



Birkhead Mountains Wilderness – Uwharrie National Forest, NC

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
12.0 mls	★	★	★	★	★
Hiking Time: 5 hours and 10 minutes with 40 minutes of breaks Elev. Gain: 1,062 ft Parking: Park at the Tot Hill Farm Access at the northern terminus of the Birkhead Mountain Trail. 35.63663, -79.90457					

[Click Here For Detailed Location](#)



By Trail Contributor: Zach Robbins

The Birkhead Mountains Wilderness and the surrounding Uwharrie National Forest sure feels like a lonely place considering it is within 90 minutes of the 3 largest metropolitan areas in North Carolina. With only 50,645 acres of land Uwharrie is by far the smallest of the four national forests in the state, but it boasts a wealth of mixed-used trails on the east side of the Uwharrie Lakes region. The Birkhead Mountains Wilderness is on the far northern tip of this national forest, and at 5,160 acres can be easily explored in a day or a weekend. You won't get long-distance views here, or a wealth of mountainous streams. The Uwharrie Mountains barely qualify as mountains. They are thought to be the oldest mountain range on the North American continent, and millions of years of erosion has whittled these peaks to elevations typically between 600-1,100 feet.

Although you won't get a true mountain experience, the Birkhead Mountains Wilderness provides an excellent system of trails perfect for day hiking and trail running. Three trails make a loop in the center of this wilderness, with four spokes providing different trail access points. This central hub allows you to choose the length of your hike, from 7.2 miles to the 12.0-mile hike described here. The relative ease of these trails makes it the perfect laboratory for testing out gear for longer trips, or for introducing friends and family to backpacking. There are many superb campsites sprinkled throughout the wilderness which provide solitude and an enjoyable night out a short distance away from the state's largest cities.

Trail Access – The hike described here starts at the Tot Hill Farm Access at the northern terminus of the Birkhead Mountain Trail [100]. The two access areas on the west side of the wilderness are the Thornburg Connector Trail [394] and Robbins Branch Trail [393]. The southern terminus of the Birkhead Mountain Trail [100] can be reached via Striemy Church Road [SR 1114]. All trails in the wilderness are blazed white and all major intersections have signs. Paper maps are typically available at the trailheads. Some trails to campsites are blazed yellow when they are a significant distance off the main trails.

Mile	Summary and Highlights
0.0	Birkhead Mountain Trail begins at Tot Hill Farm Access
1.2	Coolers Knob Mountain summit (945 feet) and campsites
2.6	T-junction with Robbins Branch Trail
4.6	Optional side trip to Bingham Graveyard
5.1	Begin Hannahs Creek Trail
6.0	Campsites near confluence of Robbins Branch and Hannahs Creek
6.7	Turn right onto Robbins Branch Trail
8.0	T-junction with Thornburg Connector Trail
9.5	Robbins Branch Trail ends at Birkhead Mountain Trail

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – Park at the Tot Hill Farm Access for the Birkhead Mountain Trail [100] (*white blaze*). The trail immediately turns left to hop over Talbotts Branch.
- ▶ **Mile 0.1** – Trail Y-splits when it meets Talbotts Branch, turn left.
- ▶ **Mile 0.2** – Wooden bridge over Talbotts Branch. Before the bridge is a campsite on the left.
- ▶ **Mile 0.6** – Y-split with unmarked trail, continue right.
- ▶ **Mile 0.9** – T-junction with a forest road grade, turn left. In 150 feet the trail turns right leaving the forest road.
- ▶ **Mile 1.2** – At the summit of Coolers Knob Mountain there are excellent campsites on both sides of the trail.
- ▶ **Mile 1.8** – Y-junction with the Camp Three Trail (*yellow blaze*). The sign indicates Camp 3 is 1.2 miles from this junction, a secluded backcountry campsite along North Prong Hannahs Creek with historic mine remnants.
- ▶ **Mile 2.0** – Campsite on the right side of the trail.
- ▶ **Mile 2.6** – T-junction with the Robbins Branch Trail [393] (*white blaze*). Stay left to continue south on the Birkhead Mountain Trail, or you can reverse this loop and turn right on the Robbins Branch Trail. There is an excellent campsite 0.8-mi from the intersection beside Robbins Branch if you are backpacking.
- ▶ **Mile 2.9** – Campsite on the right side of the trail.
- ▶ **Mile 3.0** – T-junction with the Camp Three Trail (*yellow blaze*). Large campsite with a wooden sign Camp 5 on the right side of the trail.
- ▶ **Mile 4.4** – Campsite on the right side of the trail.
- ▶ **Mile 4.6** – T-junction with the Hannahs Creek Trail (*white blaze*). Continue straight on the Birkhead Mountain Trail for an optional trip to the Bingham Graveyard.
- ▶ **Mile 4.7** – Y-split, the Birkhead Mountain Trail turns right while a yellow-blazed trail continues left to a campsite and the graveyard. Immediately you'll encounter another Y-split, turn left.
- ▶ **Mile 4.8** – Large campsite on the left side of the trail. Beyond the campsite the trail splits again. On the right split is the Christopher Bingham Graveyard. There are small headstones on each side of the path.
- ▶ **Mile 4.9** – The side path on the left side is slightly overgrown but leads down to access North Prong Hannahs Creek. Turn around and head back to the Hannahs Creek Trail junction.
- ▶ **Mile 5.1** – Turn left on Hannahs Creek Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 5.3** – Cross a tiny tributary to Hannahs Creek. Immediately past this crossing is a campsite on the right side of the trail. Soon after you'll see a chimney remnant on the left side of the trail with another campsite.
- ▶ **Mile 6.0** – There are multiple campsites on the left side of the trail before you cross Robbins Branch. A few side paths on the left lead to the confluence of Robbins Branch and Hannahs Creek.
- ▶ **Mile 6.5** – Boulder field on the right side of trail. There are campsites intermingled on both sides of the trail in this area.
- ▶ **Mile 6.7** – Y-junction with the Robbins Branch Trail [393] (*white blaze*), turn right to begin the Robbins Branch Trail. A left here would lead to the Robbins Branch Access.
- ▶ **Mile 7.9** – Huge campsite area on the right side of the trail.
- ▶ **Mile 8.0** – T-junction with the Thornburg Connector Trail [394] (*white blaze*). Turn right to continue following the Robbins Branch Trail. The Thornburg Connector Trail leads to the Thornburg Farm Access parking area.
- ▶ **Mile 8.3** – Robbins Branch Trail crosses Robbins Branch.
- ▶ **Mile 8.4** – Second crossing over Robbins Branch.
- ▶ **Mile 8.5** – Third crossing over Robbins Branch.
- ▶ **Mile 8.55** – Fourth crossing over Robbins Branch.
- ▶ **Mile 8.7** – Large campsite beside the trickling Robbins Branch. On the left side uphill from this campsite are impressively tall hardwoods.
- ▶ **Mile 9.5** – Robbins Branch Trail ends at a T-junction with the Birkhead Mountain Trail. Turn left to head back to the parking area.
- ▶ **Mile 12.0** – Hike ends at the Tot Hill Farm Access.