



The Steep Rock VISTA

Summer 2013

New Trail Maps Available



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At long last, the new upgraded trail maps for Steep Rock, Hidden Valley and Macricostas Preserves are now available. Each trail map references the new color-coded trail blazing system, designates trails by use (*hiking only vs. hiking and equestrian vs. hiking, equestrian and bicycle*), includes trail mileages, and descriptions, photos and hiking routes to three significant points of interest.

These durable, pocket-size maps are printed on water/tear resistant paper which will significantly extend the life of the map. Maps may be purchased for \$5 each at the Steep Rock office, The Hickory Stick Bookshop, and Gunn Memorial Library.



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From the Executive Director ... “Respecting the Rules”

For those of us who enjoy the tranquility of the Steep Rock nature preserves...be it for a casual walk, a strenuous hike, a gallop through the woods, or an early morning birding expedition... we are privileged to have such magnificent natural resources to sustain our passive recreational pursuits. But the preserves will only continue to satisfy our community’s diverse thirst for recreation as long as we recognize, appreciate and respect the rules of operation.

In managing the multiple-uses which characterize our preserves, it is essential that rules be in place to protect the environment and our visitors. Much thought has gone into our policies, rules and regulations. Each rule serves a specific purpose. Collectively they are intended to foster an ethic which promotes respect for the land and for each other.

Recently the Board of Trustees reaffirmed the Steep Rock policy requiring dogs to be leashed at all times while in the nature preserves. As explained in the article on the back cover, this rule has been instituted to protect our fauna and flora, to ensure a safe and enjoyable environment for all preserve visitors, and to protect companion pets too.

This is an emotionally-charged issue and we realize that not everyone will agree with our policy. But that is not the issue. Rules are put in place to serve the greater good, and so it is with this policy. Dog-owners are welcome to enjoy the preserves with their pets. We simply ask that dogs be leashed at all times in accordance with our rules and out of respect for wildlife and fellow preserve visitors. — *Steve*

Explorations in Nature

Join us as we explore various facets of nature through guided hikes and educational programs. All programs are free; however, **pre-registration is required**. Enrollment is limited and registration is on a first come – first serve basis. To register for a program, please complete and return the enclosed registration form or complete and submit the registration form on our website (www.steeprockassoc.org/whats-happening). You will receive registration confirmation by email. If a program is canceled, registered participants will be notified.

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

Saturday, July 13 • 8:00 am - 10:00 am

LOCATION: Steep Rock Preserve Parking Lot (near riding ring)

AUDIENCE: All ages; all children must be accompanied by an adult

Join us for an early morning hike photographing the splendors of nature along the Shepaug River. Regardless of the type of equipment you use...from iPhones to point and shoot to DSLR cameras...you’ll learn how to create more artistic pictures. Be sure the battery in your camera is fully charged and bring an extra empty, formatted memory card if you have one. You may also want to bring a small towel to kneel on for those ground-level shots. This hike is approximately 3.2 miles round-trip.

PROGRAM LEADER: Richard Wanderman has been involved in various forms of photography for over forty years. Many of Richard’s photos appear on the Steep Rock Association website.

BLACK BEARS

Sunday, July 28 • 9:00 am - 11:00 am

LOCATION: Steep Rock Preserve Parking Lot (near riding ring)

AUDIENCE: All ages; all children must be accompanied by an adult



Come learn about black bear biology and ecology on this interactive hike. In addition to identifying and discussing important bear habitat and looking

for signs of bear activity, we’ll visit an active hair sampling station at Steep Rock Preserve. This site is part of an ongoing research project to estimate black bear abundance across Connecticut. A description of the project goals and methods will be provided. Participants will have an opportunity to check the station for hair samples. This hike is approximately 1.6 miles round-trip.

PROGRAM LEADER: Mike Evans is a graduate assistant in the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment at the University of Connecticut. He holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Biology and a Master’s Degree in Evolution, Ecology and Behavior. Mike has studied coral reefs, conducted research on mountain lions in Saskatchewan, and is specifically interested in understanding animal movement behavior and human-wildlife dynamics in hopes of improving conservation practices.

