Boyd Big Tree Preserve Conservation Area

The 1,068-acre Boyd Big Tree Preserve Conservation Area straddles Blue Mountain. The large trees of the area are home to deep forest birds, especially warblers. Summer through autumn, the old field blooms with wildflowers, particularly butterfly weed. In late July and early August, butterflies and field birds flock to the field.



Red-spotted newt

Directions

GPS DD: GPS: Lat. 40.35907 Long. -76.86732

From US 322 take the PA 443/Fishing Creek Exit. Turn east onto Fishing Creek Valley Road, PA 443. The conservation area is 2.6 miles on the right.

Learn, Experience, Connect

Boyd Big Tree Preserve Conservation Area offers a wide variety of programs from April through October. Many programs feature wildlife, forest, and field ecology.

Curriculum-based environmental education programs are available to schools and organized groups. Call the park office to schedule a group program. A variety of professional development workshops are offered for teachers.

For more information on programs and other learning experiences, contact the park office or explore the online calendar of events. https://events.dcnr.pa.gov



What is a Conservation Area?

This designation is for land donated to the Bureau of State Parks and managed for the purposes of preserving open space, conserving natural resources, and providing opportunities for passive, non-motorized, low density outdoor recreation and environmental education activities. A conservation area is characterized as a large area with few improvements and no through roads. Recreational facilities and development are minimal. Conservation areas are used for low impact recreation, serve as outdoor classrooms, and act as examples of land stewardship and resource management.

Only passive outdoor recreational activities will be allowed. Horseback riding, biking, and motorized equipment, with the exception of official use equipment and accommodations for people with disabilities, are prohibited.

Recreational Opportunities

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING: All of Pond Loop Trail and portions of Spring and East Loop trails are recommended for cross-country skiing.



HUNTING AND FIREARMS: About 800 acres are open to hunting, trapping, and the training of dogs during established seasons. Common game species are black bear, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, ruffed grouse, cottontail rabbit, and squirrels.

Hunting woodchucks, also known as groundhogs, is prohibited. Dog training is only permitted from the day following Labor Day through March 31 in designated hunting areas. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Pennsylvania Game Commission rules and regulations apply. Contact the Memorial Lake State Park office for ADA-accessible hunting information.

Use extreme caution with firearms at all times. Other visitors use the park during hunting seasons. Firearms and archery equipment used for hunting may be uncased and ready for use only in authorized hunting areas during hunting seasons. In areas not open to hunting or during non-hunting seasons, firearms and archery equipment shall be kept in the owner's vehicle or enclosed trailer. Exceptions include law enforcement officers and individuals with a valid *Pennsylvania License to Carry Firearms* are authorized to carry a firearm concealed on their person while they are within a state park.





Trash Disposal and Recycling

Boyd Big Tree Preserve Conservation Area participates in a carry-in/carry out trash disposal program for small parks. There are no trash collection or recycling facilities. Visitors are asked to limit the number of disposable items brought to the park and take all trash and recyclables home.

History

Alexander Boyd (1926 – 2013) was president of a successful real estate business. In 1999, Mr. Boyd donated this land to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to be set aside for the perpetual management and protection of big trees, and as an environmental education study area. It was Mr. Boyd's hope that the conservation area would be utilized for passive recreational activities that he had once enjoyed, like cross-country skiing, hiking, and dog walking.

Near the entrance of the conservation area is an old cemetery shaded by trees. Stroh's Cemetery is a historic part of Fishing Creek Valley, with burials dating back to 1815. Initially, this cemetery was a family graveyard. In time, it transitioned into an affordable cemetery for residents in the community. Though many of the headstones are now missing, there are over 240 graves, including soldiers from the American Revolution.

Protect and Preserve our Parks

Please make your visit safe and enjoyable. Obey all posted rules and regulations and respect fellow visitors and the resources of the park.

- Be prepared and bring the proper equipment. Natural areas may possess hazards. Your personal safety and that of your family are your responsibility.
- Alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Because uncontrolled pets may chase wildlife or frighten visitors, pets must be physically controlled, attended at all times, and on a leash, caged, or crated. Electronic fences and leashes are prohibited.
- Do your part to keep wildlife wild! Enjoy wildlife from a safe distance and do not feed or approach wild animals.
- Please park only in designated areas and obey all traffic regulations.

Natural History

The conservation area's many wooded trails offer good chances for seeing wildlife, such as white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, squirrels, woodland songbirds, and black bears.

