

A Pennsylvania Recreational Guide for

# Nolde Forest

## Environmental Education Center

Nolde Forest  
Environmental  
Education  
Center



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

### Pennsylvania State Parks Mission

The primary purpose of Pennsylvania state parks is to provide opportunities for enjoying healthful outdoor recreation and serve as outdoor classrooms for environmental education. In meeting these purposes, the conservation of the natural, scenic, aesthetic, and historical values of parks should be given first consideration. Stewardship responsibilities should be carried out in a way that protects the natural outdoor experience for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

visitPAparks

2022

## NOLDE FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center was established in 1966 to be the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's first environmental education center. Today, Nolde Forest is one of four environmental education centers specifically dedicated to help connect students, teachers, and the public to our natural resources and promote environmental stewardship.

Nolde Forest encompasses more than 725 acres of deciduous woodlands and coniferous plantations. Open daily from sunrise to sunset, the park's network of trails provides access to streams, ponds, and diverse habitats. Forest plantations and gardens offer opportunities for nature study and wildlife observation. Teaching stations offer places for students to engage in scientific investigations. When not in use by students, these locations provide opportunities for visitors to sit and observe the sights, sounds, and smells of the natural world. By taking time to explore, observe, and participate in educational programming, visitors can learn how to be good stewards of Pennsylvania's outstanding natural, cultural, and historic resources.

The Nolde Forest Mansion houses the center office. The nearby C.H. McConnell Environmental Education Classroom is the indoor site for year-round programming.

### Directions

GPS DD: Lat. 40.2756 Long. -75.9495

Nolde Forest is in Berks County on PA 625/ New Holland Road. The office is located at 3025 New Holland Road, two miles south of PA 724 or three miles north of PA 568.



Sawmill Landscape Painting by Christopher Shearer, 1910

Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center is a biodiversity success story. Just five generations ago, very few bird species or deer lived here due to deforestation. By the early 1900s, nearly every single tree had been cut down by European settlers, many of whom were colliers making charcoal for the iron industry, farmers clearing land, and lumbermen who felled trees for sawmills. What had been a place of abundant natural resources became nearly devoid of wildlife.

Before European settlement, wildlife including owls, hawks, chickadees, foxes, squirrels, deer, and mink thrived in this area. The Lenape traversed this land for thousands of years, hunting and fishing within the Schuylkill River Valley and its tributaries, including Angelica Creek and Punches Run. In the 1600s, European settlers began farming the land and trading with Indigenous peoples.

By the early 1800s, the town of Reading was a manufacturing center. The industrial

revolution accelerated the use of natural resources. Trees were felled for timber and charcoal. Dams diverted streams to power sawmills, gristmills, and distilleries, and to make ice for early refrigeration. Small farms were established along the streams and naturally flowing springs. Livestock grazed the recently timbered hillsides. New Holland Road was the route farmers used to reach markets in Reading.

Jacob Nolde — a German immigrant and local industrialist known for his successful knitting mills — acquired this land in 1904. He found a single white pine tree growing amid the meadow vegetation near the sawmill on Angelica Creek. Inspired by this tree and his knowledge of European forestry practices, Nolde began planting trees. By 1910, he was recognized nationally. *"It is impossible to say that Mr. Nolde's example will be extensively followed at once, but he is pointing the way by which the wealth of the country may be greatly added to during the coming generations."* -- American Forestry.

By 1912, Nolde wished to expand his work and he hired an Austrian forester to create a coniferous forest that was to be "the most beautiful pine forest in Pennsylvania." As the plantations grew, wildlife returned to the area and the trees formed a "luxury forest," which became a source of great family pleasure and pride.

Although Jacob Nolde passed away in 1916, forest plantations continued to be established for several decades. In 1926, Hans Nolde, Jacob's son, initiated work on the Tudor-style mansion. When this year-round home was completed, it overlooked the pine plantations and the lights of Reading.