QUARTZ MINE HIKE

Sunday, Aug 18 • 10:00 am - 12:00 noon

LOCATION: Hidden Valley Preserve Parking Lot (Bee Brook Road/Hwy 47)

AUDIENCE: All ages; all children must be accompanied by an adult



Is it silica, siliceous or quartz? The first two are simply other names for what mineralogists call quartz – the most common mineral in

the earth. Normally, quartz forms beautiful hexagonal crystals, but at the Hidden Valley mine, the mineral developed as a massive white vein. Quartz has been, and continues to be, an important and useful mineral. Hike with us to the quartz mine as we discuss the geology of the area, the mining of quartz and its historical and present-day uses. This hike is approximately 2.7 miles round-trip.

PROGRAM LEADER: John Pawloski is a geologist, a retired teacher and the Founder and Director of the Connecticut Museum of Mining and Mineral Science located in Kent.

BIRDS OF PREY

**Saturday, Aug 24 • 11:00 am - 12:00 noon
1:30 pm - 2:30 pm**

LOCATION: Rumsey Hall School Auditorium

AUDIENCE: Ages 6 and older; all children must be accompanied by an adult



Eagles...Hawks...
Falcons...Owls.
These magnificent birds of prey, also known as raptors, are characterized

by hooked beaks and powerful grabbing feet armed with sharp talons. These agile hunters possess the best eyesight and the keenest hearing in the animal kingdom. Come meet some of these amazing birds...from the tiny saw-whet owl to the majestic golden eagle... as WINGMASTERS explains predation, the birds' place atop the food web, hunting adaptations and why many of these species are declining in numbers and facing an uncertain future.

PROGRAM LEADER: Julie Anne Collier is a licensed raptor rehabilitator and an experienced educator who enjoys sharing her compassion for birds of prey with audiences of all ages. In 1994, Julie co-founded WINGMASTERS, a partnership dedicated to increasing public understanding and appreciation of North American birds of prey. WINGMASTERS has presented over 5,000 programs at schools, libraries and museums throughout New England.

YOGA IN NATURE

Saturday, Sept 14 • 9:00 am – 11:00 am

Saturday, Sept 28 • 9:00 am – 11:00 am

Saturday, Oct 12 • 9:00 am – 11:00 am

LOCATION: Steep Rock Preserve Parking Lot (near riding ring)

AUDIENCE: Ages 13 and older; all children must be accompanied by an adult

Join us for a relaxing and meditative morning. After a short (15-20 minute) hike to a grassy area, we'll roll out our mats and begin our guided contemplative practice of Yoga. You'll enjoy the peace and serenity of being one with nature. All levels of experience are welcome. Participants should wear walking shoes and loose comfortable clothing. Please bring a Yoga or exercise mat, towel, sunglasses, water, sunscreen and insect repellent. Each class is independent of the others, so please register for the specific session(s) you want to attend.

PROGRAM LEADER: Doug Greene has studied the Eastern metaphysical and mystical arts and sciences – Yoga, Reiki, Pranic Healing, Ayurveda and Yoga Tantra – on a continuing basis since 1972. He is an Acharya (spiritual teacher) in the Kripalu lineage of Yoga. Doug credits his practice of Yoga for helping to manage stress and to maintain his physical and mental health.

NATIVE AMERICAN WALK

Sunday, Sept 15 • 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

LOCATION: Macricostas Preserve Parking Lot (Christian Street)

AUDIENCE: Ages 13 and older; all children must be accompanied by an adult

Delve into the Native American history of Bee Brook, Meeke Swamp, and Waramaug's Preserve. Join us for a leisurely walk through the meadows and woodlands of Macricostas Preserve, the homeland of Native American communities for thousands of years prior to European settlement. Participants will learn about the bountiful variety of natural resources that likely drew indigenous peoples to the region and discuss their importance to their Native American cultures. We'll also discuss local archaeological discoveries that have contributed to our knowledge of Native settlement and land use within and adjacent to Macricostas Preserve. This hike is approximately 1.5 miles round-trip.

PROGRAM LEADER: Lucianne Lavin is Director of Research and Collections at the Institute for American Indian Studies in Washington, CT. She is a member of the state's Native American Heritage Advisory Council and Editor of the journal of the Archaeological Society of Connecticut. Dr. Lavin is an anthropologist and archaeolo-

gist who has over 30 years of research and field experience in Northeastern archaeology and anthropology.

