
Hayes Nature Park

The Hayes Nature Park is a 48-acre preserve that includes a 6,000-foot (1.15-mile) hard-packed crushed stone path that has two interconnected loops. The path and wooded areas offer respite to nearby housing developments of Crescent Estates, Countryman Estates, and Woodcrest Pointe. The preserve land is former farmland that was once owned and farmed by the Hayes Family.

Directions: From the Northway (I-87) take Exit-8A and continue west on Grooms Road (State Route 91) for 1 mile to Moe Road. Turn left on Moe Road and continue 0.5 miles to an intersection with Englemore Road. Take a sharp left to continue on Moe Road heading east and after 150-yards take a sharp right to head south on Moe Road. Continue for 0.5 miles passing Woodside Road. The Hayes Nature Park parking area will be on the left.

Parking: The parking lot has a firm and stable gravel surface.

Distance: 1.4 mile loop.

Trailhead: Three posts across entrance as vehicle barrier, with 36.5 inches between barriers.

Surface: Firm stone dust except for 2 areas with loose gravel - 1,091 feet from trailhead for 50 feet with a 10 % grade and a 5% cross-slope; (this area was a washout approaching the bridge) 1,194 feet from trailhead for 100 feet at a 5% grade.

Width: The majority of the trail is at least five feet wide.

Slope: Trail was designed at under 5% grade but there are short sections over 8% - 10% for 50 feet at 1,091 feet from trailhead; turning left at signed Liberty intersection, 9% for 48 feet at 151 feet past intersection; 9% for 50 feet at 945 and 1147 feet past the intersection.

Cross slope: Majority of the trail is under 2% with notable exceptions of 5% at the bridge washout 1,091 from trailhead; 4% for 154 feet from Liberty intersection.

Features: Bench with no arms at 1,121 feet past the trail intersection at 1,295 feet from the trailhead.

Cautions or prohibitions: The park is open dawn to dusk. There is a carry in / carry out policy – no littering. Do not pick plants or disturb the wildlife. No hunting is allowed at any time.

Description: This beautifully designed hard gravel trail offers two connected loops through woods interspersed with wetlands that can be viewed from wood plank bridges. The preserve contains a variety of wildflower species and understory shrubs that grow beneath the canopy of a mix of deciduous trees and conifers.

A short, packed gravel walkway leads from the parking lot to three posts marking the beginning of the trail. In 30 feet, a sign points right to a trail leading to Thoroughbred Way, a nearby street with an entrance to the trail but no designated parking. Follow the main trail marked "Loop."

The woods here consist of a mix of deciduous tree species with occasional evergreens. There are red maples, yellow birch, gray birch, wild black cherry, shagbark hickory, beech, American hornbeam and white pine. You will see ferns also, including Christmas, cinnamon, New York, and intermediate wood fern. Large patches of may apples flourish under the trees.

At 60 feet from the trailhead, you reach the first of six wooden bridges. The bridge has closely aligned boards, raised side edges and railings. All of the bridges cross wetlands with the characteristic water-loving

plants, including skunk cabbage, meadow rue, sensitive and royal ferns, cattails, winterberry, and alder shrubs.

Another bridge is encountered before reaching a junction with the first loop. The two loop trails are continuous, with one side of each being the same trail. The trail sign points to Liberty Way to the right and the Loop to the left. Liberty Way is a road on the far side of the park. Follow the loop trail for about 900 feet towards Liberty Way, until you get to another junction. At this junction, follow the loop trail to the left. If you take a right, the trail become narrow and travels out of the park to the road.

There is a bench near this intersection for taking a rest and enjoying the scenery.

Keeping left at the junction and continuing on the Loop Trail, the woods open up to grasses and field plants for a short distance. You may also observe several invasive species in this area such as multiflora rose, garlic mustard and phragmites. There are many poplar, gray birch and willows as well as field flowers, hawkweed, red clover, asters and goldenrod.

Following the trail, you cross the third and fourth bridges in quick succession. From here the trail reaches a T-junction with a sign that indicates the second loop. Going right will begin the second loop and turning

left with complete the loop you have been following.

The right trail (second loop) passes into a more mature forest with large red oaks, sugar maple, and white pine. As the loop curves there is another bench for resting.



Beyond the bench the trail slopes gently for about 50 feet with an 8-9% slope. A three-way junction is distinguished by a yellow birch in the center, along with two signs. One sign points left toward Liberty Way and the second sign points right to Moe Road. Heading toward Moe Road brings you to the longest bridge at 98 feet, across a beautiful wetland. Soon you reach the junction where the intersecting loops began. A sign points right to Moe Road and the parking lot.

The route described takes you around the perimeter of the two loops. The trail common to both contains one more bridge and some plant species not seen on the other loops. The forest floor is thick with Canada mayflower and Solomon's plume and club mosses are common.

Owner: Town of Clifton Park

For more information: Contact the Town of Clifton Park Planning Department, (518) 371-6054, www.cliftonpark.org, planning@cliftonpark.org

TRAILS FOR ALL IN SARATOGA COUNTY

This trail report is part of a series of documents describing outdoor spaces with accessible features in Saratoga County. It was created by ECOS: The Environmental Clearinghouse, a regional environmental organization. For more information, or to find more descriptions of trails for users of different ability levels, go to ecosny.org. ECOS also publishes a series of guides describing natural areas in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties.