

Introduction

Welcome to the National Wildlife Visitor Center. This trail guide is provided to help you plan your hiking and wildlife viewing activities. Each trail is listed with a brief description of the area through which it passes. Patuxent is a research refuge where the air, land, and water are managed specifically for wildlife. To better protect our wildlife and its habitat, we ask our visitors to abide by posted signs and regulations. If you have any questions, we will be happy to assist you. Enjoy the wildlife and habitat. Take only pictures and memories, leave only footprints. Note: The Visitor Center and all trails close at 5:30 P.M.



Loop Trail



The Loop Trail (0.5 km/0.3 mi.) is a paved and fully accessible trail. It leaves the visitor center gallery door and offers views of both Lake Redington and Cash Lake. Plantings inside the loop offer a demonstration of the PEPCO power line right-of-way management program, meadow management, and a mitigation wetland. This trail also provides access to the other trails.

Goose Pond Trail



This trail (0.3 km/0.2 mi.) parallels the woods' edge as it wanders first through a forested wetland area as it leads to Goose Pond. Goose Pond Trail terminates at Goose Pond where one can sometimes see waterfowl and several waterfowl management practices. There is also an outdoor education area and access to Cash Lake and Laurel Trails.

Fire Road Trail



Fire road trail (1.5 km/0.9 mi.) begins at the intersection of Valley and Laurel Trails, and crosses the exit road before ending at the edge of the Visitor Center parking lot. This wooded trail in a pine and hardwood forest travels through an old experimental tree cutting area and follows an old fire road.

Laurel Trail



This woodland trail (0.6 km/0.4 mi.) was named for the many Mountain Laurels found along the trail. Visitors have the opportunity to see woodland songbirds, mammals (esp. deer) and evidence of their habitat use in this mid-successional forest. This trail is dedicated to Chandler S. Robbins, one of the researchers here at Patuxent Research Center who has spent over 50 years studying migratory birds and effects of habitat fragmentation on bird populations. Visitors can continue along Valley Trail and return to Goose Pond via Cash Lake Trail.



Valley Trail



Valley Trail (0.9 km/0.6 mi.) connects Cash Lake and Laurel Trails, and follows a gully up a slight grade next to a woodland valley. Along this trail, visitors can see features of a predominantly oak and beech hardwood forest.

Cash Lake Trail



Cash Lake Trail (2.3 km/1.4 mi.) travels along the edge of Cash Lake, the largest impoundment at Patuxent Research Refuge. This trail offers many opportunities to view the lake and its waterfowl, as well as a beaver lodge and evidence of their activity. There is also a seasonal fishing program at Cash Lake, with fishing by permit from the accessible pier and along parts of the shoreline. Information and permits are available at the information desk. Parts of Cash Lake trail beyond the fishing pier may be closed seasonally during wet conditions and to avoid disturbance of nesting waterfowl.

Tram Route



The tram route (2.6 km/1.9 mi) is not a hiking trail and is closed to the public with the exception of scheduled tram tours. The tram tour offers a ride through woodland and wetland areas guided by an interpreter. A variety of wildlife and evidence of ongoing research here can be seen along the way. Tickets can be purchased in the bookstore.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Patuxent Research Refuge
National Wildlife Visitor Center
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National Wildlife Visitor Center



*U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

General Information and Trail System Guide

The National Wildlife Visitor Center is the largest science and environmental education center in the U.S. Department of the Interior. This unique facility seeks to impart to young and old alike an increased knowledge of and appreciation for the earth's vital resources. It highlights the work of scientists nationwide who strive to improve the condition of wildlife and their habitats.

Welcome to the National Wildlife Visitor Center!

Established by President Roosevelt in 1936 as the Patuxent Research Refuge, this was the nation's first wildlife experiment station. The original 2,670 acres, on which the Visitor Center and its trails are located, have been expanded to the current 12,750 acres. Patuxent's mission is to protect and conserve the nation's wildlife and natural environment through research.

The primary goal of the Patuxent Research Refuge is to support wildlife research. Managing the land to maintain biological diversity for the protection and benefit of native and migratory species is another goal of the refuge. Public uses deemed compatible with these two goals are allowed in designated areas.

The National Wildlife Visitor Center features interactive exhibits which focus on global environmental issues, migratory bird studies, habitats, endangered species, wildlife life cycles, and the research tools and techniques used by scientists.

The Visitor Center also offers hiking trails, wildlife management demonstration areas, and outdoor education sites for school classes. A large auditorium and meeting rooms can accommodate scientific conferences, meetings, teacher workshops, lectures, and traveling displays.

A bookstore, *Wildlife Images*, operated by the Friends of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center (a non-profit cooperating organization), offers a variety of conservation books and other educational materials.

The National Wildlife Visitor Center is located off Powder Mill Road, between Route 197 and the Baltimore/Washington Parkway in Laurel, MD. Hours are 10:00 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. daily.

School classes and other groups should schedule in advance. Teachers must attend a workshop prior to bringing classes.

