



THE OASIS

A Seasonal Newsletter of Prince William Forest Park

Walking in a Winter Wonderland



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Every season has a special way of reconnecting us to nature and reminding us that we are dependent on the land. In winter, the shorter days, cold temperatures and threats of snow and ice remind us in their own unique way. But winter is also a time to discover the wonders of Prince William Forest Park.

Walking in winter can be one of the most rewarding times to embrace our connection to nature. At Prince William Forest Park winter allows you to read the landscape in a rare way. Trails throughout the park put on a new face in winter. With the heavy ground cover of summer gone and the fall leaves matted down by

frost, the skeleton of the Piedmont ecosystem is revealed. Small dips and gullies, downed trees and revealed rocks are no longer hidden beneath the seedlings and groundcover that dominate a summer forest's floor.

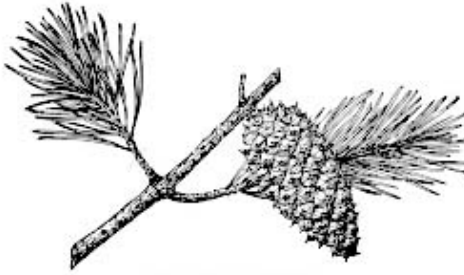
When properly prepared, walking in winter can provide you with experiences in nature hidden in other seasons. For example, winter is a great time to focus on photography. Without the leaves forming a forest canopy, light drifts down to the forest floor changing your average forested landscape photos into something quite distinctive. Try focusing your camera on a frosted leaf on the forest floor or zoom in on the sun-reflecting bark of the birch tree. These close-up shots showcase winter's beauty. The

self-guided "Farms to Forest" and "Pine Grove" nature trails are excellent opportunities for this activity. Or, take the time to discover for yourself the variety of plants in the park and the history that created this beautiful forest.

The majority of the forests within Prince William Forest Park are dominated by deciduous trees: oak, beech, and hickory. Winter is the perfect time to rediscover the scattered conifer trees in the park like the Virginia pine and eastern hemlock that stand evergreen in the park usually hidden behind the spreading branches of their deciduous cousins.

Continued on next page

Learning to identify different trees enables you to “read” the landscape in a way that clues you into the park’s history and to Virginia’s history. For example, the Virginia Pine (*Pinus Virginiana*) often invades old fields abandoned by agriculture and is usually found on sites with eroded soils.



Look for the short needles in clusters of two of this pine tree to identify an area that might have once been a tobacco farm. Farmed for centuries on the land now encompassed by Prince William Forest Park, tobacco was one of the plants that depleted the soil over time. Pines were also planted by the park where miners once dug for pyrite, or “Fool’s Gold” in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s.

Too chilly outside? Visit the park’s visitor center to explore the nature and culture of this area without braving the weather. Prince William Forest Park also has a Junior Ranger program for children ages 5-12. Children can earn their Junior Ranger badge by completing the self-guided booklet available at the visitor center.

For some, winter can be an intimidating time for hiking, but with proper preparedness, these wintertime experiences with nature can be yours. Check out the article on page 3 to learn about winter safety. We look forward to seeing you walking in winter across the Prince William Forest Park.

Donation Warms Hearts & Hands

Due to the generosity of the National Park Foundation and Travis Industries, Inc., the park headquarters building received a Travis Industries gas fireplace insert which was installed just in time for the winter season.

With an estimated value of \$2,500, the gas stove was donated to the National Park Foundation as an in-kind donation by Travis Industries, Inc., maker of wood burning stoves, fireplaces and fireplace inserts, gas stoves and pellet burning stoves. The National Park Foundation then provided the stove to Prince William Forest Park. Park maintenance staff prepared the existing fireplace for the insert, ran new propane lines and completed the installation.



a heating source that should decrease the building’s heating costs and increase overall energy efficiency.

