

# Summer

## Trail Guide

to Sapsucker Woods





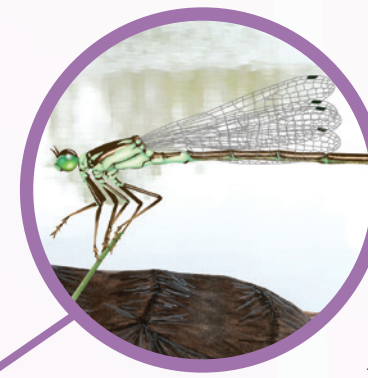
Snakes are an important part of ecosystems: they prey on rodents, amphibians, and insects, and hawks prey on snakes. None of the snakes in Sapsucker Woods are venomous, and the most commonly encountered species is the **garter snake**. Usually less than two feet long, garters are brown or dark green with several yellowish stripes running the length of their body.



Look carefully in the shallow water along the edge of the pond and you may see the colorful and spiny **pumpkinseed sunfish**. Male pumpkinseeds build shallow saucer-shaped spawning nests in the muddy pond bottom and wait for females to arrive from deeper waters. After spawning, the males actively guard the eggs and care for the young fish after they hatch.



**New York aster** is a beautiful purple perennial that grows on the borders of wetlands. Its flowers attract butterflies and moths, and are known to be a good source of nectar for bees. This late summer bloomer is also resistant to browsing by rabbits and deer.



Although the **eastern forktail** may be seen as early as April, it is most common during June through August. The male, only about an inch long, looks like a little green dot being followed by a smaller blue dot. Females are orange and black initially but slowly turn blue during their lifespan.



With a flash of slaty blue and a rattling call, **Belted Kingfishers** relentlessly hunt for small fishes throughout the pond. Look for them perched in the lower branches of dead trees, where they scan the water's surface for movement from below. A rufous band across the female's breast distinguishes her from the plainer blue-and-white male.



Look for a **Green Heron** patiently perched along the pond's edges early in the morning, fixated on the water's surface. Generally shy, this heron lets out a startled **SQUAWK!** when surprised and flies off with slow wingbeats.

Though primarily a fish eater, it also eats all sorts of invertebrates. It even employs tools while hunting, enticing fish closer by dropping bits of vegetation, bread, or twigs onto the water's surface as bait.

**Sherwood Observation Platform**

**Owens Observation Platform**

## Summer is a beautiful season to visit Sapsucker Woods.

Cool, clear mornings give way to the steamy heat of midday, and tall leafy trees offer respite from the sun. As insects buzz through the dappled shade, clumsy fledglings begin to learn how fend for themselves and the long journey ahead.

**Cornell Lab of Ornithology**

**Visitors' Center**

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**Barred Owls** spend the day roosting motionless in a sheltered spot, often next to the trunk of a tree. Dusk and dawn are your best bets for observing an owl foraging or for hearing its distinctive call, "*Who-cooks-for-you?*" A useful tactic for finding owls during the day is to listen for the excited sounds of small birds that have discovered the roosting owl.



**Podell Boardwalk**

**Poison ivy** can occur as a shrub, as a groundcover, or as a climbing vine, but one thing stays the same: three leaflets that are usually a shade of green, turning bright red in the fall. In its climbing vine form, the main trunk of the vine possesses many fine hairs along its surface. The urushiol oils on poison ivy can cause itchy rashes, so when in doubt follow the adage, "Leaves of three, let it be."



Both muskrats and **mink** can be seen in and around Sapsucker Woods

pond. Whereas muskrats are often seen swimming with vegetation in their mouths, mink are rarely seen, and can be distinguished by their pointy face and long, furry tail. Mink probably always occurred in Sapsucker Woods, but many were probably introduced as escapees from an old mink farm active near Sapsucker Woods in the early 1900s.

**Woods Shelter**



The tiny lichen-encrusted nest of a **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** is usually found near the tip of a downsloping branch in the forest understory. Females are solely responsible for its construction, lacing together fine plant materials with delicate strands of spider web.



Though difficult to see in the forest canopy, **Red-eyed Vireos** are often heard singing.

Listen for the simple and monotonous refrain as they sing *cherr-o-wit, cheree, sissy-a-wit, tee-oo* endlessly throughout the morning.



Lurking in the warm waters of the pond are common **snapping turtles**, the state reptile of New York. "Snappers" are omnivorous, scavenging plant and animal materials as well as actively hunting fish, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Anything that will fit in its mouth is potential food.

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- Wilson Trail, with boardwalk
- Other trails, in part
- Ponds and pools
- Marsh and wetlands
- Paved areas