

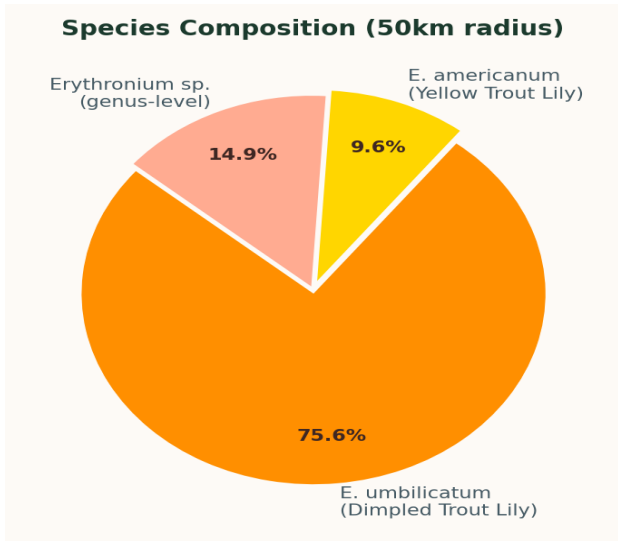
Trout Lily Hunt 2026

A field guide to Erythronium along the Eno River corridor: Eno River State Park to Penny's Bend, Durham NC

The Eno River corridor is one of the richest areas for Trout Lilies in the North Carolina Piedmont. Based on **2,358 iNaturalist observations** within 50km of Durham, this report maps where to find both **Erythronium umbilicatum** (Dimpled Trout Lily, the dominant species at 75%) and **E. americanum** (Yellow Trout Lily, 10%), identifies the best trails, and pinpoints the bloom window.

Key finding: Penny's Bend Nature Preserve is the only site in the corridor where both species reliably co-occur, with E. americanum making up 44% of observations on the Hamlin Road river bluffs. Everywhere else, E. umbilicatum dominates at 80%+.

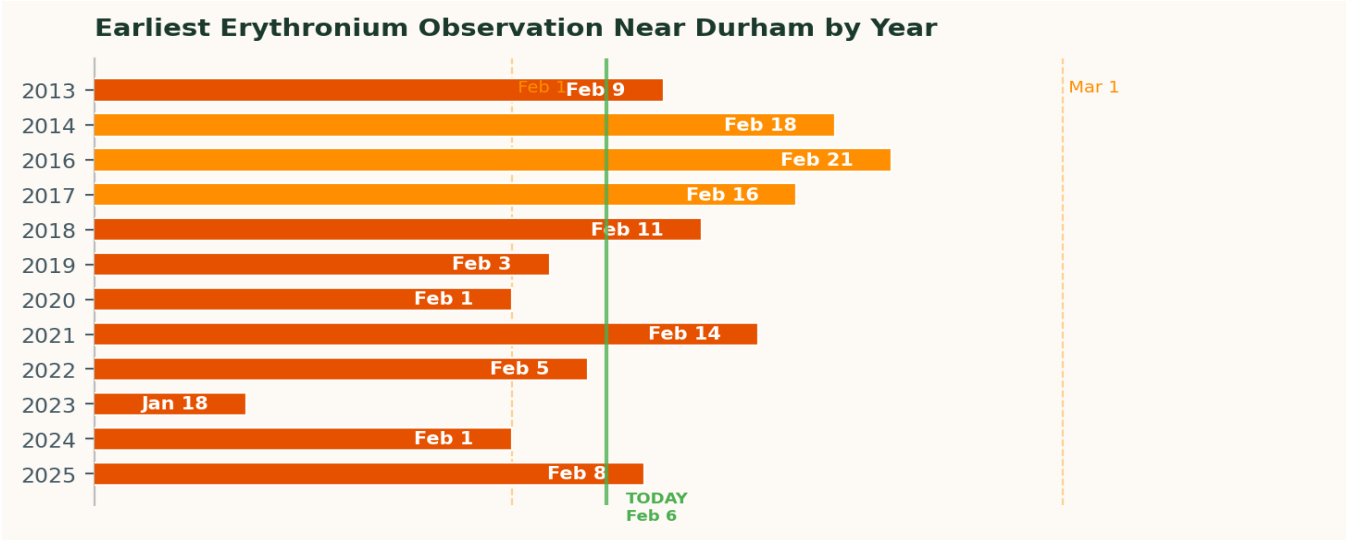
Species Composition



Species	Count	%	Notes
E. umbilicatum (Dimpled Trout Lily)	1,777	75.3%	Earlier bloomer; dominant everywhere
E. americanum (Yellow Trout Lily)	225	9.5%	Later; concentrated at Penny's Bend
Erythronium sp. (genus-level)	350	14.8%	Not ID'd to species
E. albidum (White Trout Lily)	6	0.3%	NC Botanical Garden only (cultivated)

