

The Montour Area Recreation Commission is working hard to ensure the long-term viability of the parks, trails, and other outdoor recreational opportunities in and around Montour County, including the Montour Preserve. If you believe our efforts are worthy of your support, please consider making a donation today.

MontourPreserve.org/donate



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MontourPreserve.org/brochures-and-guides
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Montour Preserve

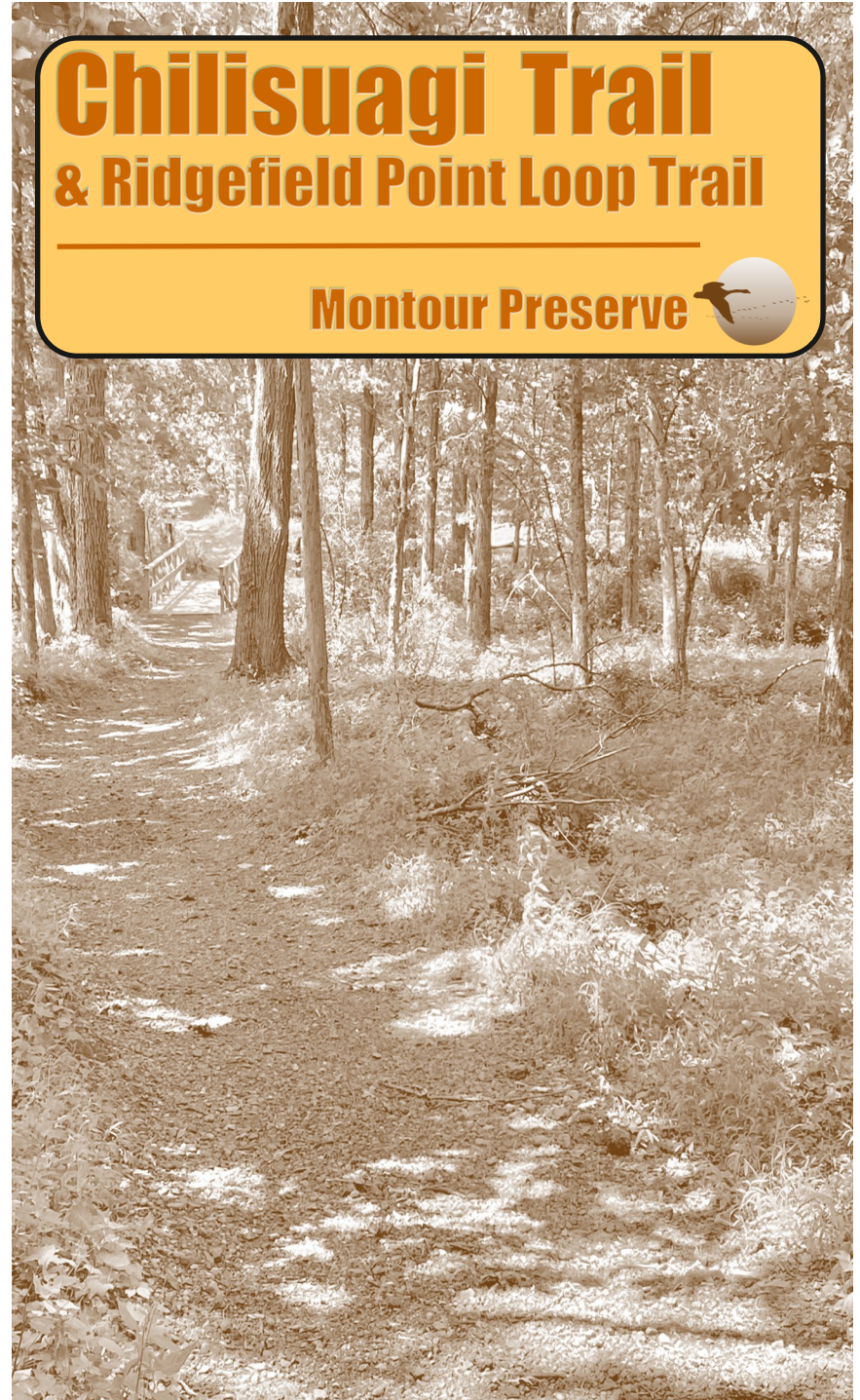
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MontourPreserve.org

