

Green Heritage

The Bimonthly Newsletter of the Monmouth County Park System

Vol. 31 No.1 Feb./Mar. 1997



Rocks, roots, and other obstacles make some Park System trails challenging. Consult a trails map to find out a trail's difficulty rating.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood...

Thanks to the Monmouth County Park System's trails plan, when you come to a trail intersection in one of the County Parks you have a lot more information than just the trail's appearance to help you decide which way to go. Before you proceed down the "road less traveled," consult a trail map for a description or classification of this path.

The Park System's trails are being evaluated and redone to conform to the guidelines of a trails plan implemented in 1992. The purpose of this plan, to design the best possible trails system balancing concerns for recreation and environment, is achieved in several ways. According to Ken Thoman, Park System Ecologist, "Park trails are designed based on how people are going to be using those trails."

Different people expect different things from their park experience,

and to cater to everyone's interests requires planning. Ken explains that a lot of consideration went into determining the trails plan. "We thought about our trail users and tried to determine what people wanted. For example, at the time, mountain bicycling was just becoming popular. Some parks were banning the bicycling, but we knew that as its popularity continued to grow, we would need to meet the needs of this legitimate user group."

The trails plan classifies each trail as easy, moderate, or challenging. Trails are constructed to conform to the specific characteristics of that classification. An easy trail is well-manicured, wide, has a firm surface, and has few slopes. A moderate trail is narrower, more natural, and may contain some hills. A challenging trail is very rugged, may have steep slopes, and may contain obstacles like fallen branches.

"We try to provide at least one trail in each park that is accessible to all

Rocky Point Trails

Hartshorne Woods Park represents a good example of the trails plan at work. With over 11 miles of trails, Hartshorne possesses trails of all lengths and levels of difficulty. Hartshorne Woods Park caters to everyone from the casual walker to the seasoned mountain bicyclist. And the recent addition of the Rocky Point Section added about three miles of paved trails for recreational use.

Currently under construction in the Rocky Point Section are several trails designed to highlight important points in the park. The Park System acquired Rocky Point in the early 1980s from the Federal government which formerly operated a military base there. Lee Homoyock, Assistant Superintendent of Parks, says it will definitely be a popular area. "There will be about three miles of trails that will loop around the old military base and hook up with existing trails."

Opened to the public in 1995, it also boasts some of the most spectacular views in the area. The trails will showcase views of the Navesink, and have some barrier island overlooks. There will also be a trail connection to the Navesink River, although steep slopes will preclude boat launching.

The trails are being constructed this year by the Park Staff with help from volunteers. Several trail construction sessions have been planned, and those interested in assisting can contact the Volunteer Coordinator at (908) 842-4000, ext. 283. □

Two Roads continued on page 2

users," explains Ken. The trails plan designates many of the trails as multiple-use trails. "Etiquette is very important to the success of the plan," says Ken. "That's one responsibility we put on the user." As a general rule, walkers are expected to yield to equestrians, and bicycles are expected to yield to all other users.

"Our trails plan is on the leading edge of trails programs," says Ken proudly. "Other parks that have not yet developed a plan are starting to discover they need to." The plan is not only in place to serve the people, but to protect the park's natural resources. "Trail users don't degrade a trail; it's how the trail was initially designed that's the problem." Ken cites examples of overlooks and how they are designed. "In our plan, key points of trails are always offshoots of a main trail. People who want to stop and enjoy the view of an overlook can get off the trail and out of the way of those who want to push on through."

Trail designs are constantly being analyzed for their effectiveness. "If people have a problem with a trail design," says Ken, "we want to know about it. We want people to understand our system and have a positive view of our trails." To date, completed trail systems have been implemented at Huber Woods Park, Hartshorne Woods Park, Holmdel Park, and Clayton Park. Construction on the Shark River Park trails should be completed this year, and Turkey Swamp Park trails are currently being evaluated. □

MARCH FOR PARKS

10am till 1pm

April 19, 1997

The Henry Hudson Trail

For information call

(908) 842-4000 Ext 310

An education in the Parks

All seniors attending St. John Vianney High School in Holmdel are required to take part in a program that impacts both their education and their community. Along with tests and textbooks, the students spend part of their school time each week volunteering for a local organization.

