Joseph E. Ibberson Conservation Area

Straddling Peters Mountain, the 836-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 interconnected trail system.

Directions

GPS DD: Lat. 40.44246 Long. -76.85918

From PA 322/22, take PA 225 north for 4.5 miles. Just before entering the village of Matamoras, turn right on Camp Hebron Road and follow it for 4.5 miles. The conservation area is on the right.

Spend the Day

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING: Cross-country skiing is permitted on all trails within the conservation area. Evergreen, Pine, and Old Sawmill trails are recommended for cross-country skiing.

HUNTING AND FIREARMS: About 780 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, eastern 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.

Learn, Experience, Connect

Joseph E. Ibberson Conservation Area offers a wide variety of programs from April through October. Gain a better understanding of the park's natural, cultural, and historical resources through guided outdoor recreation, hands-on activities, walks, special events, and other programs.

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

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



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.

Joseph E. Ibberson 1917-2011



Ibberson receiving an award from Governor Ridge

After graduating from Yale in 1948, Joseph Ibberson was recruited and hired by the Department of Forests and Waters, Bureau of Forestry. His task was to develop the first forest management plans for the 2 million acres of Pennsylvania state forest land. By 1955, all of the forests were mapped and had management plans.

In 1977, Ibberson retired from the Bureau of Forestry but continued to actively tree farm his own property and serve as a forestry consultant. That same year, he received the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Wildlife Conservation Award. In 1998, he received the American Forest Foundation's Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year award for Pennsylvania, and the following year, received their Outstanding Management of Resources Award for the northeastern states.

Ibberson continued to work with landowners across the Commonwealth, participating in the conservation areas program until his death in 2011.

The Conservation Area

In 1962, Ibberson began buying land to create a tree farm on which he practiced various forms of forest management. On December 9, 1998, he donated the land to the Commonwealth. The stated purpose of the donation was to "recognize the need of people for healthful recreation and a place where they can learn about the environment on which they depend for quality of life." It became the first conservation area in the Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks. Upon Ibberson's death, an additional 450 acres of land were donated to the conservation area.

I continue to search for new ideas to effectively preserve the natural resources of Pennsylvania, while sustaining recreational use and the harvesting of wood products. - Joseph E. Ibberson

Natural History



A Changing Forest

Joseph E. Ibberson Conservation Area has a rich assortment of tree species, including red maple, white pine, eastern hemlock, black gum, and sassafras. The area is also abundant in many varieties of oak and hickory. This diversity of trees produces food for white-tailed deer, squirrels, ruffed grouse, wild turkeys, black bears, and many species of birds. The current forest is a result of many changes over the centuries.

Prior to European settlement, the forest was likely composed primarily of large white pines and eastern hemlocks. This dark, quiet forest quickly fell to the logger's ax. The forest that regrew was likely similar to the forest of today but also included American chestnuts. The impressive American chestnut dominated the forests of Pennsylvania until the early 1900s when a fungal blight killed most of the trees. Occasional American chestnuts still sprout from old stumps but only survive for a few years before succumbing to the blight.

In more recent years, defoliation of the deciduous trees by spongy moths has let sunlight reach the forest floor, allowing white pine seeds to germinate. Over time, some of these white pine seedlings may grow to surpass the deciduous trees, making the forest resemble the previous coniferous forest.

Geology

The conservation area is in the Ridge and Valley Province of the Appalachian Mountains, which is characterized by long, parallel mountain ridges and wide, flat valleys. The mountains arose during collisions of the continents of North America and Africa. The Appalachian Mountains were once very tall, but 220 million years of erosion have worn away the mountain peaks, leaving behind short, steep mountains of hard rock.

Most of the bedrock of Peters Mountain is composed of hard sandstone tilted at a steep angle. Much of Powells Valley is underlain by a combination of soft rocks like shales, siltstones, and sandstones, creating rich soils that are excellent for agriculture.