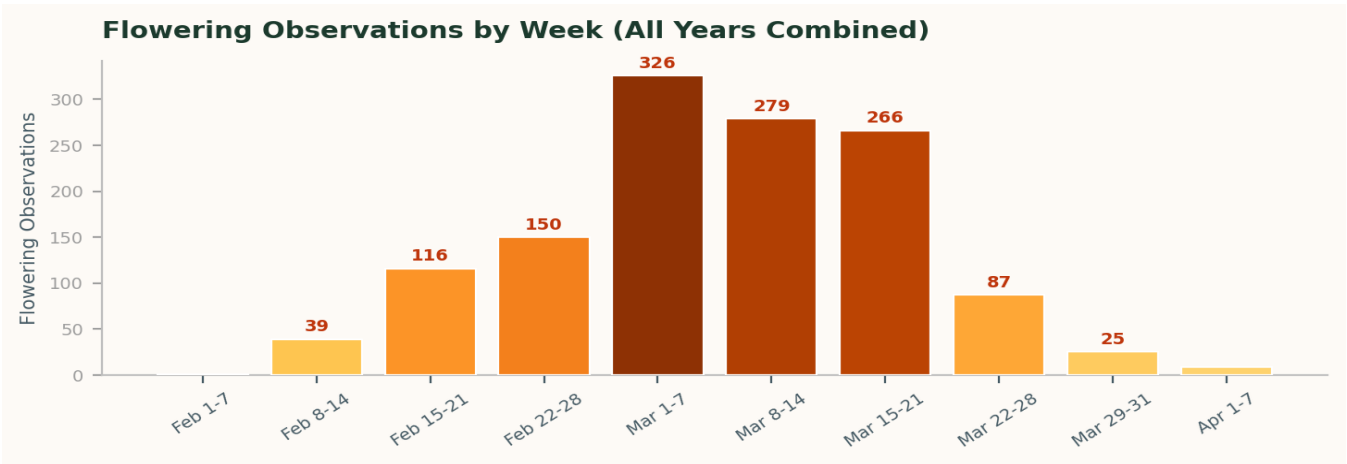
When They Bloom: Earliest Observations by Year

Trout Lilies have been emerging earlier in recent years. The all-time earliest record in the Durham area is **January 18, 2023**. In most years, the first observations appear in the **first two weeks of February**.



Peak Bloom Window

Based on 1,298 observations with flowering phenology annotations, the **peak bloom week is March 1-7** with 326 flowering records. The broad peak extends from late February through mid-March.