"In the beginning of the year we get a list of places we can go, like Bayshore Hospital, First Friends, or here," says Marco De Asa Littig who, along with Chris Therkorn and Antonio Fontanes opted to volunteer at the Monmouth County Park System. The three students are working at the Holmdel Park Activity Center where they care for the animals on hand.

"It's a good program because most students probably wouldn't take the time to volunteer," says Antonio "but in doing so, you really learn a lot." All three admit that the opportunity to work with animals is what brought them to the Park System, and each is glad he came. "The people here are really nice, and there's not a whole lot of pressure," admits Chris. "If there's a particular job we don't feel comfortable doing, we mention it, and someone else will take care of it."

According to Marco, most of their time is spent feeding and watching the animals. "We keep a journal of all the things we do and learn. And we learn a lot. I learned, for instance, that bullfrogs eat mice whole." At the end of the year their journals become part of a larger presentation about their volunteering experience. "Our supervisor evaluates us all year long," explains Antonio. "We then do a final paper, video or other project for our overall grade."

Their supervisor is Naturalist Patty O'Rourke, and for her the evaluations are easy. "They're just great. This is really a good crew." She has worked with volunteers from St. John Vianney in the past and supports the volunteer program. "Each student comes on a different day and takes care of the animals for that day. Since the animals require constant attention, it frees [the naturalists] up to do other things."

While none of the students is exactly certain how their experiences here will impact the rest of their lives (they're not screaming to become naturalists just yet), they're glad that St. John's is giving them the opportunity to do it. "It gives you a different outlook on life," Chris says of volunteering. Marco agrees. "Choose something you're interested in and you'll really get something out of it." "But be open-minded," adds Chris. "Look to try a new thing." □

