

White Tail - Weiskittel- Iron Point Trail



**A Self-Guided, Interpretive
Nature Trail**



**Marshy Point Nature
Center**




Department of
Recreation & Parks

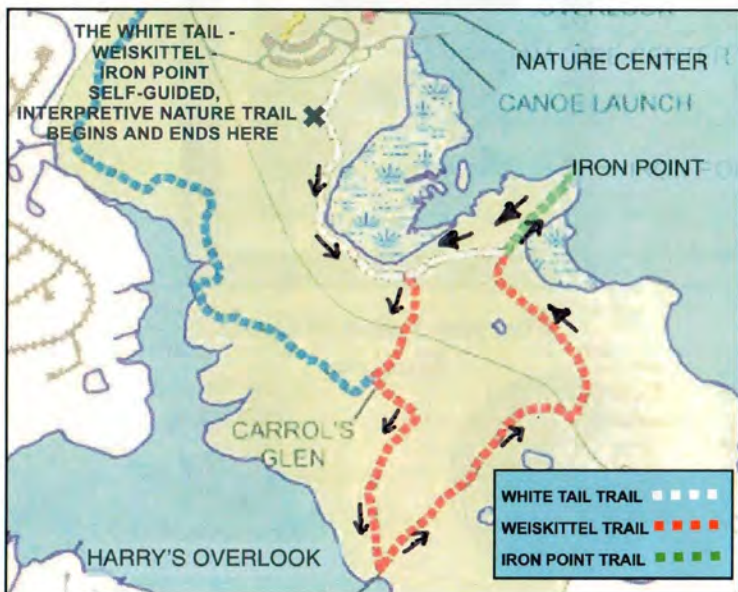
Getting Started. . .

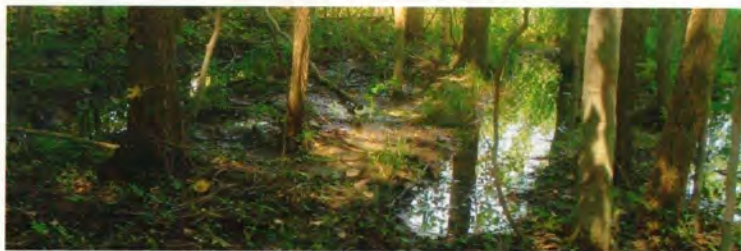
The White Tail - Weiskittel - Iron Point Nature Trail is about 1.5 miles long and may require water proof boots during prolonged periods of wet weather. You will also want to look out for spider webs along the way!

This trail begins on the White Tail Trail, which is southeast of the Marshy Point Nature Center, and continues through 14 points of interest, which are indicated by numbered trail post markers with the Nature Center being #14. These trail post markers correspond to the numbered

 symbol located at the top of each page.

As you proceed on the trail and work through these trail post markers, not only will you learn about nature, but you will also learn what makes Marshy Point a sanctuary worth being preserved.





A New Forest or An Old Farm?

This land, situated between the Dundee and Saltpeter Creeks, has seen several changes over the last couple of centuries. For a time it served as the premiere waterfowl hunting grounds of President Benjamin Harrison (1833 - 1901) and baseball legend Babe Ruth (1895 - 1948).

Then at some point during the 20th century the fertile land was plowed over and was used as an agricultural field, where soy beans and corn were grown.



Baseball legend Babe Ruth
after a successful duck hunt.

In 1983 the Department of Recreation and Parks of Baltimore County purchased this property, and since then, the seeds from pioneer species like maple trees and sweet-gum trees have germinated all over this old field stabilizing and “freezing” the old plow lines in place. Look carefully on the ground and you will see the old plow lines from the last time the field was plowed “frozen in time.”



President Benjamin Harrison
enjoyed duck hunting as a
favorite past time.



The Red Maple



If you ever have the pleasure of viewing this tree in the autumn, then it will be quite obvious as to why it's called a Red Maple. Besides its leaves, its flowers, twigs, and seeds are all red. Red Maples are able to grow in a

lot of places that other trees cannot. You might even see one growing in a swamp, which leads to its other name, "swamp maple." It might be obvious from its name, but it is one of the trees that gives us maple sap, which people boil and turn into Maple syrup.



A study has shown that the Red Maple's sap is nearly equal in sweetness, flavor, and quality to a Sugar Maple's sap, making it a great tree to tap in the spring.

In the autumn, the average Red Maple produces between 12,000 and 91,000 seeds. These seeds have little "wings" which allow them to twirl around in the air and permit them to travel great distances, enabling the Red Maple to be a pioneer species.