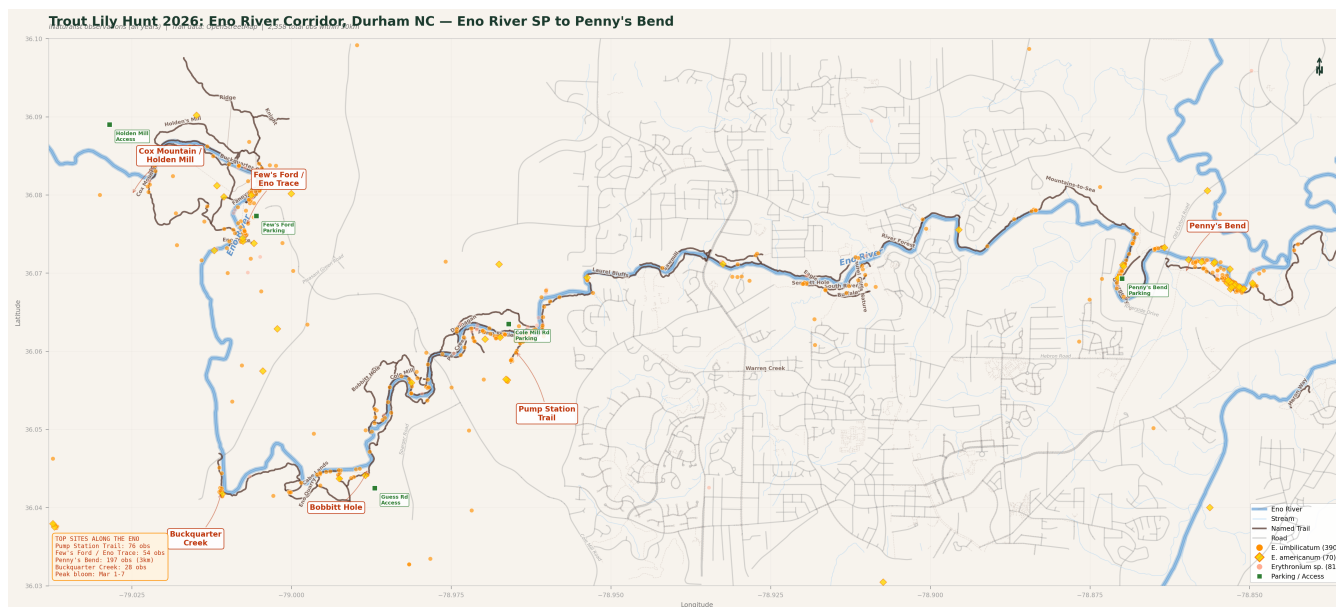


Period	Timing
Early emergence	Late Jan - early Feb (warm years)
Budding	Mid-Feb
First flowering	Late Feb
Peak flowering	Mar 1-7 (326 obs)

Period	Timing
Sustained bloom	Mar 8-21
Fruiting / decline	Late Mar - mid Apr

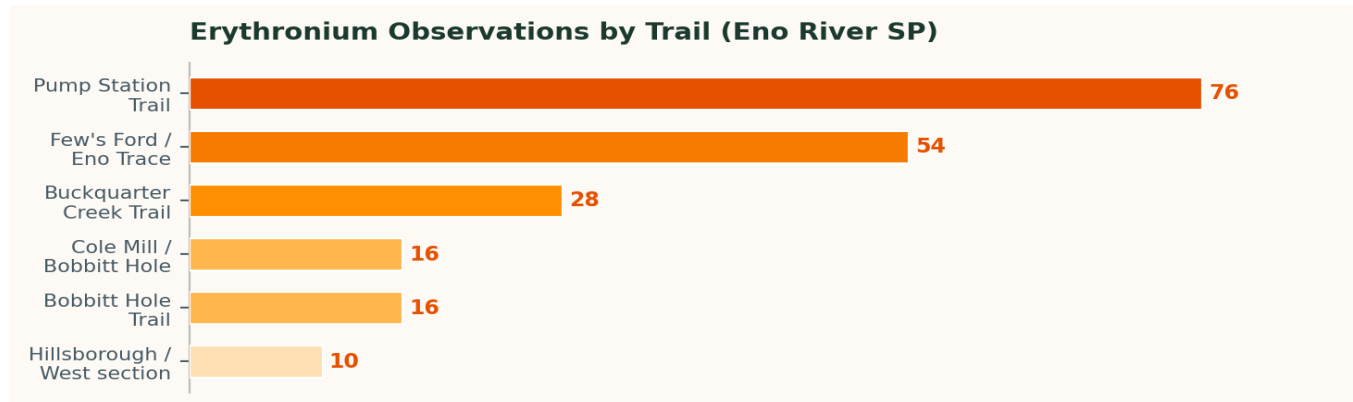
Trail Map: Eno River SP to Penny's Bend

Every Erythronium observation along the Eno River corridor is plotted below. Amber dots = *E. umbilicatum*, yellow diamonds = *E. americanum*, coral dots = genus-level.



Where to Look: Eno River State Park

Eno River SP has **252 Erythronium observations**, dominated by *E. umbilicatum* (80%). The Pump Station Trail is the clear hotspot.



1. Pump Station Trail (Cole Mill Rd Access)

76 observations | 85% *E. umbilicatum* | Hotspot: 36.060, -78.965

The single best trail for Trout Lilies at Eno River SP. Dense colonies grow along the south bank slopes, the same mesic hardwood habitat that supports Hepatica. Expect carpets of yellow flowers in early-to-mid March.

2. Few's Ford / Eno Trace Trail

54 observations | 78% *E. umbilicatum* | Hotspot: 36.075, -79.007

The trail connecting Few's Ford to Cole Mill Road passes through prime habitat. Multiple observers have documented Trout Lilies at the same tight cluster of coordinates year after year, suggesting a large, reliable colony.