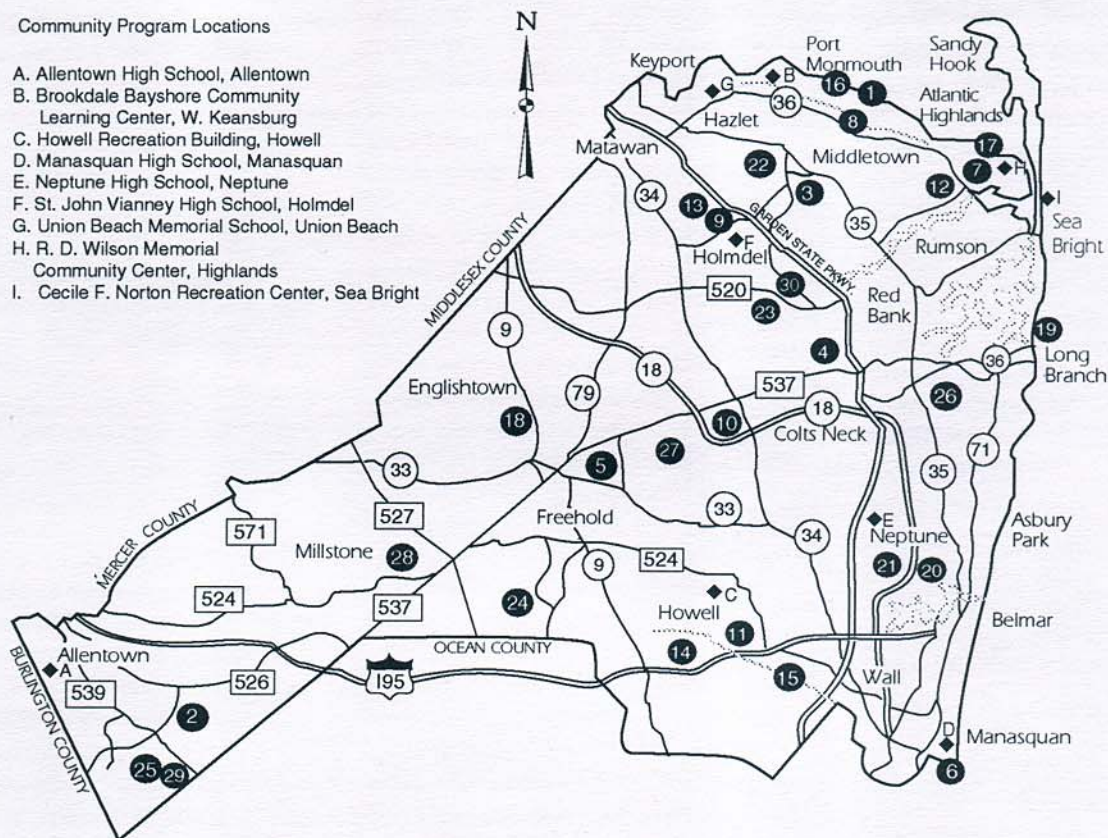


Antonio Fontanes is one of three students from St. John Vianney volunteering at Holmdel Park.

MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM LOCATIONS

Community Program Locations

- A. Allentown High School, Allentown
- B. Brookdale Bayshore Community Learning Center, W. Keansburg
- C. Howell Recreation Building, Howell
- D. Manasquan High School, Manasquan
- E. Neptune High School, Neptune
- F. St. John Vianney High School, Holmdel
- G. Union Beach Memorial School, Union Beach
- H. R. D. Wilson Memorial Community Center, Highlands
- I. Cecile F. Norton Recreation Center, Sea Bright



The Monmouth County Park System invites you to visit the county parks to follow your own path to recreation. For information, call (908) 842-4000. For people with hearing impairment, the TDD machine number is (908) 219-9484.

V.I.P.

The following are impressions of a recent trail maintenance as recorded by volunteer Joan Miller.

Water running, sounds cold. Pine smell, mixed with the smell of earth. Leaves and pine cones are crunching underfoot. Light breezes rustling the trees, making a soft crackling sound. The squishy sound of wet ground as we walk smells musty at times. The planks I am carrying get heavier as we trek through the woods. The knotty, brown, moss-covered bark of the trees feels rough as I hold on, gazing through the trees at a cloud-riddled, pale blue sky. The sound of

running water gets closer. I breathe a sigh of relief when I realize we are almost there. We carry planks and tools, no help from machines. The leaves below my feet are a range of rainbow colors, sea green, glowing orange, flaming red. We finally reach the sight of our project.

Four teens, one couple (our leaders), and three women, with tools, planks, and pure determination. Not for pay, not for notoriety, not for fame. Just because we want to make a difference. To build a bridge. It was a deep-down gratifying feeling to know that for years to come, young and old will use that bridge to enjoy what is still a sanctuary, the woods and nature.

The planks were heavy, the hammering was hard, the air was cold, the feeling after the bridge was complete was warm and wonderful. Yes, we the Volunteers In the Park are Very Important People. □

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MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM FACILITIES

