ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE
Antioch Bay is one of the best examples of clay-based Carolina Bays, which are among the most highly imperiled ecosystems in the southeast. Antioch Bay is an elliptical depression oriented along a northwest-southeast axis with a low sand rim at the southeast end and along the east side. Because of the soil’s high clay content, the bay is seasonally inundated with shallow water. Antioch Bay is considered the finest example of the rare cypress savanna natural community in North Carolina, and the site supports populations of numerous rare plants and animals.

FLORA & FAUNA
The open canopy of Antioch Bay is dominated by pond cypress with swamp black gum sparsely intermingled. Sedges like Carey’s beaksedge, Georgia nutseedge, and netted nutseedge are common in the herbaceous ground layer, which fluctuates with cycles of wet and dry conditions. Flowering plants include marsh fleabane, yellow polygala, lanceleaf sabatia, and flaxleaf gerardia. Ten rare plants have been documented, including the federally endangered Michaux’s sumac and two federal species of concern, Boykin’s lobelia and awned meadow-beauty. The site supports one of only three populations of Florida peanut-grass in North Carolina, which reaches its northern range limit here. Antioch Bay supports breeding populations of at least sixteen species of amphibians, including rare species such as Mabee’s salamander, tiger salamander, dwarf salamander, ornate chorus frog. Other rare animals documented using the site include chicken turtle, glossy crayfish snake, and yellow-crowned night heron. Common birds include wood duck, kingfisher, great blue heron, green heron, prothonotary warbler and a variety of other warblers and birds.

THREATS
Antioch Bay is surrounded by agricultural land use, and there is concern that runoff containing agrochemicals and nutrients could affect the integrity of the plant community. Occasional prescribed fire is needed to maintain the diversity of the herbaceous ground layer.

ACCESS
This preserve is not open to the public due to the sensitive nature of the ecological community present. Occasional field trips provide opportunities to see the site.

SOURCES
Inventory of Significant Natural Areas of Hoke County, NC
The Nature Conservancy