

CLAY PIT PONDS



STATE PARK PRESERVE

DEC 2022 THROUGH FEB 2023 | VOL. IV



Park Updates

New Boardwalk !

Thanks to Eagle Scout Steve Radice, and the help of Troop 25, the Green Trail has a new boardwalk to tread safely over.



Winter Sports on the Trails

When it snows, the horse trails open up for people to snowshoe and cross country ski!



Welcome!

Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve is a 265-acre natural area on the southwest shore of Staten Island. It is New York City's first and only State Park Preserve. Once the site of clay-mining, the Preserve today contains a mixture of unique habitats such as wetlands, fields, sandy pine barrens, spring-fed streams, and woodlands. These habitats serve as a terminal point for some northern and southern species. Evidences of the Lenni-Lenape Indians, European colonization and the Free Black settlement of Sandy Ground provide a rich cultural history.

A mixture of free nature programs are offered for the general public, school groups, and other private groups. Visitors may picnic or hike on designated trails. Visitors may also bring their own horse and ride on over 5 miles of bridle paths. **Please note that pets are not allowed.**

Keep Wildlife Wild - Don't Feed Them

WRITTEN BY ANNIE SMIGELSKY, ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATOR

In the winter, we might think there is less food for animals to eat. And while, yes, this is true, this doesn't mean people need to step in to help them out. Feeding wildlife can only do more harm than good (with the exception of bird feeders, see pg 2). It is also illegal to feed deer, bear, or moose in New York State.

These animals have a digestive system that has adapted to less food during this time of the year. Not only that, feeding wildlife leads to numerous problems for both the animal and humans. Animals considered dangerous become attracted to human food, and will become used to human presence, increasing safety concerns. Vehicle collisions rise as animals are enticed closer to homes and roads. Disease spreads faster as animals congregate in areas, as well. So luring these creatures in with food increases the risk of contamination and spread. Illnesses like Chronic Wasting Disease in deer are very difficult to eliminate and even pose the risk of spreading to humans -- something called zoonosis.

Here on Staten Island, there is an overpopulation of white-tailed deer which has led to the destruction of natural habitat. Feeding the deer exacerbates this issue, can lead to malnutrition, and causes them to gather closer to roads increasing the risk of car crashes. Please, respect wildlife along with their homes and appreciate them from a distance. Thank you!

Kathy Hochul
Governor

Eric Kulleseid
Commissioner

Leslie Wright
NYC Regional Director



**New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation**

Feeding Birds in the Winter



WRITTEN BY ITZAMAR DURAN, SCA ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATOR

The arrival of cold weather means many resources that wildlife need to survive become scarce. Some animals, like the groundhog, have adapted to survive winter by going into full hibernation, or just “sleeping” through it. Wouldn't it be nice to just be able to sleep through the hard parts of life, and wake up when it's all over? As for birds, many will migrate south to escape the cold winter and find more food. However, some stay here year-round, such as the Northern Cardinal, Black-capped Chickadee, and the Red-bellied Woodpecker. Their metabolism slows down to conserve energy and body fat, looking for any remaining food they can find. The simple fact is: animals either adapt or they go wherever there is food and space.

So, what if there is no food? In the winter, we can provide food for birds with bird feeders! While feeding wildlife is typically not advised, it has been proven that providing birds this food gives them a higher chance of surviving the scarce winter especially in areas where habitat destruction has limited native plants. This is unlike deer, where food given by humans disrupts their digestive system and makes them sick. Many of us already have bird feeders outside our windows. Did you know that your bird feeders can actually help make new scientific discoveries? New York's own Cornell University created Project Feederwatch, a community science effort that encourages you to count the birds you see visit your backyard. This data is used to learn information about the distribution and abundance of birds across the United States and Canada. They send you a kit on how to identify birds and submit the data. It is a great way to observe wildlife behaviors and learn new birds, while also making a huge difference in the scientific world! Just be sure to remember to regularly clean your feeders to prevent the spread of disease! Learn more by visiting feederwatch.org.



Last Quarter's Highlights

Every year, Girl Scouts nationwide celebrate the outdoors on the weekend of September 10 and 11 for Girl Scouts Love State Parks. Our local scouts showed some love to our park and gathered 6 bags of invasive wineberry and squished over 150 invasive Spotted Lanternflies!




Our 8th annual Harvest Fest was a huge success this year! We were so happy to see new and old faces join us for all our fall themed activities. We appreciate the staff and community for coming together and making great events like this possible!

Events

All programs are **free!** All participants must follow state COVID guidelines. Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult. Outdoor programs are subject to cancellation due to inclement weather, call for updates. Please dress tick-safe for each outdoor program by wearing hiking boots or sneakers, tall socks pulled up over pantlegs, and bug spray. Program size may be limited, registration recommended: visit claypitponds.eventbrite.com.

