

# SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE GREENBELT



**CHICKEN OF THE WOODS**  
This giant shelf fungus appears from spring through early fall. Its brilliant orange color fades to a dull white as it ages.



**TURKEY TAIL**  
Named for its resemblance to the tail feathers of turkeys, this fungus is found on decomposing logs.



**LUNA MOTH**  
With its striking green coloration and large eyespots, this moth lives only for a week after emerging from its cocoon, and is mostly active during overnight hours.



**GREEN DARNER**  
This large dragonfly eats primarily insects, including mosquitoes. Contrary to popular belief, dragonflies do not sting or bite people.



**GREEN FROG**  
This common frog is seen around the edges of swamps and ponds, with their faces peeking out of the water. Listen for their call, a twanging noise like a rubber band.



**GRAY TREEFROG**  
Gray treefrogs are often seen out of water on trees and other plants. Large sticky toes help them to climb and cling to tree bark. Their call sounds like a loud trill.



**PAINTED TURTLE**  
This turtle is named for the brilliant orange and red colorations on its shell. Look for them basking on logs in Greenbelt ponds.



**GARTER SNAKE**  
These non-venomous, native snakes are seen basking on rocks or slithering on the forest floor. Look for them in the warmer months – colder weather makes them inactive.



**JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT**  
This eastern native is sometimes confused with poison ivy before it flowers due to its three-part leaves. The cupped flower is covered by a distinct "hood."



**BLOODROOT**  
This grim-sounding plant with snow white flowers is named for the color of the sap in the roots. Look for blooms in April and May at the edges of wooded areas.



**TURKEY VULTURE**  
Often seen as an overhead scavenging feeding behavior, up dead animals through their silhouette, these birds help clean the forest.



**WOOD DUCK**  
Tree cavities and man-made nest boxes around High Rock Park encourage this shy, colorful waterfowl to live and raise young in the Greenbelt.



**SERPENTINITE ROCK**  
A rare rock found on Greenbelt trails. The minerals in serpentinite rock cause the greenish coloration and explain its snake-like name.



**DREY**  
A drey is a squirrel's nest found high in trees and messily made from leaves (birds make their nests with twigs). Dreys are easiest to spot in winter, after trees drop their leaves.



**WHITE-TAILED DEER**  
This large mammal is now established in Staten Island's natural areas after being absent for decades. Staten Island & the Bronx are the only NYC boroughs where deer live.



**CHIPMUNK**  
Often seen scurrying on the ground, this tiny mammal squeaks when alarmed, so hikers may hear chipmunks long before seeing them.



**SWEETGUM TREE**  
Recognized by its spiky ball seeds and star-shaped leaf, it is the most common tree on Staten Island. New York State's tallest measured sweetgum is in High Rock Park.



**TULIP POPLAR TREE**  
Named for its showy flowers and tulip-shaped leaves, their tall, straight trunks were preferred by the Lenape tribe for dugout canoes.

## WELCOME TO THE GREENBELT

You have come to New York City's "fine patch of wild." The Staten Island Greenbelt spans over 2,800 acres, providing a network of parks, natural areas, and greenspaces to explore in the heart of Staten Island. There are nearly a dozen public parks that make up this New York City flagship park. You are invited to see a variety of habitats supporting a diverse array of plants and wildlife, along widespread hiking trails (nine are featured in this guide).

The purpose of this guide is to introduce visitors to several popular destinations in the Greenbelt, provide recommendations about hiking to these sites, and highlight some of the plants and animals found along the way. Explore and enjoy your Greenbelt!

### TIPS TO MAKE YOUR HIKING EXPERIENCE ENJOYABLE AND SAFE:

**Stay on the trail:** Hiking outdoors is a great adventure, and like any adventure there are natural hazards that can be avoided with proper caution. Reduce your risk of poison ivy, tick bites, thorns, and other unpleasant encounters by staying on designated trails, and ensuring everyone in your party (pets too!) does so as well.



**POISON IVY**  
"Leaves of three, let it be." This plant is native to New York City. Oil on its leaves, stems, and roots can cause a skin rash if touched. It's berries are eaten by wildlife, who are not affected by.



