



# Forest Elders



## Escape to an Earlier Time

The giant trees of Northern Alabama's mature forests have stood throughout generations, witnessing considerable natural, historical, and cultural changes. Some probably witnessed the Civil War while others only date back to when the Muscle Shoals were tamed. Because of the rich habitat they provide, these elders of the forest host special birds that don't venture far from their ancient limbs.

## Listen Before You Look

Because the forest's extensive canopy creates a deep shade, spotting birds can be difficult. Birders should listen carefully to the variety of sounds the forest residents make. Familiarity with bird songs will more quickly reveal a bird's identity 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. However, a visit early in the morning or at the end of the day will ensure 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 *queeep* call will often betray its presence high in the canopy. Careful observation might find the bird perched overhead or perhaps tending to its nest in a tree hollow closer to eye level.



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

### Red-eyed Vireo

The Red-eyed Vireo seems to be constantly taunting 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 floor.

## Outdoor Recreation at its Best

Hurricane Creek Park is a nature lover's amusement park with great hiking, climbing, camping, and so much more.

- Rock climbing, rappelling, and bouldering are all possible with instructors and a gear shop on site.
- Three miles of scenic hiking trails lead visitors through canyons and past waterfalls.
- Primitive tent camping is available for those who wish to stay overnight.
- Birding is great along the numerous streams and winding trails throughout the park.
- Shaded picnic grounds and a swinging bridge make the park fun for the whole family.
- Rocky terrain is ideal for mountain biking on designated trails.

