

**Please send reports with photos to**  
**pam@conservingcarolina.org**  
 Thanks to David Campbell for identifying Polk County's 'Most Wanted'

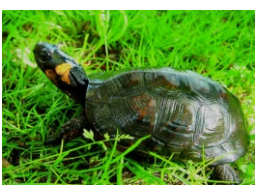
**Cerulean Warbler**  
*(Setophaga cerulea)*  
 Cerulean Warblers are early spring migrants. They are 4-5" in length, with long pointed wings, a short tail, and long under tail coverts. Males are blue above and white below. They have black streaks on their back and sides and a black line, or "necklace", across their neck. Females are bluish-green to olive-green above with white under parts and a white or yellowish eyebrow stripe; they have no "necklace". Both sexes have 2 white wing bars and white tail spots. Look for them on ridges and slopes with large tracts of mature oak-hickory forests, high in the canopy, from late April through mid-June. The song of the male is rapid and buzz-like on one pitch, followed by a short series of rising and accelerating notes, ending with a high buzz-like trill, ZHEE ZHEE ZIZIZIZI zzzzzeeet.



**Yucca Giant-skipper**  
*(Megathymus yuccae)*  
 The butterfly produces one generation each year, laying large, amber-brown eggs singly on Yucca leaves from Feb. to May. After hatching, young larvae feed on host leaves. As they mature, older larvae bore into the plant crown and feed within the root, constructing a prominent silken tent or chimney at the opening of the burrow, a key indicator to their presence.

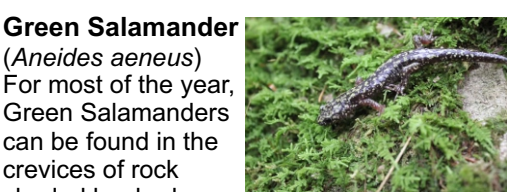


**Diana Fritillary**  
*(Speyeria diana)*  
 Ranked as "very rare" globally, this impressive, large forest dweller found from mid-May to early Oct. Female wings are 3-4". Upper portions of the wings are black with blue on outer portion. Males are a little smaller, with orange on the outer wing portion and mostly orange on the underside. Adults feed on dung and flower nectar from plants including common and swamp milkweeds, ironweed, red clover and butterflybush. Females walk along the ground laying single eggs on dead twigs and leaves near violets.

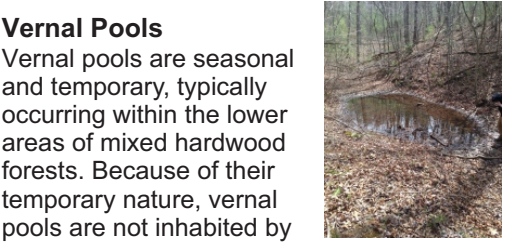


**Bog Turtle**  
*(Glyptemys mühlenbergi)*  
 The smallest turtle in the US, 3-4". They inhabit wet areas with emergent

vegetation, preferring cool, clear, shallow, slow-moving, muddy bottomed streams. Look for a bright orange to yellow blotch on either side of the head and neck.



**Green Salamander**  
*(Aneides aeneus)*  
 For most of the year, Green Salamanders can be found in the crevices of rock shaded by rhododendron in moist forests. They have a black, dark brown or gray body with a green to yellowish-green lichen-like pattern on the head, back, and tail.



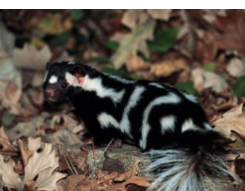
**Vernal Pools**  
 Vernal pools are seasonal and temporary, typically occurring within the lower areas of mixed hardwood forests. Because of their temporary nature, vernal pools are not inhabited by fish, which is why these small water bodies are important breeding sites for many species of amphibians, notably salamanders.



**Scarlet Kingsnake**  
*(Lampropeltis triangulum elapsoides)*  
 Known for their vivid coloration of red, black, yellow or white bands that encircle its body. This non-venomous snake is similar to the venomous Coral Snake known from southeastern NC. Kingsnakes red bands touch the black bands where Coral Snakes red bands touch yellow bands. Kingsnakes are small, slender snakes, ~18". They are often found beneath the peeling bark of pine stumps or logs.



**Northern Pine Snake**  
*(Pituophis melanoleucus melanoleucus)*  
 One of the largest snakes in NC, 4-6' long, these non-venomous snakes are bulky in appearance, with whitish-gray background and black or brown blotches. Usually active in the morning or late afternoon.