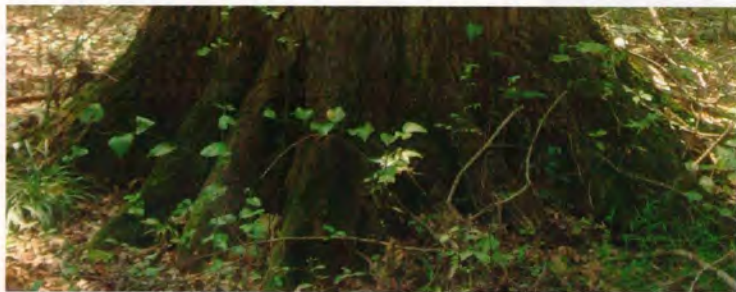


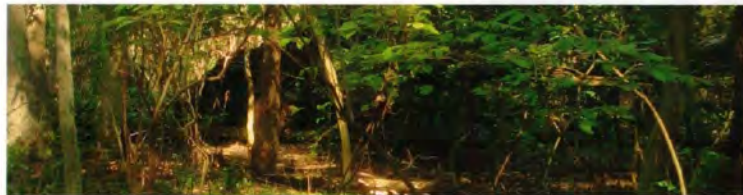
A Lookout for Marshy Point

This enormous tree in front of you is a Southern Red Oak, also known as a Spanish Oak. The Southern Red Oak can grow as tall as 125 feet. This particular tree appears to be over 100 years old and reaches to the sky! When this tree first took root, it was just a little acorn in the soil. Now it's enormous. When you find a Southern Red Oak, look at the base of the tree. If the base is buttressed (wide), this may suggest that large grazing animals might have trampled around the tree while the tree was growing, or it could be the result of the soft, wet soils here at Marshy Point.



This tree's hard wood is a great resource for construction, furniture and even firewood. Be sure to listen for bird sounds as you pass by this magnificent tree because many different birds hang out in its canopy and some local eagles may even be roosting on the very top.





The Forest Changes. . .

If you are a keen observer, then you will notice that the forest is changing right before your very eyes. The marsh loaded with its wetland grasses is at your back, and American Holly trees, which are extremely shade tolerant, are filling in underneath the canopy of the larger, older trees above them. Holly trees are an invaluable resource to the forest community for several reasons. Their leaves provide cover year round for birds and other wildlife. Plus their bright, orange-red berries ripen between September and December and provide an abundant source of food for Robins and other wildlife throughout the cold winter months.



As you look down at your feet, you will also notice a change. Lycopodium, which is known as “ground pine” or “wolf’s foot” covers the forest floor. (In Latin, “*lyco*” means “wolf” and “*podium*” means “foot.”) Lycopodium are flowerless plants, also known as club mosses. Their spores, especially the spores of *Lycopodium clavatum*, historically were ground into a powder known as flash powder and were used in fireworks and explosives or oddly enough, as a covering for pills during the Civil War era.



Tulip Trees @ the Crossroads

Poplar is derived from the Latin *populus*, meaning “nation,” as in a large group of citizens. These trees probably get their name because Tulip trees are plentiful east of the Mississippi River, so the moniker may reference their abundance, or maybe the copious supply of tulip-shaped flowers that bloom every spring. The tulip tree is a fast growing tree and is the tallest of all the eastern hardwoods, reaching heights up to 200 feet. Its orange flowers provide a rich nectar, which honey bees use in the spring to make honey, making the tulip tree one of the most important nectar crops for honey production in Maryland.





Worth its Weight in Gold!

Native to North America, the Sassafras tree can grow up to 54 feet. It has bark that becomes a red-brown color when mature, and it has three types of leaves: a mitten, a ghost, and a teardrop.

This tree is very important to wildlife, because it bears fruit eaten by many different animals. The root of this tree is used to extract an oil used in perfumes and fragrances.

Along with fragrant uses, this tree's root extract is the primary ingredient in Root Beer! When the sassafras was imported to Europe in the early 1600's, it was promoted to cure gonorrhea and syphilis. People were willing to pay almost any amount to get it, which is why it was formerly worth its weight in gold.





At Home Underground

We've all heard it before: "How much wood could a woodchuck chuck, if a woodchuck could chuck wood?" But where do woodchucks or groundhogs live? Under the ground in groundhog burrows. Groundhogs generally like to live on the edges of corn or hayfields, but not in damp, swampy or stony ground. They like to sun themselves at the entrance to their hole so you may see a small mound of packed dirt at the entrance. Generally there is a long tunnel inside the burrow that can be anywhere from fifteen to fifty feet long. This tunnel usually leads to a chamber two to six feet underground.



