

THE INFORMATION IN THIS brochure and the numbered post markers in Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park will lead you on a gentle, non-strenuous, one-mile* walk to explore the forest, plants, stream, trees, pond, and history of this special place.

The first post marker is located on the right side of the trail, just a few steps past the park sign.

1 You'll feel no pain from the needles on this evergreen

Eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) leaves are people-friendly – flat, flexible, and rounded at the tip. The cinnamon-brown bark of this Pennsylvania state tree once was used for tannin in the production of leather, and early settlers used its twigs to make tea and its branches to make brooms.

The eastern hemlock often grows in shadowy ravines and damp places. If you walk deeper inside Nature Park, you'll see it again, growing naturally. Notice where it's most abundant.

The hemlocks planted here – along with the Norway spruce – (*Picea abies*) – were designed to form a natural windbreak. Planting an evergreen windbreak like this at your home can reduce noise, screen an unwanted view, and save energy by slowing the chilling effects of winter winds if planted on the north or west side.

2 Memorial to Ann Rudd Saxman, 1914-1990

Pioneer conservationist, botanist, landscape designer and master gardener, Ann was an advocate of soil and water conservation, open space, composting, and recycling long before the "environmental movement" began.

She was a driving force in the formation of Nature Park – Westmoreland County's first county park – in 1960, and it was her vision that this site should be largely undeveloped so visitors could study and enjoy the beauties of nature. In 1976, when industrial development began on the nearby Donohoe Road, Ann worked to insure that Nature Park would remain open, natural space.

In 1996, the park was rededicated in her honor and an adjacent 10 wooded acres that originally were part of Ann's farm, were added to the park.



3 Poison ivy or harmless vine?

Use your eyes – not your hands – to decide if you're not sure. Count the leaves. This plant has five, while poison ivy has three, so it's Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), a nonpoisonous vine and cousin of the grape.

This vine takes a short cut to the sun – climbing up trees and rock faces – instead of growing its own strong stem.

Virginia creeper is one of the first plants to turn color in the fall. Its brilliant red leaves often look like a garland laced through tree branches, and boldly announce to birds that its berries are ripe.



Poison Ivy

4 This tree plays dead most of the year

Its leaves come out later in the spring, and drop off sooner in the fall, than those of most other trees. It is black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), a member of the pea family that produces pods that hang on the tree all winter.

Black locust wood is so tough that it is frequently used for fence posts and railroad ties, but almost never used for sawed lumber.

Black locusts often are planted on land that has been strip-mined because they have a special ability to take nitrogen out of the air and change it to a form that enriches the soil, helping other plants return and grow on the barren land.

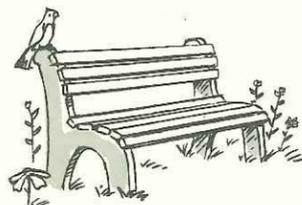
5 If you look closely, you can see the past here

The kind of plants growing here – grape vines, multi-flora roses – are clues that this area of Nature Park was once disturbed by people. Like some other parts of the park, it was once cleared and used as farmland. In this general area, there was an orchard of sweet and sour cherry, pear, and apple trees.

To the right of this path, and on Raccoon Pass, you may notice the remains of a few old fence posts and barbed wire. Cows were pastured in some areas; in others, crops were grown. The path you're walking on was once a road farmers used to get into their fields.

This land was once the county farm, producing food and farm products for the county nursing home. At one time, it also was owned by private families who farmed it.

Overall, the soils of Nature Park are average quality agricultural soils. The terrain in the park ranges in elevation from 1,110 feet to 1,250 feet.

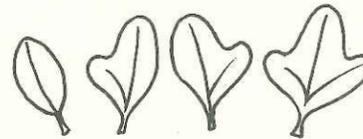


6 This plant is strong enough to crush rocks

But you'll have to look closely to see it, because it's one of the smallest in the forest. It's a lichen – a unique plant that's really made up of two different organisms living together in perfect harmony; a green algae (which makes the food) and a colorless fungus (which provides the home).

Lichens look like gray-green circles and are the first plants to grow on bare rocks. They give off an acid that breaks the rocks down into soil so that other things, such as mosses, can grow.

Lichens need only light, air and a few minerals to live. Because they don't have a protective "skin," they easily absorb pollution from water and air. When you find lichens, it's a sign that the air around you is not very polluted.



The Indians called this tree "greenstick" because of its bright green twigs. The roots and root bark of the sassafras have been used to perfume soap, make sassafras tea, and flavor root beer.