Chilisuagi Trail & Ridgefield Point Loop Trail

Montour Preserve



rev. 20260113

CHILISUAGI TRAIL & RIDGEFIELD POINT LOOP TRAIL

self-guided trail booklet

Welcome to the 3.9 mile-long Chilisuaigi Trail at the Montour Preserve. As you walk this trail, you'll see views of the Lake Chillisquaque reservoir, developed by PP&L in 1972 as a backup source of cooling water for the nearby Montour Steam Electric Station power plant, and the varied landscape that surrounds the lake.

The lands that now make up the Montour Preserve were once farms, some dating back to the days of the earliest settlers. These lands now provide homes for an abundance of wildlife and a wide variety of options for public recreation.

We suggest you wear comfortable, sturdy shoes for this walk and take drinking water, especially on warmer days, and a snack.

Allow two to three hours at a leisurely pace to complete the hike.

Thank you for visiting the Montour Preserve.

We hope you enjoy your time here today!

TRAIL INFORMATION

LENGTH: Chilisuaigi Trail: 3.9mi; Ridgefield Point Loop Trail: 0.9mi

SURFACES: gravel, mowed grass, and forest floor (on the Ridgefield Point Loop Trail)

MAXIMUM ELEVATION: 664ft

MINIMUM ELEVATION: 594ft

TOTAL ELEVATION GAIN / LOSS: 70ft

ALLOWABLE USES: pedestrians only (strollers and wheelchairs)

PROHIBITED: pets (except service animals), bicycles, horses, and motorized vehicles

HOURS OF USE: dawn to dark every day

22. The Dam

Now that you've made it past Pluto, look across the lake at the big rock wall. That's an earthen dam, stretching 2,000 feet across the valley! It was built to hold back water and create Lake Chillisquaque, a 165-acre reservoir. While it was made to cool the Montour Steam Electric Station power plant (originally coal-fired, now natural gas), the lake is also home to fish, birds, and other wildlife—and it's a fun place for people to explore and enjoy, too!

23. Wildlife Corridor

This line of trees and shrubs creates a safe path for birds and mammals to travel between the forest and the lake while looking for food and shelter.

Birds may forage in the trees, shrubs, or nearby fields. Wildlife corridors like this are important for connecting habitats that have been split up by roads or buildings.



*Thank you for visiting the Chilisuaigi Trail.
We hope you enjoyed this booklet and learned
more about what makes Montour Preserve so special.
Come back in other seasons to see how the trails change
and make new memories, as well as explore other trails,
each of which holds unique treasures.*

*When you are done with this booklet, please consider returning
it to the nearest kiosk so that others may enjoy it, too.*

*Look for our other trail guides, the Montour Preserve's
Birders' Checklist, and our Guide to the Common Trees
and Shrubs of Montour County.*

20. Changing Paths



If you look to the left side of the trail, opposite from the lake, you can see the remains of what used to be a road and field.

These can be recognized

by the younger trees that are present. The road was moved to accommodate the newly created Lake Chillisquaque and the field stopped being utilized.

The road once led to the small, but thriving, village of White Hall, a stop on the stage line from Bloomsburg to Muncy.

The community once boasted a post office, hotel, store, school, several churches, and a blacksmith shop. Though times have changed, the churches still remain.

The present road (Sportsman Road) is now higher in elevation and protected from possible flooding.

Welcome to the Planet Walk!

Please take time to think about the vastness of space as you learn the different planets on this walk along a scale model of our solar system from the Sun to Pluto.

