



The Oasis

The Seasonal Newsletter of Prince William Forest Park

Science & Stealth Help Park Staff Watch Wildlife

How many times have you seen a coyote or bobcat in Prince William Forest Park? Only a few of us have been lucky enough to see one of these animals; some might not even know they claim the park as their home. Those who have glimpsed these notoriously shy mammals could probably count the number of times on one hand. Does that mean there are only a few of these species around?

Like many forms of wildlife, carnivores (meat-eaters) are most active from dusk to dawn. Furthermore, when you are happily hiking down a path enjoying the scenery, carnivores smell or hear you long before you detect them. So, how many carnivores call this forest home and how do you count them if you do not see them? Good question.

In June of 2005, Resource Management staff and George Mason University researchers began a three-year study to provide the National Park Service with baseline data on carnivores in Prince William Forest Park. The aim of this research is to document species presence, determine population size, and investigate habitat use. The information gathered through this research will be instrumental in future management decisions and land-use policies, and will serve as the basis for long-term monitoring of biodiversity at Prince William Forest Park.

To assess the numbers and types of wildlife in the park, researchers are using various methods for indirect counts. Direct counts, while preferable, are often difficult or impractical. This is particularly true for elusive species like carnivores. In this case, researchers are employing indirect methodologies to discover population size and describe movement and activity patterns. Methods used in this study include: scent stations, hair-traps, scat analy-



Coyotes are one of the many species of carnivore currently being studied by researchers in Prince William Forest Park. Photo courtesy of NPS.

sis, and photo-trapping. These methodologies are noninvasive and provide valuable data for a comprehensive survey in the future.

Scent stations are a popular, low cost technique that is especially appropriate in the survey of large areas. Researchers clear a 1-meter diameter area of the forest floor and apply a tracking medium called a substrate. An attractant (such as bobcat urine) is placed within the center of the circle. Equipped with keen noses, carnivores can smell the lure over long distances and will investigate its source, leaving tracks in the substrate. During a sampling period, researchers return to the station daily to identify and record these tracks.

Hair and scat collection, combined with DNA analysis, produces estimates of abundance and describes the population genetics of carnivores within the park. Scat is analyzed to characterize dietary habits. Like the scent stations, a lure is used to attract carnivores to the eighty randomly-distributed hair-traps which are

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made of barbed wire. As the mammal maneuvers to investigate the scent, a small amount of fur is snagged by the wire.

Remote photography complements the above techniques by verifying species identification and yielding its own population index. Automatically-triggered cameras emit an infrared beam of light. When an animal crosses this beam, it triggers the camera to take a photo and “capture” the animal. Researchers identify and count the mammals “caught” by the camera during a sampling period.

The study of carnivores aids our understanding of the ecological theater that lies within the park boundaries. This project will provide data for resource management monitoring programs, and describe the health of the park’s ecosystem. This will enable Prince William Forest Park to meet its mandate to protect wild and free-ranging wildlife populations. Look in future issues of *The Oasis* for updates on this important research project.

Updates

Route 234 Access Study

Park staff continue to work with planners to consider providing a public access to the park from the Route 234 corridor. The next step will be the release a draft environmental assessment (EA) to the public. The EA is a planning document and an environmental tool to evaluate alternatives to a proposed action and the impacts of each.

Once the environmental assessment is released to the public, the EA will be open to comment for a period of thirty days.



Consultants presented 3 different alternatives for an entrance off of Route 234.

Waterline Improvements Continue

Contractors have been busy as beavers as installation of twelve miles of new water lines within the park nears completion. This improvement replaces the old system of wells and springs built in the mid-1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Water service is now provided through Prince William County Service Authority.

The park will now have to cover the expense of a monthly water bill. When you visit the park, please use water wisely and report any leaks to park staff. By conserving water we improve the health of our environment, improve quality of life for the public, and help keep our user fees down. This spring, contractors will be performing clean-up and restoration work in areas where water lines were installed. We appreciate your patience.