**Eastern Spotted Skunk**  
*(Spilogale putorius)*  
 Smaller than the more common Eastern Striped Skunk, the Eastern Spotted

Skunk has a 10-27" (with tail) weasel-like body and weighs 1-4 pounds. The dark black coat has 4-6 broken white stripes that look like spots. They usually have a white tip on their tail and a white, inverted triangle-shaped patch on their forehead.



**Giant Stag Beetle**  
*(Lucanus elaphus)*  
 The males are much larger than females and possess large mandibles for use in battling other males for mates. Males may reach 60 mm in length, with mandibles; females 30-35 mm. This species requires large rotting deciduous trees and stumps within which to complete its life cycle.

## Polk County's Most Wanted Animals & Habitats



### Spotlighting Species of Interest in Polk County, NC

For more information, visit the Conserving Carolina website at [www.conservingcarolina.org/polk-countys-most-wanted-plants-animals](http://www.conservingcarolina.org/polk-countys-most-wanted-plants-animals)



847 Case Street  
 Hendersonville, NC 28792  
 (828)697-5777  
[info@conservingcarolina.org](mailto:info@conservingcarolina.org)



**Cecropia Moth**  
(*Hyalophora cecropia*)  
One of the largest silk moth species in North America, Cecropia has a wingspan in excess of 5.5 inches, and a coloration consisting of red, white, gray, pink, and black. Preferred habitats include forests, woodland edges, city parks, and backyards. The caterpillar (a spectacular beast in its own right), is several inches long, and light green with prominent prickly tubercles (small rounded projections on the surface) that are red, yellow, and blue.

**Yonahlossee Salamander**  
(*Plethodon yonahlossee*)  
Belonging to the lungless salamander family Plethodontidae, the Yonahlossee is one of our larger species, reaching a length of about 20 centimeters at sexual maturity. Coloration is distinctive, with a dark background coloration for most of the body, and a prominent and large reddish 'saddle' over the middle portion of the back. Juveniles will sport red spots or blotches on their back and these will fuse in adulthood to form a large 'saddle.' Females are usually larger than males.

**Timber Rattlesnake**  
(*Crotalus horridus*)  
A medium to large-sized snake, occasionally over 5' in length (usually around 3½' to 4'), the Timber Rattlesnake can be quite variable in appearance. Some have a light background with slightly darker mottling/chevrons. Darker colored ones are more abundant in mountains. The camouflage is superb, and serves them well in their role as ambush predators. Their diet consists largely of rodents. As with other members of its genus, these snakes will utilize the rattles on their tails to warn you of their presence if you should approach too closely.

**American Burying Beetle**  
(*Nicrophorus americanus*)  
A large beetle, attaining a length of over 1.5". The coloration of this (and most other members of the genus) is a black body with various red or orange markings upon the head and thorax. Unlike other closely related species in our area, the American Burying Beetle has an orange/red thorax that is distinctive. This particular species is also nocturnal, often recorded as being attracted to artificial lights, a trait that may have led to its current scarcity.

**Elfin Butterflies**  
(*Callophrys* spp.)  
These small butterflies range in size from ¾" – 1¼". Also fairly subtle in coloration, they display a range of shades of brown to gray. They are active in the early spring, usually on the wing as early as February or March.

**Tree Holes**  
Tree holes, sometimes referred to by the less appetizing name of rot holes, are often encountered on large, mature trees. Although occurring more frequently on deciduous trees, tree holes may also be found on coniferous trees. Many tree holes contain water, rotting leaves, and other organic debris which provide nutrients for an entire community of microbes, fungi, and invertebrates. The biodiversity contained within a single, large, water-filled tree hole can be immense.

**Slender Glass Lizard**  
(*Ophisaurus attenuatus*)  
Glass Lizards are so-named because they readily lose or 'drop' their tails in order to avoid capture. They are able to regenerate the lost tails, which they're never as perfect in appearance as the initial tail. Since they lack legs, they are often mistaken for snakes – even though their head is not distinctly 'set off' from the main body. Also, unlike snakes, Glass Lizards have ears – small openings in the side of their head. They are usually brown or light yellowish brown in overall coloration, with darker bands being prominently displayed over their backs and tails. Overall lengths vary from 2' to 3½' in length. Their scales are smooth and give a somewhat glossy appearance.