The donation of the stove is an example of how Prince William Forest Park and others can work together to improve how the park operates. As a side benefit, one of the larger rooms in the headquarters building has been changed from being a space that staff and visitors wanted to quickly pass through to a gathering place for meetings and events where many enjoy the warmth that comes from good work and good heating.



The new gas stove will diversify the energy resources currently used by Prince William Forest Park. The stove supplements the other heating sources for the headquarters building providing



Playing It Safe While You Play!

If you are planning to brave the outdoors during the winter months, know the four environmental conditions that cause cold-related stress: low temperatures, high/cool winds, dampness and cold water. Prolonged exposure to these environmental conditions can result in health problems. When body temperatures drop even a few degrees below normal (98.6 degrees F), blood vessels constrict, decreasing peripheral blood flow, to reduce heat loss from the surface of the skin. This is a technical way of explaining why you shiver when you're cold. Your body is trying to produce some warmth by increasing the body's metabolic rate.

Your clothing is perhaps the most important step in fighting cold stress. Plan on wearing at least three layers:

1. an outer layer to break the wind and allow some ventilation (like Gore-Tex or nylon).
2. a middle layer of wool or synthetic fiber (Qualofil or Pile) to absorb sweat and retain insulation in a damp environment. Down is a useful lightweight insulator but only works when it's dry.
3. an inner layer to cotton or synthetic weave to allow ventilation.

Pay special attention to protecting your feet, hands, face & head. Up to 40% of body heat can be lost when the head is exposed. Keep a change of clothes incase you get wet.

KNOW THE SIGNS OF THE TWO MOST COMMON COLD RELATED ILLNESSES:

FROST BITE: deep freezing of skin & tissue; pale, waxy-white skin color; skin becoming hard & numb (usually affecting the fingers, hands, toes, feet, ears & nose).

What to Do: NEVER rub the affected area (rubbing causes damage to the skin and tissues). Remove wet or tight clothes that may cut off blood flow. Gently place affected area in a warm water bath and monitor the water temperature to SLOWLY warm the tissue. Don't pour warm water directly on the affected area (this will warm the tissue too fast). Seek medical attention.

HYPOTHERMIA: normal body temp drops to or below 95 degrees F; fatigue/drowsiness, uncontrolled shivering, cool bluish skin, slurred speech, clumsy movements, irritable or confused behavior.

What to Do: Seek medical attention immediately. Move to a warm, dry area. Remove any wet clothing and replace with warm, dry clothing or wrap in blankets. Drink warm, sweet drinks (sugar water or sports-type drinks). Avoid drinks with caffeine or alcohol. Move arms & legs to create muscle heat.

Cold weather hiking and biking can be a lot of fun. Just take the necessary precautions to stay safe.



Enjoy the park more in winter by coming prepared to be safe.

National Park Service Director visits Prince William Forest Park National Park Service Director, Fran Mainella (seated in the center holding a picture) visited the park in November along with other leaders of the National Park Service for a meeting of the National Leadership Council.



From Vermont to Virginia

On November 10th, it was 20 degrees when I left Vermont to begin my new life as an Interpretive Park Ranger at Prince William Forest Park. As I scraped a layer of snow and frost off of my packed car, I pondered the differences between the life I was leaving in Vermont and the life I was beginning in Northern Virginia. Visions of brake light- filled traffic jams entered my mind as I slowly left the small village that was my home for the past two years.

Once I arrived at Prince William Forest Park, my feelings of “suburbia- phobia” were replaced with feelings of excitement and hope. I realized that the tension I felt as I left Vermont, thinking of traffic- filled I- 95, was the reality of the people I would now be serving. I have always known that national parks provide visitors from across the United States and around the world a window into the ecological makeup and cultural memory of America. In moving to Prince William Forest Park, I discovered a new belief - national parks make great neighbors.