News from the *Friends*...

The Friends of Prince William Forest Park formed in 1989 to help conserve and enhance park natural and cultural resources, monitor activities that affect the park ecosystem, and provide citizens a forum to discuss issues and decisions affecting the park. Meetings are held at the park visitor center on the second Sunday of the month 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' website.

First Annual Photo Contest Winner Announced!

The Friends of Prince William Forest Park is pleased to announce the winners of the 2006 Prince William Forest Park Photography Contest. Jaren Briggs won the first place prize with his photograph of the South Fork Quantico Creek. His photograph is featured on this year's Prince William Forest Park Annual Pass. Alma Passek's winning photographs took both second and third prize. Way to go!



The 2006 Prince William Forest Park Annual Pass showing Jaren's prize winning photograph of South Fork Quantico Creek. Photo courtesy: NPS.



Robert Williams, Past President of the Friends Group, and Park Ranger Laura Cohen present Jaren Briggs with a framed version of his photo and annual pass. Photo courtesy: NPS.

2007 Photo Contest Coming Soon!

Thank you to everyone who made this photo contest such a success this year. The theme for the 2007 photo contest will be on the cultural history of Prince William Forest Park. Get those creative juices flowing and start taking pictures today! For more information, please contact the park visitor center at 703-221-7181 or check the website at www.nps.gov/prwi.



**FRIENDS OF
PRINCE WILLIAM FOREST PARK**

Schedule of Events

(All events begin at 2 p.m. in the visitor center unless otherwise noted.)

May 7

Alien Invasion! Learn more about how invasive and non-native plants and animals threaten the park ecosystem. This program will take place at the Turkey Run Education Center and include an optional hike.

June 11

Dam Hike. Prince William Forest Park is currently rehabilitating the dam at Cabin Camp 4 Lake. Join National Park Service personnel for a behind-the-scenes look at this interesting project.

A Pleasant Makeover for a “Pleasant” Camp

Several projects are planned and already underway at Camp Pleasant, also known as Cabin Camp 4. The theater building is undergoing extensive repair and rehabilitation. The building was built in 1938 and served as both a theatre and recreation hall for the Civilian Conservation Corps, who built the cabin camps and the Office of Strategic Services. The OSS used Prince William Forest Park as a training camp for intelligence officers from 1942 to 1945. This structure (*shown right*) was built as a theater/recreation hall for the OSS recruits. Almost all other remnants of OSS activities were removed from the park at the end of World War II.

In 2005, the exterior of the facility was renovated - siding was replaced, brick support piers was rebuilt, and windows and roofing was replaced. Work continues as crews replace electrical and sewer systems. Park managers hope to conduct further improvements to the facility and envision its utilization for local events such as conferences, meetings, and theatrical or music productions. The Dining Hall in Camp Pleasant will also receive a new roof this year.



Recruits from the Office of Strategic Services recreate outside of the Camp 4 Theatre building, circa 1944. Photo courtesy: National Archives and Records Administration.

This spring, work will begin to perform necessary repairs to the camp lake. Repairs will be made to the earthen dam wall, including removing vegetation and repairing the outlet work mechanisms. Funding permitting, a build-up of sediments will be removed from the lake bottom. Park managers are coordinating this work with the Bureau of Reclamation. All work will be performed by a contractor and is scheduled to be completed in early fall.

Reader's Corner

Park staff are looking for feedback regarding articles that you would like to see in the next edition of [The Oasis](#). Perhaps you'd like to tell [Oasis](#) readers about your favorite trail or a memorable night that you had spent camping in Prince William Forest Park.

Stories, photographs, and requests for articles can be sent to PRWI_Information@nps.gov. Please include contact information with any articles or stories. Submitted articles will be reviewed for content and may be altered to accommodate space in the newsletter.



South Fork Quantico Creek. Courtesy: NPS.



