



EXPLORE, EXPERIENCE AND DISCOVER AT THE ESSEX COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

The Essex County Environmental Center is situated in West Essex Park, a wooded wetland habitat with access to the Passaic River which makes for an interesting and affordable site to book a naturalist-led field trip for school groups, scouts, adult and community groups.

This state-of-the-art facility was constructed as an environmentally sensitive building using natural and recycled materials, innovative energy saving technologies, and topped by a "green roof" for the purpose of storm-water management, among other things.

To fulfill our mission, we have established partnerships with the following environmental organizations:

- NJ Audubon
- Essex County Master Gardeners
- Essex County 4H Club
- Essex County Beekeepers
- West Essex Park Conservancy
- NJ Woodturners
- Traditional Earth Skills LLC

www.essexcounty.nj.org



PUTTING ESSEX COUNTY FIRST



Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.
Essex County Executive
and the Board of Chosen Freeholders

Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.

Together, we will continue Putting Essex County and Our Environment First.

We hope you will come back again to take advantage of our award-winning curriculum and year-long schedule of events and activities. With our professional staff and variety of environmental partners, we offer a full range of programs that challenge and engage visitors of all ages, prepare our next generation of environmental stewards and remind us about the importance of habitats, conservation and the great outdoors.

Since its opening in 2005, our state-of-the-art facility has become the epicenter for environmental learning and awareness. Our unique location along the banks of the Passaic River and among the wilderness of Essex County West Essex Park provides us with a living, outdoor classroom where the wonders of the earth can be discovered and appreciated. We invite you to explore our site and use the self-guided tour outlined here to observe nature in action.

Welcome to The Essex County Environmental Center!



CONNECT WITH NATURE!

Programs for Adults and Children to Enjoy

Book a Field Trip or Outreach Program for your School, Scout, Adult or Community Group

Lenape Learning Programs with Traditional Earth Skills LLC

Professional Development Workshops for Educators

Butterfly Tent Safari, Earth Day, Arbor Day and Octoberfest Celebrations

Spring, Summer, Winter and Holiday Vacation Camps

Sustainable Homes and Habitats Gingerbread Contest

Adult Yoga and Meditation Programs

Tot and Pre-K Little Explorer Programs

Interactive Energy and Conservation Exhibits

Nature-themed After-School Clubs

Nature-themed Birthday Parties

Nature Photography Contest

Rental Opportunities Available (Rooms, Facilities and Grounds)

DIRECTIONS:

From Livingston:
Drive north on Eisenhower Parkway to Eagle Rock Avenue. Turn Left onto Eagle Rock Avenue. Follow "From Eagle Rock Avenue/Eisenhower Parkway intersection" below.

From Garden State Parkway North and South:
Take exit 145 NJPAC/Newark/280. Bear left off exit to merge onto 280 West/The Oranges. Follow directions from "Route 280 West" below.

From Route 280 East or West:
Take exit 4A – Eisenhower Parkway South. Continue to the light and turn right on to Eagle Rock Avenue. Proceed approximately ¼ mile to the Center on the left.

From Eagle Rock Ave./Eisenhower Pkwy Intersection:
Drive west on Eagle Rock Avenue for about ¼ mile (*You will see a directional sign Environmental Center ENTRANCE to our parking lot) The Center is on the left side of the road, we are located across from the Essex Golf Drive Range.

From New Jersey:
Take Route 280 West to Exit 4A (Eisenhower Parkway South). Turn right onto Eagle Rock Avenue. Center is on the left.

From New York:
George Washington Bridge or Lincoln Tunnel to New Jersey Turnpike South. Take Exit 15W for Route 280 West. Follow above directions.

Use the address "621-B Eagle Rock Avenue, Roseland" when obtaining driving directions from the Internet.

**Note: The driveway entrance is difficult to see. As soon as you see the "SLOW" markings on the road, slow down. You will see a directional sign Environmental Center ENTRANCE to our parking lot. The Center is on the left side of the road. We are located across from the Essex County Golf Center.*



ESSEX COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
973.228.8776

621-B Eagle Rock Avenue
Roseland, NJ 07068
Fax: 973.228.3793

HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday through Friday 9am-5pm
Saturday 10am-2pm
Trails Open Dawn to Dusk

THE ESSEX COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER



Come explore nature in your own backyard!



Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.
Essex County Executive
and the Board of Chosen Freeholders

PUTTING ESSEX COUNTY FIRST



ESSEX COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER MAP AND INTERPRETIVE TRAIL GUIDE

WELCOME! This map will be your guide around the Environmental Center. Along the way you will encounter numbered posts that correspond to the descriptions within the guide. This self-guided 1/2 mile walk follows a wooded wetland habitat along a well worn trail.

1 Sweetgum Tree

At the beginning of the Lenape Trail, look for a tree with star-shaped leaves called the Sweetgum Tree. On the ground next to the tree and along the path, you can find prickly seed pods that we like to call "porcupine eggs."



2 Mother Log

Here we have an example of a "mother log." This term refers to trees that have fallen over but still provide habitats for various plants and animals. With the help of organisms and weathering processes, the mother log is decomposing as it breaks down into soil and returns gases to the air.



3 Forest Garden

This quarter-acre fenced area includes many native plants that are kept safe from the heavy browsing of white-tailed deer. As these plants grow, they provide an understory layer improving the health of our forest ecosystem.



