

As you walk along the **Cross County Trail**, you will enjoy part of a precious network of parkland. Parks offer a lot, including:

- Trails for bike riding, walking and watching birds;
- Places to learn, exercise and have fun;
- Habitats where wild animals thrive and plants work to clean our water and air;
- Historic houses and archaeological sites that tell the stories of our past;
- Quiet spaces.

### The First Step

The Cross County Trail (CCT) began with everyday people who had an idea for a long trail that would connect neighborhoods from one end of the county to the other, from the Potomac River to the Occoquan. They took their idea to the county's leaders, who gave their support, and then over a five year period, with the Fairfax County Park Authority Board's approval and the help of hundreds of volunteers, the 40-mile Cross County Trail became a reality.

### Manners Matter

- Share the trail; respect the rights of others to use the trail too
- Stay on the trail
- Do not disturb plants or animals
- Keep your dog on a leash and be prepared to clean up after your pet
- Maintain proper control of your bicycle or horse
- Pass slower moving trail users on the left saying, "Passing on the left" as you go around them
- And remember that the Cross County Trail is open from dawn to dusk

## What's THAT?



CCT trail marker



Fairweather crossing



Marker with mileage

The Cross County Trail's diverse features reflect the surrounding area. The trail varies from natural surface to asphalt depending upon the landscape. Bridges and stone crossings help you ford streams. The trail also travels along sidewalks and crosses streets. CCT markers and mile posts help you find your way.



Leaves (Look but don't touch; poison ivy can cause an itchy rash)



Vine (Don't touch a hairy rope!)

## What's THAT?

On the edge of the trail you may notice poison ivy growing as a "hairy" vine or with leaves in groups of three. This native plant emerges in springtime with reddish leaves, turns green in summer and then changes to shades of yellow, orange or red in autumn. During the fall and winter, animals feast on its clusters of whitish berries and "transplant" the seeds in their droppings, spreading the plant along the trail and in the woods.

Photos from [www.poison-ivy.org](http://www.poison-ivy.org)

## Natural Neighbors

Cardinal



Healthy habitats include different trees, shrubs and grasses. These green networks supply wildlife homes, food and pathways. To keep the balance, volunteers help by planting native plants and removing invasive species. Look at the nearby stream, forest or meadow. How many types of plants and animals do you see?



Dragonfly



Dogwood



Red-shouldered hawk



Mushrooms

## What's THAT?

An invasive plant is a green bully that takes over an area. It usually comes from far away and is spread by people. These plants make it difficult for wild animals to find enough food, for other plants to grow and for the forest and streams to recover after a fire, windstorm or flood. To help keep parkland clear of invasive plants, don't grow them in your yard.



English Ivy



Porcelain berry

### Take a Stewardship Step

"I Spy" is one way to observe the Cross County Trail's treasures. Would you like to do more to protect these treasures? On your own you can help by picking up litter on the trail. You can also join a volunteer team to assist with trail upkeep, watershed cleanups, stream bank planting or invasive plant removal. To find out how to get involved, visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks).

# GT I SPY

Discover the Treasures of the Cross County Trail



LOOK and SEE but let them be



Use this guide to gaze FAR and WIDE



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Inclusion and ADA Support: 703-324-8563. TTY 703-803-3354



Fairfax County Park Authority

# Looking Back

As you follow the Cross County Trail you walk in the footsteps of people from the past. Close your eyes and imagine. Listen for the footsteps of history. For early people these stream valleys meant shelter, pathways and survival. Native Americans and settlers came to the stream valleys to gather nuts, berries and tubers and hunt for fish and other animals. Streams powered early mills, nourished livestock and irrigated the land. Now, you can use your eyes to hunt for:



Cattails



Deer



Turkey



Sycamore



Clouds

# Water Everywhere

Wherever you stand, walk or run on the Cross County Trail you are in a watershed! A watershed is the land, including meadows, forests, backyards and streets, that rainwater runs over, across and under on its way to a body of water. All the land in a watershed is uphill of a stream, marsh or river. This means that anything dropped on the trail flows into the nearby streams. As rainwater and melting snow run downhill, they carry pollutants, trash and other materials into our streams. Set your sights on these watershed clues:



Storm drains



Silt fence



House



Marsh



Meadow



Forest

# What's THAT?



Manhole cover

Water (and sewage) flows down hill. The manhole covers that you see in stream valleys provide access to the miles and miles of sewer lines that take sewage from homes and businesses to treatment plants. Do you know how much water you use every day? Brushing your teeth, flushing the toilet and washing dishes can add up. The average person uses over 90 gallons of water a day. Daily, you can make choices that help the environment, so practice good stewardship and save water where you can.

**Cross County Trail**  
 Discover the treasure  
 Forty miles of pleasure  
 Throughout the seasons  
 You'll find lots of reasons  
 To gaze far and wide  
 And re-use this guide

For detailed maps, visit:  
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/trails/cross-county-trail>