Summer fields abound with pollinating insects, including monarch butterflies, and cavity-nesting songbirds, like eastern bluebirds and tree swallows. Please observe all wildlife and nest boxes from a safe distance.

OLD GROWTH FOREST

About 80 acres of old growth forest are in a small valley on the west boundary of the conservation area. Two creeks supply substantial moisture that fuels the growth of at least ten species of trees including tulip poplar, eastern hemlock, sassafras, birches, and oaks. Several oaks are estimated to be 120 years old. Mosses, club mosses, princess pines, ferns, and a range of fungi and mushrooms flourish in this forest.

POLLINATOR FIELD

The 45-acre field at the entrance to the conservation area is a home to butterflies and field birds like eastern meadowlarks. It also contains many invasive plants which inhibits the number of animals and plants that can call the field their home. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is partnering with the Pennsylvania Game Commission on a multi-year habitat management project. To be done in phases, the strategic rehabilitation of these fields into native plant meadows will create significantly higher levels of biodiversity that will benefit a multitude of insects, songbirds, and wildlife species.

HAWK MIGRATION

As the southernmost ridge of the Appalachian Mountains, Blue Mountain is a vital pathway for migrating raptors. Northwest winds strike Blue Mountain, deflecting into updrafts that allow birds to save energy on their migration south.

The most common raptors that migrate through the conservation area are broad-winged, sharp-shinned, Cooper's, red-shouldered, and red-tailed hawks. Less commonly seen are bald and golden eagles, kestrels, goshawks, and osprey. Raptors migrate from September through early December.



Red-tailed hawk

AMERICAN CHESTNUT

American chestnut trees once made up one quarter of all trees in the Appalachian Mountains. Their nuts were an important food source for many animals, as well as humans. With trunks that could be five feet in diameter and very straight, chestnuts were also an important lumber tree.

In 1904, a chestnut blight from Asia began infecting American chestnuts. The American chestnut went functionally extinct within 45 years. The fungus attacks the trunk of the tree, but not the roots, so young trees sprout but become infected and die by the time they reach about 15 feet tall.

Near the main parking lot is a fenced enclosure of American chestnut trees. The American Chestnut Foundation is cross-breeding American chestnut trees with the blight-resistant Chinese chestnuts, to create a fungal-resistant American chestnut. More information on this research can be found through the American Chestnut Foundation.



GEOLOGY

The conservation area is on the southern edge of the Appalachian Mountains, which were raised up by the collision of the continents of North America and Africa. These mountain-building events, called orogenies, folded and bent the rock layers and lifted them up. The Appalachian Mountains were once very tall, but 220 million years of erosion have worn them down, leaving behind wide, flat valleys, and short, sinuous mountains of hard rock.

The bedrock under the conservation area is tilted and composed of different types of rock of different ages, which dictate the current landscape.

The sandstone on the southern border of the conservation area to the top of Blue Mountain was laid down 430 million years ago in a shallow sea near the beach. These hard rocks resist erosion and, today, are the top of the mountain.

The soft shales and thin sandstone on the north side of the mountain were laid down in deeper water and are composed of the shells of sea creatures. The red shale at the bottom of the mountain was created when the area was slightly above water. The bedrock under the valley of the northern border of the conservation area was once under water and is composed of soft shales and siltstones and were laid down 380 million years ago.

A hike on Pond Trail to Janie Trail can reveal the transition from fertile valley soil to rocky, sparse ridgetop soil and crosses 50 million years of bedrock formation.

Nearby Attractions

Information on nearby attractions is available from Visit Hershey and Harrisburg. www.VisitHersheyHarrisburg.org

Straddling Peters Mountain, the 803-acre **Joseph E. Ibberson Conservation Area** is dominated by large hardwood trees. This block of nearly unbroken forest is a haven for wildlife like forest warblers and other deep woods animals. A main attraction to the conservation area is the elaborate trail system. Contact Memorial Lake State Park Office at 717-865-6470.

Along PA 443, about 16 miles to the east, is the 231-acre **Memorial Lake State Park.** Established in honor of Pennsylvania National Guard soldiers who served in World War I and World War II, the park offers boating and fishing on its 85-acre lake, as well as hiking, picnicking, and wildlife viewing. 717-865-6470

The 3,520-acre **Swatara State Park** consists of rolling fields and woodlands. The scenic Swatara Creek meanders the length of the park and is surrounded by forests and wetlands that support a diversity of wildlife. Contact Memorial Lake State Park Office at 717-865-6470.

