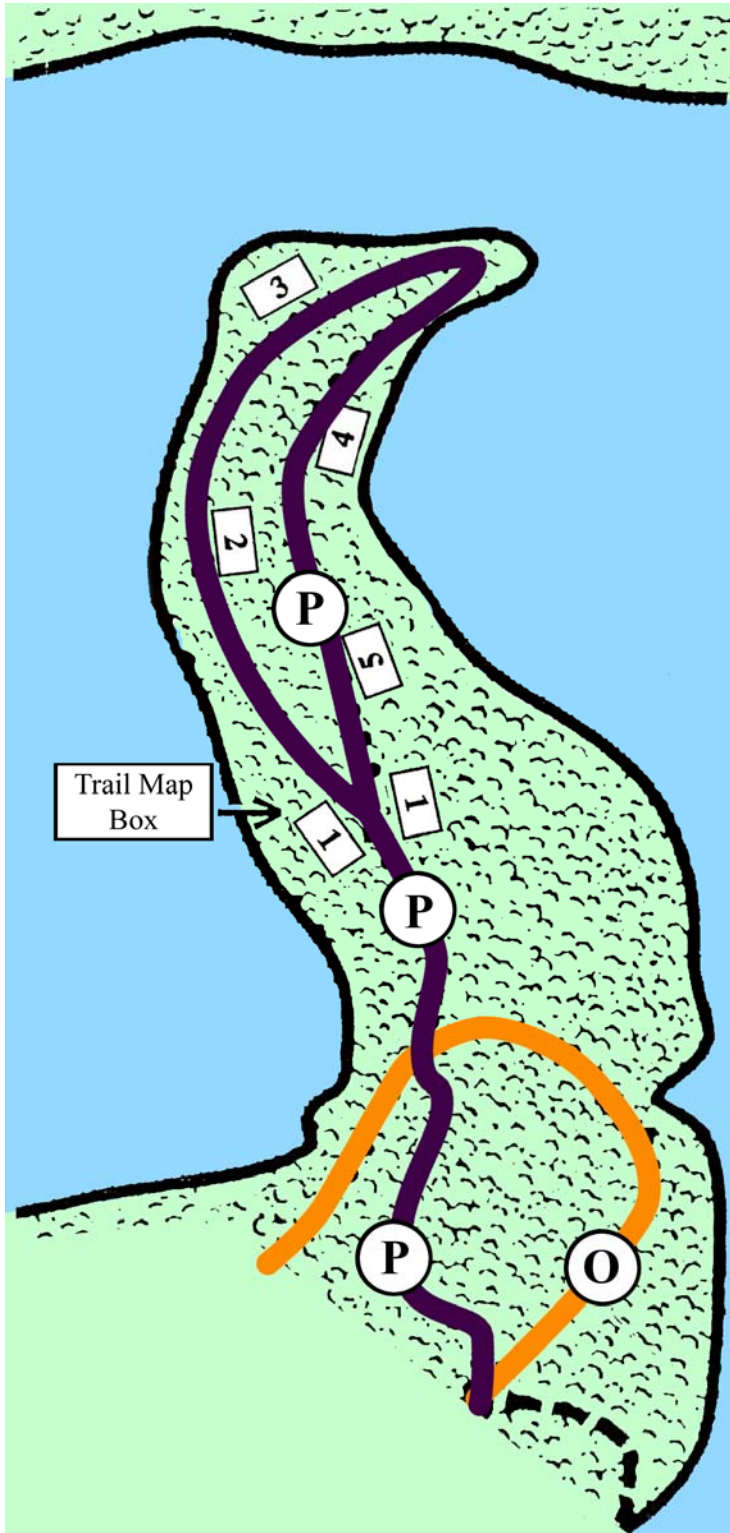# A Guide to
THE PENINSULA TRAIL

Welcome to the Peninsula Trail at Ivy Creek

Use this trail guide to more fully enjoy your walk through this diverse and beautiful habitat.

The Peninsula Trail winds through upland deciduous forest roughly following the original streambed of Ivy Creek. It returns along the edge of the main body of the Rivanna Reservoir. Round trip distance is one mile.

Some of the highlights of your walk may include sightings of mammals such as beaver; birds such as the Great Blue Heron; trees such as persimmon and American chestnut; and evergreen plants such as trailing arbutus and haircap moss.

Begin your walk by following the loop trail walking clockwise. As you come upon a bench refer to the corresponding information on the reverse side.

AS YOU WALK THE PENINSULA TRAIL, NOTE THE PLANTS AROUND YOU

Mountain laurel is a large shrub that grows densely on this trail. Blooming in May, its pinkish-white blossoms have "catapulting" stamens held in tension by the petals. Visiting bees inadvertently cause the spring-like stamens to release, spraying the insect with pollen thus facilitating cross-pollination. Every part of this shrub is poisonous to humans, including honey made from its nectar. Settlers called mountain laurel "Ivy". Ivy Creek is named for this shrub that thrives along its waterways.

Haircap moss is one of the many mosses found all along the edge of the trail here. With rain, dry mats of this two inch moss transform - to resemble vibrant miniature fir forests. Mosses, lichens and ferns are examples of non-flowering plants which reproduce by spores rather than seeds.

Trailing arbutus, a ground-hugging evergreen shrub - on the right before Bench 2 - is one of only two found at Ivy Creek. Its fragrant tubular white flowers appear in late February, among the oval, leathery, rich-green leaves.

BENCH 2 **THE PENINSULA TRAIL IS KNOWN FOR ITS ABUNDANT WILDLIFE**

Beaver - North America's largest rodents - are well adapted to a semi-aquatic life. Both the naked paddle-shaped tail and the webbed back feet aid in swimming. The eyes, ears, and nostrils are located high on the head allowing the beaver to detect danger even when swimming. Like the teeth of all rodents, the beaver's incisors continue to grow throughout its life. Their need to fell trees for food and shelter help to keep the beaver's huge chestnut-colored teeth trimmed and chisel sharp. There are two beaver lodges at Ivy Creek, one each on the east and west shores of the peninsula.

Water Birds
Look and listen for:

Great Blue Heron ►
Green Heron
Killdeer
Kingfisher
Pileated Woodpecker
Solitary Sandpiper
Spotted Sandpiper
Wood Duck

BENCH 3 **BY WATER'S EDGE, LOOK FOR…**

☼ Painted turtles perched on logs in the water
☼ Northern water snakes sunning on the bank

Directly behind Bench 3 is a persimmon tree with its mouth-puckering fruit that turns sweet by the first frost. Wildlife, especially the opposum, relish the ripe fruit. It is said that, "Most 'possum hunts end at the bottom of a 'simmon' tree.

BENCH 4 **THE RIVANNA RESERVOIR**

This is a nice view of the reservoir, created in 1966, when the South Fork of the Rivanna River was dammed - submerging the historic Hydraulic Mill. Erosion, both natural and from urban development, is a continuing problem in the reservoir as evidenced by its brownish color after a hard rain. As you walk, notice the "islands" formed in recent years by silt deposition.

BENCH 5 **THE PENINSULA TRAIL HAS SOME INTERESTING SPECIMEN TREES**

Bigtooth Aspen: 200 feet up on the left is the remnants of a large bigtooth aspen -- the only one found at the Ivy Creek Natural Area. A favorite of beaver, resident beaver discovered this savory specimen several years ago.
American Chestnut: Once the dominant tree of the Virginia forest, American chestnut were decimated by a fungal blight brought in nearly a century ago -- yet chestnut continue to re-sprout, eventually dying back again from the blight. Look for a young chestnut sprout along the inside of the trail.

photos by Stowe Keller