STARGAZING

Saturday, Oct 5 • 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm

LOCATION: Macricostas Preserve Parking Lot (Christian Street)

AUDIENCE: Ages 10 and older; all children must be accompanied by an adult

The crisp, clear nights of autumn are the perfect backdrop for observing a multitude of stars, planets and constellations. Join us for a wonderful evening of stargazing. Members of the Litchfield Hills Amateur Astronomy Club will teach us how to locate and identify these celestial bodies using our naked eyes, binoculars and telescopes. Club members will have telescopes for everyone to use. Weather permitting, we'll see constellations, galaxies and star clusters. We might even catch a glimpse of Saturn as it sets. Dress warmly and bring a flashlight (with a red filter if possible). If you have binoculars or a telescope, feel free to bring them.

PROGRAM LEADER: The Litchfield Hills Amateur Astronomy Club promotes the enjoyment of amateur astronomy through education, meetings and public outreach. The Club conducts stargazing events and presentations for schools, scout groups and community service organizations.

HOLIDAY HOUSE

Sunday, Oct 20 • 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

LOCATION: Steep Rock Preserve Parking Lot (near riding ring)

AUDIENCE: All ages; children must be accompanied by an adult

A magnificent hotel overlooking the Shepaug River once stood on the hillside above the riding ring at Steep Rock Preserve. Owned by Edward Van Ingen, Holiday House was conceived as a vacation retreat for working class women from New York City. Join us for a historical trip back in time as we explore the grandeur of this philanthropic retreat and examine how it impacted the lives of so many visitors. This hike is approximately 0.75-mile round-trip.

PROGRAM LEADER: Stephen Bartkus is the curator of the Gunn Memorial Museum in Washington, CT. A professional archaeologist, he is also employed with Archaeological Consulting Services in Guilford and has participated in numerous excavations throughout the Northeast. Stephen is the former curator of the Watertown Historical Society and currently serves on their board of directors. He is also on the board of the Connecticut League of History Organizations.

Leash Your Dog – Protect Wildlife, People and Pets

After lengthy consideration of land management options and potential alternative policies, the Steep Rock Association Board of Trustees has reaffirmed its long-standing policy of requiring dogs to be leashed at all times while in the nature preserves. This decision is founded on the principles of protecting wildlife, providing a safe environment for all visitors, and protecting your family pets.

In re-examining this emotionally-charged issue, the Board's Stewardship Committee considered a variety of options ... from designating specific off-leash areas (or off-leash hours each day) to the current policy of requiring dogs to be restrained. In the end, the decision was made based on safety ... safety for wildlife, people and the dogs themselves.

Steep Rock's primary mission is to protect the region's biodiversity, including plant and wildlife species, critical habitats and natural communities. Allowing dogs to be off-leash is contrary to this mission. In many instances, an unrestrained dog may be wreaking havoc off-trail while its owner enjoys a leisurely walk. Numerous research studies have documented that unrestrained dogs can pose a direct as well as an indirect threat to wildlife. In addition to displacing, harassing and even preying on wild animals, off-leash dogs may destroy the nests of ground-nesting birds and trample vegetation in critical habitats. Unrestrained pets are known to have a negative effect on wildlife at the individual

level and may conceivably also have important implications on wildlife populations.

Providing a safe environment for preserve visitors is also of paramount importance. Although most dog owners describe their beloved pet as 'friendly', not all preserve visitors share the same affinity for dogs. The actions of an unrestrained dog may be perceived in a number of ways. What one person perceives as friendly may be interpreted as threatening by another. It all depends on the individual's comfort level around unfamiliar dogs. Therefore, it is imperative that we respect everyone's right to walk, jog or travel by horseback without being accosted by a dog off-leash.

And let us not forget that the leash helps keep Fido safe too. Large predatory species such as foxes, coyotes, bobcats and bears, all of which are known to frequent our preserves, are capable of injuring or killing free-roaming dogs.

Let's keep everyone safe...our wildlife, our visitors, and our pets...by keeping dogs on-leash while in the nature preserves.

Save the Date

Steep Rock Annual Picnic

FREE

Saturday, September 7th; 12:00 noon; Steep Rock Preserve. Plenty of food and fun for everyone! Bring the entire family and enjoy the great outdoors!

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