

# Wetlands Tour

Morris Arboretum *of the*  
University of Pennsylvania

## What Are Wetlands?

Wetlands are areas of land that are saturated enough with ground water that they can support flood tolerant vegetation or plants that require wet soil. Wetlands are transition zones between dry land and deep water.

## Why Are Wetlands Important?

Wetlands are a home and refuge to a great biodiversity. Wetlands collect rain and ground water and act as a filter, slowing down and cleaning the water. Wetlands can also hold excess water during a storm to prevent overflow into the sewer system.



## History of the Morris Arboretum Wetlands

**1717** This parcel of land was deeded to John and Lenart Streeper by William Penn. It was used for farming and mining of iron ore and limestone.

**1892** Floodplain purchased by John and Lydia Morris to add to their Compton estate. A cow barn was built at the top of the slope and Jersey cows were pastured down the slope to the Wissahickon Creek.

**1910** In order to create better land for grazing, John Morris installed drainage tiles that successfully drained the wetlands adjacent to the creek for better pasture lands.

**1932** Morris Arboretum was founded upon the death of Lydia Morris. The lower slope and meadow were leased by the Arboretum for grazing and hay production until the 1950's. Beef cattle grazed here during WWII to supply the war effort.

**1996** The Arboretum proposed a Paper Mill Run restoration and demonstration project that began in 1998.

**2001-2** Thanks to funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the E.P.A. to restore the wetlands and meadows as demonstration sites for ecological land management. Initial installation began in 2001-2 and plantings continue today. The underground tiles were broken and natural spring water was able to flow through the flood plain once again. The water level can be adjusted to control vegetation or to prepare the area to receive runoff from a major storm.

**Today**, the Arboretum's wetland area has been restored to its original function.



# Your tour

The wetland and its floodplain encompass about 35 acres of the Arboretum. Today we will focus on the pond and its immediate surroundings. Park in the floodplain, left of kiosk and walk south-west to the wetland. Keep your ears and eyes open for the animal and plant life that thrive in our wetlands.



## Find these native plants:

- 1 *Viburnum dentatum* (arrow-wood viburnum)  
2002-365\*A
- 2 *Cercis canadensis* (eastern redbud)  
2003-064\*A
- 3 *Platanus occidentalis* (American sycamore)  
2002-362\*A
- 4 *Quercus palustris* (pin oak)  
2005-025\*B
- 5 *Betula nigra* (river birch)  
2001-378\*A
- 6 *Alnus serrulata* (hazel alder)  
2003-079\*A
- 7 *Salix nigra* (black willow)  
2003-124\*A
- 8 *Cladrastis kentukea* (American yellow-wood)  
54-1073\*A
- 9 *Ilex verticillata* (common winterberry)  
2004-142\*A
- 10 *Acer rubrum* 'Frank'sred' Red Sunset red maple  
2005-224\*A
- A Signage

## Spot this wetland vegetation:



*Solidago speciosa*  
golden rod



*Vernonia novaboracensis*  
iron weed



*Physocarpus opulifolius*  
common ninebark

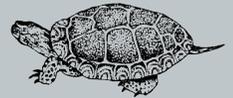
## Look and listen for these local and migratory animals:



belted kingfisher



blue heron



eastern painted turtle

## Bird Boxes

The Morris Arboretum installed bluebird, wood duck, kestrel and bat boxes to encourage wildlife to inhabit the area. Our wetlands are now a sanctuary both for wildlife and nature lovers!



Photo: Ruth Pfeiffer



**Morris Arboretum** of the  
**University of Pennsylvania**

Official arboretum of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

[www.morrisarboretum.org](http://www.morrisarboretum.org)