

Natural History

Please watch your step! One of the things that makes Ravenel Park special is that this rock outcrop is a rare habitat called a granite dome. Granite domes like Sunset Rock are unique to the Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment. They are known for having a mixture of bare rock, steep cliffs and shallow vegetation mats with scattered, naturally bonsai'd trees and shrubs. It can take thousands of years for soils to build up enough for plants to establish vegetation mats, so please be considerate and try to avoid walking on them or pushing them off the rock face.

The Eastern Continental Divide runs right through Ravenel Park, so water that originates here either flows to the Atlantic or toward the Gulf of Mexico depending in which side of the park it comes from.

Bears: It is not unusual to spot black bears at Ravenel Park. Please be sure to pack out any food and trash when you leave as it attracts and is harmful to the bears. Do not feed the bears or any wildlife.

Leave No Trace: All trash must be carried out when you leave the park.

EcoExplore Hotspot: Ravenel Park is designated as an ecoExplore Hotspot. EcoExplore is a citizen-science program for children in grades K–8 to explore the outdoors and take pictures of plants and animals they find. The photos are uploaded online and identified, and can earn prizes. Learn more at ecoexplore.net.

A stop on the Greenway: Ravenel Park is one stop along the Highlands Plateau Greenway, a nationally recognized trail system. To view a full map of the greenway, visit highlandsgreenway.com.

Sunset Rock offers an iconic view overlooking Main Street, Highlands, as well as HCLT's first conserved property in 1909, Satulah Mountain Preserve visible at the left of the photo.

On the opposite side of the summit from Sunset Rock is a short trail to Sunrise Rock (below) overlooking Horse Cove, much of which is protected by HCLT.

Botanicals: Interestingly, Ravenel Park has a population of swamp azalea or *Rhododendron viscosum*, not commonly found here. Their sweet-smelling white flowers are slightly sticky and are one of the latest blooming (mid/late June) azaleas in our area, which is known for azaleas.

Umbrella tree magnolia or *Magnolia tripetala* though not rare, is not common in Highlands. Some leaves can reach a couple feet long! Leaves are whorled around a single branch, making an umbrella shape.

Pink Lady Slipper or pink moccasin flower, *Cypripedium acaule*, can be found blooming here May–July. They like more acidic soils and are typically associated with pine/oak forests like those common around Highlands. This showy orchid, while beautiful to look at, can irritate skin if touched.

Important Bird Area: The National Audubon Society and Bird Life International have designated the Highlands Plateau as one of the Important Bird Areas of the world, and Sunset Rock Trail is a good example of the unique habitat these key birds require. Birds of high conservation priority found in the area include: black-throated blue warbler, Canada warbler, golden-crowned kinglet, hooded warbler, rose-breasted grosbeak, and red-breasted nuthatch. In spring peregrine falcons nest on nearby rock faces such as Whiteside Mountain and Laurel Knob.

Directions to Ravenel Park from Founders Park, Highlands (5 minutes): From Pine Street, turn right onto 5th Street. At the light, turn left onto Main Street/Horse Cove Road. As you approach the Highlands Nature Center, look for signage to Ravenel Park on the right. Due to rugged, narrow road conditions, it is highly recommended to park at the bottom by the sign and hike up the gravel road to the trailhead.

Difficulty: Moderate—challenging walk to trailhead on steep, rugged gravel road. From trailhead to overlooks is easy, with some uneven ground.

Distance: 1.1 miles round trip (Horse Cove Road parking to summit overlook and back).

Hours: Dawn until dusk.

RULES:

- Stay on designated trails.
- No littering.
- No collecting or harming plants or wildlife.
- No hunting.
- No camping.
- No fires or fireworks.
- Be courteous to other hikers.
- Keep dogs on leash, under your direct control.
- Follow the 7 **Leave No Trace** principles.

This property was donated by the Ravenel family in 1914.

Since then it has been privately owned and maintained by the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust, which welcomes the public to enjoy Ravenel Park at no cost. HCLT receives no significant government funding for this park and relies on the support of people like you.

