

For more self-guided trail adventure, visit nearby Hickory Run State Park and try out the Nature Trail. Brochures are available in both Nescopeck and Hickory Run's park offices.



Nescopeck State Park is part of the Hickory Run State Park Complex, which includes Hickory Run and Lehigh Gorge State Parks.

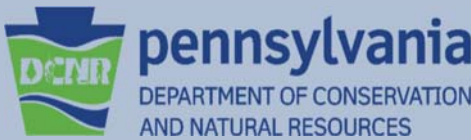
For more information on any of these parks, please contact the park office.

For more information

Nescopeck State Park
1137 Honey Hole Road
Drums, PA 18222

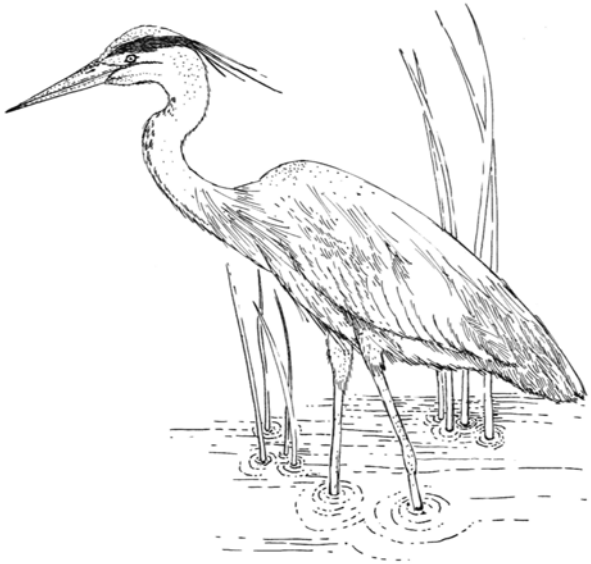
(570) 403-2006
nescopecksp@pa.gov

www.dcnr.pa.gov



Nescopeck State Park

Lake Trail
Self-Guided Tour



The Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*), is frequently sighted around Lake Frances and in wetlands throughout the park. A large graceful bird, it is easily recognized by its long neck and legs. Most often you'll find these birds wading in the shallows, patiently waiting for their chance to catch a frog or fish with their sharp spear-like bill.

Welcome...

Enjoy a leisurely walk around Lake Frances and learn a little about the natural happenings around you. Along the way, you will see brown posts with yellow numbers that correspond with the numbered paragraphs in this brochure. Take your time at each station and appreciate the natural features that are described here. This walk is an easy 1/2-mile in length.

A few reminders as you begin your walk:

- Removal of plants, animals, etc is prohibited in the State Park.** Thousands of visitors come to Nescopeck each year; if every visitor took home a souvenir – no matter how small or unimportant it may seem – the park would begin to show signs of overuse.
- Please refrain from picking rocks off the trail and throwing them in the lake.** As satisfying as the resounding ‘splash!’ may be, the holes left behind create hazardous conditions for walkers and make the trail more at risk to erosion and muddy conditions.
- Under no circumstances should you approach park wildlife to pet, feed, or photograph it.** As harmless as it sounds, human food and contact can be devastating to the health of any wildlife you may see. More information about this will be provided at stop #2.

Pet Owners: Pet refuse stations are located in the vicinity of the lake for your convenience. Trash cans for disposal of the used bags are located by the park office and the portable restroom in the main parking lot. **Remember, all dogs must be leashed in the park.**



Begin your walk at the bat box and display located near the upper parking lot at Lake Frances.

