



The Nature  
Conservancy   
Protecting nature. Preserving life.

*Mixed longleaf pine (Pinus palustris) and oak forest at Moody Forest Natural Area. © Rich Reid*

## Moody Forest Natural Area

**A**lthough Moody Forest Natural Area is named for the Georgia family that settled the land a century and a half ago, the word “moody” also perfectly describes the effect the property can have on a person. A visit to the 4,500-acre preserve, which is located just two hours southeast of Macon and features miles of easy to moderately difficult hiking trails, reveals a surprising diversity of beautiful landscapes capable of eliciting a range of emotions.

Take Tavia’s Trail, for instance. The three-mile loop begins in a cheery upland forest and rises and falls through sun-dappled flatwoods and towering stands of ancient longleaf pine that give way to the banks of the mighty Altamaha, where the lush canopy formed by centuries-old cypress trees keeps the waters of a sphagnum moss-covered slough in eternal shade. It’s a dizzying spectrum of light and landscapes.

### **A Special Forest, A Conservation Priority**

On any given day, sharp-eyed visitors to Moody Forest can spot rare gopher tortoises, indigo snakes, red-cockaded woodpeckers or even fledgling bald eagles. The property also offers a window into the past, when turpentine was a critical part of the local economy and the pine trees of the South were the backbone of America’s naval stores. Several of Moody Forest’s longleaf and shash pine trees bear distinctive “cat faces,” the v-shaped scars where pine sap was “dipped” and processed into turpentine.

The diversity of landscapes and the huge array of wildlife it supports have long made Moody Forest a priority for the conservation community.





Bald eagle in flight © Tom Wilson

## Visit

Moody Forest Natural Area is located 8 miles from Baxley, the seat of Appling County, and is open year-round to the public during daylight hours.

**Tavia's Trail** is a 3-mile loop that takes hikers through an array of different landscapes and elevations and is accessible from the parking lot and main trailhead located at the intersection of Jake Moody and East River roads.

The **Altamaha River Trail** is a two-mile (total) there-and-back hike that hugs the relatively flat banks of the Altamaha River and that can be accessed from Morris Landing Road.

Since Moody Forest Natural Area is a wilderness property, safety and caution are encouraged. The hiking terrain ranges from level and easy to moderately difficult, and the trails are self-guided. Please wear sturdy footwear and carry plenty of water. Sunscreen and insect repellent are recommended.

In addition, visitors should remain on the trails at all times and refrain from disturbing plants or wildlife.

For more information, detailed directions and trail maps, visit [nature.org/moody](http://nature.org/moody) or call (912) 366-9549.



Gopher tortoise. © Marc Del Santro

In 2001, The Nature Conservancy and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources purchased 3,500 acres from the Moody family, which had owned and managed the land for generations. Subsequent purchases by the state added another 1,000 acres and today the entire property is operated under a cooperative agreement between the two partners. The Conservancy and the Georgia DNR cooperate on all matters of conservation planning and stewardship.

The arrangement—the first public-private conservation partnership in the state—has proven to be more effective than either group could have hoped for, meaning this treasured forest will continue to be a haven for wildlife and an ideal area for families to explore.

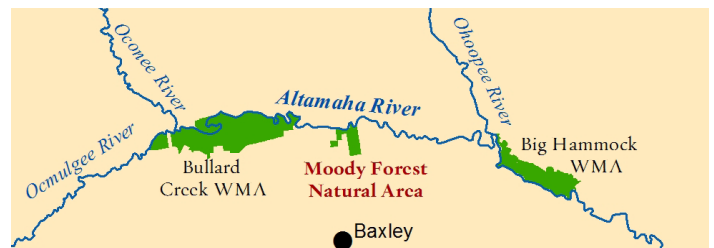
## Sound Stewardship

The jewel of Moody Forest Natural Area might be the nearly 300-acres of old-growth longleaf pine on the property, including one block of 100 contiguous acres. Those trees, as well as the countless slash, shortleaf and loblolly pines, are fire-adapted systems, meaning they thrive on periodic burning. When healthy and maintained with fire, pine forests buffer human communities against the devastation of wildfires that feed on other, less balanced forest types.

The Conservancy works with partners and volunteers to implement a regular prescribed fire regime at Moody Forest, burning more than a thousand acres each year and diligently managing the spread of invasive species.

Tree management is also essential to forest health, and the Conservancy and the DNR work together to thin the property's forests. The profits realized from timber management are returned directly to the project creating a sustainable, long-term management model.

The benefits of that stewardship are evident throughout Moody Forest, from populations of red-cockaded woodpeckers nesting in hollow trees to vibrant wiregrass that forms the natural carpet of the forest ecosystem; from abundant fish in the waters of the Altamaha River to dense beds of pitcher plants growing in the deep and mysterious flatwoods on the preserve.



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