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US Army Corps
of Engineers.

John H. Kerr Dam & Reservoir

LIBERTY HILL NATURE TRAIL



Experience an unique area with natural
beauty and historical significance.

11. DRUMMING TREES

The holes in this tree were made by the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and they harbor a variety of insects, spiders and other small creatures, which woodpeckers and other insect eaters depend on for food. Listen and you might hear the tapping of a woodpecker finding food, such as the Redheaded, Pileated, Hairy, Downy or Flicker.

12. DAM OVERLOOK

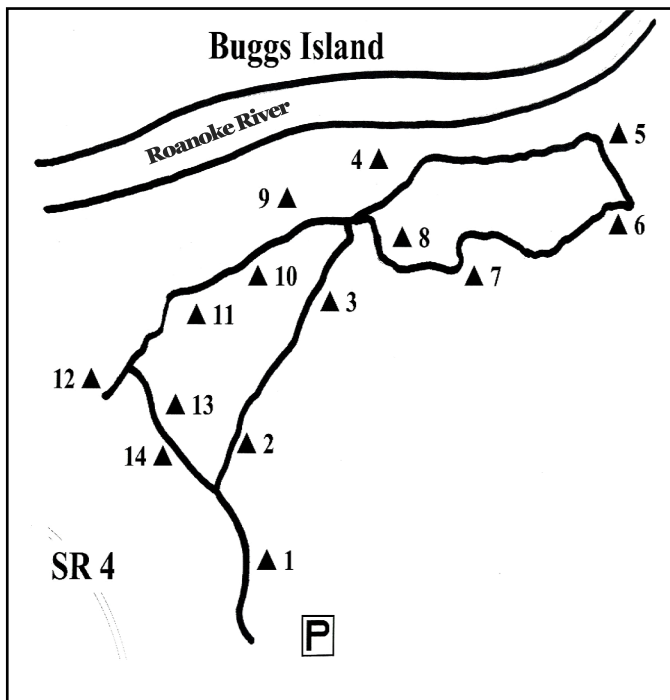
This massive structure generates pollution-free electricity to 40,000 homes. The 50,000-acre reservoir formed by the dam, along with 55,000 acres of surrounding land, receives nearly 2 million visitors per year. The building across the water is the powerhouse, and beyond that is the relay station where electricity is sent to communities in VA and NC.

13. WILDLIFE TREE

We live in houses, snakes may live in a rock pile, and box turtles carry an armored shell wherever they go. Shelter is what makes this tree important to wildlife. The cavities within trees provide a den for squirrels, opossums, owls, and other creatures of the forest, so it is important to leave dead trees in the forest.

14. SUGAR MAPLE

The tree in front of you is a Sugar Maple, which is not native to this area and is normally found in cooler climates. They were often planted for their magnificent fall colors, and are prized for their shade, lumber and, natural sugars. Maple syrup is produced by boiling down the sap of these trees in the early spring.



Liberty Hill Trailhead and Parking:

4499 Buggs Island Road
Boydton, VA 23917

Location: Southeast of John H. Kerr Dam.
Length: 1.25 miles; allow 1-1½ hours;
Moderate difficulty.



US Army Corps
of Engineers®

John H. Kerr Dam & Reservoir
Visitor Assistance Center

1930 Mays Chapel Road
Boydton, VA 23917

Visit us online at www.recreation.gov.

For information call: (434) 738-6143



Follow the numbered posts along the trail and learn about each location.

1. SIGNS OF HUMAN ACTIVITY

About 180 years ago this was the site of the St. Leon Plantation. Just 80 years ago this was open farmland. For many years, this old roadbed was used to transport crops and cattle, including tobacco. As you explore, look for other signs of this farming history, such as drainage ditches and planted farm rows.

2. LISTEN!

Stop here a moment and listen to the many sounds of this old forest. Can you hear the rustle of a squirrel gathering hickory nuts or the leaves rustling in the wind? Listen for the smooth melody of the Wood Thrush, and the calls of the Yellow Billed Cuckoo and Pileated Woodpecker.

3. HICKORY

The large tree to the right of this post is a Mockernut hickory. Native Americans used its nut in a soup called powcohicora, from which the name hickory is derived. The hickory is recognized by the crisscrossing "X's" on its bark and compound leaves (seven to nine). You can also identify it by its distinctive nut.

4. BEWARE!

Poison Ivy is common in this area, but can be easily identified by its leaves. Leaves of 3, let it be! It can take the form of a thick and hairy climbing vine or a low sprawling shrub. Skin contact with the plant often results in irritation and intense itching. Although toxic to humans, the berries make great food for birds and animals.

5. WILDLIFE, THEN AND NOW

Notice the Wood Duck nesting box across the stream. In the 1900s, Wood Duck populations were extremely low due to loss of habitat and nesting areas from logging. Wildlife restoration projects, such as nesting boxes and wintering impoundments have helped the population recover.

6. NATURE'S FERTILIZER

Fallen logs from storms become habitats for many small animals, decomposers, and fungi. They break down the log, and it returns to the earth as a rich soil which contains potassium, sodium, calcium, phosphorous and magnesium. These chemicals are then used by plants and animals to continue the food chain.

7. CEMETERY

If you look closely among the trees, you will see depressions in the earth. These are old grave sites presumed to be the final resting place for the enslaved peoples that once worked the fields of the St. Leon Plantation. Some of the graves are marked by stones at each end. Did you know that traditionally, graves are laid out from east to west? It was once believed that facing the rising sun after death would aid in passage to the next life.

8. SUCCESSION

Look around and find evergreen trees and hardwood trees (trees that lose their leaves each fall). After years of logging and farming, much of the land along the Roanoke River was eventually left to nature. Grasses and wildflowers were the first to take over, then pines took root and the land began to develop into a forest. Gradually, hardwoods gained a foothold in the under story and began replacing the pines. This natural process of one group of plants replacing another is called succession.

9. OCCaneechi NATIVE AMERICANS

Along this river, the Occaneechi Native Americans had a trading empire ranging over 500 miles! Their primary settlement was on Occaneechi Island in the Roanoke River near Clarksville. In 1676, many of the Native Americans were massacred by Nathaniel Bacon and his men. Although the island is now submerged, signs of the Occaneechi, such as arrowheads and pottery, can sometimes be found along the shoreline.

10. ROCK OUTCROP

This large rock outcrop is called a "metamorphic granite formation," which is composed of feldspar (pinkish crystals), quartz (white crystals), and biotite (black crystals). Look closely and you can see the crystals in these rocks. This solid granite bedrock provided the necessary foundation to construct the John H. Kerr Dam.

