

PENNYPACK ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION TRUST

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IN BRIEF

Enjoy the diverse restored and preserved landscapes and naturally restored wildlife of the central Pennypack Creek valley. Walk along the creek, through forests, and past historic homes and buildings, then finish in a divine meadow.

DESCRIPTION

The role of organizations such as the Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust, which seek to protect, restore, and preserve land, has become ever more important. The trust protects natural areas in central Pennypack Creek valley through land acquisitions, restoring meadows and woods through stewardship, and maintaining trails, meadows, and forests through endowments.

Parking is available on the shoulder of Creek Road. Start this hike on Creek Road Trail, heading north. Immediately, you are transported from the buzz and business of city and suburbia to a world of flowing waters and a restored stream habitat with plenty of turtles and toads. Beside the creek, butterflies flutter among snapdragons, goldenrods, and other wildflowers.

Directions

Take PA 611 north from Center City, Philadelphia. After 10 miles, bear right on Washington Lane and continue 1.3 miles. Turn left at PA 2017/Susquehanna Road. Within a block, turn right on Valley Road. After about 0.5 miles, bear left at Washington Lane and continue 2 miles. Turn right at Terwood Road, drive 0.25 miles, then look for Creek Road on your left. Creek Road ends within several hundred feet. Find off-street parking. **2955 Edge Hill Road (Headquarters), Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006**



KEY AT-A-GLANCE INFORMATION

LENGTH: 6.17 miles

CONFIGURATION: Balloon

DIFFICULTY: Moderate

SCENERY: Creek, historic homes and building, grasslands, forests

EXPOSURE: Full sun–full shade

TRAIL TRAFFIC: Light–moderate

TRAIL SURFACE: Pavement, gravel, dirt, grass

HIKING TIME: 2 hours

DRIVING DISTANCE FROM CENTER CITY: 15 miles

ACCESS: Year-round, daily, 8 a.m.–dusk; free admission

MAPS: USGS Hatboro; access at www.pennypacktrust.org/trails.htm#maps

WHEELCHAIR TRAVERSABLE: Much of the creek path is accessible.

FACILITIES: No public restrooms

SPECIAL COMMENTS: No pets are permitted on Raytharn Trail. The Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust is part of the larger Pennypack Greenway Preservation plan to protect land along the entire Pennypack Creek, which is endangered by development and water pollution. For more information about the Pennypack Greenway, visit www.pennypackgreenway.org or call (215) 657-0830.

GPS Trailhead

Coordinates

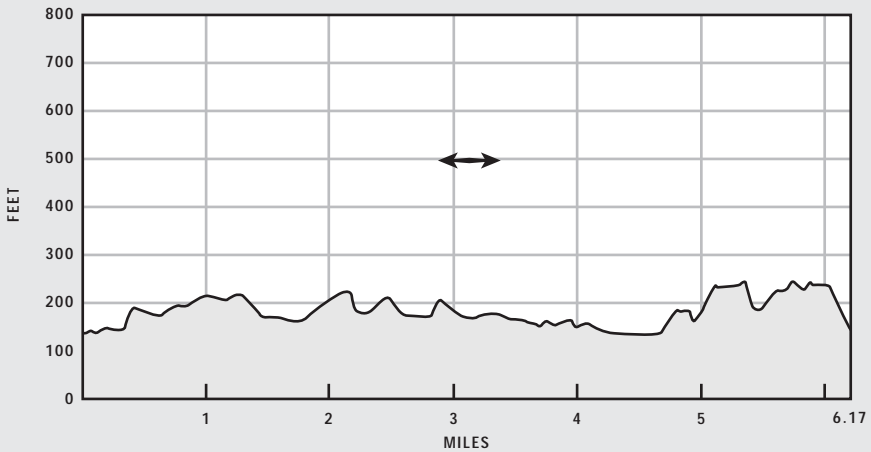
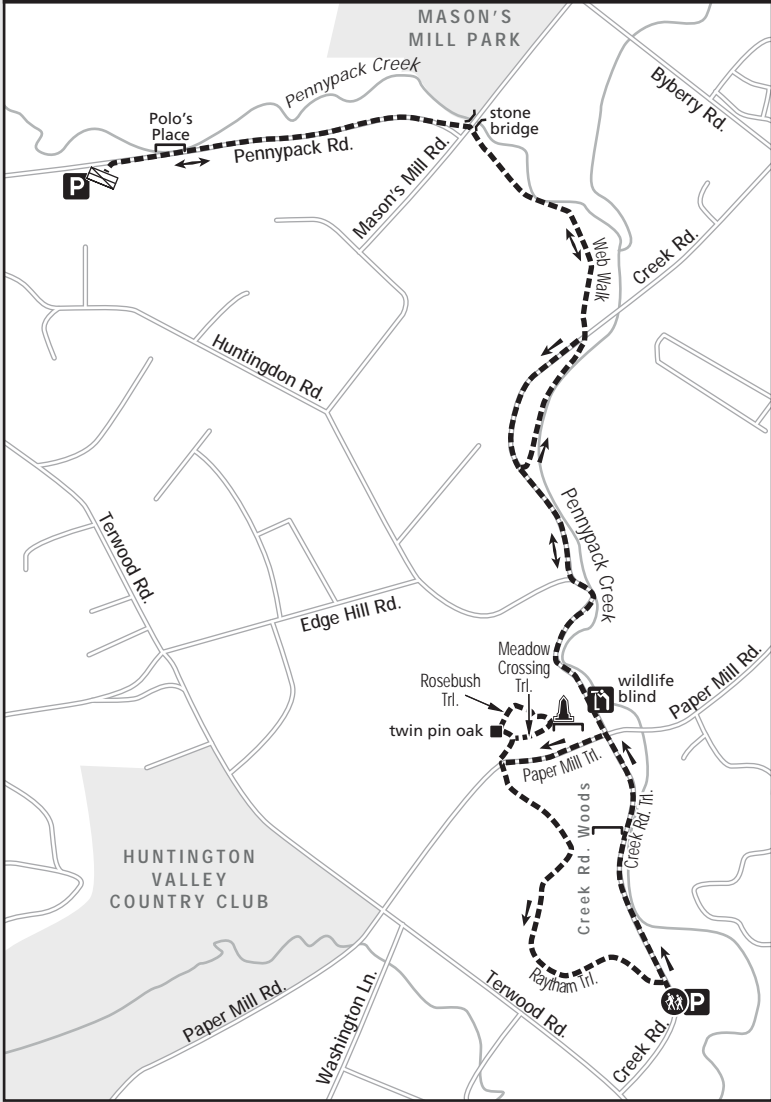
UTM Zone (WGS84) 18T