An abundance of wildlife has returned. Today, Nolde Forest is alive once again with a diverse population of plants, birds, aquatic life, and mammals, which provide outdoor learning and observational opportunities for visitors. The commonwealth purchased the property in 1966 with Project 70 funds. In 1970, federal program grants and the Berks County Intermediate Unit helped establish Nolde Forest as the first environmental education center operated by the Bureau of State Parks. Since the center's conception, the bureau has maintained an enduring commitment to environmental education through the expansion of the program and addition of education staff across the commonwealth. For over 50 years, Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center has been a place for people to connect with nature and participate in guided programs that explore relationships between humans and the environment.

A book entitled, 'A Single White Pine,' recounts the history of Nolde Forest. The book is available for purchase at the center office.

## RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

### Spend the Day

The office and the environmental education classroom parking lot are open Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. All other parking areas are open sunrise to sunset, seven days a week. Park only in designated areas. Parking is prohibited on grass, at gates, and along roadways as it damages sensitive habitat and creates unsafe conditions for visitors, motorists, and emergency responders.

**FISHING:** Angelica Creek supports a native trout population. Only children and seniors are permitted to fish in North Pond. Fishing is prohibited in Painted Turtle Pond and Punches Run. Observe posted signs. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission regulations and laws apply.

### Enjoy the Winter



Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing are serene, rewarding ways to explore Nolde Forest. With adequate snow cover, several trails provide opportunities for winter study and wildlife observation. Please observe winter trail etiquette by using appropriate footwear such as snowshoes or cross-country skis when snow covers the trails.

Due to the shade created by the forest canopy, trails can be very icy after snow has melted from roadways and parking areas. Winter boots with added cleats for traction and hiking poles are recommended for your safety. Ice skating is prohibited in the park.

**HUNTING:** A permit-only archery deer hunt is held throughout deer hunting season. Only hunters with a special permit issued by Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center are authorized to hunt. The hunt is intended to help manage our natural resources and the deer population. A lottery is held in August for those interested in obtaining a permit. Visitors are encouraged to wear blaze orange throughout the hunting season for their safety.

To report hunting-related incidents during normal business hours, contact the park office at 610-796-3699. At all other times, contact the Pennsylvania Game Commission at 610-926-3136.

### WINTER TRAIL ETIQUETTE:

**Do not walk on ski tracks.** Snowshoers should avoid walking in ski tracks. Skiers rely upon regular traction and smooth forward motion to safely travel on trails and get into a rhythm. When snowshoes hit the trail, the even plane of the ski track is disrupted and ruins the terrain for cross-country skiers. There will often be a snowshoe trail for you to use alongside the ski tracks, but if there's not, forge your own path along the trail.

**Yield the trail.** Those traveling uphill have the right-of-way. This is standard outdoor etiquette throughout the year. Simply move aside to enjoy a water break, or adjust your layers, until the uphill travelers pass by.

**Use proper equipment.** Do not walk in snow without snowshoes or skis as it packs the snow, creating treacherous conditions. A trail with deep footprints can be dangerous for other users.



## LEARN, EXPERIENCE, CONNECT



Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center is dedicated to helping our visitors and community develop a sound environmental ethic based upon science. Since the early 1970s, Nolde Forest has provided a wide variety of nature-based educational programs for students, teachers, organizations, and families.

School students engage in guided, hands-on activities while exploring and learning about unique ecosystems to further their awareness, appreciation, and knowledge of the natural environment. Using discovery and problem-solving, students explore different aspects of the environment, develop concepts and skills to learn about the role we play within the web of life, and become effective environmental decision-makers.

Nolde Forest also serves as an outdoor laboratory for visiting biologists, college students, and natural resource professionals involved in a variety of environmental studies and research topics, including water quality, small mammals, reptiles, forest succession, and songbirds.

The center offers a variety of educator professional development workshops related to the natural environment, many of which are in cooperation with the Berks County Intermediate Unit or nearby colleges and universities. Such workshops provide curriculum instruction and resources for teachers. Workshops are based on state and national environmental education curricula and standards. Continuing education hours are available for most workshops.

Professional organizations such as the Mengel Natural History Society, Baird Ornithological Club, and the Friends of Nolde Forest regularly hold public meetings and events at Nolde Forest. Opportunities are also available for visitors to connect to resources found within Nolde Forest through guided programs that focus on its natural, historical, and cultural features.

