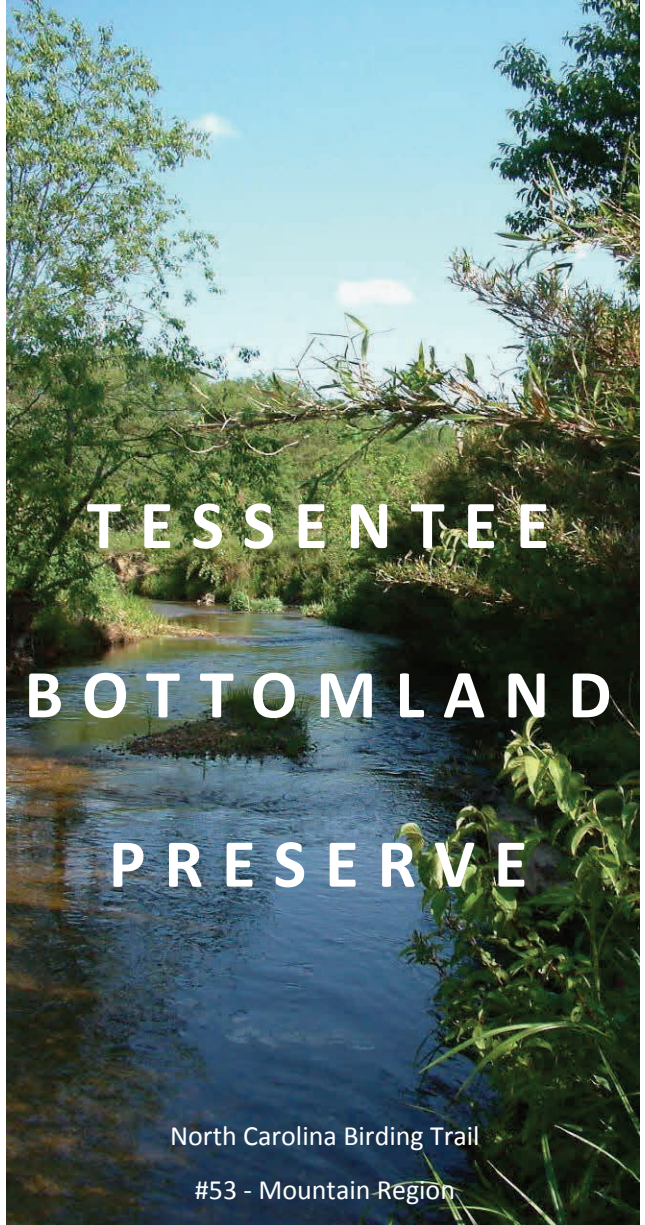


From Franklin: Take the Georgia Rd (US 23/441) south for 5 miles, turn left onto Riverside Road and follow for 1/2 mile, turn right onto Hickory Knoll Road and follow for 2 miles. The Preserve is off a private drive on the right (2249 Hickory Knoll Rd); the parking area is left of the drive, before a gate.

Please be safety conscious. Mainspring is not responsible for accidents or injuries at the Preserve. All visitors assume full responsibility for their property and persons.

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 557 East Main Street
 Franklin, NC 28744
 828-524-2711
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Stewards of the Southern Blue Ridge

Tessentee Bottomland Preserve

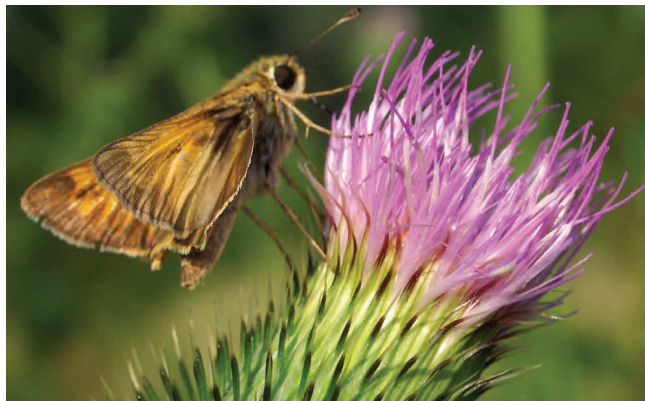
Mainspring acquired this land in 1999, conserving it for future generations as Tessentee Bottomland Preserve. We invite you to hike around the 70 acres to get a sense of the rich natural and cultural history that can still be found here.

