

About Musconetcong Gorge Section

A wooded nature preserve totaling 425 acres, Musconetcong Gorge was originally owned by the Warren Glenn Paper Mill. The mill, located adjacent to the park, started production in 1873 and is still in operation today. Formally, workers from the mill harvested trees from the property to provide a continuous supply of timber to be reduced to wood pulp and processed into various paper products. Evidence of this activity can still be found within the in the form of charcoal landings. These landings were created when colliers would stack timber in a pyramid formation to release intense heat for charcoal production. Some of these sites were used consistently over the years and are several feet thick. Today, the forest has re-grown and most trees average between 60 to 80 years.

Rules and Regulations

- Access to the designated trail network is by foot only. Mountain bike, cross country skis, horseback riding, motorized vehicles are not permitted.
- Pets must be leashed, with a leash not to exceed 6 feet in length. Owners must also clean up after their pets.
- Please follow all posted instructions and obey all closing hours.
- The following activities are prohibited:
 - camping
 - fires
 - hunting without a permit
 - littering
 - alcoholic beverages

The Hunterdon County Parks and Recreation Department is dedicated to preserving open space and natural resources, providing safe parks and facilities, and offering educational and recreational opportunities, all contributing to an enhanced quality of life for present and future generations.

Feel free to keep this booklet
or return it for future use.

**MUSCONETCONG GORGE SECTION
of the
MUSCONETCONG RIVER
RESERVATION
SELF-GUIDED TRAIL BROCHURE**





COUNTY
OF
HUNTERDON



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION



Mailing Address: PO Box 2900, Flemington, NJ 08822-2900
Office Address: 1020 State Route 31, Lebanon, NJ
Telephone (908) 782-1158; Fax (908) 806-4057
E-mail: parks@co.hunterdon.nj.us

Hours: Mon - Fri 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM
Sat: 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM

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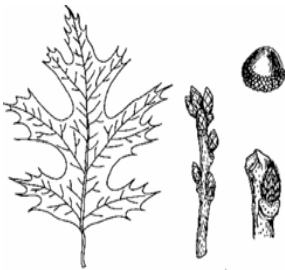
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**3. Standing Dead Trees** are a valuable resource to the inhabitants of the forest. As you scan this forest, you will notice that they dot the landscape. Dead trees provide homes for insects which in turn provides food to many kinds of birds and animals. The holes or hollows in dead trees create homes for many animals, from chickadees to raccoons. When they fall, they fertilize the soil and provide homes for ground-dwelling animals. Unfortunately, dead trees are often removed from forests for firewood or to “protect” the other trees from insects or diseases.

**4. Lightning Bolt:** When lightning struck this tulip popular tree, it created a habitat for many species. The rounded edges of the hollow suggest that the tree might heal. As the bark continues to grow it encases the living parts of the tree. This living matter is enough to support the needs of the tree’s canopy. However, opportunistic insects will most likely invade this tree before the bark can fully enclose all of the living matter, and eventually the tree will resemble the standing dead wood at the last station.



**5. Black Oak:** This Black Oak (*Quercus velutina*) can be identified even in winter by the dark squares on the bark. It is one of many species found in this diverse mixed-hardwood forest. Oaks are good for firewood, and their acorns are eaten by many kinds of wildlife.



**6. Black Birches** (*Betula lenta*) can be identified by the horizontal lines or “lenticels” in their bark. Birch beer used to be made from the dried roots of the birch, and its branches sometimes were chewed on by woodsmen seeking a refreshing taste. Notice the tree approx 35 feet in front of you, the exposed roots of this tree indicate that it established itself from a seed that landed on the stump of another tree, a common characteristic of birches.

