



The black rat snake and white tailed deer are two animals you might see along the Woodland Trail.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Rock Creek Park
Washington, DC

Explore the Woodland Trail

Dear Visitor,

We hope that you find this guide to be helpful as you explore the Woodland Trail. The numbered descriptions in the brochure correspond to numbered sign posts along the trail. Each of these descriptions will tell you a little bit about plant and animal life in Rock Creek Park.

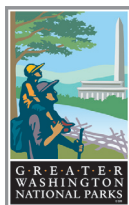
Please help protect the plants and animals of Rock Creek Park by staying on the trail, keeping pets on a leash, and leaving the trail in the same condition you found it. Remember, take nothing but memories, leave nothing but footprints.

If you have any questions or need assistance please stop in the Nature Center and talk to a Park Ranger.

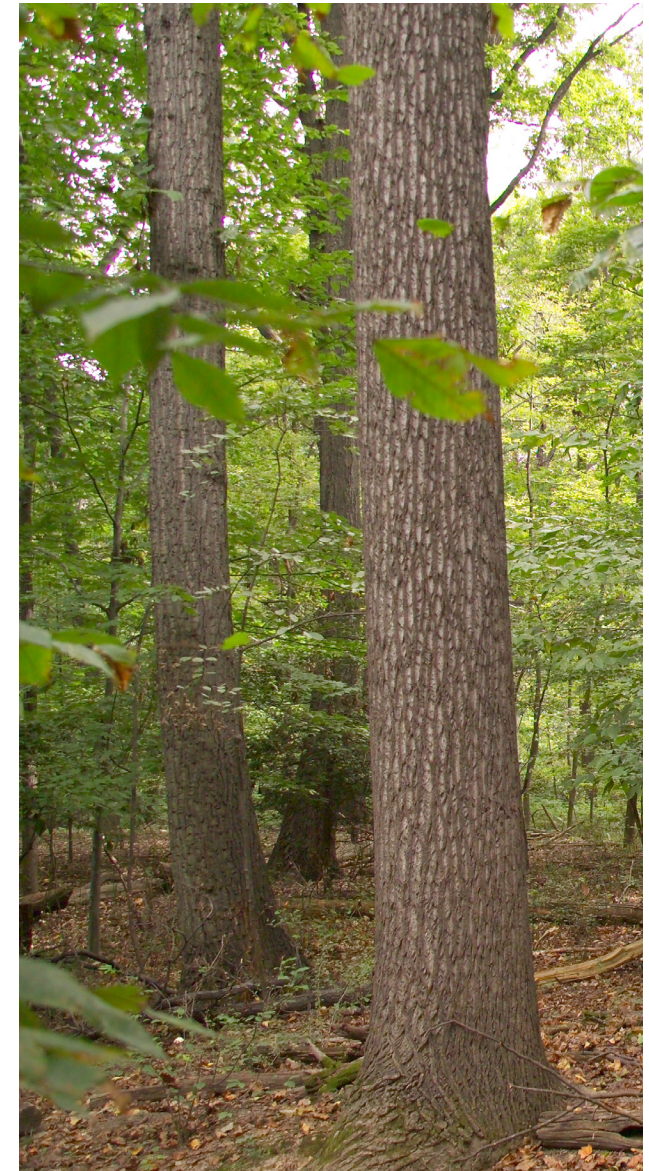
Enjoy your hike!

Thank you,

The Rangers of Rock Creek Park



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™



Points of Interest on the Woodland Trail

1. (a) **White Oak** – *Quercus alba*

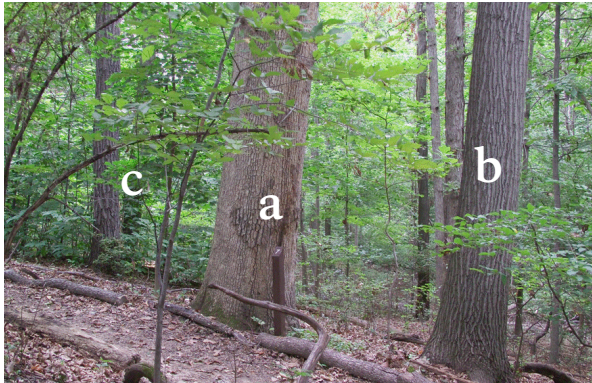
The white oak is a common tree in Rock Creek Park. It can reach heights of 100' or more and can be bigger than 4' in diameter. These trees can live to be 500 to 600 years old.

