

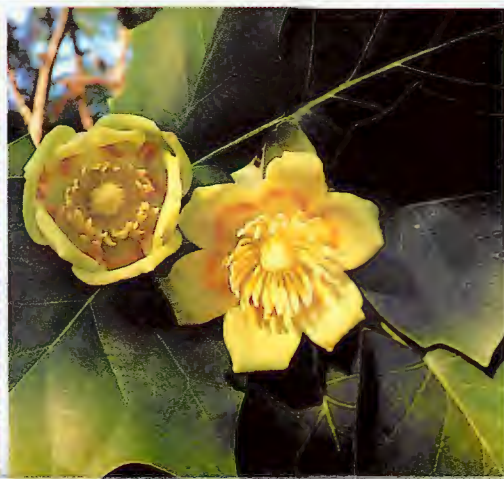
Prince William Forest Park

Prince William Forest Park
Virginia

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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A Woodland Watershed

In the Piedmont forest, falling autumn leaves signal the coming winter, yellow blossoms of the tulip poplar welcome spring, and streams nourish this watershed community year round. Many woodland creatures live here, such as gray treefrogs, eastern box turtles, and salamanders.



Simply put, a watershed is a valley between ridges and the network of streams flowing through it. In Prince William Forest Park the watershed is cloaked in hardwood forest and laced with springs, fens, and creeks, forming a vast drainage basin that eventually deposits runoff waters in the Chesapeake Bay. But water is only part of this complex ecosystem. Underlying rocks, soil composition, rainfall and evaporation, density and type of vegetation, and human intervention determine the amount—and quality—of water that finally reaches the sea. To understand this watershed community, you need to travel its main streets—the streams that run through it.

Quantico Creek and its major tributary, the South Fork, flow through the park collecting water from rain, springs, and small side streams. Together they drain more than 20 square miles within the park. About midway through their courses the creeks cut deep valleys and cascade over steep erosion-resistant rocks as they leave the Piedmont Plateau and enter the Atlantic Coastal Plain. Near the park's eastern

edge, the South Fork joins the main branch of Quantico Creek, and, with greater force, the creek flows across the compact Catoclin greenstone. A few miles downstream Quantico Creek enters a 3-mile-long bay as it meets the tidewaters of the Potomac.

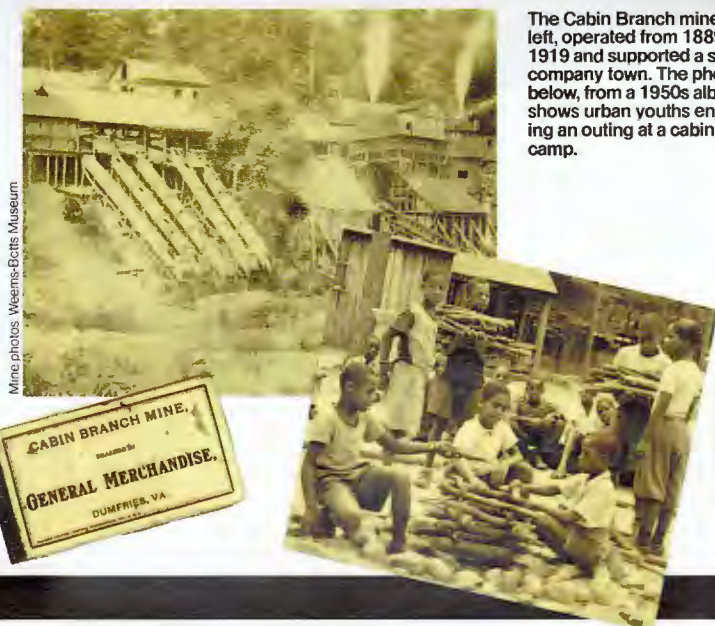
The Piedmont forest of the Quantico Creek watershed, most of which lies within the park's boundaries, serves as a sanctuary for plants and animals threatened by Northern Virginia's encroaching urban environment. White and red oak trees are found on ridges and in hollows. Beech and yellow poplar grow in the rich, damp soils of the creek valleys. The woodlands and creeks are home to white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and beaver, and migratory waterfowl stop seasonally at park ponds. The transition between the rolling hills of the Piedmont and lowlands of the Coastal Plain, marked by waterfalls and rock outcroppings, creates a varied habitat that shelters a diversity of plants and wildlife. Native Virginia plants and animals, some threatened and endangered, are protected within the park.

