



**Red Buckeye (Aesculus pavia)**

The Loop Trail is very scenic year round, especially spring and fall. It starts with two big Cherry Bark Oaks on each side of the trail. It has lots of sunlight, and tall Loblolly Pine trees.

Sometimes you might glimpse some White-

Tailed Deer, Chipmunks, a rare Copper-head. There is a Hophornbeam Tree



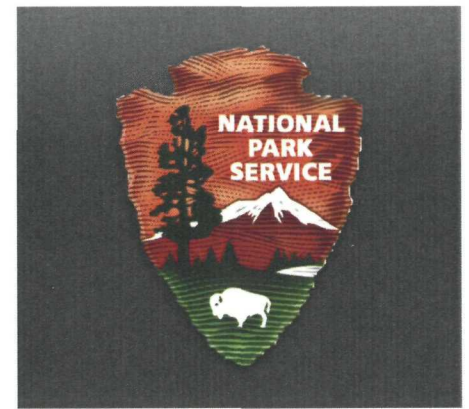
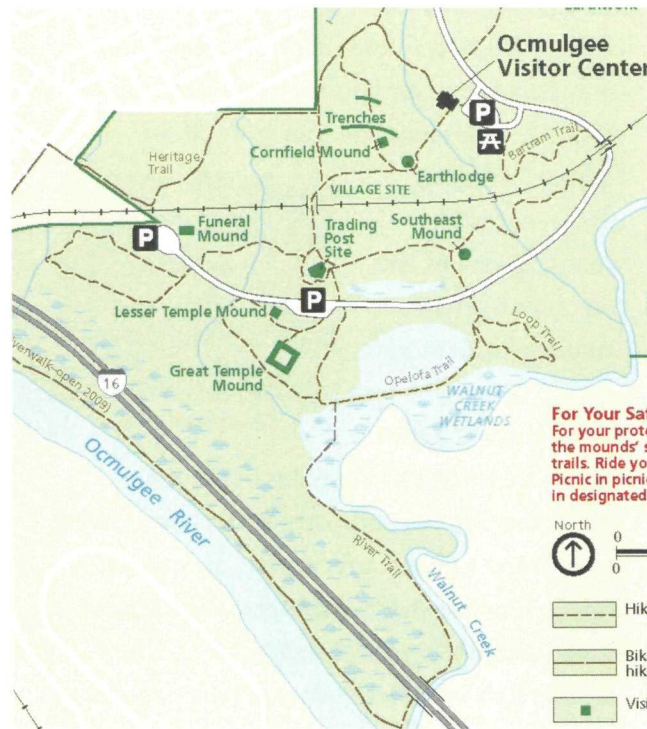
(Ostrya) on **Hophornbeam/Resurrection Fern**

your left with Resurrection Fern on it. The fern gets its name from its effective, defense mechanism against droughts; the ability to survive decades without water and still return to a healthy state after some watering.

Down the hill on your left you'll see some Magnolia trees (Magnolia grandiflora). As you turn the corner there's an exciting overlook of Walnut Creek from above when the water is up, also a few Red Buckeye wildflowers. Some Solomon's Seal Wildflowers are on the left and a Sparkleberry tree (Vaccinium arboreum) on the right. Sparkleberry is a picturesque little tree or large shrub with flaking reddish bark, a leaning crooked trunk, and twisted branches.

## Special Thanks to

Mr. Guy Lachine and the Staff of Ocmulgee National Monument, The Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Mr. Tom Patrick DNR State Botanist, Dr. Lindsay Holliday, Ms. Sharman Ayoub, The Scoutmaster, Assistant Scoutmasters and All Scouts of Troop 284, Tyler Woodall from Troop 8, Apollo Burnett, Weston Stroud, Lowe's Hardware, and Fed-Ex Office



## OCMULGEE NATIONAL MONUMENT NATURE GUIDE PAMPHLET

**For the Great Temple Mound Trail, Opelofa Trail, River Trail, & Loop Trail**

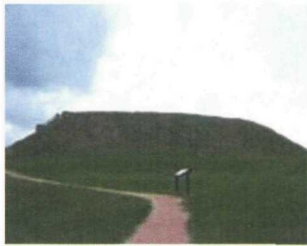
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***The adventure begins here!***



The Great Temple Mound Trail extends from the visitor center to the park road approaching the mound.



