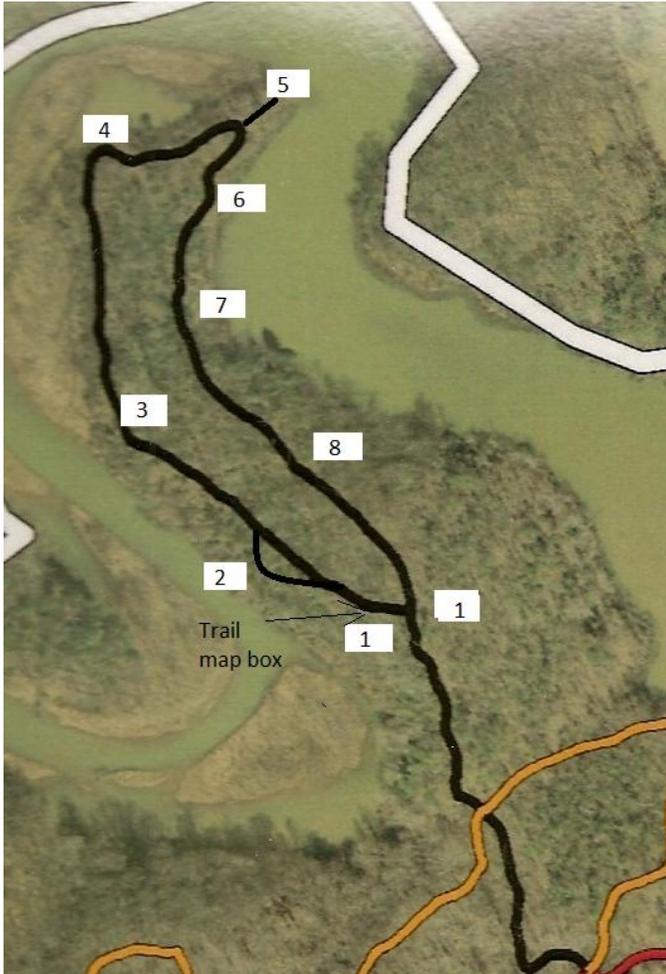


Peninsula Trail Loop

(Please return this flyer to this box when you have completed the tour)



To reach this map box and the peninsula trail loop, you have already followed the peninsula trail from its start at the bottom of the map where the red trail, the orange trail, and the peninsula trail (in black) meet. The 1 mile, guided walk begins at this box. The numbered benches on the map refer to the descriptions that follow.

Bench 1: This is the beginning of the Peninsula Trail loop. Notice how the woods become more open from here to the tip of the peninsula. Thin, sandy and rocky soil, active beaver lodges, and occasional flooding and silting of the reservoir have worked together to create several unique habitats for a number of plants not found elsewhere in the Natural Area. Keep a lookout for standing dead

trees that were killed when girdled by beavers. These trees are good habitat for woodpeckers. You may notice other trees, still living, that have a protective barrier of wire mesh to shield them from beavers. A few years ago, the beavers abandoned their lodges and moved on, now paying only infrequent visits. As a result, this area may not remain so open in the future.

As you walk the trail, notice the plants around you. Mountain laurel is a large shrub that grows densely throughout the peninsula. Blooming in May, its pinkish-white blossoms have “catapulting” stamens held in tension by petals. Visiting bees inadvertently cause the spring-like stamens to release, spraying the insect with pollen, thus facilitating cross-pollination. Honey made from its nectar is poisonous to humans.

Bench 2: This memorial bench, on a small side trail loop, has a good view of the now flooded, original streambed of Ivy Creek.



Look for water birds such as Canada geese, great blue herons, **mallards** and other ducks, kingfishers, and osprey. Also notice the wire that has been wrapped around the bench’s back supports after one was gnawed by beavers.

Bench 3: Several showy wildflowers can be seen growing on the uphill (eastern) side of the trail in this area. In March, **trailing arbutus** bears clusters of tiny white flowers above the fleshy, evergreen leaves. In June, for a very brief period, you may see the bi-colored, cream and pink, pea-like blossoms of goat’s rue. Later in the summer, the bell-shaped, full-tubed, bright yellow blooms of false foxglove adorn the area.



Bench 4: The view here is of a small pond, created as silt continues to be deposited near the tip of the peninsula. In mid-summer look for the huge, pink, hibiscus-like blooms of the bushy, herbaceous **swamp mallow** on the far side of the pond. There is also an elderberry bush growing near the bench, which bears flat clusters of small, black berries in the late summer. The fruit is enjoyed by many song birds and mammals including rabbits, red foxes, ground hogs, and other rodents. Watch for tracks.



Bench 5: This bench is at the end of a short spur trail to the water. Here you have a view of a branch of the Reservoir, which was created in 1966 when the South Fork of the Rivanna River was dammed. It is also a good place to look for fish, water birds, and **turtles**, such as cooters and painted turtles. Notice the large tree on your left closest to the water. This is a surprisingly large specimen of musclewood (*Carpinus caroliniana*), which is an understory tree and commonly much smaller.



Bench 6: In summer, notice the large spikes of blue flowers growing in the water. These are

pickerel weed. Also notice the three young persimmon trees to the right of the bench. Persimmons bear male and female flowers on separate trees. These are all female trees and are often loaded with fruit in the fall. Raccoons, opossums, and other wildlife relish the fruits as do humans. Under-ripe persimmons are mouth-puckering. Be sure to wait until they are soft to try them.

Bench 7: As you admire this view of the reservoir, notice the pine tree to the right of the bench. The needles, mostly in bundles of three and sometimes sprouting in tufts from the main trunk, help to distinguish this as a



pitch pine. It also has short, stout, “armed” cones (with sharp spiny tips to the scales).

Bench 8: Note the group of three large **chestnut oak** trunks with deeply furrowed bark in the woods to the right and uphill of this bench. The tree’s



name comes from its leaves, which somewhat resemble those of American chestnut, but without the points. American chestnuts were decimated by a fungal blight in the early 20th century. However, they continue to re-sprout from old root

systems, the sprouts then dying back from blight. Look for a young **American chestnut** sprout along the inside of the trail.