Schools and groups should schedule learning experiences as far in advance as possible to ensure availability and minimize conflicts with other scheduled programs and events. Explore the online calendar of events at <https://events.dcnr.pa.gov>, for more information on public programs and contact the center office for other learning opportunities. Please note that not all programs are public, such as our school programs, and are therefore not included on the public online calendar of events.

## HISTORY



Sawmill Landscape Painting by Christopher Shearer, 1910

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## FRIENDS OF NOLDE FOREST

The Friends of Nolde Forest exists to support and promote the educational and recreational programs while protecting the park's natural resources. The group is involved in a variety of projects within the park, including:

- Welcoming visitors and telling the stories of Nolde Forest during Mansion Open House events

- Fundraising to help maintain and support educational programming
- Restoring native habitat
- Assisting in the facilitation of special events including Run for the Ages and Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos)
- Collecting, archiving, and interpreting documents, journals, and articles with the History Committee

- Coordinating workdays for trail repair and invasive species removal
  - Assisting in the care of the native gardens
- Visit [www.FriendsOfNoldeForest.org](http://www.FriendsOfNoldeForest.org) for more information.

## NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

Information on nearby attractions is available from the Pennsylvania's Americana Region Visitors Bureau. 800-443-6610. <https://visitpaamericana.com>

The forests, lakes, wetlands, and fields of **French Creek State Park** are a destination for recreational activities like hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, picnicking, swimming, boating, fishing, hunting, disc golfing, orienteering, and camping. 610-582-9680

The **Daniel Boone Homestead**, the site of the legendary pioneer's birth in 1734, offers a unique glimpse at the diverse and dynamic community that formed in the Oley Valley during the colonial period through

exhibits, programs, and tours. Administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the site includes 579 acres of land, the Boone House, six other eighteenth-century structures, a lake, picnic areas, and recreational facilities. 610-582-4900. [www.thedanielboonehomestead.org](http://www.thedanielboonehomestead.org)

The **Schuylkill River Trail** is a multi-use trail along the banks of the Schuylkill River in southeastern Pennsylvania. The trail begins in Auburn, Schuylkill County and passes through numerous towns as it reaches Philadelphia. 484-945-0200. <https://schuylkillriver.org/schuylkill-river-trail>

The **Berks History Center** leads the way in telling the 300-year story of Berks County

and its people, with the aim of building an understanding of our unique history, strengthening our sense of community, and inspiring our community's progress in the years to come. 610-375-4375. [www.berkshistory.org](http://www.berkshistory.org)

**Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site** is an example of an American 19th century rural "iron plantation," whose operations were based around a charcoal-fired cold-blast iron furnace. The significant restored structures include the furnace group, the ironmaster's house, a company store, the blacksmith's shop, a barn, and several worker's houses. 610-582-8773. [www.nps.gov/hofu](http://www.nps.gov/hofu)

## BE A NATURALIST

Take time to experience the wonders of the natural world. Walk among the forested hills quietly, observing and studying the natural environment. Watch how birds and squirrels return to their activities when you sit motionless for just a few minutes. Listen as Punches Run cascades over stones, and breezes blow through the trees. Document your discoveries by writing, sketching, painting, or capturing photographs. Try some of the following activities when you visit Nolde Forest or explore nature around your home.

**SENSES STOP:** Find a pleasant place to stop. Sit for one minute with your eyes closed. How many things can you hear, smell, and feel? Take a senses stop at a variety of places, such as the benches and teaching stations located throughout the forest.

**SLEUTHING:** Be a woodland detective. Use your senses of smell, hearing, touch, and sight to explore a small portion of the forest. Look for tracks, droppings, food leftovers, and other signs to try to guess what animals live here. Please observe wildlife only from a distance and do not feed wildlife.

**JOURNALING:** Document your discoveries by writing, drawing, or painting in a notebook. There are some inspiring books available by authors such as Clare Leslie and Bernd Heinrich that offer guidance for those just getting started.