4 Frog Pond

Leave the Lenape trail for a visit to the frog pond, home to green frogs and leopard frogs. They start life here as eggs and, after hatching, metamorphose into tadpoles, juveniles and finally adult frogs. Look carefully at the surface to find these frogs camouflaged in the duck weed.



5 Invasion

Walk down the parking lot to the beginning of Patriot's Path. Looking around the forest floor, especially under the trees, you will see the plant called European Garlic Mustard. Once used as a culinary herb, it has become an invasive species and is forcing out native groundcover species. You can see that few other plants have found enough space and sunlight to grow.



6 River Birch Tree

Continue to follow the white trail blazes and look for a tree whose bark seems to be peeling off in strips. It is called a River Birch tree. With its strong roots, the River Birch helps prevent soil erosion along the river's edge. If you look at the dead branch overhanging the trail, you might see holes showing signs of woodpecker activity.



7 Wood Duck Box

Walking along the boardwalk, look for a large birdhouse attached to a tree. The home was placed near the water for Wood Ducks to raise their young. Wood Ducks prefer to nest in hollow trees, but since these can be hard to find, we put up boxes that duplicate this natural cavity. Screech owls and squirrels often take up residence in these boxes during winter.



8 Don't Touch!

Look at the hairy vine growing up that tree! Would you have guessed that it's Poison Ivy? Remember the rhyme, "hairy rope, don't be a dope" and "leaves of three, let it be" and you should be able to avoid touching this plant and breaking out in blisters. We let it grow, because the white berries are beneficial food to many forest and field birds.



9 The Passaic River

Leaving the woods, walk toward the Passaic River. This spot is a public canoe launch and offers a nice view of what much of the upper Passaic looks like today. The 80-mile long Passaic River is host to an abundance of flora and fauna. If you are quiet and still, you might see a Great Blue Heron, Painted Turtle or River Otter.



10 Pollinator Garden

Stop by the Pollinator Garden before you enter the woods again. Specific plants have been grown in this garden to encourage butterflies, bees and other pollinators to come and visit. An important plant grown here is milkweed – a vital food source of developing Monarch caterpillars but is also a favorite of other pollinators because of its nectar rich flowers.



11 Beehives

Right off the trail you can see where some of our pollinators live. What may look like dresser drawers is a human-constructed honeybee dwelling. If you look closely on a sunny day, you may see honeybees flying in and out. Having honeybees here are beneficial to the plants in the gardens because they act as pollinators. The beehives are maintained by Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Essex County.



12 Lenape Life

The Lenape Native Americans hunted, fished and foraged here in these forests, fields and wetlands over 400 years ago. The shelter you see here is a replica of the structure the Lenape called a wigwam. Wigwams were made out of wooden frames built of samplings and covered with woven mats of grasses in summer and thick bark sheets in winter.



13 Pin Oak

The Pin Oak is a hardwood tree that can be identified by its pointy-lobed leaves with prickly tips and the way the lower branches point towards the ground. It produces many acorns which are important food for such wildlife as squirrels, chipmunks and deer. Native Americans collected and ground acorns to make flour. In autumn the leaves turn red, adding color to the wetland landscape.



14 Forest Composition

Take a moment to observe the forest canopy around you. The following are common flora found at this spot: **American Hornbeam:** Sometimes known as Ironwood, this tree can be identified by its distinct trunk that looks like a strong arm muscle. **American Beech:** You can identify this tree in winter by its cream colored, ridged leaves. It does not lose these leaves until new ones grow in the spring. Also, the trunk of the beech is smooth and grey like an elephant's trunk.



15 Ferns

Ferns have been found in the fossil record about 360 million years ago. During the spring and summer, look around for these modern relatives: **Christmas Fern:** The leaves of this fern look like Christmas stockings on their side. **Hayscented Fern:** These are named for the scent given off by its crushed brittle, yellow-green leaves. **Sensitive Fern:** This fern has broad, ridged leaves that give it an un-fernlike more leaf like appearance.



16 Fox Grape Vine

Follow the blue blazes along the Bird Trail. Look near the trunk of a large tree to find a Fox Grape Vine. In late summer and autumn, see if you can find hanging clusters of



grapes. The Fox Grape Vine has alternating palm shaped leaves, and a woody stem that cardinals like to strip and use to make their nests.

17 Floodplain

A floodplain is an area near a body of water that often floods. The Passaic River often floods in the spring after heavy rains. When it rains in an area with a lot pavement that can't absorb water, the water runs into the river and causes it to overflow its banks. Then the forest floor acts like a sponge and slowly absorbs the extra water. Feel this springy 'sponge' quality as you bend your knees and bounce!



18 Glacial Erratic

This large boulder may look out of place, but it was left here about 12,000 years ago! During the last ice age, much of northern New Jersey was covered by the Wisconsin Glacier. The glacier moved rocks as it flowed, which were left behind as it melted. Use your imagination to picture what this area looked like when the glacier was around.



19 Land-Use History

Remnants of old farm equipment, barbed wire, fence posts and stone walls tell us a story of the past. Years ago, this landscape was used for agricultural purposes. Today you can see a young forest reclaiming its former glory. Use your imagination to picture this area as farmland.



20 Mayapple Plants

In the spring if you look along the woodland floor, you will find Mayapple plants. They like to grow in large, low clusters less than a foot high. The plant has six double-lobed leaves that are connected at the center, but there is only one leaf per stem. The flower grows where two stems meet. The fruits appear in early summer and are the size of a large grape.



We look forward to your next visit!
Please share this map with a friend.
www.essexcountynj.org
973.228.8776