

## Lake Conestee Nature Park

**Status:** Recognized

**Priority:** Global

**Criteria Proposed:** B1

**Criteria Confirmed:** A1, D1, D3, D4i, D5

**State:** South Carolina

**Country:** US

**County:**

Greenville

**Latitude:** 34.77639

**Area (ha):** 162.0

**Longitude:** -82.355

**Elevation (m):**

Min 231.0 Max 271.0 Avg 251.0028

**Bird Conservation Region**

Piedmont

**Endemic Bird Area**

### Site Description

Lake Conestee Nature Park consists of 400 acres of beautiful natural habitat just 6 miles from downtown Greenville, SC. The park contains both hardwood and evergreen forest, extensive wetlands, a lake and 1.5 miles of the Reedy River. Current facilities include 2.8 miles of natural surface trails, two wheel-chair accessible paved trails (0.6 and 1.25 miles), four trailheads with public parking, 1,850 linear feet (0.35 miles) of boardwalk in the wetland areas, and a large wetlands observation deck with interpretive signs. The park is open daily and there is no charge for entry. For more information about the park, including the Master Plan for future development, the website is <http://www.conesteeepark.com/>.

### Ornithological Significance

Lake Conestee Nature Park is the wintering grounds of the largest reported population of Rusty Blackbirds in South Carolina. Between 700 and 1000 individuals have been reported. Research on Rusty Blackbirds is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Russell Greenberg, Director of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, Washington DC. The bird checklist, developed since Nov. 2006 includes 162 species. Dr. Paul Serridge and members of the Greenville County Bird Club gathered data.

### Criteria

### Species Data and Criteria

Common Name	Date	Seasonal/Daily	Season	# Observed	Density (#/km2)	Units	Proposed Criteria	Confirmed Criteria
Rusty Blackbird	2010	S	non-breeding	200		Individuals	A1 - Global Species of Conservation Concern B1 - Continental Species of Conservation Concern	A1 - Global Species of Conservation Concern D1 - State Species of Conservation Concern D3 - Species in rare/unique habitat D4i - >1% State population D5 - Research site

	<b>2009</b>	S	non-breeding	850		Individuals		A1 - Global Species of Conservation Concern
<p>Source text: Data has been collected from 2006-2010 by Dr. Paul Serridge, members of the Greenville County Bird Club, and Patti Newell, researcher. Between 700-1000 individuals of Rusty Blackbirds have been observed during winter months. The Lake Conestee Bird List totals 164 species.</p>								

## Ownership

The Conestee Foundation owns and manages LCNP. Dr. Dave Hargett is the Executive Director. (dhargett52@gmail.com) 601 Fork Shoals Rd., Box 9111 Greenville, SC 29604 864-277-2004

Drew Gonick is project coordinator (conesteeperpark@gmail.com) 864-631-9800

LCNP Principal Advocacy and Support Organizations (July 2009)

University of South Carolina, Institute for Public Service & Policy Research 1600 Hampton Street Columbia, SC 29208

Hollingsworth Funds 124 Verdae Blvd., Suite 104&#8232; Greenville, SC 29607

Jolley Foundation SC National Bank Trust Dept. 100 N Main St., 13th Floor Winston Salem, NC 27150

Naturaland Trust P.O. Box 728 Greenville, SC 29602

City of Greenville P.O. Box 2207&#8232; Greenville, SC 29602

Clemson University, Dept. of Biological Sciences 132 Long Hall&#8232; Clemson, SC 29634

Environmental Education Association of SC Richland Conservation District P.O. Box 192, 2020 Hampton St. Columbia, S.C. 29202

Friends of the Reedy River P.O. Box 9351&#8232; Greenville, SC 29604

Graham Foundation 531 S. Main Street, &#8232; Suite ML-7 Greenville, SC 29601

Greenville County 301 University Ridge, Suite 2400 Greenville SC 29601

Greenville County Bird Club E-mail: dcoody@gcbirdclub.org

Greenville County Recreation District 4806 Old Spartanburg Road&#8232; Taylors, SC 29687

Greenville County School District P.O. Box 2848&#8232; Greenville, SC&#8232;29602

Roper Mountain Science Center 402 Roper Mountain Road Greenville, SC 29615

SC Conservation Bank P.O. Box 167&#8232; Columbia, S.C. 29202

SC Dept. of Health & Environmental Control 2600 Bull Street Columbia, SC 29201

SC Dept. of Parks, Recreation & Tourism 1205 Pendleton Street Columbia, SC 29201

SC Native Plant Society P.O. Box 491&#8232; Norris, SC 29667

SC Master Naturalists Clemson University Dept. of Forestry and Natural Resources&#8232; 261 Lehotsky Hall&#8232; Clemson, SC 29634