Enter Prince William Forest Park and you know it is a special place. Sunlight filtering through the trees forms luminous freckles on the forest floor. Birds and bubbling streams give shape to nature's music, and the woody fragrance of moist vegetation fills the air. It is a place you can enjoy alone or with friends. But Prince William Forest Park does not exist in splendid isolation. For nearly 300 years the woodland watershed suffered from intense logging and over-cultivation. Today it is located in one of the Nation's most rapidly developing regions. Bulldozers, asphalt, and shopping malls compete for space at the fringes of this woodland watershed. We all face an on-going challenge to protect this forest ecosystem so that future generations of plants, wildlife, and our fellow human beings can enjoy this forested oasis.

Tobacco, Mines, and Secrets

Once the land here was bountiful, and the water that ran through it was pure. Algonquin-speaking Native Americans, who had lived in the region for thousands of years, hunted, fished, and raised crops. Then, in 1607, Europeans came to Virginia—and things began to change. The settlers encountered a rich natural world, including tobacco, which they soon adopted for their own use. The newcomers also brought with them the notion of dominion over nature and used agricultural practices that nearly destroyed the land.

By the late 1600s smoking tobacco was a popular European habit, and Virginia landholders met the demand by clear-cutting area forests to create large tobacco plantations and to grow rich. In the 1720s, Scottish merchants created the port of Dumfries at the mouth of Quantico Creek to warehouse and export the crop. Intensive tobacco cultivation proved unhealthy for the land, and the exposed topsoil washed from plantations and filled Dumfries harbor. Within decades, the soil was impoverished, the muddied harbor was isolated from the Potomac shipping channel, and the economic boom had ended. Plantations were abandoned or divided into small farms; and for most of the



The Cabin Branch mine, left, operated from 1889 to 1919 and supported a small company town. The photo below, from a 1950s album, shows urban youths enjoying an outing at a cabin camp.

18th and 19th centuries, a succession of farmers cleared, cultivated, and deserted the marginally productive land.

At the same time a new Nation emerged. In 1781 George Washington led his army along Telegraph Road, then called Potomac Path, to Yorktown where they won America's Independence. From 1861 to 1865, the Civil War took its toll on the area as Union and Confederate troops skirmished here. Hope for economic recovery came in 1889 with the opening of the Cabin Branch mine which employed 300 workers in the mining of pyrite for sulfur, an ingredient in gunpowder. The mine prospered through World War I, but low prices and labor troubles closed it in 1919.

By 1930 only a few small farms remained, and the degraded land gradually returned to forest. Its ecological healing got a boost in 1936 when the Quantico and Chopawamsic Creek watersheds area was selected as one of 46 national land-use projects that reclaimed marginal farm lands for recreational activities. In 1940 the area became a unit of the National Park System, and the restoration and preservation of the woodland watershed were ensured. By 1941 the Civilian Con-

servation Corps constructed roads, bridges, dams, and 5 rustic cabin camps to serve as summer camps for urban youth groups. Today these rustic camps, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, are still used for group retreats.

During World War II the park became a top secret military installation. The Office of Strategic Services (OSS), forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency, operated training schools here known as Areas A and C. In Area A agents were trained to gather information, and the new spies practiced their skills in nearby communities. In Area C the OSS trained radio engineers to operate stations that relayed secret messages from agents behind enemy lines.

In 1948 the area was returned to public use and was named Prince William Forest Park after the Virginia county in which it is located. With more than 17,000 acres, it is the greatest expanse of Piedmont forest in the National Park System and the largest natural park area in the metropolitan Washington area. The park shelters native plants and wildlife and offers visitors an opportunity for outdoor solitude and recreation.

Visiting the Park

Visitor Center Located here are exhibits, information, publications, and maps to help you explore and enjoy the park. It is open daily except January 1, Thanksgiving, and December 25.

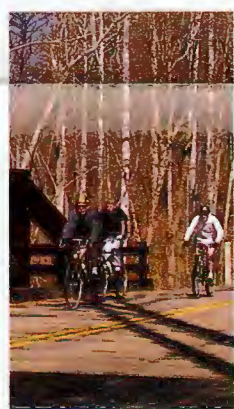
Naturalist Activities Rangers lead interpretive walks and give evening programs throughout the year. Check the *Turkey Caller* activity schedule, park bulletin boards, or the visitor center for program times and locations. Groups may schedule activities by calling the visitor center.

Hiking Trails wind 37 miles through the park, giving opportunities for quiet reflection, nature study, and physical challenge. Major trails

are marked with color blazes. Pine Grove Forest and Farms to Forest trails have self-guiding signs or brochures. Pine Grove Forest trail is accessible for wheelchairs and baby strollers. Check the park map and watch signs along park roads for trail locations.