(908) 842-4000

ALL NUMBERS ARE 908 AREA CODE

		ACREAGE	ACTIVITY CENTER	BOATING Ramp / Launch	BOATING Rentals	CAMPING Group	CAMPING Tent / Trailer / RV	X-COUNTRY SKI	ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER	FISHING	FOOD CONCESSION	FOOD VENDING MACHINE	GARDENS	GOLF DRIVING RANGE	PAY PHONE	PICNIC FACILITIES	PLAYGROUND	REST ROOMS Modern	REST ROOMS Primitive	SCENIC VIEW	SHELTER BUILDING	SKATING	TENNIS	TRAILS Equestrian / Bicycling	TRAILS Walking / Hiking	VISITOR CENTER	WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE	FEATURES
F FEE CHARGED	R RESERVABLE (FEE CHARGED)																											
S SEASONAL	G GROUP USE PERMIT REQUIRED																											
1.	Bayshore Waterfront Park • 842-4000 Port Monmouth Rd. • Port Monmouth	138	●							●								●										
2.	Clayton Park • 842-4000 Emley's Hill Rd. • Upper Freehold	394				●																	●	●				
3.	Deep Cut Gardens • 671-6050 252 Red Hill Rd. • Middletown	52	●								●							●	●							●		Horticultural Library
4.	Dorbrook Recreation Area • 542-1642 207 Rt. 537 • Colts Neck	510	●			●				●				●	R	●	●	●				●				●		Horseshoe Court (R) Model Airplane Field (R)
5.	East Freehold Park • 842-4000 Kozloski Rd. • Freehold	81												●				●										Special Events Area (R) County Fair July 23-28
6.	Fisherman's Cove Conservation Area Third Ave. • Manasquan • 842-4000	35								●																		Bait & Tackle Shop
7.	Hartshorne Woods Park • 842-4000 Navesink Ave. • Locust	736			R	●				●								●	●					●	●			
8.	Henry Hudson Trail • 842-4000 • Aberdeen to Atlantic Highlands border	85								●									●					●	●			9-Mile Trail
9.	Holmdel Park • 946-2669 Longstreet Rd. • Holmdel	334	●			●		●	S	●	●	●	●	R	G	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Sledding Hill Fitness Trail
10.	Hominy Hill Golf Course • 462-9222 Mercer Rd. • Colts Neck	183								S	●	●	●				●											Par 72, Yardage 7,059
11.	Howell Park Golf Course • 938-4771 Preventorium Rd. • Howell	306								S	●	●	●				●											Par 72, Yardage 6,869
12.	Huber Woods Park • 872-2670 Brown's Dock Rd. • Locust	258				●	●			●			●				●	●					●	●	●			Program Room (R)
13.	Longstreet Farm • 946-3758 Longstreet Rd. • Holmdel	9																										1890s Living History Farm
14.	Manasquan Reservoir • 919-0996 Windeler Road • Howell	1203	●	S		●		●	S	●	●	●	●				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Bait & Tackle Shop (S) Boat Tours (S)
15.	Manasquan Stream Valley • 842-4000 Howell & Wall Township							●																				Canoe Launch
16.	Monmouth Cove Marina • 495-9440 200 Port Monmouth Road • Port Monmouth	12										●																Wet Slips & Rack Storage
17.	Mt. Mitchell Scenic Overlook • 842-4000 Ocean Blvd. • Atlantic Highlands	11														●	●	●							●			Elevation 266 Feet
18.	Pine Brook Golf Course • 536-7272 Covered Bridge Blvd. • Manalapan	61								●		●					●											Par 61, Yardage 4,168
19.	Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park Ocean Ave. • Long Branch • 229-0924	33	●	F				●	S	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●						●			Swimming (S) Fitness Court
20.	Shark River Golf Course • 922-4141 Old Corlies Ave. • Neptune	176								S	●	●	●				●											Par 72, Yardage 6,180
21.	Shark River Park • 922-4080 Schoolhouse Rd. • Neptune	587				●	●	●		●		●	G	●	●			R	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			Fitness Trail
22.	Tatum Park • 842-4000 Holland Rd. & Red Hill Rd. • Middletown	368	●			●										●	●	●					●	●	●	●		
23.	Thompson Park • 842-4000 805 Newman Springs Rd. • Lincroft	665	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	G	●	●	●	●					●	●	●	●	●	●	Fitness Trail
24.	Turkey Swamp Park • 462-7286 Georgia Rd. • Freehold	849			S	S	S	●		●				R	G	●	●	●	R	G	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Archery Range Fitness Trail
25.	Walnford • 842-4000 Walnford Rd. • Upper Freehold	36																●										Historic Site
26.	Weltz Park • 842-4000 West Park Avenue • Oakhurst	165					●																●	●				

Other areas include: (27) Baysholm, Freehold Township; (28) Charleston Springs, (a planned Golf Course Site) Upper Freehold; (29) Crosswicks Creek, Upper Freehold; (30) Sunnyside, Middletown.

NATURE CORNER

Birds of a feather...

If you look up in the sky about an hour before sunset on any winter afternoon, there's a good chance you'll see a stream of large black birds all flying in the same direction. If you were to follow them, you'd find an amazing sight- hundreds, possibly thousands, of birds flying in from all directions and landing in the trees overhead. The birds are crows and their destination is their winter roost, or sleeping accommodations.

Crows spend most of the year in pairs or small family groups. But come winter, they congregate in large flocks with all the other crows in the area. Both common crows and fish crows, the two species found in our area, roost together. There are several winter roosts in Monmouth County, but perhaps the best known is the one on Newman Springs Road at the Red Bank/Shrewsbury border. From year to year, the exact location may change due to human activity or crow preference, but usually the choice is a

somewhat isolated tract with lots of tall trees.

