



## Brown's Farm Trail



Brown's Farm Trail is an easy ½ mile loop trail that passes through wetlands, a pine grove, a turn of the century farmstead, an eastern hardwood forest, and back across a mountain stream. Long ago American Indians roamed this mountain where deer were plentiful. Settlers eventually brought changes to the mountain, clearing land for farms such as Brown's Farm.

By the early 1930s, clear-cutting trees for farming and the Catoctin Iron Furnace left much of the mountain bare and no longer suitable for farming or hospitable to wildlife. The federal government purchased the land in 1936. This natural and recreational area is now under the care of the National Park Service.

### Begin Your Journey at the Owen's Creek Picnic Area

1. The trail begins in the Owen's Creek Picnic Area. Protected by the National Park Service, nature has reclaimed the mountain and the forest succession is now approaching its final stage of development. This deciduous eastern hardwood forest is home to white-tailed deer, chipmunks, raccoons, bluebirds, woodpeckers, and a host of other animals. Watch carefully for glimpses of the forest's residents.



2. Areas frequently water logged or under a shallow layer of water are called wetlands. Wetlands play a vital role in our environment, recharging ground water and providing a habitat for a variety of plants and animals. Ferns live year 'round in these shady, damp quarters. Skunk cabbage blooms, with their unfortunately foul smell, herald spring in February snows.



3. The streambed contains quartz and Catoctin greenstone. The water, the trees overhead, and the quiet of the woods make this an ideal spot for birdwatching.



4. Walking slightly uphill from the boardwalk, notice the subtle changes in the forest. The marshy earth becomes firm under foot; ferns give way to barberry, greenbrier, and spicebush; wetlands give way to a hardwood forest.

5. Living trees produce oxygen, stabilize the soil, provide homes for wildlife, and offer a cool place to rest on a hot summer day. Dead trees are also valuable in the forest cycle of life. A dead tree provides shelter for wildlife. The insects, bacteria, and fungi that live in and on a dead tree provide food for wildlife while slowly decomposing the tree into rich, replenishing soil for the next generation of plants.



6. Take a deep breath. The fresh scent of pine fills the air. Why is a pine grove in the middle of a hardwood forest? In 1957 children from Frederick County schools joined the reclamation project on Catoctin Mountain and planted this pine grove. In the short-term, the pines controlled erosion and provided shelter for wildlife. Under the shade of the pine trees, the maples, hickories, and oaks could take root and over time become a mature hardwood forest with a variety of species.

### Trash or Treasure?

7. Close inspection reveals that this pile of rocks is actually an old dumpsite. Probably the family dump, this site still contains broken pottery and other cultural resources from the Brown's time on the mountain.

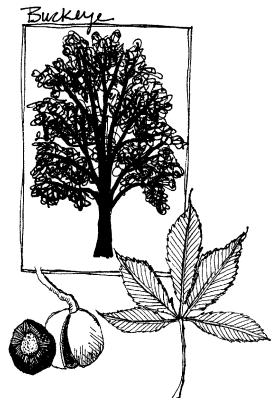
These things have not decomposed since the 1930's. Imagine such a dumpsite with the quantity and type of trash produced today.

Discarded pans, broken dishes, seeds, even animal bones are clues to our past.

Please do not disturb or add trash to the site.

## Brown's Farm

8. Picture the farmhouse built of chestnut logs that once stood on this stone foundation. The Browns raised four daughters in the eight-bedroom log house. They "lived by oil" using oil lamps for light as there was no electricity. The water well stood nearby, convenient as possible at a time when water had to be hauled inside for washing and cooking. Today asters grow at the well, brightening the scene with late fall blooms.

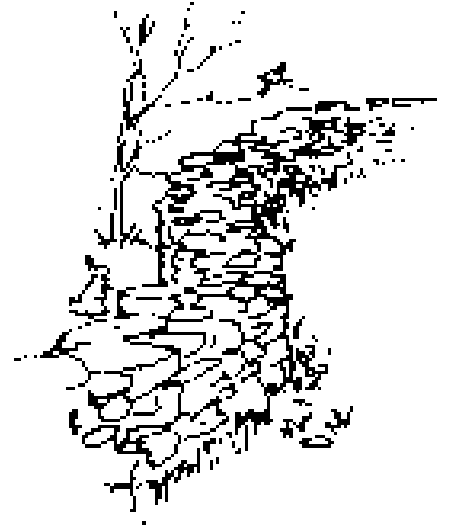


The buckeye tree is an 'alien' species because it is not native to the area. Could it be a memento from a former home?

9. A small field lies to the right of the trail. An occasional fruit tree also suggests a time when families raised most of their own food. The Browns grew raspberries, potatoes, greenbeans, and wheat. Just past the stone foundation on the left is a concrete watering trough for the farm animals. Beyond the trough to the right is the back of a bank barn. Building into the bank of a hill provided added protection against wind and cold for the animals, and afforded easy access to the second level through the back. The Brown's livestock included hogs, chicken, and sheep.

10. The loop trail once again passes through the pine grove. When the pines reach their full height, crowding themselves in the process, small shrubs appear. Pioneer trees such as short-lived poplars and locusts gain a foothold. These in turn provide the shade necessary for the seedlings of the hardwood forest to sprout. When the oaks, maples, beeches, and hickories grow tall and strong, the forest has reached a climax stage.

11. The stone wall is a reminder that these were once fields or farm boundaries. Today the stones provide cover for insects, chipmunks, woodchucks, and snakes. Take care not to disturb the residents.



## End of the Trail

12. Plant succession means much more than just a change in the vegetation. As plant species change, the wildlife of an area also changes. Rare warblers move on when open fields disappear. Deer prefer brushy places for food and cover while wild turkeys look for acorns beneath full-grown oaks.

Look around for the kinds of wildlife that live today on Brown's Farm and think how the wildlife has probably changed in the past century.

13. The landscape changes again, the trail leaves the forest and returns to the wetlands.

14. Bubbling out of the ground, this spring offers a drink for the wildlife and the moisture needed by plants like ferns and fungi that grow here.

The soil acts as a filter, yet ground water can become polluted, taking with it any contaminants picked up on its travels from beneath the ground and ultimately to the ocean.

15. Find the hollow tree to the right of the bridge. The hollow is small and the tree apparently continues to get enough nutrients to be healthy. Are there any tiny footprints to indicate that this is someone's home now? Raccoons, chipmunks, mice, and other forest creatures seek ready-made shelters such as hollow trees or logs.



Catoctin Mountain Park is in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. As difficult as it may be to imagine, the water that springs out here on the mountain makes its way to the Chesapeake Bay.

## Enjoy Your Visit

Brown's Farm Trail is a small piece of the world where visitors can glimpse a wealth of natural and cultural history. With abundant wildlife, evidence of past human occupation, and the reclaimed forest, Catoctin Mountain Park serves as an ideal study area. An environmental study area is a place to discover and understand your own relationship and responsibility to the environment.

Visitors to Brown's Farm Trail can discover something about a turn of the century farm family, see the process of natural succession, and enjoy a peaceful walk in the woods.

"To conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

NPS Organic Act, 8/25/1916