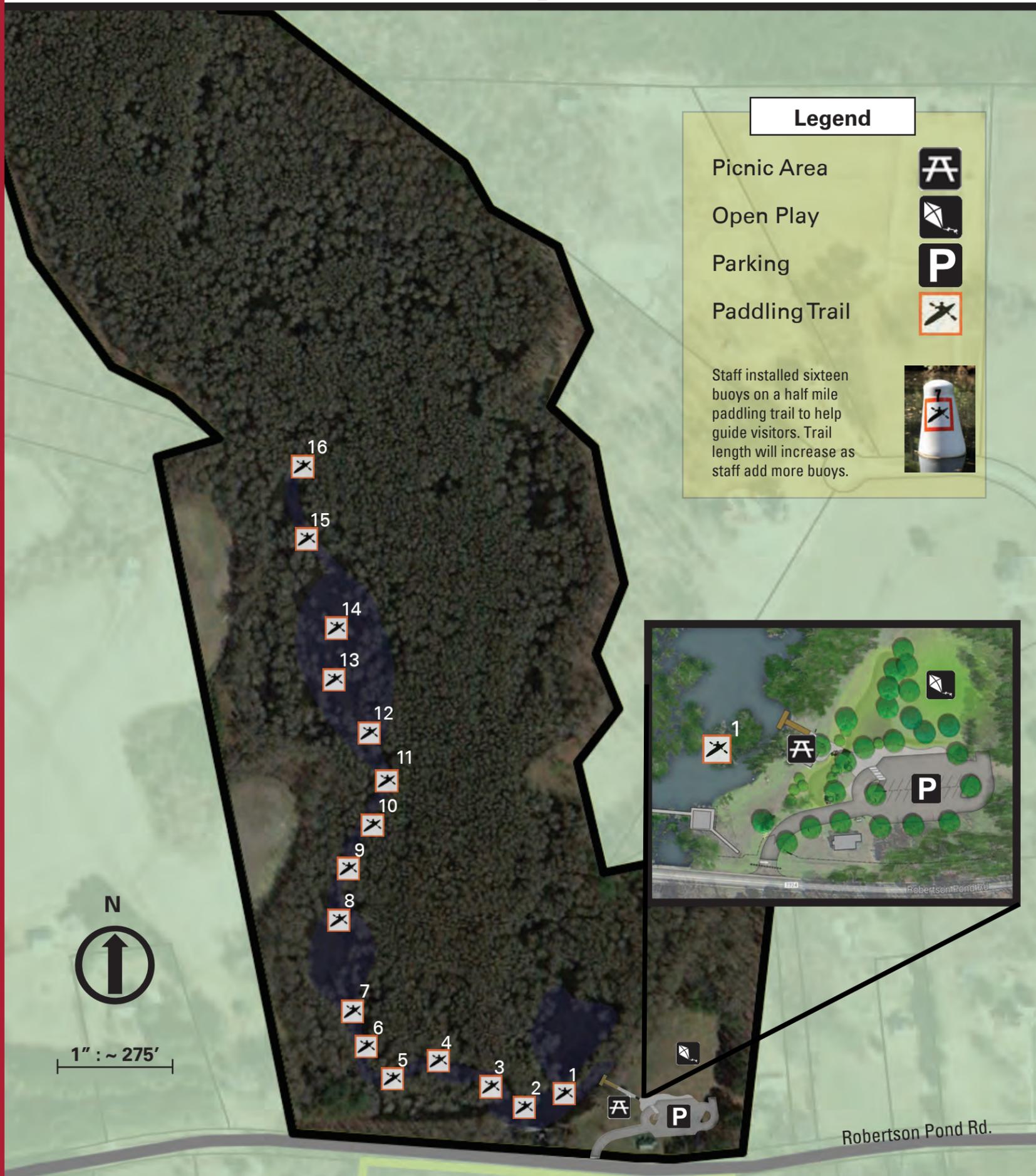
## Nature

The dam built in the 1820s created the pond, which developed into a nearly closed canopy of bald cypress trees. A variety of plants and animals thrived in this pristine habitat. NC State University led a flora and fauna survey in the 1980s. The site was also designated a Natural Heritage Area in 1983.



## Culture

The Robertson mill site and dam, built in the 1820s, served as a significant focal point of economic activity in the Wendell community for almost two centuries. After the mill fell out of use in 1950s, the focal point became recreational activities in and around the millpond created by the dam.



And Now

## Recreation

Many people enjoy paddling for fun, exercise, fishing, and to get close to nature. **PLAN AHEAD** with the weather and your physical limitations in mind! The pond is 8-12 feet deep. Life jackets are **REQUIRED**. Bring paddling trail map, water and snacks with you, as there are no facilities on site.



## Nature

Recent surveys found a variety of birds including warblers, wood duck, anhinga, and woodpeckers. Bald cypress is still dominant and coastal plain species like swamp rose, fetterbush and sweetspire are common. Click the "Discover Nature" signpost on the website to find a complete list of species.



## Culture

Visitors can see the dam, the mill foundation, and the original millstone. Now is the time to make new memories at this beautiful preserve. Share your memories via Instagram, Facebook or directly with preserve staff. Future plans include interpretative signage, and boardwalks through the wetlands.