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MontourPreserve.org/brochures-and-guides

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Montour Preserve

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MontourPreserve.org



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Wildlife Management Trail

Montour Preserve



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT TRAIL

self-guided trail booklet

Welcome to the Wildlife Management Trail at the Montour Preserve! This three-quarter-mile-long trail meanders through forests and meadows. These habitats offer a variety of sights and sounds, plants and wildlife, and are constantly changing as the cycle of seasons progresses through the year. Visit often and you will begin to notice these changes.

Please take only photographs and memories with you when you leave; do not pick plants or capture wildlife. Please stay on the trail to avoid damaging sensitive natural areas and hazards such as poison ivy.

Thank you for visiting the Montour Preserve. We hope you enjoy your time here today!

TRAIL INFORMATION

Length: 0.76mi

Surface: mowed grass; NOTE: some areas are seasonally wet

Maximum Elevation: 622ft

Minimum Elevation: 560ft

Total Elevation Gain/Loss: 152ft

Allowable Uses: pedestrians only (strollers and wheelchairs allowed)

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

Hours of Use: dawn to dark every day

You now have a better understanding of the subtle interactions between plants and animals found along the Wildlife Management Trail. These meadows and forests change through the year. In the springtime, these changes can be almost daily. Summer is a slower time, but fall brings weekly changes. Winter is also a time of change, but at a slower, more subtle pace.

There are always new discoveries waiting along the Wildlife Management Trail for those who are willing to slow down, look, and listen.

The staff of Montour Preserve invites you to visit again on another day or during another season.

***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.***

13. Pond Ecology

Sit here for a moment and listen. What do you hear? Maybe the whir of mosquitos, or the *chit-chit-teeeee* of some red winged blackbirds, or the low croaking chorus of frogs. All of these creatures depend on ponds. Unlike vernal pools, ponds stay filled all year round. They provide essential habitats for birds, amphibians, and insects. Take a minute to watch and take note of other visitors.

14. Pollinators

Take a moment to admire the butterfly wall and garden. Do you see any butterflies visiting the flowers? From spring into early autumn, these plants will be humming with activity. But, butterflies and bees aren't the only pollinators upon which plants depend. Hummingbirds, beetles, flies, and wasps also play an important role as pollinators. Look closely at the flowers and plants, to see if you find some of these other pollinators?



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT 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. Benefits of Birdhouses

Look up in this tree and you'll spot a birdhouse. Birdhouses, along with being great beginner woodworking projects, are a simple way to help wildlife. Secondary cavity nesters are birds that rely on tree holes to nest in, but cannot create them on their own. Species like tree swallows, Eastern bluebirds, Northern house wrens, and black-capped chickadees must find suitable nest sites made by others. That's where you come in! Building a birdhouse can be a great way to help wildlife and encourage more birds to visit your yard.



2. Cattails

Lining this small pond is a ring of tall, thin-leaved plants. Depending on what season you visit, you may be able to see the seeds - they look like fuzzy, brown hotdogs. Cattails are an important part of a pond's ecosystem. They have extensive root systems, which are good for stabilizing the marshland and filter water as it runs into the pond. Pay attention as you walk along the trail for other places where cattails grow. Why do you think they grow in these areas?

11. Insects

Meadows and fields are full of insects. The wildflowers attract bees and butterflies, but many more creatures can be found crawling through the grass. Wolf spiders can be found stalking their next meal. Unlike most spiders, wolf spiders don't spin webs. Instead, they chase and catch their prey. Grasshoppers are another common find in a meadow. With powerful back legs, they can jump up to twenty times their body length. That would be like a six foot tall person being able to jump 120 feet!



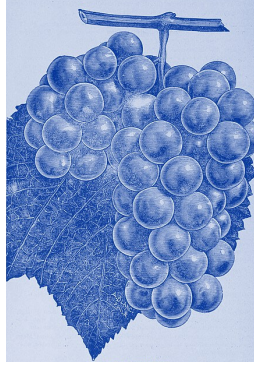
12. Vernal Pools

Look to the sides of the trail. Do you see those depressions in the forest floor? Depending on the season and weather, you might notice pools of water there. They are called vernal pools, shallow bodies of water that have no permanent water source. They fill up on rainwater and snow melt. As the seasons and weather change, these pools will dry up and reform multiple times throughout the year. They are great for housing insects, some are even deep enough for frogs and salamanders to lay their eggs in.

9. Wild Grapes

Look up into this tree. Do you see the vine that has entangled it? This is a riverbank grapevine and it is an important source of food for songbirds in the autumn.

Its leaves and young branches are grazed by white-tailed deer and wild turkey. This grapevine is an example of a native species with connections to many other animals and plants in its habitat.



10. Meadows

Meadows, like the one here, are essential habitats.

The backbone of any meadow is wildflowers, native plants that support pollinators. Tall grasses, which flourish in the open space of a meadow, produce abundant seeds which act as food for field mice and song sparrows. White-tailed deer eat their fill of fibrous plants and in spring, young fawns hide in the tall grass. Some birds weave their nests

out of grass and raise their young among the wildflowers. Stop and listen. Do you hear any birds singing?



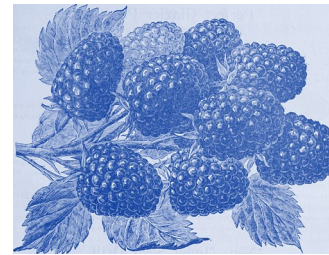
3. Succession

As you walk along this section of the trail, look along the forest edge.



Can you spot the places that are changing? Succession is the process by which the community of plants change an area's habitat. This clearing is now a meadow. It has a diverse community of grasses and wildflowers, but at the forest edge, small trees and shrubs are creeping in, eventually becoming a forest.

4. Food Chains



This blackberry bush represents an important starting point in a food chain. The berries produced will be eaten by birds, rabbits, and white-tailed deer. These are all herbivores: they eat plants. These animals will in turn be eaten by carnivores: red-tailed hawks and coyotes. When these animals die, their bodies will be broken down by decomposers, returning nutrients to the soil. Every plant and animal on the planet is connected via a food chain.

5. Role of Canopy

Looking at the forest in front of you, you'll see the extensive canopy cover present. The canopy does more than just collect sunlight. It regulates temperature and shelter for species of both plants and animals. The canopy will intercept sunlight, minimizing temperature differences, creating stable environments below. The forest canopy also promotes shade tolerant plants and creates unique ecological niches.



6. Pipeline Corridor

You are almost at the end of the section of trail which follows the path of an area of disturbance. This strip of forest was cleared in 2022 for a new natural gas pipeline laid underground to serve the Montour Steam Electric Station power plant. Though the work has long been finished, the impact on vegetation can still be seen today. Wildflowers, like thistles and goldenrod, thrive in these areas of disturbance. They are called pioneer species and they are important resources for pollinators.

7. Trees can Talk!

Look across the pipeline clearing to the grove of white pines. Each of these trees are currently communicating with each other through the soil. They communicate through the mycorrhizal (mai-kaw-ree-zuhl) network. The network is made up of fungal threads known as mycelium, linking tree roots together. Through this, trees can send signals, warning others of threats such as insect infestation or disease, and even send water and nutrients to struggling neighbors.



8. Dead Trees

Trees can live for a long time, but they don't live forever. Even after they die, trees provide food and shelter for forest animals. Standing dead trees are called snags and are important for woodpeckers, who both build their homes and search for food in them. When trees fall, they begin decomposing. The dead wood is consumed by ants, beetles, and mushrooms. So, even after they die, trees still host a wide variety of life!