(b) **Northern Red Oak** – *Quercus rubra*

This oak can be up to 90' tall and 2 ½' in diameter. It is one of the fastest growing oaks, does well in city conditions and can survive very cold temperatures. In autumn the leaves turn a deep, rich red.

(c) **Chestnut Oak** – *Quercus prinus*

Chestnut oaks can grow to be 80' tall and 3' in diameter. The deeply ridged bark of this tree is very high in tannins and was once used in the leather tanning process.



2. **American Beech** – *Fagus grandifolia*

The American Beech is one of the most common trees in Rock Creek Park. It is easily recognized by its smooth, gray bark. These trees reach between 60' to 80' in height and 1' to 2 ½' in diameter. American beech trees produce beech nuts in the fall, which are eaten by squirrels, raccoons, and other animals.

This tree, like many other American beech trees in Rock Creek Park, has been damaged by carvings. Tree bark is similar to human skin

– it keeps moisture in the tree and dirt and bugs out. When the bark is removed from a tree it allows harmful bacteria and insects to enter the tree. Please help protect the trees in Rock Creek Park and everywhere by not carving into them or stripping their bark.

3. **Decomposers** – Decomposers are nature's cleanup crew. They break down dead material in the forest and make new soil. This area has a lot of decomposer activity due to the many fallen trees and abundant moisture. Look around for fungus growing on logs, wood rotting and breaking down into soil, and decomposer bugs like earthworms and pill bugs.



4. **Deer Enclosure** - Why is there a fence in the woods? The vegetation inside the fencing is protected from deer browsing. There are 15 of these enclosures scattered throughout the park. Detailed data about the numbers and types of plants growing inside the fence and in an equally-sized area outside of the fence is collected yearly by Rock Creek Park's resource management team. This data helps rangers to better understand the affect that the deer population is having on plant life in the park.

5. **Yellow Poplar** – *Liriodendron tulipifera*

The yellow poplar is also known as the tulip tree or tulip poplar because of the large, tulip-like flowers it develops in the spring. The unusual shape of the leaves makes this tree an easy one to identify. These trees have tall, straight trunks, and typically reach 80' to 120' in height and 2' to 3' in diameter. The yellow poplar is one of the most common trees in Rock Creek Park.

American Indians hollowed out the trunks of these trees to create lightweight canoes, giving the tree another nickname, canoe wood.

6. **Eastern Hophornbeam** – *Ostrya virginiana*

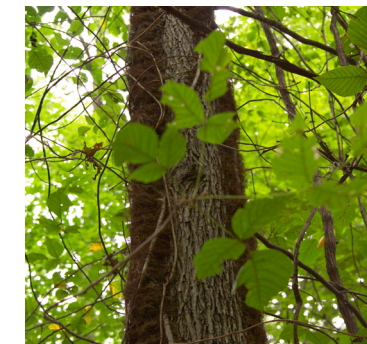
The eastern hophornbeam gets its nickname, ironwood, from its tough, hard wood, which is used to make tool handles, mallets, and fence posts. These slow-growing trees reach between 20' and 50' in height and may grow to 1' in diameter. They grow in moist soil underneath larger trees in hardwood forests, like here in Rock Creek Park.



7. **Poison Ivy** – *Rhus radicans*

Two vines are growing on this tree. While the woody vine hanging away from the tree is a harmless wild grape, the dark brown, hairy looking vines are poison ivy! The poison ivy vines and leaves are covered with a substance called urushiol [oo-roo-shee-awl], which can cause irritation, itching, and blistering when it comes into contact with human skin. Even when the leaves are gone in winter or after a plant has died the urushiol can remain.

So why don't park rangers remove the poison ivy? While harmful to humans, many animals are not bothered by poison ivy. Deer eat the foliage, and birds eat the berries that appear in late summer and fall. Poison ivy is native to this area and can be found throughout Rock Creek



Park and the region. If you accidentally come into contact with the plant, wash the skin with soap or rubbing alcohol immediately. You might be able to remove the urushiol before it causes a reaction!