**SHARING:** Share your experiences at Nolde Forest with friends, family, and center staff. Berks County students can also submit their artwork to the annual Nature of Nolde Student Art Contest organized by Art Plus Gallery of West Reading. [www.artplusgallerypa.com](http://www.artplusgallerypa.com)

## INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS

### Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center

3025 New Holland Road  
Reading, PA 19607  
610-796-3699  
[NoldeForestSP@pa.gov](mailto:NoldeForestSP@pa.gov)  
An Equal Opportunity Employer  
[@NoldeForestEEC](http://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks)



### 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.



### In an Emergency

Call 911 and contact a park employee. Directions to the nearest hospital are posted on bulletin boards and at the center office.

**NEAREST HOSPITAL**  
Reading Hospital and Medical Center  
6th Avenue and Spruce Street  
West Reading, PA 19611  
484-628-8000

### Make online facility reservations at

[www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks](http://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks) or call toll-free 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Saturday.

### Electric Vehicle Charging Station

A 2-plug, electric vehicle charging station in the Sawmill Parking Lot is available for public use during park hours, sunrise to sunset. Please move to another parking space once your vehicle has been charged.

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





TRAILS: 10 miles

Park trails meander through a landscape steeped in history. Be prepared to encounter uneven terrain, narrow footbridges, and changing weather conditions. You are invited to observe and explore, but asked never to remove any natural objects.

ADA accessible trails are located by the Historic Sawmill and C.H. McConnell Environmental Education Classroom. Be courteous to other visitors by staying on designated trails, remaining aware of your surroundings, and sharing the trails while quietly enjoying the sights and sounds of nature.

Pets are permitted on trails if they are on a leash and under control at all times. For a better chance to see wildlife, leave pets at home.

Trails are for hiking only. Bicycles, horses, and motorized vehicles are only permitted on the park entrance road and in parking lots. If visiting Nolde Forest with horses, secure them with tree saver straps and highlines on durable surfaces in the Sawmill, North Pond, and environmental education classroom parking areas.

RECOMMENDED HIKES

**Boulevard Trail Loop Hike: 2.9 miles, more difficult hiking**

This trail is a lollipop-shaped route that ascends uphill through the forest, crossing the highest point in the forest. The hike begins at the Sawmill Parking Lot. Follow Watershed Trail upstream along Punches Run to the Historic Stone Bridge, where Boulevard Trail begins. Continue straight/right on Boulevard Trail where it intersects with Watershed, Apple Tree, and Cabin Hollow trails. Boulevard Loop begins just past that intersection. Both directions around the loop travel uphill through

pine plantations, eventually crossing the highest point in the forest. Complete the hike by following Boulevard and Watershed trails back to the Sawmill Parking Lot.

**Fire Gate #3 Loop Hike: 1.5 miles, more difficult hiking**

This loop hike begins and ends at the Fire Gate #3 Parking Lot and traverses through one of the park's pine plantations. From the parking lot, follow Apple Tree Trail. At the first intersection, continue straight on Apple Tree Trail. A few springhouses can be seen on the left as the trail enters a pine plantation. At the intersection with Cabin Hollow Road, view