Easting 0493794

Northing 4442480

Latitude N 40° 7' 57.4"

Longitude W 74° 4' 22.3"



A stone building on the grounds of the Lord's New Church, which borders the Creek Trail.

The creek and the nearby forest provide excellent bird-watching opportunities; phoebes, bluebirds, kestrels, red-tailed hawks, red-winged blackbirds, sparrows, white-breasted nuthatches, warblers, swallows, cardinals, mockingbirds, woodpeckers, robins, and wrens may be spotted. In fact, sightings of more than 150 species of birds have been recorded here.

As you continue north along the creek, watch the mallards napping and notice the large boulders that dot the stream to your right. Healthy saplings sprout in the Creek Road Woods to your left. Shortly after you

cross Paper Mill Road, you come upon a wildlife blind that provides a chance for up-close birding and observation of a wetland.

Soon the gravel trail turns to pavement, continuing about 50 yards beside a quiet road before narrowing again. The nearby cream-colored colonial homes recall a slower time in the history of southeastern Pennsylvania. Creek Road Trail continues past an open gate to where tall pines scent the air with the smell of Christmas.

Stone buildings with walls of cascading ivy and a picturesque chapel belonging to the Lord's New Church are farther north along the trail. The New Church is a Christian religious movement that closely follows the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. These picturesque grounds are closed at dusk. If you have time, walk around if you wish; if not, continue north on Creek Road Trail.

Just before a stone bridge in the distance, pick up the dirt path on your left that hugs the western side of the creek. Soon, the open trail, which is warm in the summer, gives way to lots of trees, ensuring shade and cooler temperatures.

This trail crosses Mason's Mill Road, another popular parking spot for visitors to the Trust's property. This road can be busy with traffic at times, but serenity





Old stone shed along the Web Walk

resumes on the other side. A bench by the creek bears a plaque reading POLO'S PLACE and signifies that you are coming close to the western end of the trail at the Parkway Gate.

At this point, turn around and head back to the junction near the stone bridge. Here, instead of turning right, keep straight on the Web Walk, heading southwest, for a closer look at the creek. The narrow trail weaves close to the creek, over wooden walkways, and past an old stone shed. Web Walk leads you back to Creek Road Trail, where you turn left, heading south.

Past the wildlife blind, find the Paper Mill Trail on your right. This last leg of the hike uses Paper Mill Trail and part of Rosebush Trail, then follows Raytharn Trail south to the parking area. Pets are not allowed on Raytharn Trail, so if Rover is in tow, you may need to save your exploration of these trails that circle the meadow restoration and head straight back to the parking lot. If Rover stayed home, however, you can head west, past the wetland and uphill on the Paper Mill Trail.

At the top of Paper Mill Trail, turn sharply right and then right again. You now reach a lookout with a bench and a memorial stone to a woman named Kathryn Adelberg Greenhouse (1944–1987), who likely saw the trust take the first steps in its master plan, adopted in 1975, to preserve undeveloped and environmentally sensitive land in the central watershed of Pennypack Creek.

The trust's association began to assemble the preserve in 1976, through land donations, purchases, and conservation easements. What started in 1970 with the efforts of a small environmental group fighting to improve the water quality of Pennypack Creek has grown into 720 acres of protected land only 35 minutes from Center City, Philadelphia.

After the trail loops, turn left and head southwest for a short stroll on Rosebush Trail to reach Meadow Crossing Trail, where an enormous twin pin oak stands to your right. The wooden trail markers are well labeled and in plain view, so pick up Raytharn Trail heading southeast at a meadow clearing.

These restored meadows constitute a collaborative restoration-research program with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Natural Lands Trust, and the Pennypack Trust. The meadow plots, with 21 different planting dates and pre-planting treatment combinations, will eventually guide other land-management organizations to the best measures for establishing native-grass meadows, which create habitats for diverse animals and plants.

At two neighboring benches, Raytharn Trail turns right, heading southwest and into a wooded area. You soon return to meadowlands and a scenic view of a farm in the outlying valley. The trail turns left, and you are rewarded with a view of the towers and spires of the Bryn Athyn Cathedral in the distance. As you walk downhill toward the parking area, you are reminded of nature's divine qualities, and see that restored ecosystems promise a gradual renewal of life where you can not only connect with nature, but also fall in love with it again and again.

NEARBY ACTIVITIES

ALLWAYS CAFÉ

(Salads, sandwiches, pastas)

634 Welsh Road,

Huntington Valley

(215) 914-2151

(215) 914-2165 (fax)

www.allwayscafe.com

GLENCAIRN MUSEUM

(Art on the history of religion)

1001 Cathedral Road,

Huntingdon Valley

(215) 938-2600

www.glencairnmuseum.org

See also Hike 38, Lorimer Park, page 196.