**Barn Owl**  
(*Tyto alba*)  
The Barn Owl, a ghostly nocturnal denizen of our fields and farmlands, is a distinctive species, buff in coloration with a slightly darker back. They have a white, heart-shaped face and stand approximately 1½' in height. In flight, it often looks entirely white. Its preferred prey includes mice, voles, and other rodents.

**Baltimore Checkerspot**  
(*Euphydryas phaeton*)  
Beautifully arrayed in patterns of orange, black, and white, the Baltimore Checkerspot has a wingspan of approximately 2.5 - 3 inches. Preferred habitats are wetlands and bogs, where the primary larval food plants, Turtlehead plants of the genus *Chelone*, are found. However, one may occasionally encounter this butterfly in upland habitats with no Turtlehead plants at all.

**Hilltopping**  
With the arrival of spring, be on the lookout for an interesting insect behavior known as "Hilltopping." Hilltopping is a mate-seeking behavior employed by many groups of insects such as butterflies, dragonflies, beetles, and flies. Simply put, insects will seek out the highest points in the landscape and congregate there to seek mates. Butterflies, like the pictured Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*) and Angletwings (*Polytonia* spp.) are often the most visible members of the "hilltopping community" in our region, but they are by no means the most numerous.

**Rusty-patched Bumblebee**  
(*Bombus affinis*)  
The aptly-named Rusty-patched Bumblebee bears an orange colored spot on its abdomen that serves to distinguish it from other species of Bumblebees. Collection records indicate that this species has been found in North Carolina, and may very well still be present here. Open, sunny areas that contain an abundance of wildflowers serve as an excellent place to search for this, and other, species of Bumblebees.

**Red-legged Purseweb Spider**  
(*Sphodros rufipes*)  
A close relative of the Tarantula, the Red-legged Purseweb Spider is only red-legged if it's a male; females are all black. Both sexes are approximately 1" long. Instead of a 'web', they make silken tubes running up the lower bases of tree trunks, rocks, etc. The tubes become camouflaged over time, as bits of twigs, algae, etc. become incorporated. The spider hides inside, and if an unfortunate insect walks across, the spider pierces it from within the lair with fangs, and pulls it inside for slow digestion.



**Anteater Scarab Beetles**  
(*Cremastochelilus*)  
These beetles are small, about 1/2" - 3/4" in length, and cryptically colored. They have hairs on certain parts of their body, known as trichomes, that exude a chemical signal that ants find pleasing or mollyfying, allowing them to reside inside ant nests without being attacked. The best way to locate these beetles is to place small stones or bark on top of ant nests in the late winter or early spring. Occasionally checking under the bark or stones may reveal the presence of one or more beetles, as they will often congregate under such objects for shelter.



**Brush-footed Butterflies**  
This family of butterflies gets its name from the fact that its front legs are shorter than the other four legs, and these front legs don't have feet, just little brushes of hairs that the butterflies can use to smell and taste with. In Polk County, commonly encountered species include the Mourning Cloak, Comma, and Question Mark butterflies. Look for these butterflies along old dirt roads, woodland paths, and semi-open areas receiving sun for part of the day.



**Giant Swallowtail**  
(*Papilio cresphontes*)  
This largest species of Butterfly in North America is colored dark, chocolate brown, with prominent areas of yellow on its wings and body and with a wingspan of up to a whopping 6 inches. Within North Carolina, caterpillars may be found on Hoptree in the Piedmont and mountains.



**Snail-Eating Ground Beetles**  
(*Scaphinotus*)  
These beetles, not surprisingly, prefer cool, damp conditions often near streams or on steep slopes above streams or creeks. Scaphinotus are secretive and typically nocturnal so they are not often observed. Purposeful searches for these beetles may be made by looking under rocks and logs in damp ravines that are favored by snails, particularly at night. Oddly enough, specimens may sometimes be caught by setting out bait of slightly fermented bananas (with a bit of yeast or beer added).



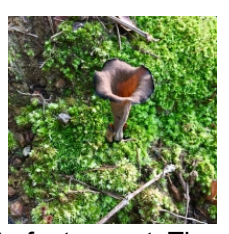
**Order Neuroptera**  
Try to find this interesting order of insect fauna, Neuroptera ("Nerve-wings") which include Mantidflies and Owflies. These insects are commonly referred to as "Nerve-wings" due to veined structures on their wings. Mantidflies have strong raptorial "claws." In our region, one species mimics the stinging wasps. They are found on flowers in old fields, gardens, and woodland edges from mid-spring to late summer. Owflies look like dragonflies except they have very long antennae. They are often attracted to lights or seen flying among vegetation in old fields or lightly wooded areas throughout the spring and summer months.