The Land

The Preserve is where Tessentee Creek joins the Little Tennessee River, in a special place in the Little Tennessee Valley. Here the River meanders slowly north through a wide, flat floodplain. The valley is a migratory bird flyway into the Southern Appalachians.

Bottomland is just what it sounds like: low-lying land in the floodplain with rich soils and abundant moisture. The Preserve also straddles a quarter-mile long bluff; it rises 60 feet above the bottomlands, creating spectacular winter views north and south.

Habitats at the Preserve are diverse because of the many soil types and abundant water features, including a mile of rivers and streams. Some habitats are rare in the mountains, such as wetland, red cedar savanna, and canebrake. Habitat diversity means the Preserve is a great place for viewing wildlife; 129 bird species and 56 butterfly species have been observed so far.



The History

The Preserve is located at a historic crossroads in the river valley, which has been a trading route for millennia. Coweeta Creek nearby was the site of a 16th-century Cherokee town that included an earthen mound and a council house. Smaller archeological sites date back thousands of years.

The first battle of the “Cherokee Wars” may have occurred on Tessentee Bottoms in 1760. Archibald Montgomery marched British and Colonial forces to attack the Middle Cherokee towns. Cherokee forces ambushed them, killing 29 and wounding 76.

In spring of 1775, naturalist and explorer William Bartram spent the night in a trader’s hut at “the foot of the Tessentee” near the present-day Preserve. The next year, Andrew Williamson led 1,860 South Carolina militiamen to attack the Cherokee town of Cowee, camping at Tessentee along the way. This campaign began the Revolutionary War in the South.



Records of white settlement on the farm date from 1820, when the state granted the property to Samuel Smith, Smith-bridge Township’s namesake. The existing farm house, seen in the 1912 photo above, dates from the 1890s. The farm was in operation as a dairy as late as the early 1990s.



Points of Interest

1) Entrance - Parking area, gate, and information kiosk. The forest foot trail starts just beyond the gate, on the left.

2) Tree ID - Tags identify trees in the Preserve's oldest and most natural forest. White oak-dominated cove forest grades into drier oak-hickory forest.

3) Cabin site - Former site of 4-room wooden cabin built by George Keener, who raised a family of 7. Abandoned in 1960s, torn down in 2005. Artifacts and ornamental plants remain. A spring is nearby.

4) 2nd-growth forest - Mixed pine/hardwood forest. Features trees uncommon to Macon County, such as blackjack oak and shortleaf pine.

5) Outcrop - Granite outcrop, home to a distinct natural community. Please do not disturb.

6) Tessentee Creek - A 2000-foot stream restoration project was completed in 2015. The restoration included measures to improve stream bank stability, reduce sediment input into the Creek, and improve aquatic habitat diversity.

7) Wagon road - Old wagon road, below the existing road. It was probably the original pioneer road through the valley and once forded Tessentee Creek.

8) Bottoms - 12 acres of rich bottomland once used for crops, currently maintained as early successional habitat for wildlife. Note white oak plantations, planted in cooperation with Cherokee Preservation Foundation for use in basketry and fore wildlife.

9) Alluvial forest - Montane alluvial forest. A canopy of black cherry, black walnut, sycamore and black locust trees with rivercane beneath. Note planted butternut trees, valued by the Cherokee for their dye.

10) Little Tennessee River - A 500-foot streambank restoration was completed in 2016 to increase bank stability, reduce sediment input into the River, and improve aquatic habitat.

11) Canebrake - A stand of rivercane (*Arundinaria gigantea*), one of North America's 3 native bamboo species. Artisans from Qualla Arts & Crafts Mutual harvest this cane for Cherokee crafts.

12) Wetland - The most botanically diverse wetland in this part of the Little Tennessee valley.

13) Red Cedar Savanna - Native grasses and flowers grow among red cedars. Rocky soil here was never plowed. Old-growth oak trees (the largest trees on the property) and spring heads are to the south.

14) Farmhouse - Built in the 1890s. Also includes a stone smokehouse, 2-story root cellar and apple shed, chicken coop, and outhouse. The old wagon road once passed between house and root cellar.

15) Silo - Built in the late 1940s. Winter views south across Tessentee Bottoms and north to Cowee Bald. A barn and corn crib were once located nearby.

16) Bluffs - Early successional ridge top with scattered shrubs and wooded side slopes. A good habitat mix for birds and other wildlife.



Tessentee Bottomland Preserve



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