

# Greenbelt Park

MARYLAND

Greenbelt Park, a 1,100-acre woodland in a rapidly expanding metropolitan area, provides a retreat for those seeking escape from the pressures of city life, and a refuge for native plants and animals. Just 12 miles from the center of Washington, it offers easy access to facilities for camping and other forms of outdoor recreation.

The park affords an opportunity to see that a forest is more than a collection of trees. It is, rather, a constantly changing community of plants and animals, adapting to natural and man-caused influences. Both the forest and man are just part of a complex environment, dependent upon each other for survival.

## WHAT IS GREENBELT PARK?

Long before man appeared here, these rolling hills teemed with trees, flowers, and wildlife, which constantly adapted to the changes taking place in their environment. A balance existed between the land and the plants and animals it supported.

Then the ax swung, the trees fell, and the forest was no more. Wildlife scattered, and for the next 1-1/2 centuries, the farmer cleared the land, plowed the field, and planted his crops. He raised tobacco, corn, and fruit trees. In turn, the rich, fertile soil returned high yields.

But man did not return as much as he was taking from the land, and the soil produced sparser crops each season. Eventually, the farmer moved on, abandoning the land and leaving it naked and defenseless against the elements eroding it. Recovery was slow, but nature began healing the scars.

Since the turn of the century, the process has continued. Today the pine forest stands in silent testimony to the ability of the land to recover. Unless man, fire, or disease interferes, another one-quarter century will undoubtedly see the

return of the deciduous forest that once covered the land.

This is only one chapter of the Greenbelt Park story. Many more await visitors who walk the trails throughout this woodland oasis.

Deer, raccoon, squirrel, and red fox again make their home at Greenbelt, as do the bobwhite, blue jay, cardinal, and numerous other birds. In spring, displays of dogwood, laurel, and azalea rival any in the area, and, in autumn, the colors are as vivid as can be found in the region.

The summer visitor need walk only a little way on the trails before he is surrounded by myriads of ground-hugging wildflowers and luxuriant ferns.

In winter, a new world opens up. Crisp days—with sunlight filtering through the naked tree branches—provide an invigorating atmosphere for observing how nature protects her own.

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## ADMINISTRATION

Greenbelt Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. An area manager, whose address is Greenbelt Park, Greenbelt, MD 20770, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

National Park Service  
U. S. Department of the Interior



