

George & Rita Garstad Nature Trail at Lower Allen Community Park



***Welcome to a very special part
of Lower Allen Community Park***

**This trail brochure will introduce you
to the natural beauty, diversity and
wonder in this corner of the Township.**

**The trail is about one mile in length,
with numbered posts matching
numbers in this brochure.**

Please observe the following rules:

**Stay on the trails
Take only pictures
Leave only footprints**



1. An Historic Stream

This nature trail begins along the Yellow Breeches Creek, a stream with an important local history. When Europeans first arrived in this area, water power supplied by streams enabled the settlers to run machines that created many of the products needed by the farmers. In the 1700s, records show numerous mills along the Yellow Breeches including grist mills for grinding seeds into flour, saw mills, apple presses, and other mill operations.



As you walk along, think about how we use the Yellow Breeches today.

2. Caution on the Trail

"Leaves of three, let it be" . . . poison ivy grows in abundance here and can often be seen as a large, hairy vine growing up tree trunks. Its berries are a very important bird food.



Several species of

ticks are found in this park (as well as most natural areas in Pennsylvania), including the black-legged or "deer" tick, which can cause Lyme disease.



If you stay on the trail can better avoid both poison ivy and ticks!

3. Trout Live Here

The Yellow Breeches is one of the best trout streams in the state. It is fed by numerous cold springs in Cumberland and York counties, the water has a neutral pH due to limestone bedrock, and the stream banks still have a lot of trees and shrubs for much of its length. Anglers come from all over the country to fish in this beautiful stream.



4. Exposed Bedrock

Looking across the stream, you can see a large rock jutting out from the hillside — one of the few opportunities to see the bedrock that lies under the park. This conglomerate (rock made up of large and small pebbles cemented together with sand and silt) is much more resistant to erosion than the soft sandstone, shale and other types of rock more common in the area.

Part of this hard layer of rock is near the surface here, with an exposed edge crossing the bed of the creek, causing a "riffle" or "rapid" depending on the creek's water level.

The bedrock throughout the park started out as flat layers of mud, silt and stones a little more than 200 million years ago — when dinosaurs first started appearing. It then received tremendous pressure under the earth to form the rock that it is today. Some of it may even have dinosaur footprints!

5. Trees Along the Stream

Healthy streams have trees and other natural vegetation along their edges and up the banks for at least 100 feet. This "riparian" corridor slows and filters

water runoff, holds the stream bank in place during flooding, and is a very important wildlife habitat area.

A common tree that you will see along the Yellow Breeches is the American Sycamore, easily identified by its smooth, white bark on its upper trunk and branches.



6. A Woodland Rest

This is a good place to enjoy the sights and sounds of nature. How many birds can you see or bird songs can you hear? Different flowers are in bloom from May through September. Contemplate the beauty, diversity and peacefulness of this place.

Look up at the unusual tree "burl" — a harmless growth of wood around the trunk.



7. You are at an Edge

Look around. Here you can see a meadow, woodland and stream. Most animals in Pennsylvania use several habitats to meet their survival needs. Many birds which nest in the woods eat insects in meadows or over water. Deer rest in brush or high grass and find much of their food in woodlands.



The nature trail continues straight along the stream and loops through the meadow later.

8. Life in the Woods

These woods are home to many birds, mammals and plants. Look for small birds flitting high among the tree tops. Dead trees and hollow branches provide homes for raccoons, chickadees, and many other creatures. The forest floor is home for wildflowers, shrubs and low-growing plants.



This brochure was developed by the **Appalachian Audubon Society** and the map was produced by **The Design House**.

For ways to help wildlife habitat at home and around the community, visit: www.AudubonAtHome.org

9. Wet Woods

To your left is a woodland with soil that remains moist much of the year, due to natural springs and runoff from higher ground. Wildflowers, shrubs and trees grow here that like to have “wet feet” — that won’t grow as well in drier woodlands.



You can create your own “rain garden” at home by planting grasses, shrubs, sedges and native flowers (like the Cardinal Flower at left) that prefer damp soil in a low area of your yard and directing rainwater into it to help protect local streams.

10. Connected by the Watershed

Once the Yellow Breeches flows past the park, it winds north of the Turnpike, then east through Lower Allen Township, past many farms and housing developments. It finally joins the Susquehanna River on the south side of New Cumberland.

11. The Marsh

This is a special place suited to certain plants, mammals, amphibians, insects and birds. The water is shallow, quiet and warm; the bottom is muddy. Notice the many kinds of plants growing along the edges and on the surface of the marsh. Cat-tails are abundant here, along with numerous plants that are only found in wet areas. Look carefully and listen for signs of life in the marsh as you walk to your left and down the length of this special habitat.



12. Valuable Wetlands

Wetlands are one of the most valuable habitats for many species of animals. They also hold rainwater, reducing runoff problems like erosion and flooding. Look for dragonflies darting around or turtle trails across the surface.



Smell the special fragrances of the marsh. Walk around to your right and then left across the bridge. As you go, enjoy the solitude of this special place.

13. Wet Meadow

By now, you’ve noticed large areas of un-mowed grass throughout the nature trail area. These are all “wet meadows” and remain damp most of the year. The soil is too wet for the meadow plants commonly seen in higher, drier areas, but is ideal for certain grasses, ferns, flowers and other plants which are adapted to wet soil.

All through the meadow you will see that the ground is very bumpy. Since this is a wet meadow, the type of grass that grows here is adapted to wet soils. Its roots mound up above the soil so it can get oxygen.

14. Meadow Plants

As you walk through this lovely meadow, you will notice grasses and low-growing plants where the soil is wetter, and taller flowers where the meadow is drier. One common plant growing here is the Teasel — a flower brought here by European settlers. The dried flower heads were used to “tease” or fluff up newly woven woolen cloth.



Another flower you see here is Goldenrod which produces a beautiful yellow flower head in late summer. This flower is often associated with hay fever, but it actually has a sticky pollen that insects collect. Ragweed, with its windblown pollen is the culprit for most people.

15. Food for Wildlife

As you leave the meadow and walk quietly through the thicket ahead, you may hear and see a variety of animals. This tangled” looking area is thick with fruiting shrubs, wild grapevines, blackberries, and other natural wildlife foods. Listen for the Gray Catbird, a common resident here, with its squawky, cat-like “mew.”



16. Old Field

Look around you. You are standing in another disappearing habitat in this part of Pennsylvania. This area is no longer a meadow, but it is not yet a forest. The many shrubs and young trees tell you that the soil is drier than the wet meadow; and in time this spot could become a woodland.

Due to the drier soil, old fields are common places for housing developments; but they are also valuable for wildlife due to the berry bushes, vines, and dense vegetation for cover and nesting.

17. Food Web in the Meadow

Grassy areas are home to several species of mice, moles and shrews which eat the seeds of grasses and other plants.

Songbirds eat meadow seeds along with insects. Snakes and foxes eat rodents, rabbits and bird eggs. Many owls eat mice, but Great Horned Owls also like skunks.



18. Care of the Earth

Take a moment to look back across this small natural area, and think about the Yellow Breeches, forest, wet woods, marsh, meadow, old field and the many kinds of plants and animals living in these natural areas.

This is a very special and unique place in Lower Allen Township that has been protected for wildlife and for education about nature. At home, look for ways you can make your corner of the planet more wildlife-friendly and help protect our streams, wetlands and lakes.

We each need to do our part to keep the environment healthy in our neighborhood, community and beyond for people and wildlife today and for future generations.