Leave No Trace™
Center for Outdoor Ethics | LNT.org

Directions

From Washington, D.C.: Take 270 north to I-70 west to I-68 west. Exit 14A (Route 219 South Deep Creek Lake). Continue on Route 219 South for 18 miles. Turn left onto Glendale Road. Continue on Glendale Road for one mile, crossing over the Glendale Bridge. Immediately after crossing the Glendale Bridge, turn left onto State Park Road. Continue on State Park Road for one mile until you see the information sign for the state park facilities.

From Baltimore: Take I-70 west to I-68 west. Exit 14A (Route 219 South Deep Creek Lake). Continue on Route 219 South for 18 miles. Turn left onto Glendale Road. Continue on Glendale Road for one mile, crossing over the Glendale Bridge. Immediately after crossing the Glendale Bridge, turn left onto State Park Road. Continue on State Park Road for one mile until you see the information sign for the state park facili-

Contact Information

Deep Creek Lake State Park
898 State Park Road
Swanton, MD 21561
301-387-5563
http://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/pages/western/deepcreek.aspx

Report any hunting and fishing violations or suspicious activity to the Maryland Natural Resources Police at:
410-260-8888

Maryland
Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Last Updated: March 2022

SNAKEROOT NATURE TRAIL
A SELF-GUIDED EXPLORATION OF NATURE

MARYLAND PARK SERVICE

Deep Creek Lake State Park

Welcome

Welcome to the self-guided Snakeroot Nature Trail. The forest can reveal many things about past weather events, soil conditions, wildlife and insects present there. Take your time and discover some of the forest's secrets. Look for signs of wildlife movement and insects at work. Consider how you affect the forest and the environment you are in. While you walk, think of some ways to protect and preserve the environment that gives us so much.

What to Expect?

The Snakeroot Nature Trail is a 0.25 mile trail that is marked with green, painted blazes. The hike to the start of the Snakeroot Nature Trail is approximately 0.6 of a mile. This would make a round trip a total distance of approximately 1.5 miles. The trail itself is a mixture of packed dirt and rock surfacing that can be slippery when wet. We recommend trail users wear sturdy footwear while enjoying the trail. The Snakeroot trail is not stroller friendly. Look for the interpretive stops along the trail which are marked with numbered wooden posts that correspond to information in this brochure.

How to get there?

The Snakeroot Nature Trail can be accessed using the Indian Turnip Trailhead starting at the Ranger Station (see trail map). From the trailhead follow the Indian Turnip Trail (orange blazes) for approximately 0.4 of a mile. Next turn left onto the Meadow Mountain Trail (white blazes) and hike for approximately 0.15 of a mile. The Snakeroot Nature Trail begins and ends where it meets the Meadow Mountain Trail at the power line right of way. To return to the trailhead , back track down the Meadow Mountain Trail and then follow the Indian Turnip Trail back to the parking area.

1. Northern Red Oak


Credit:: http://etc.usf.edu/clipart

The large tree with dark, furrowed bark behind marker #1 is a Northern Red Oak (Scientific name *Quercus rubra*). It is a dominant tree species in the forest and is very important to wildlife and humans. Its acorns are valuable food for small mammals, birds, deer, and black bears. However, the acorns are only produced every two years and then only when conditions are favorable.

Humans value the lumber for fine furniture, flooring, high-quality paper, and firewood. Many people regard red oak to be the best firewood because of its high heat content and its easy splitting qualities.

Native Americans and early settlers also used acorns for food. Early settlers brewed coffee from the bitter acorns while Native Americans baked breads and cakes from acorn flour.

2. White Oak


Credit:: http://etc.usf.edu/clipart

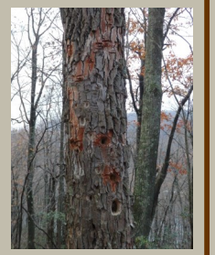
The second stop along the nature trail highlights another large oak species in the forest. Directly behind marker #2 is a White Oak (Scientific Name: *Quercus alba*). In addition to the leaf lobes being more rounded, the white oak can be differentiated from many other oak species by its whitish bark. This species is another dominant tree in the Appalachian Hardwood Forest.

The White Oak produces acorns every year. Most wildlife species choose white oak acorns over those of the red oak because they are less bitter. Squirrels and birds often cache the nuts for later use and they sometimes forget where they are stored. Those nuts may sprout, providing trees for future generations. The acorns are very important food for a wide variety of wildlife.

Humans value the lumber for furniture, flooring, and whiskey kegs. The heat produced from one cord (a stack of wood 8 feet by 8 feet x 4 feet in size) of seasoned white oak firewood is equivalent to one ton (2000 pounds) of coal.

3. Dead, Dying, and Damaged Trees

A large maple snag lays on either side of the trail behind marker #3. How many other dead, dying, or damaged trees do you see along this trail? They are examples of the fragility of our forests. Many of these trees were damaged by autumn winter storms such as the ice storm in October 2002 and Super Storm Sandy in fall of 2012.



A forest can be damaged by the weather (ice, snow, wind, drought) and by insect pests. As trees are damaged and die, they in turn promote new life. They open the area to sunlight and nutrients that are needed by younger, smaller trees. The decaying process returns much needed minerals back into the soil for use by the new growth. During the process, many animals use the dead or rotting trees for homes, as do cavity-nesting birds. Standing dead timber is very important wildlife habitat.