At Haleakala National Park on the island of Maui, visitors use the park to interact with a Hawai’i that has all but disappeared, but local residents and native Hawaiians use the park to interact with a Hawai’i that is uniquely *theirs*. At Marsh- Billings- Rockefeller National Historical Park, in Woodstock, Vermont, visitors use the park to hike its carriage roads or visit the historic mansion, but local residents use it to interact with a history and landscape that is uniquely *theirs*.

As I begin my career here at Prince William Forest Park, I hope to introduce our many visitors to the tremendous beauty and history encompassed within the park boundaries. I also hope to share with our local residents a growing knowledge of the natural and cultural stories of northern Virginia that is, all too quickly, disappearing. This park holds a story that is uniquely *yours* and I look forward to exploring it with you.

Laura Cohen, Education Specialist, Prince William Forest Park



Laura works with area schools and groups to help tell the stories of the park through ranger- led programs. Come out this summer and join her or one of our other interpretive rangers on a program of discovery and exploration.



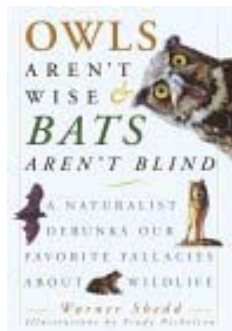
Eastern National

Serving America's National Parks
and Other Public Trusts

Prince William Forest Park was pleased to welcome Eastern National as its cooperating association bookstore in June of 2004. "Eastern National provides quality educational products and services to the visitors to America's national parks...", supporting research for natural and cultural resources as well as educational programming assistance.

Drop in and explore for yourself what the bookstore has to offer. The bookstore is located just inside the Visitor Center.

From books to bird calls to binoculars, there's something here for everyone. Learn more about the park you thought you knew. One of our best selling titles, "Sisterhood of Spies", details the stories of



women spies that served the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Prince William Forest Park was a key training ground for the OSS during WWII.

Did you know bats aren't blind? Debunk this and other myths with one of our newest titles, "Owls

Aren't Wise and Bats Aren't Blind" by Warner Shedd. Perhaps you would like to know more about hikes all over the state of Virginia. But don't just stop there! Pickup any number of guides the bookstore offers on national park sites throughout the country. Then, preserve your Prince William Forest Park memories with the National Park Deluxe Scrapbooking kit. The Eastern National Association bookstore really does have something for everyone.



Visit us and dig a little deeper into the history and resources of Prince William Forest Park and your natural world. We look forward to seeing you. The Eastern National Association bookstore in the Visitor Center is open from 9am-5pm seven days a week.

Old Trails are New Again

Have you ever gone down **Pyrite Mine Trail** and stood,



looking across the creek, thinking there should be a bridge there? After remaining closed for several years due to safety concerns, this portion of this trail is open once again. The project involved constructing a 50 foot bridge over Quantico Creek, and a 175 foot boardwalk. The decking of the boardwalk was constructed with recycled lumber, making it more environmentally friendly and durable.



Because the work site was remote, the bridge was brought to the worksite in five sections. The steel truss bridge was then assembled on site.

If you've been waiting to head out to the far end of **South Valley Trail**, your wait is over. Through the combined efforts of park staff and volunteers, the section of the trail hit so hard by winter storms has now been rerouted. This project involved the design and construction of a half mile long reroute. It also included the removal of the old bridge that had been washed out, construction of 9 foot bridges, and 90 feet of boardwalk.





FRIENDS OF PRINCE WILLIAM FOREST PARK

New Leadership Team Elected & Events Planned

On Sunday, November 14, 2004, The Friends of Prince William Forest Park voted in a new Leadership Team and Board Members as follows:

President: Kathy Wentworth Drahosz
Immediate Past President: Robert Williams
Vice President: Lee Watenpaugh
Treasurer: Jennifer Cunningham
Secretary: Bob Sargent

New Board Members:

Kevin Plasse
Wes Allen
Trisha Milligan

After a holiday break, the Friends of Prince William Forest Park met in January and set an exciting agenda for 2005! Check out what's on tap for this Spring!

