



A Significant Forest

A Special Place: for People and Birds

The forests of Bankhead have been here for many generations, witnessing considerable natural, historical and cultural changes. This area was home to native Americans for many years. The pioneers who lived here witnessed the events of the War Between the States. Many of the trees growing here were planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) on abandoned farms during the Great Depression era. Because of the large area of rich habitat they provide, these forests host special birds that depend on these trees to make their nest, forage and hide from predators.

Listen Before You Look

The forest's extensive canopy and deep shade can make spotting birds difficult. Birders should listen carefully to the variety of sounds forest residents make. Familiarity with bird songs will often reveal a bird's identity quicker than trying to discern it in a thick canopy of green. Many birds are quiet in the middle of the day as they forage for food or tend to their young, but during early morning or late day, visitors might be serenaded with a fantastic chorus of bird song.



Pileated Woodpecker/Perry C. Covington

Pileated Woodpecker

One of the bird's colloquial names, "Lord God Woodpecker," says it all. This is Alabama's largest woodpecker. Its impressive size and striking black, white, and red plumage make it a real showstopper. Even if you don't see the bird, its powerful drumming can often be heard from deep within the forest.



Great Crested Flycatcher/Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Isidor Jeklin

Great Crested Flycatcher

This bird's distinctive *queep* call will often betray its presence high in the canopy. Careful observation might find the bird perched overhead or tending to its nest in a tree hollow, often at eye level.



Red-eyed Vireo/Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Mike Hopiak

Red-eyed Vireo

The Red-eyed Vireo seems to constantly taunt visitors as it utters a hurried phrase that some interpret as *here-I-am, in-the-tree, look-up, at-the-top* repeated over and over again. Look for movement in the lower canopy to catch a glimpse of this songster.



Wood Thrush/Walt Burch

Wood Thrush

To many, the song of the Wood Thrush represents true forest wilderness east of the Mississippi. This reddish brown thrush sports a heavily spotted potbelly. The warm brown tone and black spots help this bird fade into the background when it isn't actively searching for worms in the dry leaves on the forest.

Bankhead National Forest: An Important Bird Area

The forest habitats of the Bankhead National Forest are unique, diverse and beautiful. Because of the importance of this area to birds, *The American Bird Conservancy* has designated Bankhead as a globally important bird area (IBA).

One of the most important features of the Bankhead is the large acreage of continuous forest. Forests of this scale are no longer common in north Alabama. Another important feature is the diversity of forest types that provide habitat for many species of birds and other wildlife. Diversity is caused by natural and manmade disturbances. Windstorms, fires, insect outbreaks and floods are examples of natural disturbances. Forest and wildlife management practices such as thinning, prescribed burning and wildlife openings are planned and conducted by the Forest Service. Managing for a variety of forest community types and conditions provides habitat for a diversity of birds and other wildlife.