4. Vernal Pool

A small, temporary pool appears at the base of the large rock left of the bridge. It forms after heavy rains and after snow melt in the spring. By late summer or early fall, it may disappear completely. This pool will not support fish, but it is ideal for small animals such as wood frogs, salamanders, or mosquito larvae. Even here predators are common. Water scorpions, dragonfly larvae, birds, and turtles may feed on the tadpoles and other young critters. The changing, shrinking existence of a vernal pool poses another challenge to residents. The young born here must become adults before the water disappears.

Photo Courtesy of : Emily Mills

Can you find evidence of other creatures that may use the pool? You may find tracks in the mud left by animals as they visit the local watering hole.

5. Rocks and Geology

The geology of Garrett County is evident in many places by exposed surface rocks, cliffs, and the extraction of mineral resources. The exposed rock you are walking over and can see on the surrounding hillside is part of the Appalachian Plateau geologic region which is characterized by various types of sandstone, siltstone, claystone, shale, limestone, and pockets of coal.

This area of rich mineral resources makes Garrett County an important mineral provider for the surrounding areas. Numerous quarries and mines (Such as the Brant Mine, see the Beckman's Trail) dot the landscape to extract the sandstone, limestone, and coal that we frequently use in road material, concrete, household heating (coal), etc.

Beneath the mineral resource also lies an additional resource in the form of natural gas. The first gas well was built in Garrett County in 1944, making Maryland one of 33 states that produce some type of gas or oil.

6. White and Black Snakeroot

White Snakeroot http://www.amystewart.com/wp/white-snakeroot.jpg for white snakeroot

Both White Snakeroot (*Eupatorium rugosum*) and Black snakeroot or Black Cohosh (*Actaea racemose*), grow well in this spot. These and other herbaceous plants cover the forest floor. They must tolerate life with very little sunlight. The showy Black Cohosh flower spikes are white. It blooms in July and are easily spotted. Black Cohosh was traditionally used by American Indians to treat female complaints, rheumatic conditions, and snakebites. The White Snakeroot's white flower is much less showy than that of the Black Cohosh. It blooms from mid August through September. When cows fed on this plant, it gave settlers milk sickness. Milk sickness is believed to have killed Abraham Lincoln's mother.

Black Cohost http://www.swsbm.com/Illustration

7. Striped Maple in the Understory

The striped maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*) has glossy green, smooth bark with pale vertical lines and its leaves look like a duck's foot. Specimen' are located about 10 feet in front of you, to the left and behind you. It has a small diameter trunk. This species does not grow very large, at most 32 feet in height. Its wood is light and of no commercial value.

The samaras or seeds are an important food for ruffed grouse, wild turkey, squirrel, rabbit, deer, and small rodents.

Striped Maple http://www.wood-atabase.com/wood-articles/differences-between-hard-maple-and-soft-maple/

Look around you at the various layers of vegetation. The canopy trees of the forest regulate the light conditions under which all other plants must operate. Understory trees and plants must be able to live in very low light intensities.

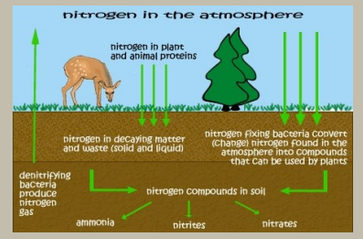
8. Ecology– How the System Grows

Do you think the trees you see from this spot look healthy? Are they good timber for commercial use?

As you have walked this trail, you may have admired the beauty of the forest or appreciated the diversity of the plant species. If so, it may surprise you that this area is considered to be of poor quality. Most of the trees are not very large, nor are they straight, and there is relatively little understory. This site has shallow rocky soil with only small amounts of nutrients that are necessary for the health and growth of plant life. The south facing slope of this mountain receives lots of sunlight, but tends to be much drier than the north facing slope. The steepness causes fast runoff when it rains. Site conditions influence the type of forest growth and its health. Aesthetically, most forest types are pleasing to the eye, but may be of limited commercial value. But all forests are invaluable to the diversity of plant and animal species.

9. Nutrient Cycle

As you complete you circular walk, consider the nutrient cycle of the forest. The green leaves of trees, shrubs, an d herbaceous plants around you are vital to the forest. Chlorophyll (little green cells in plants) absorb sunlight to provide energy for photosynthesis which creates food for the plants. The plants or their fruits may then become food for wildlife.



http://www.realtrees4kids.org/

The nutrients are absorbed into the animal's system. The unused portions– still rich in nutrients important to plant life– are returned to the soil. The dead leaves, branches, and trees on the ground also return nutrients back into the soil as they decay. They provide food and shelter for insects, microscopic plants, animals, and bacteria that are essential to the life, health, and growth of the forest.

What can you do?

Leave No Trace

1. Plan ahead
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
3. Dispose of waste properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize campfire impacts
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of other users

Get Involved!

1. Volunteer
2. Become a Maryland Master Naturalist
3. Make wild friendly backyards
4. Make a donation
5. Learn how to plant a tree through the Tree-mendous Maryland Program (http://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/treemendous/planting.aspx)