Most groundhogs have 4 to 5 burrows that they move between and shallower ones for hibernation. This makes it easy for other animals such as foxes, opossums, raccoons and skunks to take over their burrows. Not to worry though, if a groundhog needs a new burrow, it can generally dig one overnight.





Harry's Overlook



The Salt Peter Creek overflows with life, and Harry's Overlook gives the viewer a 240° perspective of this tidal creek. Fish such as white and yellow perch, sunfish, catfish, bass and shad as well as endless numbers of migrating waterfowl regularly enjoy this tranquil habitat. Look closely and you might even see a turtle or a snake or a Great Blue Heron in the water. Great Blue Herons frequently lurk along these banks seeking to snatch an unsuspecting fish for an easy meal.



One of the reasons for the vitality in this habitat is that this creek rarely freezes. As you look to the northern horizon you will see the sizable towers of a Constellation Energy plant in the distance. This coal-fired energy plant produces 416 megawatts of electricity for our region and dispenses its warm discharge water into the Salt Peter Creek via Seneca Creek, keeping the water warm and abundant with life all year long.

The overlook is named in honor of Harry Weiskittel, whose family formerly owned and farmed the property of the Marshy Point Nature Center.





The Pitch Pine



The Pitch Pine played a huge role in the American economy during the days of wooden ships and railroads. Its wood is rough grained and not very strong, but it contains a lot of resin, which makes the wood resistant to decay. Early American settlers identified this tree by its “shingled” or “scaly” bark and would make tar and turpentine



from the Pitch Pine’s resin. The tar from the tree was used for tarring ropes and rigging for ships to prevent them from rotting. Plus it was used as a caulk to seal the planks of the hull of a boat. This same tar was also used medicinally as a treatment for wounds, sores, and burns. Turpentine also had a wide range of uses. Not only can it be used as a solvent for paints and waxes, but it is also an essential ingredient in making varnish.

North Carolina, our neighbor to the south, is nicknamed “The Tar Heel State,” and most historians would agree that the nickname stems from

North Carolina’s long history as a producer of tar, pitch, and turpentine from the state’s extensive forests of Pitch Pines. Today Pitch Pine is used primarily for rough construction, pulp, and fuel called “fat wood.”





Woodland Gem



Commonly known as “wolf’s foot,” tree ground pine, or club moss, *Lycopodium* can be found in the northern woodlands throughout the United States and Canada. This little plant with an interconnected root system often creeps along the forest floor, and can be found standing erect, with its widely-branched arms thickly covered in simple, needle-like leaves or scales.

It is believed that the Native Americans used its dried spores for baby powder. Photographers recognized that the dried spores are highly flammable and used them extensively in the 19th century to provide extra light for their photography, prior to the invention of the flash bulb. *Lycopodium* powder has also been used as an ingredient in fireworks, explosives, and as a coating for pills. It is still used today to create flashes and easily-controlled flames in magic acts and for theatrical special effects.





Maryland's State Tree

What do the *USS Constitution*, the Japanese *bokken* (wooden sword), and acorn pancakes all have in common? They are all made from the white oak, one of the largest and longest living trees in Northeastern America. *Quercus Alba*, normally grows to about 75 feet, which is average for a tree, but compensates by extending outward over 100 feet in open areas.

Known to live up to 600 years, the white oak provides acorns which are edible by animals and humans alike, and which were most likely part of the original Thanksgiving feast in 1621.

Its close-grained wood is very dense at over 45 pounds per cubic foot, making it ideal for items that will be used heavily such as swords. Plus it is waterproof, making it ideal for ship hulls as well as for wine and whiskey barrels. The Wye Oak, a magnificent white oak tree and the honorary state tree of Maryland, was located in Wye Mills, MD on Maryland's Eastern Shore until 2002, when it died after a severe thunderstorm. It was believed to be one of the oldest trees in Maryland and was estimated to be 460 years old.





Living Barbed Wire!