History

The land of the conservation area has been inhabited for over 11,000 years. The nearby Shoop Site is one of the largest and oldest Paleo-Indian sites in eastern North America. Unlike most Paleo-Indian sites which are found in the floodplain, the Shoop Site is unusual in that it is near a hilltop. Archaeologists theorize that the Paleo-Indians were hunting migrating caribou. Interestingly, most of the stone tools found at the site were made from stone found 250 miles north, in New York. Thousands of artifacts from the Shoop Site are exhibited in the Smithsonian Institution and the Pennsylvania State Museum. The Shoop Site is on private land and has no public access.

Subsequent inhabitants used the Shoop Site as a temporary shelter or hunting camp. The Susquehannocks controlled the land until it was taken by the Haudenosaunee, who eventually sold the land to the William Penn.

The names of the earliest European settlers persist in the names of features in the area. Peters Mountain is named for Peter Allen who built a stone home on the south side of the mountain in 1726. North of the conservation area is Powells Creek and Powells Valley, named for Margaret Powell who owned the land at the creek mouth in the 1760s.

A portion of Victoria Trail passes through the southeastern corner of the conservation area and intersects the Appalachian Trail. The Victoria Trail connected the nearby Victoria Iron Furnace to some of its timber supply. The furnace was on the south side of Peters Mountain in Clarks Valley and was in operation from 1830 to 1857. The land was repeatedly logged to supply wood to produce charcoal for the furnace. The last steam sawmill in Dauphin County, Bakers Sawmill, was within the land of the conservation area.



Scarlet tanager

Nearby Attractions



Boyd Big Tree Preserve

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

North of Harrisburg is **Fort Hunter Mansion and Park**, which was a settlement fort in the 1750s during the French and Indian War. This 40-acre Dauphin County park has playgrounds, picnic areas, and tours of the mansion. www.FortHunter.org

One mountain range to the south is **Boyd Big Tree Preserve Conservation Area**. Large trees of numerous species are scattered throughout the area, which provide habitat for deep forest birds, especially warblers. The large field is filled with blooming butterfly weed in late-July and early-August and attracts many butterflies.

Along PA 443, about 32 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.

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 other attractions.

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.
- Soliciting and posting signs are prohibited without approval from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Trash Disposal and Recycling

Joseph E. Ibberson 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.



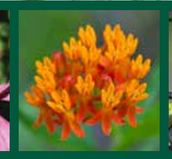
Red-spotted newt

A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide for

Joseph E. Ibberson Conservation Area









Pennsylvania
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources



Joseph E. Ibberson 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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2025

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 hospital 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

JOSEPH E. IBBERSON CONSERVATION AREA

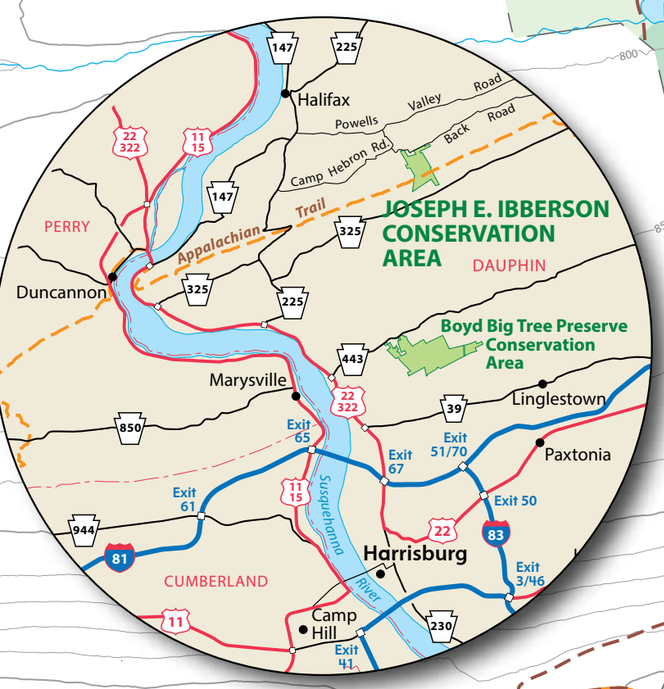
N

Camp Hebron Road
To Matamoras
To PA 225
Back Road
Powell Creek
Back Road
MAIN ENTRANCE
Back Road

