ECOLOGY & SIGNIFICANCE
This site is part of Pettigrew State Park and comprises more than 550 acres of state-designated Unique Wetlands along the north shore of Lake Phelps, North Carolina’s second largest natural lake. Within the site is cypress and willow forest, a rare natural community found on bay lakes, and an area of mature lake shore swamp. The site contains one of the last old growth forests in eastern North Carolina, including some bald cypress trees that measure 10 feet in diameter. The south shore of the lake has a distinct marsh community with diverse emergent herbaceous flora. The lake is adjacent to the 110,000 acre Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge on the Albemarle-Pamlico Peninsula, a sparsely populated region that supports abundant wildlife.

FLORA & FAUNA
In addition to bald cypress and willow, the swamp’s canopy includes bay trees, pawpaw, sycamore, sweetgum, tulip poplar, persimmon, green ash, swamp chestnut oak and American elm. Other plants at the site include atamasco lily, Jack-in-the-pulpit, jewelweed, purple passionflower, blueflag iris, leather flower, cardinal flower, swamp dogwood and roughleaf dogwood, which is rare in North Carolina.

These wetlands and the lake ecosystem support a wide variety of bird species. Kingfishers, herons, egrets and other birds that forage at the water’s edge are common here. Birds of prey such as owls, hawks, and eagles perch high up in the sites towering trees to hunt rodents in the adjacent crop fields. The area is a wintering ground for ducks, snow geese and tundra swans. The site also supports an abundance of butterflies, especially the zebra swallowtail. Mammals documented using the site include black bear, white-tailed deer, opossum, fox, bobcat, raccoon, mink, muskrat and otter. The area is also part of the red wolf reintroduction program, and wolves are known to visit the Park.

THREATS
Land use surrounding the park to the north, east, and west is entirely agricultural with some low-density residential areas. Associated impacts may include spread of invasive species, altered hydrology, and altered water quality.

ACCESS
This site is located in Pettigrew State Park and is open to the public. For more details, see www.ncparks.gov/pettigrew-state-park.

SOURCES
NC Division of Parks and Recreation
NC Department of Environmental Quality-Unique Wetlands