**Eastern Woodrat**  
(*Neotoma floridana haematorea*)  
Woodrat nests are built inside a large "house" constructed of sticks, leaves, branches, and scavenged litter, hence the nickname "packrats." The nest structures are often located in or under rock outcroppings, in large cavity trees, in large slash piles, or in abandoned buildings. They have gray-brown or rusty brown fur on the back, a white belly, and white paws.



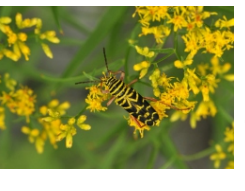
**Black Trumpet Mushroom**  
(*Craterellus fallax*)  
These hard-to-spot mushrooms are dark in coloration with a tube-like appearance that is very reminiscent of a trumpet. The 'trumpets' are usually from one to two and a half inches in length with a grayish-black coloration. The spore print is yellowish to orange. As for habitat, Black Trumpet prefers growing under Oak and Beech trees, often in a carpet of moss.



**Sugar Maple Borer**  
(*Glycobius speciosus*)  
Adult Sugar Maple Borers are large and robust and mimic Yellow Jackets. The adult is about 1" long, black, and has yellow markings. This insect is best recognized by the damage the larvae cause to Sugar Maple trees and this can be observed year-round. Evidence of larval activity can be seen as horizontal scars formed on the trunk of the tree and these scars may persist for many years.



**Locust Borer**  
(*Megacyllene robiniae*)  
The Locust Borer bears a striking resemblance to stinging wasps, such as Yellow Jackets - this form of mimicry (known as Batesian mimicry) helps the beetles to avoid predation by birds. The best method to employ when searching for adult beetles is to seek out Goldenrods, where the adults feed on pollen. If one can locate a patch of Goldenrod adjacent to a stand of Black Locust - that is ideal. The beetles prefer sunny, warm days and may be observed feeding and mating on the Goldenrod flowers.



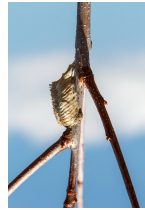
**Sap Runs**  
Sap runs are a fascinating micro-habitat that occur on trees where an injury has resulted from some type of physical damage. Sap flowing from the tree wound (known as flux) contains sugar which provides food for bacteria and other types of microorganisms. In turn, these microorganisms provide nourishment for the larvae of some of our most spectacular Hoverflies, incredible mimics of stinging wasps and bees such as the pictured Syrphid Fly.



**Spotted Salamander**  
(*Ambystoma maculatum*)  
A stout species reaching up to nine inches in length with a black body covered in bright yellow "polka dots," the Spotted Salamander is impossible to confuse with any other species throughout its range. Their diet consists of insects and other invertebrates. They are rarely encountered outside of their breeding season of late winter to very early spring, dwelling as they do in underground burrows.







**Carolina Mantid**  
(*Stagmomantis carolina*)  
This insect likes fields, wooded areas, and gardens. They blend easily into the background of the vegetation as they are clothed in colors of brown, green, and gray. The Carolina Mantid is most conspicuous in late summer or early fall when it reaches a length of 4-6 centimeters (1.5-2.5 inches). During the winter, you may spot egg cases that are approximately three quarters to one inch in length and are of a uniform tan coloration. Egg cases typically contain dozens to hundreds of eggs. If you find this Mantid, count yourself fortunate, as this insect is a beneficial predator of many common garden pests.



**Alder Woolly Apher** (*Prociphilus tessellatus*)  
The Alder Woolly Apher has a conspicuous white color due to waxy secretions from its exoskeleton. fed in colonies making them quite visible. As their name suggests, their host plants are Alders (*Alnus* spp.). Alders prefer damp habitats and are typically found in and around wetlands and along stream sides. Smooth or Tag Alder (*Alnus errulata*) is a common species and occurs throughout the County. Focus your search on the lower limbs of Alder trees. A careful observer may note the larvae of the Harvester Butterfly (*Feniseca tarquinus*) - our only carnivorous butterfly species - feeding on colonies of Alder Woolly Apher.