10 This dead stump is full of life

Organisms called decomposers are busy at work, recycling this old tree stump into soil where new things can grow. Mushrooms, fungi, molds, bacteria, and some other things so small you need a microscope to see them all could be at work, decomposing this wood. They may also get some help from beetles, termites, and carpenter ants, each carrying out its own task in this decomposition assembly line.

Each year, up to 10,000,000 leaves fall on one acre of deciduous forest. Limbs fall too, along with twigs, bark, and animal carcasses. If all things were not decomposed, the forest would suffocate beneath its own debris.

11 This is a forest grocery store

These thick, brown woody vines with strips of "bark" peeling off their sides are wild grapes (*Vitis species*) – a source of food when they ripen in the fall for the birds and animals that live in Nature Park.

Wild grapes are usually dark purple, and look like the clusters of Concord grapes you may grow in your yard. But they don't taste nearly as good to humans. In fact, wild grapes tend to be very bitter.

12 It's vine time again

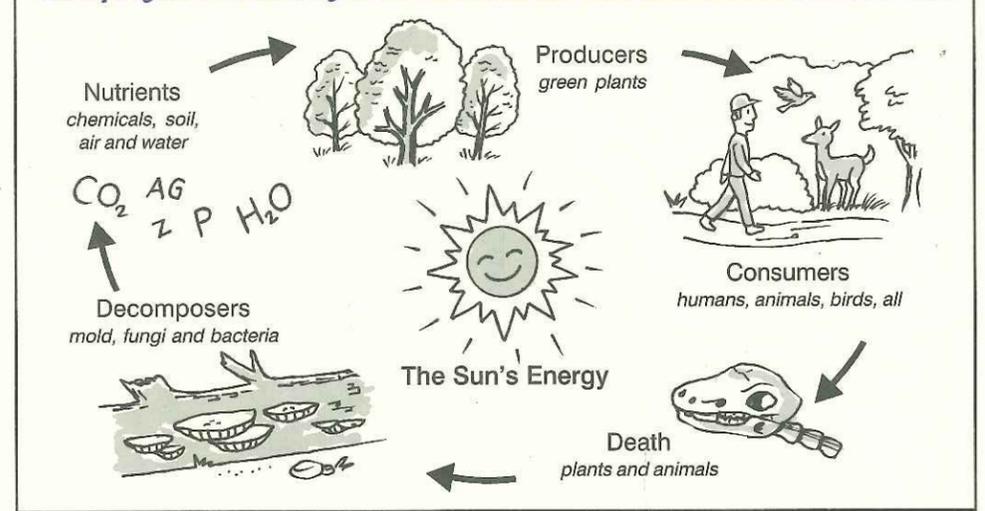
Remember postmarker #3, where the answer was Virginia creeper? Well, this time your looking at the other vine – poison ivy (*Rhus radicans*). If you thought poison ivy grows only on the ground, be careful! It can climb up trees and rocks, too.

Every single part of this plant is poisonous to humans. You can even get poison ivy after you get home if you touch a shirt sleeve or pant leg that brushed up against it when you were in the woods. Birds don't have the same problem, though. They can eat the cream white berries that poison ivy produces in the spring without any problem.

13 Welcome to Oakville

About 30 feet from the trail you can see a cluster of various types of oak trees. This is a perfect example of a community within a forest. This particular place has the type of soil and the amount of moisture that oak trees especially like. So the oak trees produce lots of acorns, which attract squirrels who love to eat acorns, to come and live in their community.

The life cycle surrounds you on a visit to the Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park



When the population of squirrels rises, their predators – hawks and great horned owls – may move in.

In a community, everything has some influence on every other thing. Humans, too, influence the nature of a forest community. Can you think how?

14 This tree could help you hoe your garden

About 15 feet off the trail is bitternut hickory (*Carya cordiformis*), a tree whose strong wood is often used for tool handles. This tree doesn't usually grow very tall. It tends to be part of the understory layer of the forest – one level below the tallest trees, which form the forest's "roof" or canopy. But it is an abundant tree – one of the most common hickories in the Eastern United States.

As its name implies, its nuts are bitter tasting. But the squirrels and rabbits that eat them don't seem to mind a bit.

15 This grove of American beech sprouted about the same time as America's conservation movement

In the mid-1800s, the oldest of these American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) trees were just beginning to push up out of the ground,

Henry David Thoreau was calling for the establishment of "national preserves" of virgin forest, and the American conservation movement was gaining momentum. The value of nature was being celebrated in books, art, and photographs; the U.S. Department of Interior was established; and the word "ecology" first came into use.