- Water
- Restrooms - Non-flush
- Information Kiosk
- Education Pavilion
- Cross-country Skiing Recommended
- Appalachian Trail
- Trails - Hiking
- Parking - Unpaved
- Gate
- Road - Unpaved
- Road - Paved
- State Park - No Hunting
- State Park - Hunting
- State Park - Boundary
- State Game Lands

900 — 850 — CONTOURS ARE ON 50 FT. INTERVALS

Whitetail Trail
Evergreen Trail
Turkey Foot Trail
Evergreen Trail
Victoria Trail
Evergreen Trail
Rock Trail
Foot Trail
Rock Trail
Old Saw Mill Trail
Old Saw Mill Trail
Whitetail Trail
Rock Trail
Turkey Foot Trail
Victoria Trail
Star Intersection
Rock Trail
Pond
Old Saw Mill Trail
Whitetail Trail
Connector Trail
Victoria Trail
Whitetail Trail
Victoria Trail
Whitetail Trail
Appalachian Trail
PETERS MOUNTAIN
Victoria Trail
Whitetail Trail
STATE GAME LANDS 211
Victoria Trail
To PA 225



100 0 100 200 METERS

400 0 400 800 FEET

Rev. 8/6/2025

Hiking: 7.8 miles

The trails in the conservation area travel through forests, by streams, and up, down, and even over Peters Mountain. Wear appropriate footwear when hiking. A hike down a trail means that a hike up is required. Well planned hiking trips utilize different trails to provide an extended hiking experience and avoids a steep return climb.



Appalachian Trail

0.6 mile in the park | More difficult hiking | Point-to-point trail | White blazes
Recreations permitted: hiking

The famous, national scenic trail extends 2,000+ miles from Springer Mountain in northern Georgia to Mount Katahdin in central Maine. A short section of this famed trail traverses the conservation area. The Appalachian Trail is reached from Victoria and Whitetail trails.

Evergreen Trail

1 mile | Easiest hiking | Loop trail | Green blazes
Recreations permitted: hiking, cross-country skiing recommended
Trailhead amenities: non-flush restrooms, seasonal potable water

This trail begins adjacent to the parking lot and restrooms and is a nice triangular loop that connects to many other trails. At the Star Intersection this trail descends back to the trailhead. Evergreen Trail is good for cross-country skiing and wildlife watching.

Old Saw Mill Trail

0.8 mile | Easiest hiking | Loop trail | Yellow blazes
Recreations permitted: hiking, cross-country skiing recommended

With trailheads on Evergreen Trail, Old Sawmill Trail encircles the old location of Baker's Sawmill, the last steam sawmill in Dauphin County, and loops near the Pond. This is a nice trail for cross-country skiing.

Rock Trail

0.6 mile | More difficult hiking | Loop trail | Orange blazes
Recreations permitted: hiking, cross-country skiing recommended

Rock Trail splits at the Star intersection and meets near Victoria Trail. Portions of the trail can be rocky.

Turkey Foot Trail

0.6mile | Easiest hiking | Connector trail | Purple blazes
Recreations permitted: hiking, cross-country skiing recommended

A great trail for making loops with other trails, Turkey Foot Trail can be accessed from Evergreen Trail and Victoria Trail, and crosses Rock Trail twice.

Victoria Trail

2.3 miles | More difficult hiking | Out-and-back trail | Blue blazes
Recreations permitted: hiking

This rugged footpath crosses over Peters Mountain and spans the conservation area. With trailheads by the Education Pavilion and on PA 325, the trail crosses the Appalachian Trail and intersects several other trails.

Whitetail Trail

2 miles | Most difficult hiking | Connector trail | Red blazes
Recreations permitted: hiking
Trailhead amenities: benches

Whitetail Trail begins on the north side of Peters Mountain, ascends to the top of the mountain via switchbacks and stone stairs, crosses the Appalachian Trail, winds partway down the south side of the mountain and ends at the Victoria Trail. A nice view of Powells Valley can be seen from a stone bench on the north side of the mountain. This is a good trail for viewing wildlife.