1 - Bug Zappers

Take a moment to read the two displays on Pennsylvania bats. Bats are truly amazing creatures, and a great source of all-natural, chemical-free pest control...but they need our help. Since the introduction of a disease known as White Nose Syndrome (WNS) to a New York cave in 2006, more than 1 million bats have died in the Northeast and Canada. Spreading rapidly, it was found in Pennsylvania in 2008 and as of 2019 has travelled as far west as California and Oregon. While there seems to be some emerging research that a few bats may be building up immunity to WNS, long term effects of this disease are yet to be seen. Why not consider installing a bat box (similar to the one in front of you) in your back yard or even right on your house to provide some added bat habitat? *Box plans and information on WNS are available in the park office upon request.*

The next stop is down by the lake, visit the small display found to the right.

2 - Harmful Handouts

Read the park wildlife display. For many people, the highlight of their visit to a state park is seeing wildlife in their natural habitat. We encourage you to watch and enjoy the many creatures that can be found here, but please remember they are wild animals and their behavior is unpredictable. Approaching wildlife to pet, feed, or photograph it could startle an animal with unexpected results. The experience of seeing wildlife makes for great memories, but keeping your distance is the safest alternative for both you and the wildlife being viewed. *Remember, keep wildlife wild!*

Go left! Take the trail down the left side of the lake to continue with the walk.
The posts will be located to the left of the trail from this point on.

3 - Island Getaway

From this post, you can look across the lake and see an island with two nest boxes. The long hexagonal shaped box on the left is for mallard ducks. The larger, structure to the right is for wood ducks. Suitable habitat is hard to find sometimes, and boxes like these provide an alternative place for ducks to nest. This is especially important for cavity nesters such as wood ducks who lay their eggs inside hollowed out trees or similar cavities that have a close proximity to water. A young wood duck’s first adventure is a jump from the nest box to the ground...before it can even fly. *Nest box plans are available in the park office upon request.*

4 - Grassland Grocery

Explore the meadow for insects or pause and listen for birds. Grasshoppers, dragonflies, and butterflies can often be found here in this grassy meadow. An abundance of insects inevitably draw in hungry insect-eating birds; including bluebirds, tree swallows, and phoebes. The nest boxes you see are used by bluebirds and tree swallows. Areas like this are important habitats for a variety of other wildlife as well. Small rodents such as mice and voles feed on grasses and seeds while hawks, owls, and snakes feed on the rodents. White-tailed deer may prefer the thick cover provided by the nearby forest, but a grassy meadow such as this provides a choice feeding area. This small spot may not seem like much, but if you look closer, you’ll see the tell-tale signs that show it is an important link in the food web.

5 - Here Fishy Fishy...

At 9-acres Lake Frances isn’t very big, but it is still a popular spot among those who like to fish. Annual trout stockings by the PA Fish & Boat Commission are an added bonus, but natural populations of sunfish, bluegills, and bass can also be found here. If you’re an avid angler, don’t forget about the Nescopeck Creek. A mile-long walk will get you to the special ‘delayed harvest, artificial lure only’ section, popular among fly fishermen who prefer the challenge of fishing the creek, as well as the solitude. If you want to try your hand, fishing poles may be available to borrow at the office; check for availability. **All Fish & Boat regulations and licensing requirements still apply.** *Lake Frances boating opportunities are limited. Ask at the park office for more information.*

6 - Healthy Trees Mean Healthy Streams

The lonely evergreen trees growing along this corner of the lake are Eastern Hemlocks, the official state tree of PA. Carefully lift a branch and look at the underside of the flat needles. The white stripes are an identifying characteristic of eastern hemlocks. A moisture and shade-loving tree, hemlocks are commonly found along streams. They provide year-round cover along stream banks which keeps water temperatures cool. Cool water has a higher dissolved oxygen content, providing ideal habitat for trout and other stream inhabitants. Many hemlocks across the state are currently infested with the hemlock wooly adelgid; a small aphid than can cause tree mortality within a few years of infestation. Without hemlocks shading our streams, water temperatures will increase and dissolved oxygen will decrease, making the health of these streams uncertain. DCNR is one of many agencies working to save hemlocks through a variety of management practices.

Continue right, following the trail around the lake.

7 - Timber!

