

Protecting the Lands of Bethania
The Piedmont Land Conservancy’s mission is to protect natural resources, water quality, farmland, and urban green-space in nine counties of the northwest Piedmont of North Carolina. The Piedmont Land Conservancy’s efforts to preserve open lands of the historic Town of Bethania protect the community from surrounding development. The land preservation of the 60 acres of land in Black Walnut Bottoms was made possible by generous gifts of land or land value by various families and by historic preservation funds provided by the N.C. Natural Heritage Trust Fund. For more information, visit PiedmontLand.org.



The Town of Bethania, Piedmont Land Conservancy, and the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources have worked together over the past 14 years to preserve more than 165 acres of historic land.



Audubon

Plant and wildlife identification on the Black Walnut Bottoms Loop Trail was provided by the Audubon Society of Forsyth County.

Visit ForsythAudubon.org

The Town of Bethania
ESTABLISHED 1759

HISTORIC BETHANIA VISITOR CENTER

Tuesday–Saturday, 10 am to 4 pm

FREE ADMISSION

Group Tours by Appointment

5393 Ham Horton Lane | Bethania, NC 27010

visitorcenter@townofbethania.org

336.922.0434 | TownofBethania.org

The Town of Bethania
FOUNDED 1759

Black Walnut Bottoms

LOOP TRAIL



A project of the Town of Bethania, the Piedmont Land Conservancy, and the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources.

1.4 MILES | CONSERVANCY-PROTECTED

What to look for on the Black Walnut Bottoms Loop Trail:



Zebra Swallowtail



Common Pawpaw



Spicebush Swallowtail



Black Walnut

PAWPAW TREE • The Pawpaw tree is the host plant for Zebra Swallowtail caterpillars. Watch for the Pawpaw and the Zebra Swallowtail butterfly.

SPICEBUSH • The Spicebush is the host plant for Spicebush Swallowtail caterpillars. Can you spot the differences between the Spicebush and the Zebra Swallowtail?

HEDGEROWS • The dense growth of hedgerows provides protection for many birds and small animals. As you walk, listen to the birdcalls. Can you recognize the voices of these Bethania residents?

NATIVE CANE (Giant Cane) • This colonial grass is common in Piedmont swamps and wetlands, and grows in a few places near the creek banks. It is a host to several species of butterflies, including Pearly-eyes and Skippers.

MUDDY CREEK • Your journey along the Black Walnut Bottoms Loop Trail will take you by Muddy Creek, across Bear Creek, and over Laurel Creek. All these waterways were important to Bethania’s residents—both two legged and four legged! How many insects and animals do you see in or near these waterways?

BLACK WALNUT • German settlers often sought locations with Black Walnut trees since the walnuts’ presence can indicate limestone-rich soil, superior for farming. Black Walnut, a beautiful brown wood, was considered the best and most valuable wood for joiner’s work. The walnuts were used for food and the outer hulls in dying. Today we appreciate Black Walnut trees for their beauty and wildlife value.

The Town of Bethania

Bethania is the second oldest Moravian settlement in North Carolina and is recognized as a National Landmark Historic District because it is one of the only examples in the United States of a German “medieval” plan farming village. In Bethania, the Moravian Church owned the land. The families lived in the farming village and were each assigned equal bottom-land strip fields and upland orchard lots. The town was laid out in this German agricultural pattern by the surveyor Christian Gottlieb Reuter. Families lived on 24 town lots that flanked a main street running north and south of a central square.



Black Walnut Bottoms area, as pictured in the original 1766 Reuter Bethania Land Plat.


Black Walnut Bottoms

LOOP TRAIL
1.4 MILES


The 1.4 mile Walnut Bottoms Loop Trail begins at the Bethania Visitor Center and loops through the Walnut Bottoms area, beginning with shady paths in a forested region, continuing along the base of Walnut Bluffs, then traveling beside fields that were part of the original agricultural parcels farmed by the residents of 18th-century Bethania. Along the well-marked trail, you will find planned resting places, beautiful views and serene shaded pathways.

Today Bethania’s landscape retains some of the open fields created by the Moravian settlers, but much has changed. Woodlands now dominate the Black Walnut Bottoms landscape, and non-native invasive plants crowd the native plants, dramatically altering the character of the wooded areas along the creeks. Forsyth Audubon is working to manage the invasive plants and restore native plants that thrived in Bethania when the Moravians first settled here. The goals of these efforts are to contribute to historical restoration, beautify the property, and add wildlife value.


Map Legend




Marked Trail



Map and notices



Picnic area



Bench

Natural Attractions: Exploring the Lands of Bethania

There are several different plant community types in the Bethania Nature Trail area. This diversity is a result of the soils, topography, climate, and the history of land use. These conditions provided a variety of resources and value to the historic colonists of Bethania and currently provide diverse wildlife habitats and recreational use for visitors.

FIELDS AND FARMLAND

These old fields are flat lands with deep alluvial soils which were prized as farmlands by Native Americans, colonial Bethanians, and subsequent landowners. Currently these fields are a mixture of grasses and herbaceous plants mixed with weedy trees and shrubs. Continual disturbance by mowing, grazing, or fire is needed to maintain a field and prevent it from naturally converting back into a forest. Many insects, mammals, birds, and reptiles use old-field habitats for the dense and diverse cover and the abundant food sources.

FOREST LANDS

Young and old forest occur in this natural area. Forests provide products for human use, and habitat for species that nest off the ground, perch in trees, or use cavities in trees for shelter. Most of the forests in the North Carolina Piedmont have been cut three or four times since colonial times, so sites with very large trees are rare. Steep slopes are where most of the mature trees are in the modern Piedmont. The steep bluff forest is the same kind of forest shown by surveys performed by the Moravian surveyor Reuter of this same area in 1762. Reuter also served as forester for these Moravian owned lands and established very early rules designed to assure sustainable cutting.

Young stands of trees are often almost

impenetrable thickets where some of the larger animals like deer, coyotes, foxes, and turkey hide during the day or bed down at night. Young trees provided colonists with limber poles for building uses, as well as stems, twigs, and branches to make tools and structures around the farm.

WATERS OF BETHANIA

The floodplains of the Bethania natural area have several kinds of surface water, including ponds, streams, and springs. When the colonists arrived, much of this floodplain was drained with ditches to make the soil dry enough for farming. The surface water was used untreated by the colonists, and remains vital for livestock and agriculture. Today these waters and their surrounding wetlands are also important for wildlife habitat, and serve as a filtration system for water that runs off during storms, carrying sediment and other pollutants. Wetlands and creek corridors are host to a rich diversity of plants and animals.