Harrisburg, the historic capital of Pennsylvania, has many attractions, including: Pennsylvania State Museum, State Capitol, Governor's Mansion, Whitaker Center for Science and the Arts, National Civil War Museum, and more.

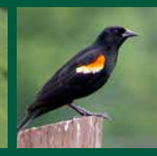
A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide for

Boyd Big Tree Preserve Conservation Area









Pennsylvania
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources



Boyd Big Tree Preserve Conservation Area
c/o Memorial Lake State Park
18 Boundary Road
Grantville, PA 17028
717-865-6470
MemorialSP@pa.gov

Make online reservations at www.pa.gov/state-parks or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday.

www.pa.gov/state-parks

PAStateParks

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Access for People with Disabilities

This symbol indicates facilities and activities that are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible for people with disabilities. This publication text is available in alternative formats.

If you need an accommodation to participate in park activities due to a disability, please contact the park you plan to visit.

In an Emergency

Call 911 and contact a park employee to summon medical, fire, or safety professionals.

Call or text 988 to contact a crisis center counselor during a mental health or substance abuse crisis.

Directions to the nearest hospitals are posted on bulletin boards.

Nearest Hospitals

Penn State Health Hampden Medical Center
2200 Good Hope Road
Enola, PA 17025
717-981-9000

UPMC West Shore
1995 Technology Parkway
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050
223-285-8942

Hiking 12 miles

The Boyd Big Tree Preserve Conservation Area boasts an extensive hiking trail system which includes old growth forest and a hike to the top of Blue Mountain.

Coach Trail

0.9 mile | More difficult hiking | Connector trail | Yellow blazes

A great trail to watch and listen for warblers in the spring and early summer, Coach Trail follows the base of Blue Mountain. It connects Janie Trail and Pond Loop Trail and Creek Loop by an unnamed connector trail

Creek Loop

0.7 mile | More difficult hiking | Loop Trail | Blue blazes

In the west side of the park, Creek Loop follows a creek and winds through an American beech tree grove. The trail can be reached from a trailhead on Frog Hollow Road or from connections with Old Growth and Pond Loop trails.

East Loop Trail

2.1 miles | Most difficult hiking | Loop trail | Green blazes

From Spring Trail, East Loop Trail runs toward the eastern portion of the conservation area and makes a large loop. Several smaller loops can be made by using Mockingbird Trail. Several views to the north into Fishing Creek Valley are along the trail.

Janie Trail

3.9 miles | Most difficult hiking | Out-and-back trail | Red blazes

Janie Trail is the longest and most challenging trail in the conservation area. From Pond Loop Trail or Spring Trail, Janie Trail ascends the north side of Blue Mountain and follows along the top of the ridgeline with scenic views to the south. Hikers can continue on to the parking lot on Blue Mountain Parkway, or travel down switchbacks and loop back to Janie Trail. Conditions vary from a gently sloping, flat, 8-foot-wide surface to a very steep, narrow, rocky, single track on its most eastern section.

Mockingbird Trail

0.4 mile | Easiest hiking | Connector trail | White blazes

A connector trail within the loop of East Loop Trail, Mockingbird Trail can be used to create different loops and shortcuts in the east side of the conservation area.

Old Growth Trail

0.5 mile | More difficult hiking | Connector trail | Orange blazes

From a trailhead on the west side of the conservation area, or from connections with Creek Loop, Old Growth Trail parallels a creek and loops through poplar trees.

Pond Loop Trail

1.2 miles | Easiest hiking | Loop trail | Pink blazes

Trailhead amenities: non-flush restrooms, seasonal potable water, benches

From the parking lot, the trail skirts the spring-fed pond which is a popular watering hole for wildlife. The pond is a haven for a number of amphibian species during the early spring and summer months. Many trails connect with Pond Loop Trail.

Ridge Trail

0.4 mile | Easiest hiking | Out-and-back trail | No blazes

This trail branches off the south side of the loop portion of Janie Trail, continuing along the ridge of Blue Mountain.

South Trail

0.1 mile | Easiest hiking | Out-and-back trail | No blazes

This trail branches off the south side of the loop portion of Janie Trail.

Spring Trail

1 mile | Easiest hiking | Connector trail | Purple blazes

The trail provides a nice cross-section of the conservation area and connects to Pond Loop, East Loop, and Janie trails. This is an excellent trail to see some of the area's largest trees. These second-growth oaks, hickories, and beeches could become future old growth stands.