All Season Long


Tot Time Tuesdays

Every Tuesday · 10am-11:30am · Ages 0-4 · 

Explore a different nature theme each week during this indoor free play group. A guided story time begins at 10:30am, followed by a short hike at 11am, weather permitting.

December

Astronomy Talk: Extraterrestrial Life

Saturday, Dec 3rd · 1pm-3pm · All Ages · 


NASA Solar System Ambassador Professor Harold Kozak is coming back to Clay Pit! Take a close look at the search for life in outer space. Participants will receive NASA gifts for attending!

Homeschoolers: Invasive Species

Thursday, Dec 8th · 10am-12pm · Ages 10+

In this month's homeschool program: learn about invasive species and help us remove them. Includes a ~1-mile hike. Dress for the outdoors!


Annual Wreath Making Workshop

Saturday, Dec 10th · 11am-1pm · Adults · 

Make your own wreath to take home, just in time for the holidays! Bring your own base and decorations if you have any! Supplies are limited.

Registration required


GrowNYC Stop 'N' Swap - **Children's Clothes and Toy Swap**

Wednesday, Dec 14th · All ages · 

Donations: 11am-2pm · Swap Event: 12pm-3pm

Donate and swap gently used children's items including clothing ages 0-10, toys, and games of all kinds before the holiday gift-giving season. You don't need to bring anything to take anything!

Winter Solstice Fun!

Saturday, Dec 17th · 1pm - 3pm · All Ages · 

Celebrate the start of the winter season with us doing a mix of activities and crafts! Learn about what these changes mean for our surrounding environment!

January


12th Annual First Day Hike

Sunday, January 1st · 1pm-3pm · All ages

Spend New Year's Day the right way—in the woods! An educator will lead you on a 2-mile hike on our trails and point out various wildlife.

Winter Clothing Drive

Tuesday, Jan 10th through

Saturday, Jan 14th · 9am-4:30pm · 


Drop in to the Nature Interpretive Center during this time to donate your old winter clothes and give them a new home!

Maple TapFest

Saturday, Jan 21st · 10am-12pm OR 1pm-3pm · Ages 6+

Learn how to tap maple trees during this volunteer event! We will be tapping every tree we will use for the entire 2023 maple syrup season. Includes a 1-mile hike.

Maple Syrup Saturdays

Saturday, Jan 28th · 1pm-3pm · All ages · 

Learn the process of making maple syrup from tap to table! We will hike up to 1-mile to reach the maple trees to demonstrate tapping and to collect sap.



February

Staff Highlight



Maple Syrup Saturdays

Every Saturday • 1pm-3pm • All ages • ♿

Learn the process of making maple syrup from tap to table! We will hike up to 1-mile to reach the maple trees to demonstrate tapping and to collect sap.

Maple Syrup Science for Homeschoolers

Thursday, Feb 9th • 10am-12pm • All ages • ♿

Join us every month for a program geared toward homeschoolers! This month: learn how to make maple syrup from tap to table! Includes a 1-mile hike.



February Break:

SLF Egg Scraping Workshop

Wednesday, Feb 22nd • 10am-12pm • All ages

Volunteer with us to remove egg masses of Spotted Lanternflies throughout the park.

Art in the Park: Tree Cookies

Thursday, Feb 23rd • 10am-2pm • All ages • ♿

Stop by to decorate a slice of a tree trunk to make your own coasters or other decorative art! This event is indoors.



Jake DiBello (left) is part of Clay Pit's operations staff and the NYC State Parks Stewardship Team. He has spent a lot of his life outdoors as he grew up fishing and hunting, something he still loves to do today! He has taken this passion to the University of Idaho, from which he will be receiving a Master's degree in Fish and Wildlife Management. Jake's favorite thing about the park are the pine barrens of the Clay Pit Pond Trail. He also loves spotting deer while patrolling the park.

Book a Private Program or Event

The Nature Interpretive Center offers FREE private programs for any group of 10 or more people. Classes, clubs, scout troops, organizations, and other groups are all welcome! The indoor space is also available for rental. For more information, contact our educators through any of the channels listed below.

CONTACT US



Nature Interpretive Center
2351 Veterans Road West
Staten Island, NY 10309



Open Tuesdays-Saturdays
8:30am-5pm



(718) 605-3970 x201



ClayPitPondsSP@parks.ny.gov



claypitponds.eventbrite.com



Facebook.com/ClayPitPonds



Instagram @ClayPitPonds



YouTube



SCAN ME

<https://parks.ny.gov/environment/nature-centers/14/details.aspx>