Although designed to accommodate the human visitor, the National Wildlife Visitor Center continues to maintain the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mission to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats. As a visitor, it becomes your responsibility to ensure that wildlife has a place to grow and survive for future generations by respecting Visitor Center regulations and obeying posted signs. All federal, state, and local laws apply on the refuge.



Please stay on marked trails to prevent erosion, disturbance of wildlife habitat, and research that is being done throughout the area. Hiking trails are for pedestrians only. Recreational activities are not permitted on the entrance and exit roads and in the parking lot.

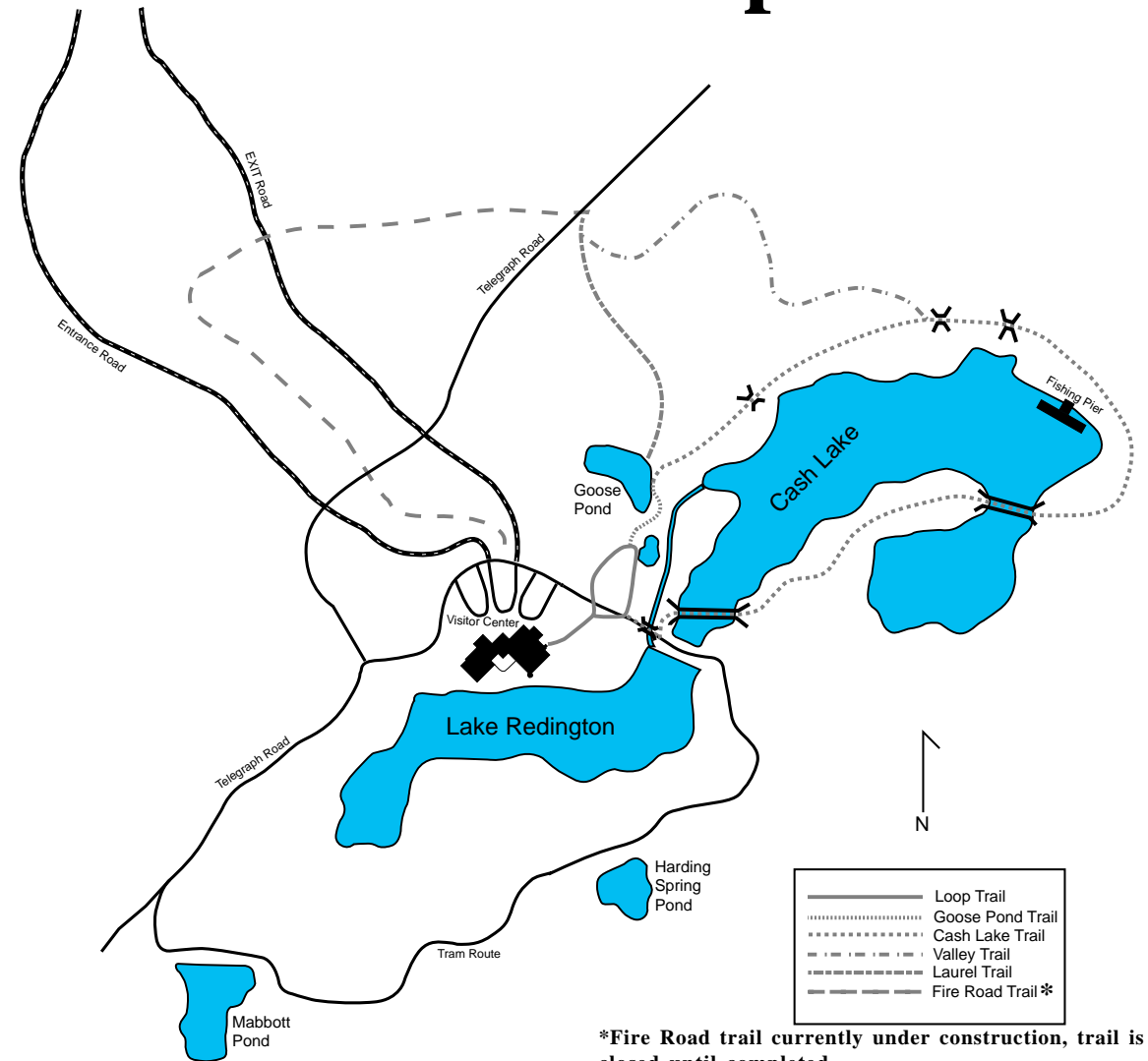


Help protect and preserve our wildlife and its habitat. Please do not cut or mar any plants or trees. Removal of wildlife or plants from the refuge or introduction of new species is not permitted. Recreational activities such as camping, open campfires, cross country skiing, picnicking, ball playing, and sun bathing are not related to our wildlife management goals, and are not permitted. Possession of firearms or alcohol is also prohibited. Please check at the information desk to ensure your activity is compatible. Please dispose of all litter in designated containers.



Pets are permitted on the trails, but they must be kept on a leash no longer than 10 feet and under immediate control at all times.

Visitor Center Trail Map



***Fire Road trail currently under construction, trail is closed until completed.**