Starting from the side of the visitors center, notice two female American Holly trees (*Ilex opaca*) on each side of the steps. Female Hollies have berries, males do not. They're a food source for many animals sometimes seen here, including Mourning Dove, Cedar Waxwing, American Goldfinch, Northern Cardinal, other songbirds, Eastern Gray Squirrel, White-tailed Deer, Eastern Chipmunk, Meadow Vole, White-footed Mouse, Red Fox, Raccoon, and Eastern Cottontail. Down the hill along the left of the trail is a Sweet Gum tree

(*Liquidambar styraciflua*); easy to identify by its star-shaped leaves with five pointy lobes and long stalk. Fully



grown leaves are bright green, red in the fall. Its fruits are spiky green balls that turn brown with age. Its seeds are eaten by many birds, chipmunks, and squirrels. Young Sweet Gum trees are eaten by deer, rabbits, and mice. Beside the Sweetgum is a male American Holly (no berries). As you pass the Earthlodge take a moment to see the beauty of the Great Temple Mound from afar. Just across the railroad bridge is a field of native grasses, plants, weeds, and mint on your left such as Needle Grass (*Stipa*), Scorpion weed (*Phacelia*), Black Medic (*Medicago lupulina*). There's a large Pignut Hickory tree at hill's bottom left at the edge of the road.

The Opelofa Trail begins across the park road at the base of the Great Temple Mound. It crosses a wetland met by Walnut Creek. Coming

down the steps there is an Eastern Redbud tree on your right at the bottom. It has purple pink buds in early spring and heart-shaped leaves. Along with lots of plant life you may see animals such as the Great White Egret, Great Blue Heron, Redhead Duck, Red-Tailed Hawk, Eastern Box Turtle, King Snake, Copperhead, various frogs and rarely even a Beaver, River Otter or Alligator. River or Switch Cane (*Arundinaria*), a bamboo-like tree, is all over this trail. Also along the trail you will see Swamp Palmetto (spear-leaf palm plants), invasives like the Chinese Privet and Japanese Honeysuckle.

Before the first bridge there is a Water Oak tree with Sapsucker holes in the bark, where the bird has setup the insects by drawing them to the sap and later comes back to eat them. Between the two bridges you will pass some Wild Buttercups (*Ranunculus occidentalis*) flowers with five yellow petals, *Garanium* flowers with five petals colored white, pink, purple or blue, and Golden Ragwort (*Packera aurea*) is a yellow plant in the Sunflower family.



**Red-Tailed Hawk**



**Copperhead**

The River Trail winds deep into a wetland forest area of impressive Water Oak, Sugar Berry, Winged Elm, Sycamore, Silver Maple, and Cottonwood trees. It's shady with beautiful sun spaces, and running along Walnut Creek to the Ocmulgee River, sometimes floods.



On the bridge to the river trail there are male and female Black Willow trees side by side with thin oval-like leaves on your right. At the end of the bridge on the left is a Red Maple tree. After you cross the bridge on your left you will see some pretty yellow goldenrod and purple violet wildflowers.

There's a great overlook of Walnut Creek on this trail with a bench sitting beside it to relax. A Water Oak tree with tear drop-shaped leaves stands next to the overlook. A Winged Elm tree with a web-like bark is next to the Water Oak. There's much Chickweed on the sides of the trail, an herb said to be good for digestion, and amazing poison ivy vines running up some trees.

Before you reach the I-16 overpass on your right you'll see a big Cottonwood tree (*Populus*) whose bark has deep chiseled lines. Nearing the river on your left you will see a Sugar Berry tree with lots sapsucker holes. River Birch trees stand on the Ocmulgee's banks with bark that looks like paper. You'll see huge grain factory silos across the river, looking in the direction of Central City Park in the distance. Imagine the ancient people native to this land, and other amazing events of history on the river, a great hike.