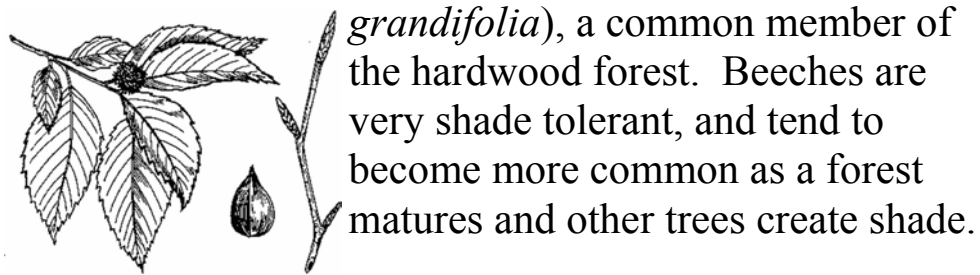


**7. The Paper Company** that you see in the distance is the most modern indicator on the trail of man’s use of the forest. It is currently operated by Fibermark Inc. The mill started making paper in 1873. It processes wood pulp imported from as far as Chile and as near as the southern US, chops it up, rehydrates it, and makes it into heavy-weight paper used for various purposes. Large amounts of water are required for this process, which is why the mill was located on the Musconetcong River.



(Stone front of the original mill at Fibermark Inc.)

**8. American Beech:** The smooth, light gray bark of this tree identifies it as an American Beech (*Fagus*



*grandifolia*), a common member of the hardwood forest. Beeches are very shade tolerant, and tend to become more common as a forest matures and other trees create shade.

**9. Christmas Fern (*Aspidium acrostichoides*):** Most of the ferns on this hillside are Christmas Fern, so named because they are green in winter and because, if you look closely, you will see that each leaflet is shaped like a Christmas stocking.



**10. Scout Run Overlook:** Pause a moment and enjoy the view of the beautiful ravine below. Did the stream create the ravine, or was the ravine created first and the stream followed the easiest course? Many of the trees around you are Norway Maples, (*Acer platanoides*). This tree was introduced from Europe over a 150 years ago and has since naturalized and is replacing local species.



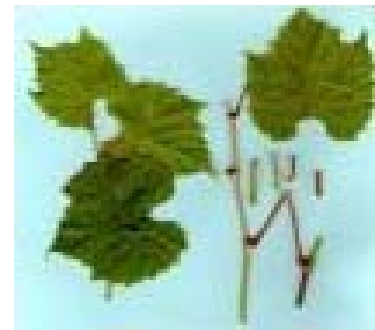
**Note:** To continue the nature hike return the way you came and follow the trail to the left.

## **Self-Guided Trail System at Musconetcong Gorge**

This self-guided nature trail incorporates 12 points of interest as you hike into the gorge. The trail is approximately 1.2 miles round trip. If you have any comments or questions about what you find along the trail, contact the Parks Department at (908)-782-1158.

**1. Rock Wall:** Remnants of rock walls can be found in almost all of New Jersey's forests. They indicate areas cleared with the hard manual labor of a farmer who hoped to use this land for many years. This clearing effort contrasts with the efforts of the native Lenni Lenape, who chose easily tillable soil to begin with, and often moved their fields to a new area every few years.

**2. Fox Grape Vines (*Vitis labrusca*),** such as this one, are indicators of disturbance in a forest. These vines require full sunlight to grow, so their presence means that a tree has either fallen or been cut down nearby, allowing light to reach the forest floor. Grape vines can hinder the tree growth and sometime can kill a tree by blocking sunlight to it; however, they provide edible fruits for many kinds of wildlife.



PAPER MILL

Nature Trail

IG Ridge Trail

Gas Pipeline - Not A Trail

0.6 mi.

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The trails at the park are designed for hiking only. Most of the trails range from moderate to slightly difficult. They take advantage of the smoothest grounds but are steep in some areas. They offer beautiful vistas as they wind through a wide diversity of tree species.

**12. Shagbark Hickory:** As you near the end of the nature trail, you will be happy to know you are approaching the tree that is easy to identify – the Shagbark Hickory (*Carya ovata*). Its shaggy, light gray bark gives it away in any season. Hickory is among the densest of woods, and is often used for tool handles.



The Hunterdon County Department of Parks and Recreation gratefully acknowledges the hard work of Henry Jones and Boy Scout Troop 187 on originally establishing this self-guided nature trail, signs, and content of this brochure for the Musconetcong Gorge Nature Preserve. This trail and guide were completed as Henry's Eagle Scout Project in May of 1992.