If this time of year prompts you to strap on your hiking boots or stretch out a blanket to enjoy a favorite reading spot, then the bookstore in Prince William Forest Park has plenty to offer. The bookstore is located in the park visitor center and is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

Recently we've added a few wildflower books that are the perfect accompaniment to a springtime hike. [An Instant Guide to Wildflowers](#) by Pamela Foray and Cecelia Fitzsimons is a wonderful guide to carry along in your backpack. Using color and shape, this guide helps differentiate between species of flowers that might otherwise blend together.

While you are in the bookstore, ask a ranger about places to see wildflowers. The Scenic Drive is a great place to see Pink Lady's Slippers (*Cypripedium acaule*), a member of the Orchid family.

This small flower has only two leaves with a deep, pink flower that grows from a single stalk in the center. Some say that the tightly-closed flower looks like a lady's slipper, hence its whimsical name. **Please remember that picking or collecting any park resource is strictly prohibited.**

For more information about the bookstore at Prince William Forest Park, please call the visitor center. You can also purchase some books at the online bookstore at www.eparks.com.

Planning a Rustic Retreat? Think Prince William Forest Park.

Have you given any thought to renting a cabin this summer? What about renting an entire cabin camp? Prince William Forest Park administers five historic Civilian Conservation Corps-era cabin retreats. Most of the cabin camps open in mid-May, but one cabin camp (Cabin Camp 5) has heat and is open year-round. For more information on the cabins, please contact the cabin camps office at 703-221-5843 or visit www.nps.gov/prwi.



If you are planning a group event such as a birthday party, conference, or family reunion, four of the five camps accommodate 60 - 200 campers. Each camp has its own personal dining space and is conveniently located by large playfields, lakes, and pavilions. Swimming and boating permissible only with a certified lifeguard on duty.



If you prefer a weekend getaway with family and friends we can reserve you a spot in one of our 4, 6, or 10 person cabins. Each cabin contains a sleeping area, centrally located bathrooms, a grill, and picnic table.



Leave No Trace

From your back yard to your backcountry

Protecting the park is everyone's job. Whether you're visiting the park for a week-long excursion into the backcountry or to enjoy the views from the scenic drive, you can help protect Prince William Forest Park by practicing the principles of *Leave No Trace (LNT)*.

Leave No Trace is a national education program which teaches responsible use of the outdoors. The program promotes a set of seven principles which can be applied in any environment. LNT is not just rules and regulations, but rather, it is a program which challenges each individual to act upon his/her love of the outdoors. By applying the principles of LNT, you can promote stewardship in the park as well as in other places you visit. To learn more about Leave No Trace, visit their website at www.lnt.org.

Principles of Leave No Trace

Dispose of Waste Properly.

Properly dispose of all trash - Pack-it-in, pack-it-out.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors.

Leash your pet and let nature's sounds prevail.

Respect Wildlife.

Observe wildlife from a distance and do not feed or harass them.

Plan Ahead and Prepare.

Know and follow park regulations

Minimize Campfire Impacts.

Fires are allowed in pre-constructed fire grates at campgrounds and picnic areas only.

Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces. Stay on trails to avoid damaging fragile vegetation.

Leave What You Find.

All plants, animals, rocks, and artifacts are protected. Leave them as you find them.

A Fee Free Day?

April 29th has been designated as a “fee free” day by the park superintendent in celebration of several special events. Hikes and guided bike rides are scheduled in the park on that day as part of the March for Parks for the park and a countywide Family Fun Fitness day sponsored by the Prince William County Park Authority and the Prince William Regional Chamber of Commerce.

April 29th is also the culmination of National Parks Week (April 22-29). This is the perfect day to make your regular visit to Prince William Forest Park or to introduce the park to family and friends.

9:00 a.m. – Beaver Hike – Lee Watenpaugh, Vice President of Friends of Prince William Forest Park. Meet at parking lot “F.”

10:00 a.m. – Easy Off- Road Bicycle Tour – Meet at the visitor center. Hybrid or mountain bicycles suggested.