3. Buckquarter Creek Trail

28 observations | 89% *E. umbilicatum* | Hotspot: 36.042, -79.011

A less-visited trail with a strong *E. umbilicatum* presence. The creek valley provides ideal mesic conditions.

4. Cole Mill / Bobbitt Hole Area

16 observations | 75% *E. umbilicatum*

Scattered observations along the Laurel Bluffs Trail and Bobbitt Hole Trail, overlapping with the Hepatica habitat.

Penny's Bend Nature Preserve

Penny's Bend is the **crown jewel for Erythronium** in the Durham area, with **197 observations within 3km** (53 within the preserve boundary). It is the only site where both species reliably grow together.

Sub-area	Obs	Species Mix	Coordinates
Stanley Road entrance	~35 obs	66% <i>E. umbilicatum</i>	36.070, -78.870
Snow Hill Road area	~16 obs	Mixed	36.073, -78.865
Hamlin Road / river bluffs	~43 obs	44% <i>E. americanum</i> !	36.069, -78.853

The **Hamlin Road river bluffs** are exceptional: *E. americanum* makes up 44% of observations there, compared to just 10% region-wide. This is the best place in the Durham area to see and compare both species side by side. Look for differences in the leaf mottling pattern and the shape of the capsule apex (dimpled in *umbilicatum*, rounded in *americanum*).

Other Top Sites Near Durham

Location	Obs	Species	Notes
Lochmere / Cary	91	89% <i>umbilicatum</i>	Birkhaven area trails
Sandy Creek Dr, Durham	36	75% <i>umbilicatum</i>	Durham residential area
Erwin Rd / Duke Forest edge	33	70% <i>umbilicatum</i>	Near Korstian Division
Occonechee Mountain SNA	22	77% <i>umbilicatum</i>	Hillsborough
UNC / NC Botanical Garden	37	65% <i>umbilicatum</i>	Includes <i>E. albidum</i> (planted)

Your Strategy: Getting Out There

Timing

It is **very early** for Trout Lilies (Feb 6). The earliest records are from late January to early February, but these are exceptional years. Expect the main show to begin in **late February**, peaking the **first week of March**. You have 2-3 weeks before the peak.

E. umbilicatum vs E. americanum

E. umbilicatum blooms earlier (437 February observations vs 32 for E. americanum). If you want to catch the very first blooms, focus on E. umbilicatum at the Pump Station Trail or Few's Ford. For E. americanum, wait until early-to-mid March and head to the Hamlin Road bluffs at Penny's Bend.

Where to Go

For earliest blooms: Pump Station Trail (Eno River SP). Highest density, earliest emerging E. umbilicatum. Cole Mill Rd parking.

For peak spectacle: Penny's Bend Nature Preserve. 197 observations, both species, carpets of yellow flowers on the river bluffs.

For species comparison: Hamlin Road bluffs at Penny's Bend. The only reliable site for E. americanum vs E. umbilicatum side-by-side.

For solitude: Buckquarter Creek Trail (Eno River SP). Strong E. umbilicatum population, fewer visitors.

What to Look For

Trout Lilies produce a single **nodding yellow flower** on a 6-8 inch stem, with **6 recurved tepals** revealing prominent stamens. The basal leaves are distinctive: paired, lance-shaped, with **brown-purple mottling** resembling trout markings. Before flowering, colonies produce extensive single-leaf "non-flowering" plants that carpet the forest floor. Look on **rich, mesic slopes and floodplains** under hardwood canopy.

Telling them apart: E. umbilicatum has a **dimpled (umbilicate) capsule apex** and often slightly smaller flowers. E. americanum has a **rounded capsule apex** and sometimes bronze or reddish tones on the outer tepals. In practice, the capsule shape (visible after flowering) is the most reliable field mark.

The Trout Lily season is approaching fast. Expect first blooms in the next 2-3 weeks, with peak spectacle the first week of March. Penny's Bend and Pump Station Trail are your best bets. Happy hunting!

Data: iNaturalist API (api.inaturalist.org). 2,358 Erythronium observations within 50km of Durham, NC. 252 observations within Eno River State Park; 197 within 3km of Penny's Bend. Species breakdown: 75% E. umbilicatum, 10% E. americanum, 15% genus-level. Trail data from OpenStreetMap (ODbL). Report generated February 6, 2026.