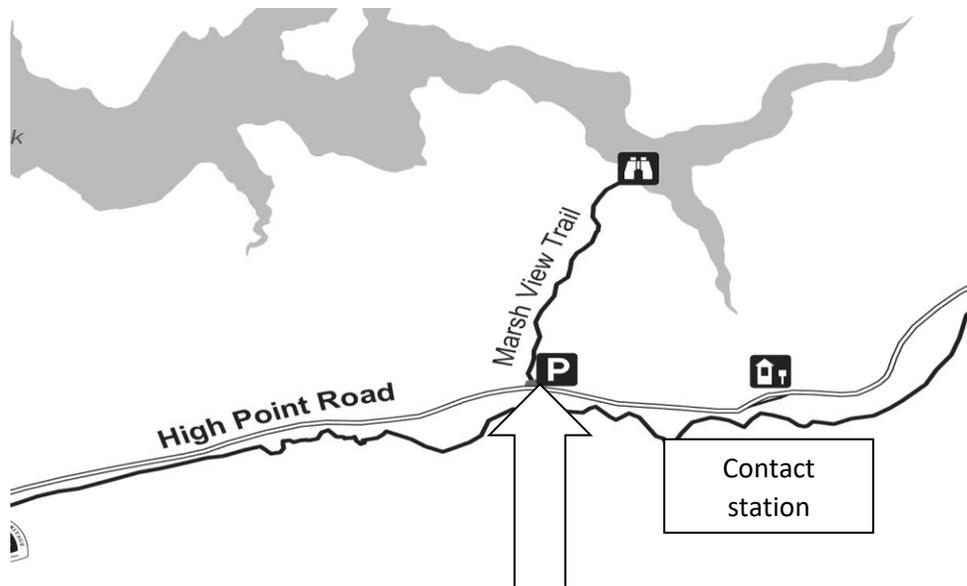




Friends of Mason Neck State Park Accessibility Project

Marsh View Trail



Trail Type – out and back

Trail length – .25 mile

Trail width – minimum of 4'

Trail surface – stone packed

Trail blaze - Maroon

Consider bringing a pair of binoculars to see wildlife, especially at the end of the trail in Kane's Creek marsh.

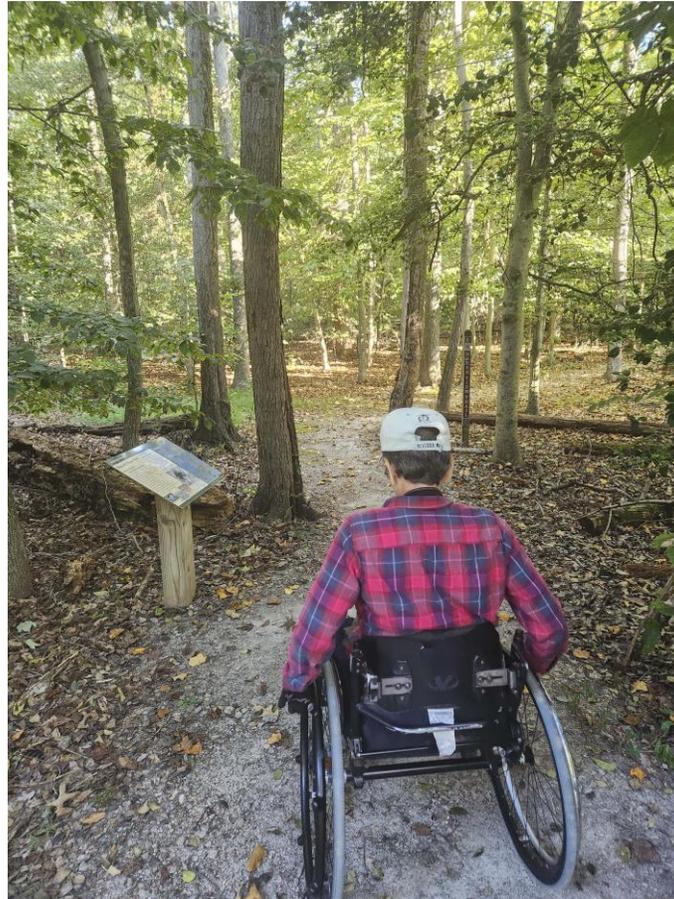
Marsh View trail is accessed from the small, unpaved parking lot on the right side of the road approximately .25 miles after the contact station as you enter the park. There is one designated handicapped parking spot, and there is a bike rack at the start of the trail. The trail is not visible from the road.



Marsh View Trail begins with a downhill slope from the parking lot. It meanders through a wooded forest and ends at a wheelchair-accessible viewing platform overlooking Kane's Creek. There are two benches on the viewing platform.



Users will notice slight changes in elevation, with a total descent of about 6 feet along the length of the trail.



Loose rocks and exposed tree roots on the trail may present hazards for people using wheelchairs or other personal mobility equipment.



Along the trail, there are several points of interest. Stop #1, marked by a signpost, marks the location of vernal pools, a type of seasonal wetland that is important for many amphibians. These pools are usually filled with water during part of the spring and summer and may have ice in the winter.



In late summer and early fall, the pools often dry up. Unlike pools that have water year-round, there are no fish in vernal pools. This lack of predators makes vernal pools an ideal spot for amphibians to breed and lay eggs in the spring.

The bench and signpost that mark stop #2 are just over half-way to the trail's end. It is also a place where two trees have grown together, a phenomenon called inosculation. This usually only happens when two trees of the same species grow too close together. If the trees are touching, but not grown together, they are considered to be hugging trees.



At Stop #3 is a dead tree, also called a snag, that looks like it should be cleared away, but it's actually a mini ecosystem.



Fungi and insects are working to turn this tree into rich soil. Woodpeckers eat the insects in the tree, and they create small to medium sized holes that become homes for other animals like bats, owls, nuthatches and wood ducks. Many animals use the holes created by the woodpeckers as a safe place to raise their young. Squirrels often store nuts in dead trees, and hawks and other birds of prey may use the snags for perching and looking for prey.

As you approach the viewing platform, mountain laurels are abundant. They are native to the eastern United States and bloom in late spring. They can be identified in other seasons by their gnarly stems and glossy evergreen leaves.



From stop #3 it is only a short distance to the platform overlooking the marsh and the upper reaches of Kane's Creek. The view changes with the season. Wild rice is evident in this picture, taken in early September.



Visitors during other times of year may see ducks and Tundra Swans floating in the water and Great Blue Herons hunting for frogs and fish. In winter, when the trees have lost their leaves, bald eagles and hawks may be visible in the distant trees. The pictures below offer a glimpse of what may be seen from the Marsh View Trail overlook.



Hooded Merganser



Lesser Yellowlegs



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker



Juvenile Bald Eagle



Red-tailed Hawk

Information describing the three points of interest along the trail is taken from the Mason Neck State Park Marsh View Trail Self-Guided Tour brochure, which is available at the Visitor Center.

Photos by Kris Gulden, Pam Cressey; wildlife photos by Randy Streufert.