21. For the People

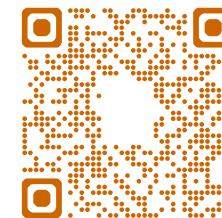
As you stand in the shade of the spreading pin oak tree, look around and count how many different ways people are enjoying the Montour Preserve. While the property serves many different roles—from supporting the production of electricity to enhancing and protecting wildlife to helping with flood protection—the Montour Preserve is also a place for nearly 100,000 visitors per year to enjoy nature and the outdoors.



CHILISUAGI TRAIL & RIDGEFIELD POINT LOOP TRAIL INTERPRETIVE POINTS



find a Google Maps formatted version of this map (including many other features at the Montour Preserve) at montourpreserve.org/map/ or scan here



1. American Chestnut

The American chestnut, once the most abundant hardwood tree in eastern American forests, at one time comprised almost 25% of all hardwood trees. American chestnuts were heavily relied upon by wildlife (and people) because they produced a consistent crop of nuts every year.

Tragically, in the 1920s, chestnuts became infected by a fungus accidentally brought from Asia which decimated the population. More than one hundred years later, the fungus continues to weaken those trees that sprout from still living roots.



The chestnut trees you see here are part of a program to hybridize American chestnuts with Chinese chestnuts which are resistant to the blight.

Learn more at www.TACF.org



2. Chillisquaque Creek Watershed

A watershed is the land through which waters flow toward a common body of water, such as a creek, river or bay.

Blessed with abundant natural resources – including fresh water, timber, iron ore, wildlife, and fertile agricultural lands – and more than three hundred years of recorded settlement history, the Chillisquaque Creek watershed is rich in history and resources alike.

Encompassing an area of approximately 112 square miles in Montour, Northumberland, Columbia, and Lycoming Counties, the watershed includes more than 200 miles of waterways, including 17.5 miles of the Chillisquaque Creek, from Washingtonville Borough to the creek’s confluence with the West Branch Susquehanna

River, navigable by small watercraft during much of the year. Learn more at www.montourec.com/



18. Invasive Species

In undisturbed natural ecosystems, plants and animals live in a state of relative balance, contributing to each other’s growth, food, and survival.

Unfortunately, this balance is disrupted when invasive plants like autumn olive, multiflora rose, and honeysuckle take over. These plants are not native to central Pennsylvania and outcompete many native plants such as spotted alder, dogwood, and hawthorn that wildlife need to survive.



Which bushes do you see most commonly here?

What do you smell and how pleasant is it?

Though some invasive plants may smell nice to us, they don’t help wildlife—something to remember when choosing what to plant at home.

19. Wetlands

Wetlands are a vital habitat in nearly all environments. They serve as a nursery for aquatic animals and waterfowl by providing food and shelter. They act as a natural filter for our water cycle by absorbing chemicals and pollutants, thereby boosting water quality. Wetlands also provide protection against climate change, acting as a natural defense against flooding and erosion. While many wetlands have been lost to development over the years, efforts are being made to create wetlands and mitigate against the loss. Here natural wetlands serve as habitat for fish, insects, waterfowl, and animals.

17. Ash Trees and Emerald Ash Borer

Most of the fallen trees on the ground in this area are white ash, killed by the Emerald ash borer—an invasive beetle first found in the United States in Michigan in 2002. While the adult beetle does little harm, its larvae eat the inner bark of the trees, stopping the trees from moving water and nutrients, leading to the tree's eventual death.

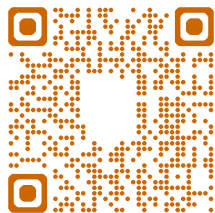


In Pennsylvania, white ash was once the largest and most common of the state's three native ash species, but the Emerald ash borer has wiped out millions of trees across the state and beyond.