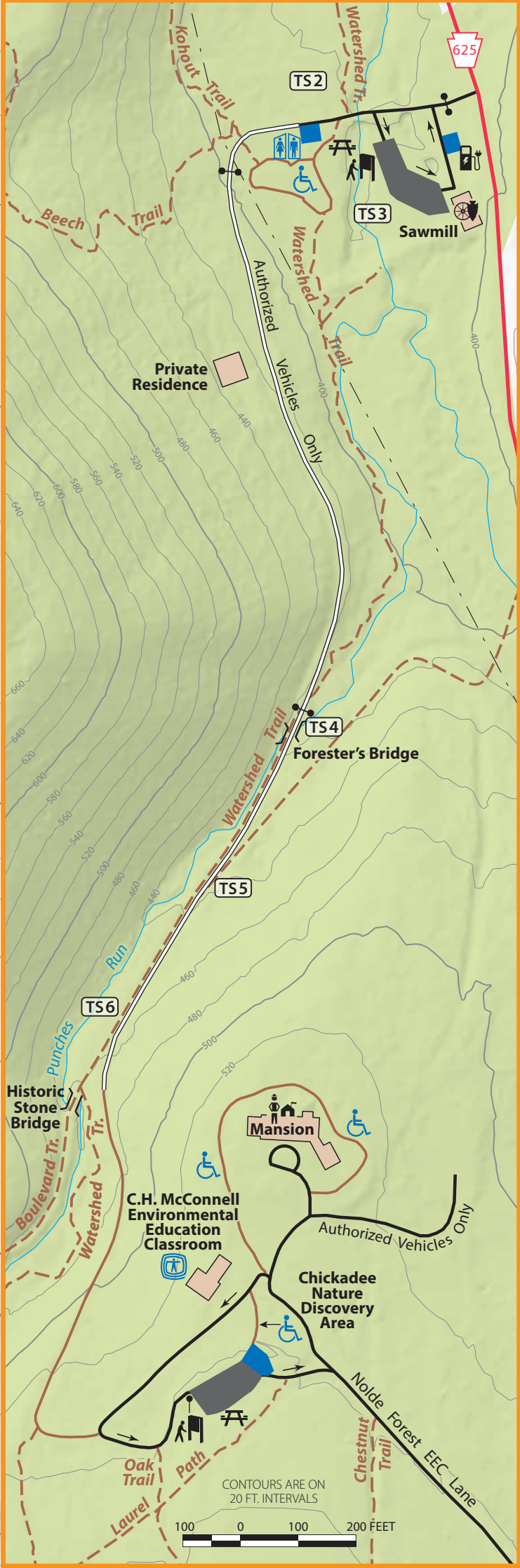
the confluence of the southern and western branches of Punches Run. Turn right onto Cabin Hollow Road and head uphill along the southern branch of Punches Run. At the intersection with Spruce Trail, turn right. At the top of the hill continue on Spruce Trail, where the trail leisurely descends under a spruce canopy. In approximately 500 feet, turn left onto Coffee Pot Hollow Trail to return to Fire Gate #3.

**Watershed Trail Hike: 1.1 miles (one-way), more difficult hiking**

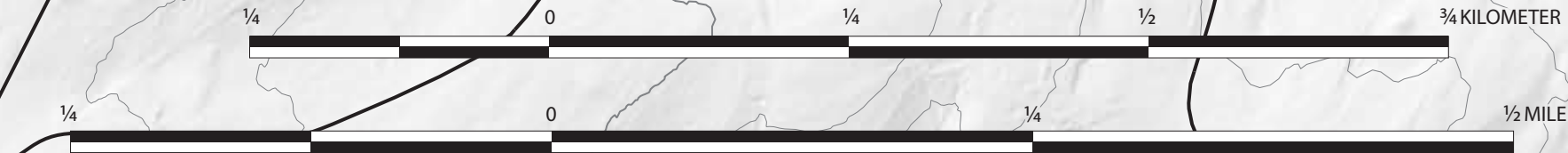
This out and back hike begins at the Sawmill Parking Lot and directs visitors upstream along Punches Run, the main artery through the forest.

Watershed Trail provides a gradual uphill walk from the historic sawmill. Note that Watershed Trail briefly overlaps with the old mansion driveway and Boulevard Trail between the Forester's Bridge and Teaching Station 8. Near the end of the trail, several concrete structures and pipes can be seen, which are the Springs of Punches Run and a system that helps direct water further downstream. The trail ends near the bench and map kiosk, where Boulevard and Spruce trails intersect. The hike can be extended by continuing on additional trails, or returning to the Sawmill Parking lot to make a 2.2-mile roundtrip hike.

Enlargement



- Park Office
- Blue Symbols Mean ADA Accessible
- Environmental Education Classroom
- Historic Site
- Information Kiosk
- Teaching Station
- Modern Restrooms
- Non-flush Restrooms
- Picnicking
- Hiking Trail
- Paved Trail
- Cross-Country Skiing Recommended
- Unpaved Road
- One-way Road
- Gate
- Electric Vehicle Charging Station
- Parking ADA Accessible
- Parking Paved
- Parking Unpaved
- State Park No Hunting
- CONTOURS ARE ON 40 FT. INTERVALS



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BERKS COUNTY