Wildlife Watching Dawn and dusk are best for seeing deer, wild turkey, and beaver. Watch for migratory birds in the spring and fall and a variety of song birds throughout the year. A checklist of bird species found in the park is available at the visitor center.

Winter Activities Hiking, crosscountry skiing, and snowshoeing are popular. Open views along ridges and into ravines provide opportuni-



Robert Brooks

ties to see animals as they move through the winter landscape.

Picnicking Pine Grove and Telegraph Road picnic areas are located near the visitor center and within a mile of I-95. Each area has tables, cooking grills, trash containers, water, and rest-

rooms. Pine Grove has a first-come, first-served picnic shelter.

Bicycling The park offers miles of scenic roads through the Piedmont forest. Stop at the visitor center for a free bicycling guide, which suggests paved and unpaved routes and provides information on restrooms, water, and parking.

Fishing Bass, bluegill, perch, pickerel, crappie, and catfish are found in the park's lakes. A Virginia fishing license is required. State and federal regulations are available at the visitor center. The park does not sell fishing licenses.

Environmental Education The Turkey Run Environmental Educa-

tion Center offers hands-on activities, instructional tools, and lesson plans to groups and others who want to learn about the natural and historic resources of the park. Call ahead for information and reservations.

Camping Oak Ridge Campground has 80 sites for tents, recreational vehicles, and vehicle/trailer lengths to a maximum of 30 feet. Each site has paved parking, a campfire grill, and a picnic table. The campground has water, restrooms, firewood, and trash containers. There are no hookups or showers.

Travel Trailer Village, concessioner-operated, has sites for recreational vehicles and trailers

only. Facilities include showers, a coin-operated laundry, dump station, and swimming pool. For reservations, call 703-221-2474.

Backcountry camping, by permit only, is allowed south of the park in the Chopawamsic Backcountry Area. The sites, open February 1 to October 15, are located at 0.2 to 1.0 mile from the trailhead. All supplies, including drinking water, must be packed in; trash must be carried out. Cooking is allowed on portable cookstoves only. Campfires are prohibited. Phone reservations are not accepted; write or call for an application, or fill out one in person. Permits are available at the visitor center.

Group Camping Five cabin camps built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s accommodate groups of 104 to 211 persons. They offer primitive sleeping cabins, restrooms, showers, and a modern, central kitchen with dining hall. Groups must bring cooking utensils and linens. Reservations for spring and summer are due December 1; for fall, May 1. For information, call 703-221-4706.

Turkey Run Ridge campground offers 6 group tent sites for 20 to 40 people. Sites have picnic tables and fire grills. The campground has drinking water, restrooms, firewood, and trash containers. There are no hookups or showers. Write or call for

a permit application; advance reservations are required.

Information Prince William Forest Park is open daily; the park closes at dark to all but registered campers. An entrance fee, good for 7 days, is charged. An annual park pass is available. For information on educational and volunteer programs and on permits, or to schedule group activities, write: Superintendent, Prince William Forest Park, P.O. Box 209, Triangle, VA 22172-0209; or call, 703-221-7181.

Getting Here The park is located in Virginia, 32 miles south of Washington, D.C., and 22 miles north of Fredericksburg. From I-95, take exit 150 and follow signs to the



park entrance. To reach Travel Trailer Village from I-95, take exit 152 onto Va. 234; travel west 2.5 miles to entrance.

Playing It Safe For your safety and to protect the park, follow these regulations: • Vehicles must observe speed limits; drive and

park only on paved surfaces. • Bicycles are not permitted on hiking trails or in the Chopawamsic Backcountry Area. Bicyclists and motorists share equal legal responsibility for traffic safety. Ride single file. • Fire danger is high in a forest. Wood fires

are permitted only in campfire grills in picnic areas and campgrounds. Gathering of dead and downed wood is not permitted. Crush all discarded smoking materials. Extinguish fires in grills when leaving even for a short time. • Pets must be leashed at all times. Pets are prohibited in the Chopawamsic Backcountry Area, Turkey Run Ridge Campground, on Pine Grove Forest trail, and in the cabin camps. • Swimming in lakes and ponds is not allowed. • Hunting is prohibited. Firearms, fireworks, archery equipment, slingshots, and other weapons must be cased, broken down, or packed to prevent their use. • Do not disturb, destroy, or remove plants, wildlife, historic structures,



or natural features; all are protected by federal law. • Animals are wild and may bite; do not harass or feed them. • Report injuries, accidents, law violations, or suspicious activities to a ranger immediately; or call the visitor center, 703-221-7181. In an emergency, call 911.

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