FORT DUPONT PARK

Fort Dupont Park
National Capital Parks-East
U.S. Department of the Interior

From the Activity Center parking lot proceed across the Fort Dupont Drive, long the cross walk and enter the trail.

Look for the numbers on three foot wooden stakes to correspond with the information:

1.) Welcome to the Hollow Tree Trail! This trek will show you some of the natural beauty in our own backyard you will learn about the local eco-system and local history. Look out for the different types of trees and plants and keep your eyes peeled for animals along the way including deer, turkey, and raccoons.

2.) Notice the difference in bark types on the trees along the way. Notice the different levels of habitation. You will notice around you American Beech trees (*Fagus grandifolia*). These trees retain smooth grey bark through all stages of maturity; simple alternate leaves that are sharply toothed where pinnate veins meet the leaf margin; 2-3 triangular 'beech nuts' are housed in prickly husk; long, slender pointed buds, angling away from twig (whereas redbud buds are snug to the twig). There is the concern they will get Beech Bark Disease. A 'complex' that attacks beech in two phases, first with a non-native scale insect feeding on and altering the bark, then with a fungus that kills the live bark tissue. In this region, it is mostly found at higher elevations but there is concern that it will make its way to the DC area.

3.) Notice how different plants, like animals, protect themselves. The fragile vines have thorns to protect themselves, the sweet gum trees seed pods, which litter the ground, have a spiky covering. This is similar to animals having teeth, claws, camouflage, and skunk spray.

4.) Fallen trees are left for the decomposers to complete nature's recycling. Micro-organisms work with beetles, earthworms, and woodpeckers to speed the decomposition process.

5.) As you walk along notice the different trees that have carvings and those that don't.
Here you can see Poison Ivy (*Toxicodenron radicans*) on a Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). 'Leaves of three, leave it be!' The trifoliate leaves of poison ivy help us identify it. You will also notice the hairy rootlets that attach mature vines to trees. The leaves of this native vine are some of the first to turn in the fall, displaying a range of colors from red to orange to yellow. The grey berries are produced in the fall and provide food for wildlife (mostly birds) through the winter. You can distinguish the Tulip Poplar because the leaves are shaped like the profile of a tulip, plus the orange and yellow distinct large flower that blooms in early May also suggests a tulip. Dead flowers can remain through winter! The trunk is usually straight and uniform with consistently patterned flattened ridges and conspicuously whitened furrows.

Turn right at fork down to bridge.

6.) This is a small bridge over Ridge Stream. Look for animal prints and poison ivy.

Turn around and continue up the Hollow Tree Trail.

7.) The Hollow Tree. This tulip tree is possibly 150 years old. It manages to get enough water and nutrients despite the large hollow. Tree trunks are mostly made of dead wood, which is in the center. This is called 'heartwood' and often functions to provide structural support. As we see here, however, many trees can manage just fine without heartwood. The vital functions of the trunk's vascular system take place in the outer portion of the trunk near the bark, and a cavity like this one causes minimal harm as long as its edges have sealed up well and is no wider than about 30% of the tree's circumference. Are you brave enough to step inside? Check for visitors first! You can also notice the Common Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) which has a bark that can be distinctly 'warty' in sections, otherwise it is