**Black Witch moth**  
(*Ascalapha odorata*)  
Have you seen a massive, bat-shaped, and dark-colored moth? Not yet reported in Polk County, this moth disperses northward from the tropics during the months of July through October. They rest during the day and fly at night. They are easily recognized by their large size, a wingspan of up to 7 inches, and pointed forewings. Males are dark in color and exhibit the plain, grey-brown, mottled pattern commonly associated with moths but with hints of iridescent purple and pink. There is a small spot, often green with orange highlights, on each forewing that is shaped like a number nine, or comma. Females look similar, however, they are slightly larger than the males, lighter in color, and they have a white, sometimes iridescent, stripe across their open wings.



**American Golden-Plover**  
(*Pluvialis dominica*)

During the fall migration, they travel in small flocks. In flight, look for long, narrow, and pointed wings.



On the ground, they appear as stocky, medium-sized birds that often pause while running to bob their bodies quickly up-and-down. Both males and females have a white crown stripe that extends down the side of the neck. They have a black belly and face and a dark back and head that is mottled with gold, white, and black. Females are paler overall. In our area, look for this species is in September and October, especially after a cold front. Look in drier portions of mudflats, small pools, short grass and turf farms, spray irrigation fields, and other short grass habitats (lawns).

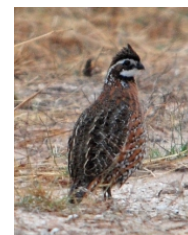


**Baltimore Oriole**  
(*Icterus galbula*)  
A medium-sized, sturdy-bodied bird, smaller and more slender than an American Robin,

with a thick neck, long legs, and a long, thick-based, pointed bill. Adult males are flame-orange and black, they have a solid-black head and black wings with one white wing bar. Females and immature males are yellow-orange on the breast, grayish on the head and back, and have with two bold white wing bars on their grayish wings. Often seen perched or flitting in treetops, listen for the rich, whistling song. Male's sing a short series of paired notes, repeated 2-7 times. The female also sings, but her songs are much shorter. Both give a sharp, repetitive 'chuck' call.

**Red-headed Woodpecker**  
(*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*)

A medium-sized woodpecker with a brilliant red head, black back, large white wing patches, and a white belly. Their most common call is a hoarse, shrill *tchur*. Preferred habitat is open forest areas with a clear understory and numerous snags.



**Northern Bobwhite**  
(*Colinus virginianus*)  
The Northern Bobwhite is the only native quail in the eastern United States. These birds are often heard more than seen, with the male seemingly calling his name, whistling "Bob-

WHITE!". They are about 10 inches in length; about the size of a small, plump chicken walking upright on short legs. Look for these unobtrusive birds on the ground and under or near vegetation. Often, they can be spotted pecking and scratching the earth in search of insects and other food; however, more than likely, you'll spot them as they burst out of the vegetation in panicked flight if you get too close!

**Ruffed Grouse**  
(*Bonasa umbellus*)

North Carolina's only grouse species and North America's most widely dispersed upland game bird. These medium-sized birds have dark bars and spotted plumage that allows them to blend into their preferred habitat. Hard to see and find, they can more often be heard when they are "drumming," a sound that many liken to an engine trying to start.







**Four-toed Salamander**  
(*Hemidactylium scutatum*)

As the name implies, it has four toes on its hind limbs. It's approximately 4" in length, with a light-colored dorsal surface 'sprinkled' with dark spots, gray sides, and a brownish/reddish back. There is also a noticeable constriction of the tail. Preferred habitats are wooded wetlands and bogs. Mating occurs in the fall, and females lay eggs on land, often under clumps of moss.



**Queen Snake**  
(*Regina septemvittata*)  
A medium-sized watersnake (15"-24"),

slender, gray or olive-brown with one light stripe on each side of the body. Too, starting at the chin, the belly is light in color and divided by two brown stripes that run the length of the belly. They are active during the day and can be found near clean, flowing, rocky streams and small rivers throughout the mountains and Piedmont. They primarily eat crayfish, particularly those that are newly molted and soft. Mating occurs in the spring and females give birth to 5 – 23 live offspring in the late summer, July-September.



**Flower Scarab Beetle**  
(*Gnorimella maculosa*)  
This attractive scarab beetle is 3/4 of an inch in length with a variable coloration ranging from

almost black/gray to an orangish-yellow (and covered with whitish dots). An uncommon species, it lives in or adjacent to mature woodlands with many large flowering shrubs. It has been observed in mature Beech woods in the Town of Columbus in Polk County but it likely occurs elsewhere throughout our region.