



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 extensive forest 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 reveal a bird's identity quicker than trying to discern it in a thick green canopy. 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 makes it a real showstopper. Even if you don't see the bird, its powerful drumming can often be heard from deep within the forest.



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.



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.

Alabama's Earliest Residents

Just across the river from the western end of the TVA Reservation in Florence is the Indian Mound and Museum. Though there are larger mounds in Alabama, the Florence mound is the largest in the Tennessee Valley.

- Early settlers reported finding steps on the eastern side of the mound and an earthen wall that surrounded the mound.
- This quadrilateral mound is thought to date from one thousand years before the arrival of Columbus.
- Visit the museum to learn about the rich cultural heritage of native Americans in Alabama.