**TICKS**  
Both deer ticks and dog ticks live in the Greenbelt, and thrive in humid areas like leaf litter, dense grass, and overgrown areas. Both types can transmit tick-borne illnesses, including Lyme disease.

## GREENBELT PARKS & FACILITIES

**THE GREENBELT NATURE CENTER**  
700 Rockland Avenue  
Staten Island, NY 10314  
718-351-3450 • naturecenter@sigreenbelt.org



**April - October:**  
Tuesday – Sunday, 10am - 5pm  
**November - March:**  
Wednesday – Sunday, 11am - 5pm

**HIGH ROCK PARK**  
200 Nevada Ave., Staten Island, NY 10306  
718-667-7475 • education@sigreenbelt.org

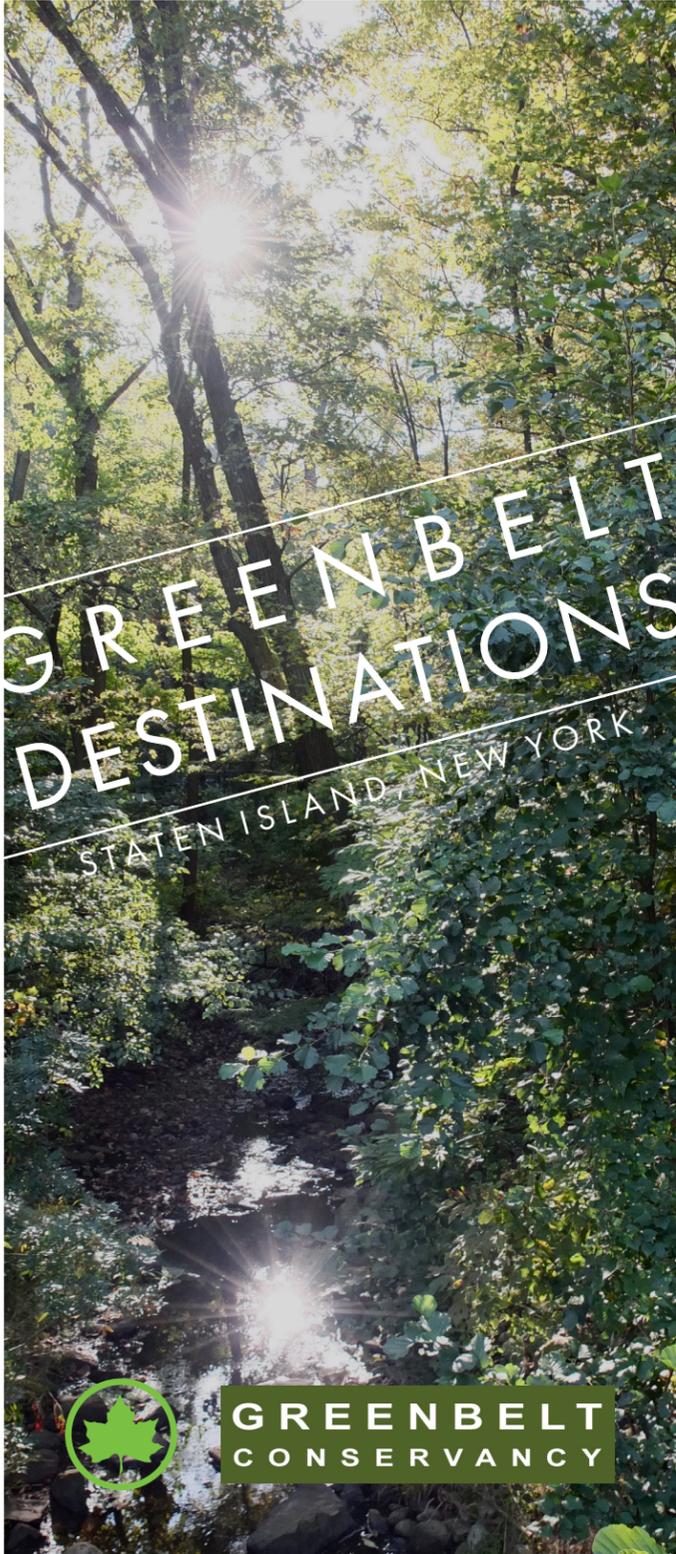


**WILLOWBROOK PARK**  
1 Eton Pl., Staten Island, NY 10314



nycgovparks.org • sigreenbelt.org

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**GREENBELT CONSERVANCY**



**1**  
**WILLOWBROOK PARK**  
 1 Eton Pl Staten Island NY 10314/  
 1.9 miles from the Greenbelt Nature Center

The mature forest of Willowbrook Park, accessible via the White Trail, is home to large tulip poplar, red oak, American beech, and red maple trees. The small lake supports Canada geese, various ducks, dragonflies, and little brown bats above the surface, while pumpkinseed sunfish and catfish swim below. Around the lake, notice the willows and the baldcypress trees with needles that turn a unique coppery-bronze color before shedding each fall.



**7**  
**REED'S BASKET WILLOW SWAMP**  
 Enter trails at Chapin Ave. or Annfield Ct./  
 4 miles from High Rock Park entrance kiosk

Take the Yellow Trail northeast from High Rock Park to see this section of the Greenbelt. The Read family lived on this site where father and son took part in the early American industry of growing willow trees to make fine baskets. The swampy areas are perfect for willow trees, and the industry prospered for many years.

Pick up or download a **GREENBELT TRAIL MAP** to plan your route using our entire trail network. [sigreenbelt.org/hiking-trails/](http://sigreenbelt.org/hiking-trails/)



**2**  
**LATOURETTE GOLF HOUSE**  
 1001 Richmond Hill Rd Staten Island NY 10314/  
 2.0 miles from the Greenbelt Nature Center

Use the Red/Blue Trails to get to the LaTourette Golf House, a restored Federal style brick structure built in 1870. Once a family mansion, today it is on the U.S. Register of Historic Places. Buy a snack and take a bathroom break here on the way to Historic Richmondtown, a 19th century living history village, or while heading further into Southwest LaTourette Park. There, see the naturally-occurring Hessian Spring, remnants of Ketchum's Mill, and the tidal wetlands of Richmond Creek.