As you continue along the trail, look for signs of a busy wetland animal called a beaver. These hardworking mammals are active in the lake and even the streams within the park. You’ll notice around the lake the beavers have taken down quite a few trees along the trail. Contrary to popular belief, the beaver doesn’t actually eat the wood of the tree, but rather the softer, sweeter cambium found under the bark. This living layer of the tree carries nutrients back and forth between the roots and the leaves. Just like people have favorite foods, beavers have favorite trees. When they remove all their preferred trees from an area, they will move on in search of a new food source. If you happen to catch a glimpse of a beaver in the lake, consider yourself lucky, sightings are uncommon.



8 - Plant Bonanza

Look at the variety of vegetation around you. The park is home to over 650 different species of plants. Each one is different, yet all have an important role in the ecosystem at the park. Some plants, like the cattails and rushes on the lake side of the trail, can only grow in wet conditions, while others like the goldenrods and grasses on the opposite side of the trail prefer drier soils. Look for water lilies floating on the lake surface in the summer months. These plants are entirely water dependent and would not survive outside of it. See how many other plants you can find (no picking!) between here and the parking lot.

9 - Carry In, Carry Out

Look high in the trees growing along the trail as you continue your walk. You might see an unlucky angler’s plastic fishing bobber hanging from a tree or fishing line entangled in the shrubs along the shoreline. Due to the extra-fine nature of mono-filament line, it becomes attractive to birds for use in their nests, often with disastrous consequences. The nests are flimsy and the chicks can become entangled. If you see any fishing line on your walk, you can do us and the birds a favor by picking it up (watch for hooks!) and discarding it in the trash can by the parking lot. Remember, Nescopeck is primarily a ‘Carry in, Carry Out’ park with limited trash receptacles. This means any trash you generate while here, such as the remains of a picnic lunch or tangled fishing line, should be taken with you when you leave.

10 - Everyone Lives Downstream

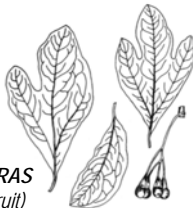
Notice the creek flowing under the footbridge on the left side of the trail. This is Reilly Creek. Further upstream a pipe feeds some of the water from Reilly Creek into Lake Frances. Downstream, Reilly Creek flows into the Nescopeck Creek - for which the park is named - and then into the Susquehanna River. The Susquehanna River flows into the Chesapeake Bay which flows into the Atlantic Ocean many miles from where you are standing. It’s amazing to think that the water you see flowing in this creek will eventually make its way to the ocean. Makes you want to be careful what you put in the water, doesn’t it?

On the last leg of your walk, see if you can identify the following tree species growing along the lake.



BLACK CHERRY
(leaf, flowers, fruit)

- leaves with serrated edges
- brown hair on underside of leaf along middle vein
- bark of older trees is dark and flaky (like burnt potato chips)



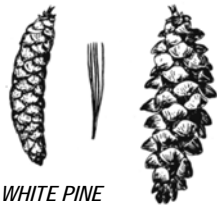
SASSAFRAS
(leaves, fruit)

- three different leaf shapes
- dark blue berry-like fruit on a red stem



RED MAPLE
(leaf, seeds)

- leaf with three lobes
- flat seeds travel by wind using a ‘helicopter-like’ motion



WHITE PINE
(closed cone, needles, open cone)

- evergreen tree with five needles in every ‘bundle’ (similar to one leaf per stem)
- pinecones are long and slender



EASTERN HEMLOCK
(cone, needles)

- flat needles with 2 white stripes on underside
- small pinecones (marble-size)



WHITE OAK
(leaf, acorn)

- leaves have rounded, smooth tips, or lobes
- acorn cap is bowl-like with scales that are warty at the base



RED OAK
(acorn, leaf)

- leaves have pointed, bristled tips, or lobes
- acorn cap is shallow with narrow, often fuzzy scales