SUPPORT RAVENEL PARK and HIGHLANDS-CASHIERS LAND TRUST HERE:



SCAN ME



SUNSET & SUNRISE ROCKS AT RAVENEL PARK

A HIGHLANDS-CASHIERS LAND TRUST PROPERTY SINCE 1914



MAP & GUIDE

Ravenel Park is owned and conserved by Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust (HCLT).

Sunset and Sunrise Rocks top a granite dome rock outcrop with iconic bird's-eye views of the Town of Highlands.

Take a short stroll through a lush Montane oak and hickory forest, past a population of sweet-smelling swamp azaleas, and you will arrive at one of Highlands' most visited, photographed and beloved spots.

Highlands-Cashiers LAND TRUST

"Saving Special Places since 1909"

Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust is a nationally accredited, 501c3 nonprofit land conservation organization that, for 100 years, has been strategically conserving our most ecologically vital lands for the benefit of us all.

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Map & illustrations by Ken Czarnomski



SUNSET & SUNRISE ROCKS AT RAVENEL PARK

A HIGHLANDS-CASHIERS LAND TRUST PROPERTY
SINCE 1914

SUNSET ROCK

A GRANITE DOME OFFERS PANORAMAS OF THE TOWN OF HIGHLANDS & TO SATULAH* MOUNTAIN PRESERVE. ON A CLEAR DAY, 24 MILES TO THE N.W. OUT TO BURLINGTON BALD.

SWAMP AZALEAS OR RHODODENDRON VISCOSUM, ARE LOCATED HERE. THIS IS AN UNUSUAL PLANT TO SPOT AT HIGH & DRY LOCATIONS. BLOOMS JUNE THRU JULY.

LONG BILLS
SHAGGY THROATS

BLACK THROATED BLUE WARBLERS OR SETOPHAGA CAERULESCENS CAN BE SPOTTED IN THESE DECIDUOUS & MIXED CONIFER FORESTS.

ADULT COMMON RAVEN OR CORVUS CORAX ARE UNCOMMON & OFTEN MISTAKEN AS CROWS. THEY ARE LARGER, 24" L. & A WING SPAN OF 53" USUALLY THEY TRAVEL IN PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS.

CAROLINA DWARF OR PIEDMONT RHODODENDRON (RHODODENDRON MINUS) IS A DECIDUOUS SHRUB, A NATIVE TO THE NORTH CAROLINA, SOUTH CAROLINA & TENNESSEE MOUNTAINS. IT IS A SMALLER SPECIES WHICH GROWS 3 TO 6 FT. IN DIAMETER.

BLACK BEAR OR URSUS AMERICANUS
ADULTS 30" TO 40" TALL. MALES 130 LBS TO 660 LBS. FEMALES 90 LBS. TO 180 LBS.

PINK LADY SLIPPER OR CYPRIPEDIUM ACALE A MEMBER OF THE ORCHID FAMILY. BLOOMS APRIL THRU JUNE

SUNRISE ROCK

PANORAMIC VIEWS OVERLOOK HORSE COVE* & BLACK ROCK MOUNTAIN

EASTERN CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

VEWS

BENCH

SUNSET ROCK TRAIL
180 FEET

SUNRISE ROCK TRAIL
360 FEET

BENCH

VEWS

TRAIL FROM HORSE COVE ROAD APPROX. .5 MILE EACH WAY
ROUGH ROAD PREFER PARKING AT HORSE COVE RD.
WHICH WAY DOES THE CREEK WATER FLOW ? TO THE ATLANTIC OR THE GULF OF MEXICO ?



PITCH PINE

PITCH PINE OR PINUS RIGIDA NEEDLES HAVE 3 LEAF CLUSTERS, OVAL CONES & THE SCALES ARE TIPPED WITH CURVED RIGID SPINES. THE BRANCHES ARE CONTORTED AND PENDULOUS GIVING THIS TREE AN IRREGULAR AND PICTURESQUE PROFILE.