16 If you can tell this tree, this tree can tell you some things, too

You can tell a tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) by its extremely straight, slender trunk often without a lot of lower branches, and the yellow tulip-shaped blooms it produces in June. But the tulip poplar can tell you some things, too, about the place where it is growing.

One is the fact that the soil around it might not have much nitrogen to give to other plants (tulip poplar is the most nitrogen-demanding of all trees). Another is the possibility that the place where it is growing was once farmland. (Tulip poplar is a pioneer species that immediately colonized abandoned agricultural land on steep slopes, especially land that was farmed for corn).

Thanks for coming to Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park and walking the Discovery Trail and Loop! Come back and visit again soon!



During your visit...

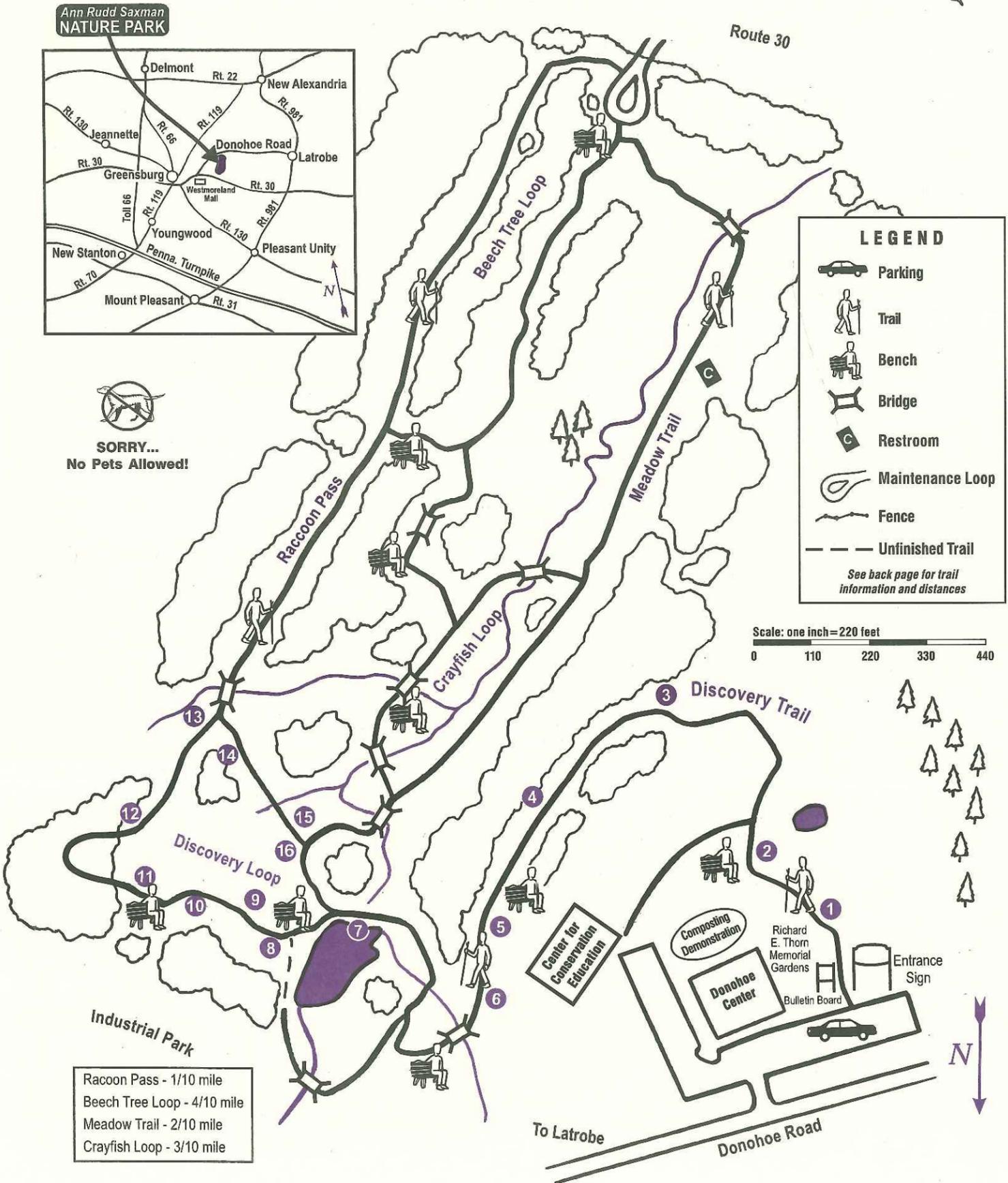
Please stay on the established trails. As few as 15 people taking a shortcut can destroy fragile vegetation and cause soil erosion. By not picking the wildflowers or disturbing the wildlife, you are insuring that the park will remain a special place when you visit again.

