

Stop #9~ Water Willow

Water Willow is a type of perennial that grows along shorelines. Despite the name, it is not in the same family as the Willow tree. The Water Willow grows in an environment known as the littoral zone, the area between land and open water. Such zones serve as breeding grounds for animals, and act as buffers slowing the erosion process.



Stop #10~ Black Oak Gall

A gall is a tumor-like overgrowth on a tree. It is caused by a fungal or bacterial infection, or attacks from insects. Oak galls like this one were used as a herbal remedy in Colonial America.

Stop #11~ Tree Rings

Counting the inner rings of this tree trunk can determine the age of the tree. Analyzing the size of tree rings can reveal what the climate was like in the past. Narrow rings indicate that there was less water or moisture available in the surrounding environment, while wide rings are indicative of larger amounts of water or moisture. The study of growth rings to uncover a tree's history is called dendrochronology.

Visitors can expect to be surrounded by the quiet beauty of nature in winter, experience spectacular views and vistas and benefit from the company of a knowledgeable state park guide. Railroad Ford Trail is a 1.5 mile hiking only trail.

Enjoy views of the lake and wildlife along the way. Hike over easy terrain through mixed hardwood and pine forest.

Lake Anna State Park Self Guided Interpretive Hike Railroad Ford Trail



Lake Anna State Park

6800 Lawyers Road
Spotsylvania, Virginia 22551

Visitor Center: 540-854-6245

Office: 540-854-5503

www.virginiastateparks.gov



Stop #1 ~ Fern Gully

Christmas ferns, like those seen here, are hardy evergreen plants. While the name traces its origin to the traditional use of the plants in Christmas wreaths and greenery, the leaflets on each frond, some say, resemble Christmas Stockings. This evergreen plant, can be found in abundance in forests in the eastern part of the United States, and often grows near drainages like the one that's here.



Stop #2 ~ Running Cedar

The creeping evergreen covering the forest floor is known as running cedar or ground pine. It is in the club moss family. A group of plants which aren't Moss at all, they are actually more closely related to Ferns.

Stop #3 ~ Virginia Pine

Virginia Pine, also known as Scrub Pine, is indigenous to the Piedmont region. These cone-bearing trees have a light, durable wood which is used for lumber. The resinous substance obtained in its sap is used in varnishes, plastics and medicines.

Stop #4~ Moss Carpet

Mosses are green plants that lack flowers, but have small leafy stems. They commonly grow close together in clumps or mats in damp or shady locations. Unlike Vascular plants which take in water through vessels which occur throughout the plant, Moss plants take in water and nutrients directly through their cell walls.

Stop #5~ Life Cycle of Trees

Trees begin as a seed. When the seed gets planted by man or nature, it emerges as a seedling, grows into a sapling and eventually a mature tree. As trees succumb due to disease or as a result of damage from storms or lightning, it will die off. What often remains standing is called a "Snag". In this form the tree continues to provide useful habitat to many organisms such as burrowing insects, woodpeckers, and squirrels for as long as it remains standing.



Stop #6~ Liking Lichens

Lichens are a union, between a fungus and an alga. We most often associate alga with the water. Alga, in this instance provides the lichen chlorophyll for photosynthesis while the fungus shelters the alga and provides nutrients enabling the lichen to grow. Examples of types of lichen seen nearby are crustose (formed onto rocks) foliose (which appears leafy on rocks) and fruticose (as with "reindeer moss", which is a lichen that grows in and amongst moss and other suited soils throughout the forest.

Stop #7~ Decaying Logs

As they lay on the ground trees and logs continue to host creatures of all kinds. Earthworms and slugs dig tunnels. Beetle larva and snail eggs are deposited in the tree and may grow to maturity or become a food source for animals. These processes continue to break down the log until it gradually returns to the soil.

Stop #8~ Trees

All living things need food, water, shelter, air and SPACE to survive.



Some need a little more than others: These two remarkable trees have continued to flourish despite environmental factors which grafted them together at an earlier stage in their development.