

# Great Hikes in Tennessee State Parks:

## Take Wildflower Stroll on TVA's River Bluff Trail at Norris Dam State Park

By Fran Wallas

Featuring lots of wildflowers in spring, the River Bluff Trail has been designated as a National Recreation Trail. The trail is on TVA property adjacent to Norris Dam State Park in Lake City.

This three-mile loop trail has a short steep section and a few eroded rocky sections, but the first mile of the trail is easy to hike. Most of the wildflowers grow on the hillside along this easy section.

The trail starts on old wooded farmland that is in a dry area. In less than a half-mile, you get to the loop split. Take the lower part of the trail nearest to the river on your left. The flower show begins when you drop down to the more moist area with rich soil along the Clinch River. Usually in the last week of March or first week of April there is an amazing variety of wildflowers and ferns. Just after you cross the small bridge there are flowers like Bloodroot, Foamflower, Miterwort, toothwort and Spring Beauty. The hillsides then turn to yellow as you hike through Yellow Trout Lilies that cover both sides of the trail.

The trail follows the riverbank and there are many scenic views. You will notice that beavers have enjoyed gnawing on some of the trees. When you

start seeing large rocks on the right, try to find the tiny window in the bluff. You have to stand in just the right place on the trail to see it. Past this point you can see horsetails, Wild Columbine and a few nodding mandarins. Keep looking and you may also spot the pair of eagles who have moved to the area. The rock bluffs on your right have fantastic shapes and look like castles. This hike would be beautiful even without the flowers. When you get near the weir dam, you start to see Solomon's Seal, Celandine Poppy, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, and Dutchmen's Breeches. If you only want a short easy hike, you may choose to turn back at this halfway point.

The trail turns to the right and climbs steeply through a series of switchbacks. If you look back, you can see Hibbs Island. There are several Pawpaw patches near the top of the loop. The rest of the hike is an easy walk through the woods with only a few wildflowers.

The staff of both TVA and Norris Dam State Park lead spring wildflower hikes on the last Saturday of March and the first Saturday of April. There are trail maps available at the state park visitor center.



Mike Scott

Jack-in-the Pulpit. Below: Yellow Trout Lily.

### Directions

Take I-75 to exit 128. Drive around to the stop sign and turn left on Highway 441 South. Drive 2.5 miles to the first park entrance. Do not turn at this entrance and continue south on Highway 441 about another 1.5 miles. Turn right on Dabney Road. Just after the turn the road splits. Turn left at the split. In about a half mile the road ends at the trailhead parking lot.

#### Norris Dam State Park



(Fran Wallas is an avid hiker. She works as an attorney with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation in Nashville. You can read about her other Great Hikes in Tennessee State Parks on the Web site [www.tn.gov/environment/greathikes](http://www.tn.gov/environment/greathikes).)



Mike Scott