

At Mason Farm Biological Reserve you can—

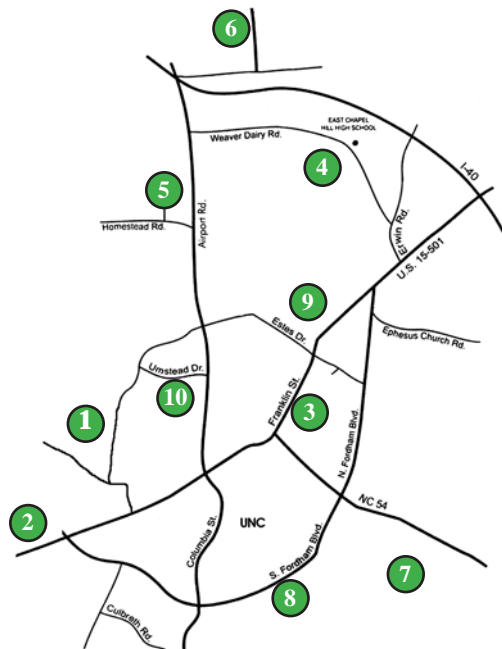
- » watch hawks soaring overhead
- » listen for frogs
- » observe a variety of birds
- » see trees over 200 years old
- » appreciate a landscape little changed from the 19th century

Cross the ford over Morgan Creek by car or foot and you enter a natural area unlike any other. Budding naturalists welcome the serenity of the reserve that enables them to catch the smallest movements of birds and to hear distinctly so many sounds of the natural world, including birds and frogs, as well as other animals.



Natural Areas of Chapel Hill

- 1 **Adams Tract**
Wilson Park, 101 Williams Street, Carrboro
- 2 **Henry Anderson Community Park**
302 Highway 54 West, Carrboro
- 3 **Battle Park**
Country Club Road
- 4 **Cedar Falls Park**
501 Weaver Dairy Road (across from East Chapel Hill High School)
- 5 **Homestead Park**
100 Northern Park Drive
- 6 **Johnston Mill Nature Preserve**
Turkey Farm Road
- 7 **Mason Farm Biological Reserve**
Finley Golf Course Road
- 8 **NC Botanical Garden**
Fordham Boulevard at Old Mason Farm Road
- 9 **Pritchard Park**
100 Library Drive (surrounding Chapel Hill Public Library)
- 10 **Umstead Park**
399 Umstead Road



Explore . . .

MASON FARM BIOLOGICAL RESERVE



A Natural Area of Chapel Hill

One of 10 natural areas in the Chapel Hill area profiled by Boy Scouts of Troop 9 for Daniel Ripperton's Eagle Scout Service Project to encourage children to spend more time in the natural world.

Mason Farm Biological Reserve

provides a glimpse of a natural area in the Piedmont as it might have appeared a century ago. Bequeathed to the University in 1894 by Mary Elizabeth Morgan Mason, the land has been largely undisturbed since then. The 367 acres comprising Mason Farm Biological Reserve consist mostly of forests and old fields, with a creek, swampy areas, and flood plain. The Big Oak Woods, a 65-acre section of hardwood bottomland in the center of the site, has never been clear-cut, though it was used as a woodlot and for foraging by cattle. Some of the trees there are over 200 years old. Through a combination of controlled burning and mowing, the open fields are maintained as prairie-like habitats, ranging from wet meadows to drier Piedmont prairies.



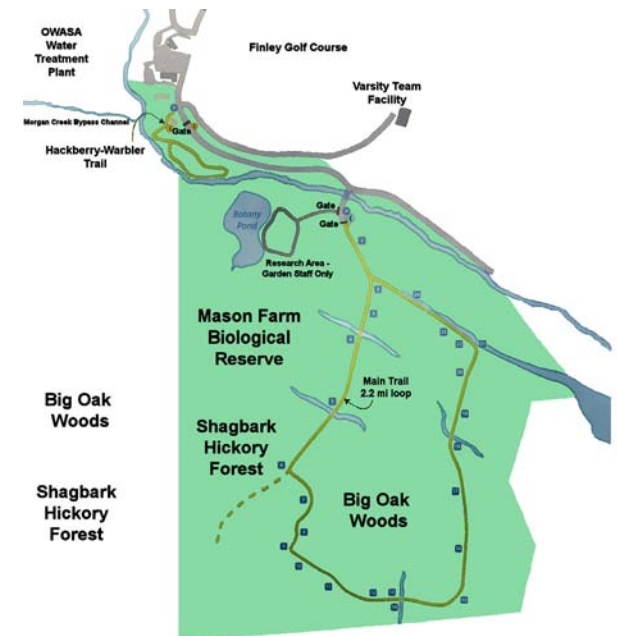
Flora and Fauna

Due to the variety of habitats at Mason Farm Biological Reserve and the careful management of them, more different species of animals have been recorded there than in any other comparably-sized area in the entire Piedmont. Among the wildlife recorded are 29 species of mammals, 28 species of fish, 28 species of reptiles, 23 species of amphibians, 67 species of butterflies, and 216 species of birds. Not surprisingly, the reserve is the most popular site for birding in Chapel Hill. It is an excellent spot to find sparrows in winter, warblers in both spring and fall, and hawks all year round. With all the fields and brushy areas, birds such as Indigo Buntings, Blue Grosbeaks, and Yellow-breasted Chats are readily found. A number of rare birds are regular nesters and more are migrants.

The site also supports an unusually large variety of plant life with over 800 different species of plants recorded. Large numbers of mature Carolina Shagbark Hickories are found on the site, including the state champion.

Trails

Two trails offer access to the site. The Hackberry-Warbler Trail begins near the entrance to the reserve. It descends gently to Morgan Creek which it follows along much of its course, then loops back through the low woods and brush to its start, less than a mile in all. The Big Oak Woods Trail, a 2.2 mile loop, traverses the main section of the reserve. Following the trail from the parking lot, turn left at the fork to proceed clockwise around the loop. Initially you pass brushy areas and fields, with a water-filled ditch on the left. Rounding a curve, the trail enters a low forest of tall hardwoods, called the Big Oak Woods. After another sharp turn the trail passes through a swampy area, called Siler's Bog. Then it proceeds by the Shagbark Hickory Forest and more fields before returning to the parking lot.



Permit required for entrance. You can get this at the Totten Center at the North Carolina Botanical Garden during business hours.

Located on Finley Golf Course Road. Small parking lot available on the south side of Morgan Creek.

Not accessible by bus.

No drinking water or restrooms available.

Park hours are dawn to dusk.

Dogs are NOT permitted.

Administered by North Carolina Botanical Garden.