

Forest Trail

The Forest Trail is an extension of the Homestead Trail. As you travel further up the hill you will eventually reach the highest point on the CNC property. This trail is *0.31 miles long* and steepest trail on the property and is a great one to get away from the developed areas on the grounds.

Some seasonal plants and migratory wildlife mentioned in this self-guided brochure may be scarce from December through February.

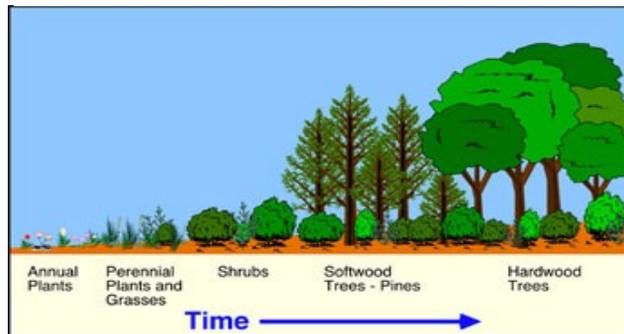


We certainly hope that you enjoy your walk of our Forest Trail. Please return this guide to the Admissions Desk. We look forward to your next visit! www.chattnaturecenter.org (770) 992-2055

6. When I Grow Up

If you can, try to imagine this trail without a single tree between the top of the hill and the river. The forest that you are walking through may seem old but it is still pretty young for a forest.

As recently as 100 years ago, much of this land was used for farming. That means that trees and shrubs were cut and removed and the soil was tilled and planted each year, which suppressed the forest from returning.



When farming stopped, it still took many years for the forest to return. Seeds of grasses and herbaceous plants that remained in the soil were the first to pop up. Thanks to the wind and animals, seeds of shrubs and pines were deposited and changed the landscape even more. Over time, the changes in the land also helped to change the soil and encouraged the return of hardwood trees. This ecological process is known as succession.



Tulip Poplar
Liriodendron tulipifera



Hickory
Carya sp.



Forest Trail

a self-guided tour

Please respect nature as you hike on the Forest Trail; take only pictures, and leave only footprints. To enjoy this trail, please follow the red blazes (a spot/mark on a tree) that can be found along the trail. Numbers are marked with red paint on stones.



Great Horned Owl
Bubo virginianus

1. Kelpin Family Gravesite

One historically significant sight along the Forest Trail is this old gravesite. In 1857 William Kelpin purchased the surrounding land for use as a family farm. Up to six family members may be buried in the immediate area, although only three of the graves are clearly marked.



One grave belongs to Charles Kelpin, the second oldest of six children born to William and Mary Kelpin. Charles was a mill worker when the Civil War began, and while technically exempt from military service, chose to enlist as a member of the Roswell Battalion on August 11, 1863. Charles died in Augusta, Georgia on February 21, 1864 before seeing combat.

2. Dominant Forest Trees

As you wander various trails around the Chattahoochee Nature Center grounds you will experience mixed conifer & hardwood forest. The dominant conifer or “needled” tree is the loblolly pine. Also known as “old-field pines”, these trees grow well in abandoned agricultural fields like those formerly cultivated by European settlers throughout northeast Georgia.



Broadleaf red oak and white oak trees share a need for strong sunlight and also flourish on hilltops.

2. Dominant Forest Trees, cont'd



White Oak
Quercus alba

Other deciduous broadleaf trees (*trees that grow leaves in the spring and shed leaves in winter*) can be found in abundance lower down the hill where there is more shade but the soil is richer.

3. There She Blows!



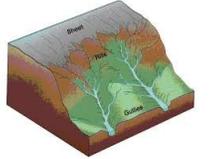
Loblolly Pines
Pinus taeda

Prior to European settlement, loblolly pines accounted for a small portion of forest growth. Those loblollies grew quickly in abandoned agricultural fields and were valuable for logging. Loblollies, however, are not long lived trees. Apart from potential logging, their numbers fell rapidly with age due to a general decline in health, ensuing insect attack and eventual toppling or “blowdown”.

Unlike areas where pine beetles destroy acres of conifer forests to the detriment of wildlife, the natural culling of the loblolly pines by beetles and blowdowns in this case promotes forest growth. Decomposition aided by beetles and fungus releases minerals and nutrients. Gaps created in the forest canopy by blowdowns promote the growth of the neighboring “understory”, facilitating the reign of broadleaf hardwoods.

4. My Gully and Me!

You may barely notice what lies beneath as you pass over this small bridge. While some water is absorbed by soil, this depression in the ground was formed by rainwater flowing downhill during heavy rain events. As this and other gullies meet, water passes to small creeks, then to larger streams, and eventually enters the Chattahoochee River. Thanks in part to this and thousands of other gullies that drain an estimated 8,770 square miles of land alongside 436 miles of the Chattahoochee River, an average of over 16 billion gallons of water a day flow downstream into Apalachicola Bay.



5. Who Lives Here? (Spring and Summer)

Keep your eyes open for a variety of species that call this area home. In particular, examine the “snags”, or standing dead trees. Insects move into these dead trees and are followed by woodpeckers looking for a meal. The large holes created by the woodpecker provide a home for small mammals, owls and other birds. Once fallen, the logs on the ground are home for more insects, other invertebrates, and even some amphibians!



Red-headed Woodpecker
Melanerpes erythrocephalus



Southern Flying Squirrel
Glaucomys volans



American Toad
Bufo americanus