Learn more about the Emerald Ash Borer and other insects and diseases affecting Pennsylvania's forests at

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dcnr/conservation/forests-and-tree/insects-and-diseases>

or by scanning here



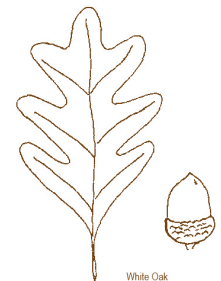
3. Edge Effect

You are standing at a point of transition between two habitats. An 'edge effect' occurs where one habitat meets another or where two or more habitats overlap. A greater diversity of wildlife tends to be found in an edge like this, as those animals that live in the forest often enter the field to look for food, and those that live in the field visit the forest for food or shelter. Notice the differences between the habitats. What animals might you spot that benefit from this edge effect?



4. Hardwood Forests

One forest community in our portion of Pennsylvania is known as the Appalachian Oak Forest, a forest dominated by hardwood trees. In this section of the forest on the preserve, you will see trees such as white oak, red oak, shagbark hickory, and black cherry. Here before you is an old white oak tree. Notice the pale gray color of the bark and lobed shape of the leaves. Why might this oak tree be so large compared to other trees around it? Perhaps it was left behind from the days of logging or farming to mark a boundary or property line, or an edge of a former road?



White Oak



Red Oak

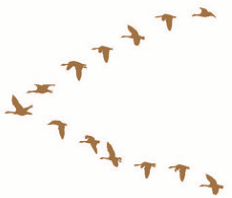
5. Walnuts

The black walnut tree has played many roles in our history. In the Revolutionary War, the wood was used to make stocks for guns. During the Civil War, nuts of walnut trees were used as a dye for Confederate soldiers' uniforms. During the Industrial Revolution, the wood was used as railroad ties and for building trestles. Today, black walnut is used in making furniture and planted as a landscape tree. Many people enjoy eating, cooking, or baking with walnuts as they are a source of vitamins B and C, a variety of minerals and nutrients, as well as rich in omega 3 fatty acids vital for our health. Gray squirrels in particular enjoy black walnuts and store many each autumn in preparation for winter.



6. Wildlife Refuge

136 acres of the Montour Preserve have been designated as a wildlife refuge. This area is managed as a protected place for wildlife to live relatively undisturbed by human activity. The refuge provides food, shelter, and nesting areas for many animals and the plants upon which they depend. During the spring and fall, flocks of migratory waterfowl will dot the surface of the lake in this area to feed and rest along their long journey. Canada geese and other waterfowl will lay eggs around the lake in late spring, bringing goslings in the summer to feed upon the ample vegetation, unbothered by human activity.



15. Bird Songs

Listen to the songs of the birds in the trees around you. How many different bird species can you identify? A variety of birds visit this small stand of larch trees as they move about searching for food. Some use the shelter of the trees as nesting sites. In this area, you can find blue jays, tufted titmouse, wrens, and many other species throughout the year.



Learn more about identifying birds you might see and listen to their calls at www.allaboutbirds.org or scan here.



16. Wildlife Encounters

Take time to stop, look, and listen closely to the woods surrounding you. Do you see or hear any movement? If you are still, you might notice a fawn bedded down in late spring, perhaps standing up on gangly legs to munch on leaves. Perhaps you notice the scurrying of squirrels across the forest floor or overhead in trees gathering food, or a woodpecker boring into a tree in search of insects.



At any time and in any season, if you are observant, you can notice so many different types of wildlife that make this preserve their home.

Between points 16 and 17, you will rejoin the Chilisugi Trail.

13. Snags

Dead trees serve an important role in the natural environment. As insects invade the dead wood, woodpeckers drill holes to eat



the insects. Woodpeckers can also create nesting cavities to raise their young. Once abandoned, these cavities can be used by other birds and animals such as chickadees, screech owls, and squirrels. As you walk along, how many trees can you find that have cavities?

14. Ridge and Valley

As you look across the lake, you'll see rolling hills and ridges in the distance that give way to wider valleys like the one in which the Montour Preserve is located. This is typical of the Ridge and Valley area of Pennsylvania. The site for this reservoir was chosen because the Middle Branch of the Chillisquaque Creek meandered through this valley. Both natural forces and humans have sculpted this landscape.