Upstate Forever P.O. Box 2308&#8232; Greenville SC 29602

% of IBA	Ownership
100.0	Non-profit

100.0	Non-profit / Environmental/Conservation Organization
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## Habitat

The topography of Lake Conestee Nature Park (LCNP) is gently rolling hills in uplands and riverine flood plain in lowlands. Approximately 130 acres of the site consists of the former Lake Conestee lakebed, which now is approximately 75% filled in and has developed into a bottomland hardwood forest. Approximately 25% of the lake remains as open water and river channel. The site is dominated in upland areas by southern mixed hardwood forests and in the lowland areas by bottomland hardwood forests. The dominant species in upland forests are species typical of the piedmont, including various oaks and hickories; and the bottomland forests are dominated by box elder, red maple, ash species and privet. Approximately 15 acres of uplands consist of pastureland, dominated by grasses and herbs; and approximately 12 acres are old field habitat, dominated by herbs, grasses and various shrub/sapling species. There is a large active population of beaver with several dams (IMPORTANT FOR RUSTY BLACKBIRD HABITAT). Recently returned to the upstate of SC, river otter are found at LCNP. A significant breeding population of White-tailed Deer inhabit the park. Breeding pairs of red and gray fox are found. Yellow-bellied Slider and Eastern Painted Turtles are abundant, while several species of snakes, including Copperhead, are found. A unique population of Red Buckeye, monitored by the SC Native Plant Society, and abundant Water Primrose are significant vegetation.

% of IBA	Habitat
-	Forested Upland / Deciduous forest / Bottomland Hardwood Forest
-	Forested Upland / Deciduous forest / Southern Mixed Hardwood Forest
-	Forested Upland / Evergreen Forest / Coniferous woods
-	Forested Upland / Evergreen Forest / Coniferous woods
-	Forested Upland / Evergreen Forest / Coniferous woods
-	Forested Upland / Mixed Forest / Deciduous/Mixed upland forest
-	Forested Upland / Mixed Forest / Deciduous/Mixed upland forest
-	Herbaceous Upland / Grassland/Herbaceous
-	Herbaceous Upland / Grassland/Herbaceous / Grassland
-	Herbaceous Upland / Grassland/Herbaceous / Grassland
-	Water / Open Water / Lake
-	Water / Open Water / Lake
-	Water / Open Water / Lake
-	Water / Open Water / River
-	Wetlands / Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands / Non-tidal Wetland
-	Wetlands / Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands / Non-tidal Wetland
-	Wetlands / Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands / Non-tidal Wetland
-	Wetlands / Woody Wetlands / Forested Wetland (=bottoml forest)
-	Wetlands / Woody Wetlands / Forested Wetland (=bottoml forest)

## Land Use

100% of Lake Conestee Nature Park is devoted to wildlife conservation and recreation and tourism. Birdwatching and hiking are the most common uses. There are wheelchair-accessible trails.

<b>% of IBA</b>	<b>Land Use</b>
100.0	nature conservation and research / Conservation/ Natural Area
-	tourism/recreation / Birdwatching
-	tourism/recreation / Hiking

## Conservation Issues

Over time, approximately 75% of the original lake has filled in naturally with sediments from the Reedy River, which contains pollutants from the river's industrial past. Today the majority of the contaminants are covered by layers of more recent sediment and by bottomland forest. The Conestee Foundation entered into a Voluntary Cleanup Contract (VCC) with the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) to safely manage both the legacy contaminants in place and the historic Lake Conestee dam resulting in a Restrictive Covenant (RC) defining limits on activities in the lakebed for the protection of both the public and the environment. Disturbance of soils, sediments and wetlands is minimized and swimming or taking of fish for consumption are prohibited. Additional conservation problems include management of invasive plant species. These are gradually being eliminated from the site where feasible and as resources allow. The conservation measures required under the BCC and RC provide effective stewardship of the legacy pollutants in subsurface sediments. The Conestee Foundation is developing plans to refurbish the lake dam to ensure long-term structural integrity. The first phase of removal of invasive Bradford Pear trees in the pasture land and old field communities has been completed. This species, multiflora rose, and privet are the dominant invasive plant species on the site, and future plans include removal of the majority of these plants to the extent feasible.

<b>Level</b>	<b>Threat</b>
0	Invasive species / Non-native plants
0	Pollution / Water pollution

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Citation: National Audubon Society 2010. Important Bird Areas in the U.S.