As crows fly in from areas where they spent their day foraging, they meet up with other crows and start to form small flocks and may stop off at staging areas along the way. When they reach the roost, there is much jostling and jockeying among the birds for what must be the prime places to roost. The noise goes on for hours and what interesting noise it is! Crows can make the strangest sounds and they have a wide repertoire. While listening, it's easy to pick out the sounds of the fish crow from that of the common crow. The fish crow is slightly smaller than the common crow and spends more of its time near coastal areas. Its "caws" have a more nasal quality, often described as sounding like a common crow with a head cold.

Winter crow roosts are often located near the coast since that is where the food is. When inland areas are covered with snow and ice, the beaches, bays and estuaries supply food such as mollusks, crustaceans, and dead fish. Crows open clams and mussels

in the same way that gulls do, by carrying them up into the air and dropping them on rocks. Crows join together in flocks for mutual protection. Lined along a branch sleeping shoulder to shoulder, they make a more difficult target for a great horned owl than sleeping individually. Ironically, these roosts make a better target for humans trying to rid themselves of what they perceive as a nuisance. Thousands of birds have been destroyed in one night by farmers and disgruntled gardeners. Crows are maligned because of the corn and grain they consume, but they are not given credit for the large numbers of grubs and insect pests they feed upon.

Crows are extremely smart and social birds. Though they are wary of people, they are known to make interesting pets and can be taught to "speak." Don't think too seriously about a pet crow, however- in New Jersey, it's illegal to keep a wild bird in captivity. There are many opportunities to enjoy their antics, though, especially when there's the chance to visit a winter crow roost. □
Sue Draxler



The 9-mile Henry Hudson Trail was paved last fall to provide a more uniform surface for bicyclists, joggers, and other trail users.

Have you visited your Park System lately?

Here's a short list of the accomplishments and changes in the parks during 1996:

- Handicapped accessibility at Turkey Swamp Park from parking lot to lake front
- New facilities at Dorbrook Recreation Area: two basketball courts, a roller hockey rink, and an instructional swimming pool
- Group use picnic tents at Holmdel and Turkey Swamp Parks
- Continuous paved cart path at Howell Park Golf Course
- Renovation of the Deep Cut horticultural display pool (funded by Friends of the Parks)
- Paving of the Henry Hudson Trail
- One additional soccer field at Thompson Park

- Two additional fishing piers at the Manasquan Reservoir
- New artificial driving range tee at Hominy Hill Golf Course
- Restoration of large barn at Thompson Park for indoor recreation use
- Basketball court at Turkey Swamp Nomoco Activity Area
- Acquisition of an additional 579 acres, including additions to Turkey Swamp Park, Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park, Henry Hudson Trail, Holmdel Park, Mt. Mitchill, Clayton Park, Crosswicks Creek, Bayshore Trail, Manasquan Stream Valley, and the Manasquan Reservoir

CORRECTION

In an article last issue on winter golf at the Shark River Golf Course, the hours given were incorrect. The Golf Course is open 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.



**The Bimonthly Newsletter of the
Monmouth County Park System**

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BE HAPPIER • increase property value • attract new business • look better
take care of latch key children • reduce unemployment • create memories
conquer boredom • diminish chance of disease • build self-esteem • live longer
INCREASE COMMUNITY PRIDE • promote sensitivity to cultural diversity
eliminate loneliness • Build Family Unity • **RELAX** • Reduce Crime • Lose weight
MEET FRIENDS • educate children and adults • lower health care costs
provide safe places to play • generate revenues • **PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT**
OFFER PLACE FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION • diminish gang violence • **Feel Great**
BOOST ECONOMY • curb employee absenteeism • increase tourism • build strong bodies
reduce stress • **TEACH VITAL LIFE SKILLS** • Provide space to enjoy nature...

THE BENEFITS ARE ENDLESS...

**MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM
MINI CALENDAR OF EVENTS
February and March 97**

- | | | |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Mar. 1 | Manasquan Reservoir boat ramp opens | |
| Mar. 2 | E. Murray Todd Half Marathon | Brookdale College
9:00 am |
| Mar. 15 | County Golf Courses open
Turkey Swamp Park Campgrounds open | |

For more information, call (908) 842-4000