March 13, 2005	<p>Hiking Class presented by REI</p> <p>World renowned outfitter Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI) will be here to provide helpful hiking tips including what to bring, wear, safety, etc. Then put your learning into practice with a hike in the park.</p>
April 23, 2005	<p>The Wood & Dale Wanderers (A Local American Volkspport Association)</p> <p>Join us on this co-sponsored "March for Parks" on Saturday 23, 2005. More information on where to meet and when will be coming soon. Celebrate Earth Day and hike in the beauty of Prince William Forest Park.</p>

But that's not all! Keep up to date with these activities and more by visiting the Friends web site at www.fpwfp.org.



Riders Up to the Chopawamsic Cycle Challenge

On September 12, 2004, over 50 volunteers, bicyclists and park staff joined forces to raise money for the park. The Friends of Prince William Forest Park challenged local cyclists to spend a day riding through the park on both its paved and gravel routes. Donations for the

Meeting the Challenge!

cycle challenge were received from each rider. The riders not only got to spend a challenging day in the park, but were automatically entered to win fantastic door prizes. Through the generous contributions of several local sponsors including REI, Shirt, Inc., The Training Connection, Inc., Business Management Systems, Mary Washington Hospital, Olde Towne Bicycles, Dynamic Enterprise Solutions, Inc., The Young Marines, Woodbridge SDA Church, Fairfax Skin Care Center, Long & Foster Real Estate, and "N" Shape Fitness, participants were treated like winners of the Tour De France. All cyclists were offered complimentary technical support for their bikes provided by Village Ski and Bikes.

"This year's Chopawamsic Cycle Challenge proved to be our biggest to date as we increased ridership and ultimately the funds that were raised," commented Kathy Wentworth Drahosz. "As a result, we are now able to increase the amount of resources that will be donated towards visitor's activities and to historic preservation projects in the park."

The Friends of Prince William Forest Park was formed in 1989 to help preserve and enhance the park's natural and cultural resources, monitor activities that affect the park's ecosystem, and provide citizens a forum to discuss issues and decisions affecting the park. Meetings are held at the park on the second Sunday of the month and begin at 2:00 p.m. Along with a business meeting, the day typically includes special speakers and/or organized recreational activities. Membership is open to anyone who supports the mission of the group. For more information, visit the Friends web site at www.fpwfp.org.

Reader's Voice

In this new section, we'd like to hear from you. Have you been looking for a place to share your poetry about Prince William Forest Park? How about a wonderful activity that you'd like to tell others about? This is the space that we would like to fill with your thoughts, photographs and musings on the park.



Or, if you have a comment you would like to share with the park, we are continually looking for ways to better serve you. Is there a particular article you would be interested in reading? Do you have a comment or suggestion on a more general nature that you would like to share?

Please send your submissions to:

Prince William Forest Park
Reader's Voice
18100 Park Headquarters Road
Triangle, Virginia 22172

Or send it via e-mail to:

prwi_information@nps.gov

Please include "Reader's Voice" in the text of your message or subject line.



Please note that because of the limited space and scope of this newsletter, your submission may need to be edited or responded to in another manner.

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts on Prince William Forest Park.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Prince William Forest Park
18100 Park Headquarters Road
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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

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Got Questions? We've got answers.
Your quick reference to information in
Prince William Forest Park

General Park Information **703-221-7181**
Visitor Center - Open daily 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Camping **703-221-7181**
Including individual, group and backcountry.

Cabin Camps **703-221-5843**
*Including group cabins and individual rentals, please
leave a message.*

Travel Trailer Village **800-737-5730**
Camping area off Route 234 with full hook-ups.

Ranger-led Programs **703-221-7181**
*Including regularly scheduled, special request and
education programs.*

Volunteering in the Park **703-221-7181**
Learn how you can help.

Official Park Website **www.nps.gov/prwi**
For the latest information about the park, surf this way.