Take Only Pictures...Leave Only Footprints

* This one mile represents a walk from the parking lot to Discovery Trail around Discovery Loop and back along Discovery Trail to the parking lot.



Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park



Explore the rest of the park...

Raccoon Pass (1/10 mile)
Once a road that ran along the former boundary of Nature Park, this trail takes you into mature woods and past fence posts and barbed wire that defined Ann Rudd Saxman's farm next door. In 1996, Ann's daughter sold the 10 wooded acres that remained of the family farm to Westmoreland County, and it became part of Nature Park.

Beech Tree Loop (4/10 mile)
The smooth, silver-barked American beech is the dominant tree here, and you'll see at least one area where there is almost a pure stand. The beech's strong presence attracts deer, turkey, and other wildlife to this area because of the sweet and deliciously buttery beechnuts it produces in the fall.

Meadow Trail (2/10 mile)
This loop meanders through a cool cluster of evergreens and along the main stream in Nature Park. Check the soft earth at the water's edge for tracks of deer, raccoon, and muskrat who come here to drink. Quarter-sized holes in the sides of the streambank most likely are the homes of crayfish.

Crayfish Loop (3/10 mile)
This loop meanders through a cool cluster of evergreens and along the main stream in Nature Park. Check the soft earth at the water's edge for tracks of deer, raccoon, and muskrat who come here to drink. Quarter-sized holes in the sides of the streambank most likely are the homes of crayfish.

While you're in the neighborhood, be sure to also visit...

The Richard E. Thorn Memorial Gardens

These beautiful gardens, located near the entrance of Nature Park, feature a changing variety of annual and perennial flowers, grasses, and herbs suitable for our area. They are designed and maintained by the Westmoreland County Master Gardeners and the Penn State Cooperative Extension.

The Donohoe Center Arboretum

Located throughout the five-acre grounds surrounding Donohoe Center, this tree public arboretum features more than 75 species of trees.

Donohoe Center

This building is one of the region's first to offer one-stop conservation information. It houses the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Penn State Cooperative Extension,

Farm Service Agency, Rural Development, Penn's Corner Resource Conservation and Development Area, Westmoreland County Agricultural Land Preservation, and the Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation.

Center for Conservation Education (Barn)

This restored 120-year old barn is home to the Westmoreland Conservation District. The barn features many "green" technologies including geothermal heat, a cistern to store rainwater, and a concrete floor dyed with iron oxide from abandoned mine drainage. Programs available include: erosion and sedimentation, stormwater management, agriculture/nutrient management, forestry and environmental education.

How to find us...

From Points East and West: Take Rt. 30 towards Greensburg. Turn onto Donohoe Road at the traffic light immediately across from Westmoreland Mall. From the east, this is a right turn. From the west, it is a left turn. Follow the road to the right towards the Toys R Us store. Continue straight through a traffic light and turn right into the Donohoe Center parking lot across from Dominion Peoples Gas. Nature Park is located in between the Donohoe Center and the Westmoreland County Department of Public Works.

From Points North and South: Take Rt. 119 to Greensburg and turn onto Rt. 30 East. Follow Rt. 30 East and turn left onto Donohoe Rd. at the traffic light immediately across from Westmoreland Mall. Follow the road right towards the Toys R Us store. Continue straight through a traffic light and turn right into the Donohoe Center parking lot across from Dominion Peoples Gas. Nature Park is located in between the Donohoe Center and the Westmoreland County Department of Public Works.

The Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park is part of a countywide system of nine parks, totaling more than 2,700 acres, that are open from dawn to dusk year 'round for the use and enjoyment of all. The parks are administered by the Westmoreland County Bureau of Parks and Recreation.

Westmoreland County Commissioners
Tom Balva, Tom Ceraso, Phil Light

For further information contact:

Westmoreland County Bureau of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 12, Box 203 • Greensburg, PA 15601

Toll-free 800-442-6926, ext. 3950
(724) 830-3950 or (724) 830-3951

Westmoreland County Park Police - Emergency 911
Non-Emergency (724) 830-3961 or (724) 830-3567
www.co.westmoreland.pa.us (keyword: parks)

Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park

DISCOVERY TRAIL & LOOP

INTERPRETIVE GUIDE



WESTMORELAND COUNTY Parks & Recreation

www.co.westmoreland.pa.us (keyword: parks)



SORRY... No Pets Allowed!

Two miles east of Greensburg, tucked between the commerce of Route 30 and Donohoe Road