

### Stop 3

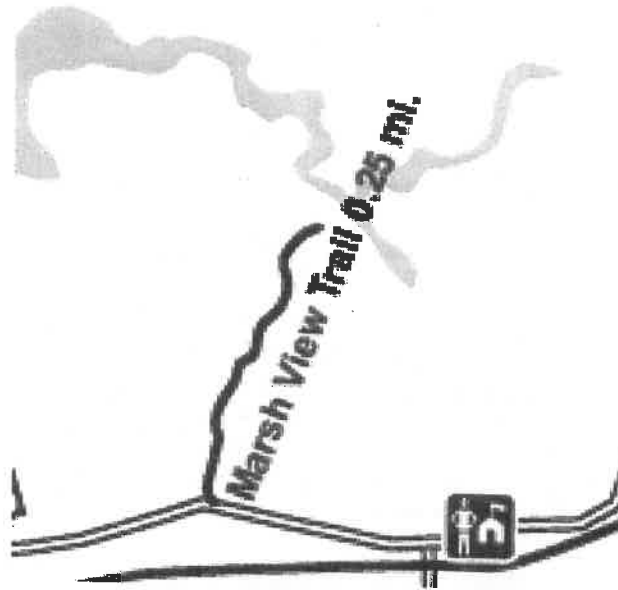
#### Dead Tree

You may think this is just a dead tree, or snag, that should be cleared away, but it's actually a mini-ecosystem. Fungi & insects are working busily to turn this tree into rich soil. In the mean time, this dead tree provides food & homes for many creatures. Woodpeckers eat the insects inside & create small to medium sized holes. These holes then become homes for other animals like bats, owls, nuthatches & wood ducks. Many animals use these holes as a fairly safe place to raise their young. Squirrels often store nuts in dead trees. These nuts can be an important food source in winter. Dead trees are important perching areas for hawks to rest & look for prey. Since the leaves are gone, the hawks have a better view to find their prey.

### Stop 4

#### The Marsh

The last stop, and the end of the trail, is a great view of the marsh. Marshes and other wetlands act as natural filters, filtering out nasty pollutants. They also act as nurseries for many animals such as birds, fish and amphibians. Other species spend their whole lives in the marsh. Many plants can only be found in wetlands like the cattail. Listen to the sound of the frogs. How many different ones can you hear? Some of the most commonly heard are: the barking Green Tree Frog; the peeping Spring Peeper; the clacking Northern Cricket Frog; the banjo twang of the Green Frog; and the deep throated drone of the American Bullfrog. This is also a great place to look for the Great Blue Heron. They like to look for frogs & fish in the marsh. If you're lucky, you might even see a Wood Duck! As you can see, the marsh is an important ecosystem.



#### Trail Information

The Marsh View Trail is a .25 mile easy trail, that is handicapped-accessible. It is a crushed gravel trail that runs from the parking lot to the overlook with a view of the marsh.

#### Marsh View Trail Self Guided Tour

Tour stops 1 through 4 are marked by numbers along the trail.



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Virginia State Parks

## Mason Neck State Park

### Marsh View Trail Self Guided Tour



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# Mason Neck State Park

## MARSH VIEW TRAIL SELF GUIDED TOUR



### History of Mason Neck

Mason Neck State Park is steeped in natural and cultural history, encompassing 1,825 acres. The park shares 'The Neck' with Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge, Pohick Bay Regional Park, Gunston Hall and BLM's Meadowood Special Recreation Area. Combined, these areas provide over 6,400 acres dedicated to recreation, preservation and wildlife management.

The first recorded history of Mason Neck was by Captain John Smith in 1608. He wrote of his meeting with the Dogue Indians and charted the chief's village of Tauxenent on his map of Virginia. The area was referred to as Doggs Island and Doeg Neck originally. Later, this peninsula received its current name from the Mason family.



During the 1800's and early 1900's, logging was the area's primary industry. The removal of mature pine, hardwood and the use of the pesticide DDT led to the decline of the American Bald Eagle in the region.

In 1965 the Conservation Committee for Mason Neck formed to preserve the area from increasing development pressures. In July 1967, the Nature Conservancy made its first purchase of land to protect areas of Mason Neck. Later, funds were appropriated to federal, state and local agencies to begin buying land parcels from private land owners and the Nature Conservancy.

The park is now managed for passive recreation, environmental education and the protection and preservation of habitat for the American Bald Eagle and other animals in the area. Animals that frequent Mason Neck include: bald eagles, hawks, white-tailed deer, fox, beavers and over 200 species of birds.



### Stop 1

#### Vernal Pools

Stop and take a look at these two pits. These are the remains of a house that used to stand here. They now fill with water when it rains and become vernal pools. Vernal pools are a type of seasonal wetland. They are usually filled with water during part of spring and summer and may have ice in winter. They will often dry up in the late summer to fall. Vernal pools are important for many amphibians. They will often breed and lay eggs in these pools during the spring. Unlike pools that have water year-round, there are no fish that would eat amphibian eggs in vernal pools. They also are safer from birds and mammals that live & fish in big ponds.



### Stop 2

#### The Bench

Take a moment to sit on the bench. Look at the two trees that have grown together. This can happen if two trees grow too close together. This is called inoculation & usually occurs if the two trees are the same species. If they are touching, but not grown together, they are considered to be hugging trees. The Beech Tree behind you is the one with lots of roots above ground. Their nuts provide food for many animals. Listen to the sounds in the woods. Can you hear the teacher-teacher of the Ovenbird? Or the nasal ha-ha-ha-ha of the White-Breasted Nuthatch? The forest is alive with the music of the birds if you just take the time to listen.