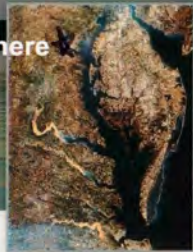
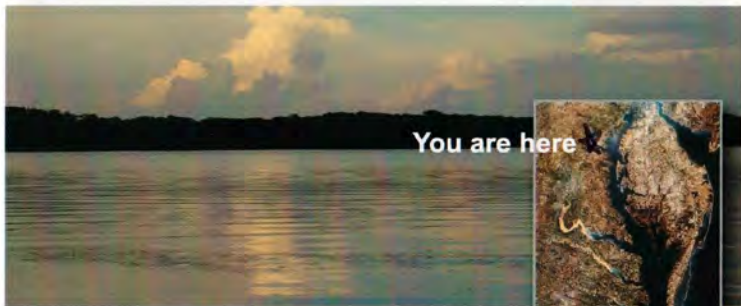
Alert! The Greenbrier plant is a nourishing forest necessity, not a nuisance. Walking through the woods, you may feel the sting of the Greenbrier plant before you see it. The prickly thorns warn you of its presence. Open your eyes to the glossy leaves, delicate flowers and blue berries.

You may catch a bird nibbling a berry or a butterfly sipping the delicate flower's nectar. Hear the rustle of leaves as small animals dart in the dense foliage for cover. Notice the tender shoots edible to animals and humans.



Climbing vines or dense bush, this multi-faceted plant packs an environmental punch. Birds and mammals survive winters with its blue berries and young leafy shoots. Sheltering the vulnerable animals from predators, the Greenbrier is an animal's sanctuary/ haven. Though bemoaned for its thorns, Greenbrier deserves its place in the sun.





Iron Point

Take a moment here at Iron Point to reflect on the significance of our local water source, the Chesapeake Bay.

The word “Chesapeake,” comes from the Native American term “*Tschiswapeki*,” which literally means, “Great Shellfish Bay.” This is a fitting term, considering the abundance of shellfish which inhabit the bay. Oysters and blue crabs can be found throughout the Chesapeake, which is North America’s largest estuary, and the third largest in the world. Besides blue crabs and oysters, there are over 350 varieties of fish which inhabit the bay, such as rockfish, white perch, and bluefish to name a few.

In addition to these creatures, which call the Chesapeake “home,” more than one million waterfowl spend the cold winter months on the bay. There are Mallards, Teals, Canada Geese, Snow Geese and even Tundra Swans, just to mention a few species, that take a break from their arduous migration to find food and shelter in these brackish waters. There are also an estimated 2,000 nesting pairs of Bald Eagles and Ospreys, which now call these waters their home.





Getting Back to the Marshy Point Nature Center. . .



Please deposit your trail guide booklet back in the deposit box located on the Trail Head Sign.

If you would like to learn more about nature or the environment, then please visit the Marshy Point Nature Center by continuing on the White Tail Trail until you reach the Nature Center. Seek out a naturalist to enrich your understanding of life around the bay, or go online to www.marshypoint.org.

Thank you very much for taking the time to hike this trail today and learn about the many hidden treasures of this special place.



The Value of Conservation

As you approach the end of this trail, ask yourself a question, “Did I see any litter along the trail?” If not, wonderful! If you did, then think to yourself about the importance of conservation, and protecting the environment around us. For example, did you know that cigarette butts will take 1 to 12 years to decompose? Plastic bottles will take 70 to 450 years, depending on their size. Glass bottles will take 1 to 2 million years. And finally, did you know that styrofoam does not decompose?

These items have wonderful benefits for us but can be very harmful to wildlife and to the environment.

It is important for us to be thoughtful and to protect the environment that we live in! It is imperative that we protect our bay. The Chesapeake Bay is our source of pride and livelihood as Marylanders. Let’s keep it clean for our grandchildren and their grandchildren and for many generations to come. Start with the little things now. Conserve water. Turn off the lights when you leave a room. Plant a tree. Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.



Maryland

CHILDREN'S BILL OF RIGHTS

Every child in Maryland shall have the opportunity to:



1. Discover and connect with their natural world.
2. Play and learn outdoors.
3. Splash and swim in the water.
4. Camp under the stars.
5. Follow a trail.
6. Catch a fish.
7. Watch wildlife.
8. Explore wild places close to home.
9. Celebrate their culture and heritage.
10. Share nature with a great mentor, teacher or parent.



Credits. . .

Many people worked long hours on this Eagle Scout project, and I could have never accomplished a project of this scale without the faithful assistance and partnership of many people for whom I am very grateful.

Thank You

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Not Just a Place...



*A Place Where
Life Begins.*



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®
BALTIMORE AREA COUNCIL

This self-guided, interpretive nature trail booklet, the trail head sign, and trail post markers were all produced in cooperation with the Marshy Point Nature Center as the fulfillment of the Eagle Scout project for Benjamin Badorf, Troop 130, Perry Hall, MD between February 2011 and November 2012.