You might find it hard to believe as you look across the landscape here today that this part of Pennsylvania millions of years ago was covered by a shallow sea. The only evidence that it was once here are the sedimentary rocks beneath your feet and the fossils of marine creatures that once lived here. Visit the Montour Preserve's Fossil Pit to find fossils and learn more about this area's distant past.

7. Ecological Succession

This area is an example of succession, which is the process of vegetative community structure changing over time. Succession is prompted by disturbances such as fire, logging, wind storms, farming, or the deaths of mature trees. The new community which develops is usually much different than what came before it.

Look at the transformation happening in this old field. Shrubs are growing in and eventually trees will establish and block the sunlight needed for the smaller shrubs and plants.



8. Remnants of the Past

Many people have come and gone on this land through the years. What remains are indicators of their past activity here. As you look straight ahead, you will see remnants of an old building. What could this building have been? Are there any clues or other remnants you see that indicate how people used this land long ago? What do you notice has happened here in the absence of people maintaining a building?



9. Tributary

You are standing on a bridge across the Middle Branch of the Chillisquaque Creek, just past another field that is experiencing succession. The large rocks upstream of the bridge were placed to prevent erosion of the creek's bank and, ultimately, the trail. In the creek you will notice riffles, runs, and pools. A riffle is where water flows rapidly in a stream due to shallow flow over a rocky/gravelly streambed, while a run is also fast but with a deep flow and lacking turbulence. A pool is different yet, with deep, slow water flow. Each of these zones provides a different habitat for aquatic life. What sorts of creatures do you see in the creek? Do you see evidence of past flooding?

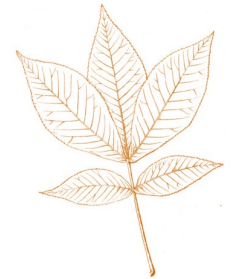


10. Pine Plantation

After World War II, our country experienced a housing boom. All the new homes being built led to fears of a future lumber shortage. As a result, the government subsidized farmers to plant pine plantations to ensure there would be plenty of trees for lumber. Many of these trees were never harvested. Those that remain, such as the ones here, provide habitat for wildlife. Among these pines are tamarack trees, also known as American larch. Tamarack is the only coniferous tree that loses its needles for the winter. If you visit during different seasons, you will notice the changes these trees experience. In the spring, the tamaracks show flowers, purplish red in females and golden yellow in males. The needles which then develop begin as green-gold, turning to frosty blue-green into the summer. In autumn, the needles become a light glowing gold before they fall to the ground, leaving bare branches through the winter.

11. Past Timbering

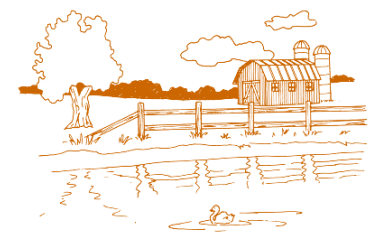
As you look out through this section of the forest, can you tell there was a timbering operation here years ago? What evidence do you see? Stumps provide clues to past lumbering. Notice what the forest looks like now. Many trees have grown back over the years, resulting in differently aged trees. Additionally, areas of all young growth trees are a sign of timbering. Some trees have died and fallen naturally. In this area, you will see many red maple and shagbark hickory trees.



Between interpretive points 11 and 12, you may choose to leave the Chilisugi Trail to enter the Ridgefield Point Loop Trail. If you prefer not to walk the additional 0.9 mile-long trail, skip ahead to interpretive point 17.

12. Ridgefield Point

Welcome to Ridgefield Point. Long before the creation of Lake Chillisquaque, the land now known as Ridgefield Point was known as Ridgefield Farm.



Over the years, this fertile farmland has reverted back to a more natural state. You may notice young trees and fencing dotted around the loop. Look for other signs of human use in this area.