**3**  
**HEYERDAHL HILL** in Buck's Hollow  
 0.8 miles from the Greenbelt Nature Center

A slight diversion from the Red Trail in the Buck's Hollow section of the Greenbelt will bring you to the ruins of the old Heyerdahl Family House – evidence of the Staten Island's pastoral past. Here, the Heyerdahls ran a family farm and vineyard despite the area's rocky and poor soil. Buck's Hollow is likely named for the goats ("bok" is the Dutch word for goat) that once grazed the farmland. Today, look instead for bucks and does of white-tailed deer.



**4**  
**BUTTONBUSH SWAMP** in Buck's Hollow  
 1.1 miles from the Greenbelt Nature Center

Buttonbush Swamp is a wetland in the central Greenbelt, accessible by the White, Blue, Red, and Yellow Trails. Home to green frogs, bullfrogs, spring peepers, and gray treefrogs (successfully reintroduced here in the 1990's through a NYC Parks initiative), the swamp teems with aquatic life. Adjacent to the swamp is a persimmon grove, a rare species for Staten Island generally found in the South.



**5**  
**MOSES MOUNTAIN** in Bloodroot Valley  
 1.4 mi from the Greenbelt Nature Center/  
 0.6 mi from High Rock Park entrance kiosk

In the early 1960s, there were plans to construct a highway through the Greenbelt. Many concerned citizens protested the highway and won their battle. A large pile of construction debris from this project remained and was named Moses Mountain as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the notorious urban planner, Robert Moses. This 260-foot-high vista offers up to 15 miles of visibility on a clear day. Visit via the Yellow Trail for a vista of the Greenbelt and views of fall foliage and migrating birds.



**6**  
**HIGH ROCK PARK**  
 200 Nevada Ave Staten Island NY 10306/  
 1.9 miles from the Greenbelt Nature Center

For many years, High Rock Park was a Girl Scout camp visited by children from all across New York City. When the Girl Scouts tried to sell the property, local citizens rallied to preserve this land as public parkland. The leader of this movement was Gretta Moulton, a scout leader for which the entrance gate to the park is named. High Rock Park contains five ponds and various wetlands, and is often referred to as the most tranquil place in New York City.