11:00 a.m. – On-Road Bicycle Tour – Paul Langlois, park Volunteer and avid cyclists. Meet at the visitor center for this moderately difficult ride. On-road bicycles and conditioned riders suggested.

To receive updates on park events and programs, join the park email listserve by calling the visitor center or by visiting our website at www.nps.gov/prwi.

National Parks America Tour

On Saturday, June 17th, Prince William Forest Park will be one of several sites in the D.C. participating in the 2006 National Parks America Tour. The National Parks America Tour is a volunteer-driven initiative designed to provide National Parks with the manpower needed to complete important projects and engage communities in the National Park experience. Sponsored by Unilever, the National Park Foundation, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., and Take Pride In America, the Tour expects projects to total more than 100,000 volunteer manpower hours to the National Park Service over four years. This is equivalent to a donation of almost \$1.7 million. For more information, please visit the National Parks Foundation website at www.nationalparks.org.

The National Parks America Tour hosts 26 events each year which provide volunteer and material resources to National Parks; these resources enable the parks to complete a myriad of projects ranging from clean-up and painting to trail restoration and installation of sustainable boardwalks. These service-to-the-land activities allow volunteers to earn service-hour credits while giving something back to America's treasures - its 390 National Parks.

After service projects are completed, the National Parks America Tour will salute America's Best — its volunteers — at the Great American Picnic, hosted by Suave® hair and body care; Snuggle® fabric softener; Hellmann's® mayonnaise; Wishbone® salad dressing; Lipton® tea; Lever 2000® and Dove® personal wash products; and Breyers® ice cream.

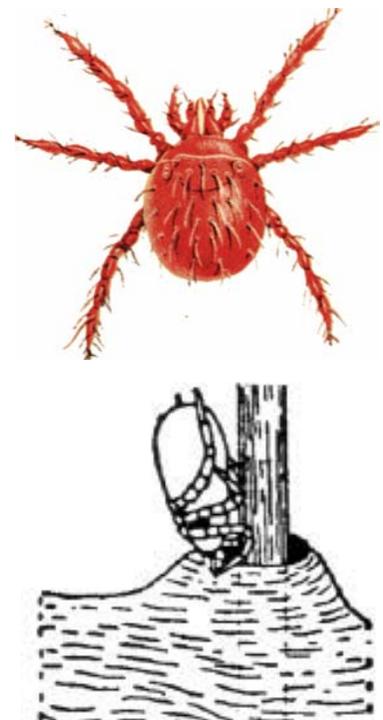
What's Bugging You? Dispelling the Myths of the Dreaded Chigger

You feel an annoying itch around your sock line. You scratch it for a while and when you look down a large red blotch appears. Well, what's bugging you is a chigger bite.

Myths abound as to how to treat yourself once you've been unlucky enough to have encountered one. Similar to ticks, chiggers are parasites, but that is where the similarities end. Smaller than a pin-head, chiggers, aka “redbugs,” are mites that feed on mammals (including people) during the brief larval stage of their lives.

Contrary to popular belief, chiggers do not burrow in your skin. They attach to the skin where clothing is tight - our ankles, waist, knees and armpits. After they are attached, they inject saliva into a skin pore, which breaks down tissue. The chigger then consumes this decomposed tissue through a filament similar to a straw. After the chigger gets its fill, it falls off its host just in time for a rather itchy red bump to form.

Care for chigger bites are the same as any bug bite: Don't scratch it and keep it clean to prevent infection. Over the counter anti-itch medications often prove effective in reducing the itch. If signs/symptoms worsen, see your doctor.





National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Got Questions? We've got answers!

*A 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.
- Tent Camping 703-221-7181
Including individual, group and backcountry.
- Cabin Camping 703-221-5843
Including group cabins and individual rentals, please leave a message.
- Travel Trailer Village 800-737-5730
RV/Trailer camping facility 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.