



Meadows

Valley Forge National Historical Park contains the largest area of meadows in southeastern Pennsylvania, covering approximately 30% or 1,000 acres of the park. Meadows are reminiscent of the agricultural landscape that existed here before and after the encampment and support a wide variety of plants and animals..

For three centuries, the Valley Forge area provided an ideal location for agriculture because of prime soils, the availability of water, and accessibility to transportation on the river. At the time of the encampment, 18 landowners had established farms within what is now the park. As you look out from the Baron von Steuben statue you are observing property owned by David Stephens during the 18th century and covering much of the Grand Parade. Imagine that the tall grass meadows are actually fields of wheat and hay ready for harvest.

Open fields at Valley Forge were not always managed as meadows. For many years after the park was established in 1893, all open areas were mowed as lawns. Mowing was first accomplished by sheep and later by mechanical means. Fields also were cultivated for periods of time to grow crops such as corn. Both of these management styles provided very poor habitat for wildlife and did not reflect the historic scene. The establishment of meadows offered an opportunity to improve visitor understanding of the contribution of agriculture to the area and also to provide excellent wildlife habitat. Tall grass is particularly important to certain kinds of grassland birds that can now be observed in the park, such as the eastern meadowlark, grasshopper sparrow, and field sparrow.

Meadows represent one of the most threatened habitats in southeastern Pennsylvania and the park has become a refuge for grassland dependent animals across the entire region.