

Cushetunk Mountain Preserve

Cushetunk Mountain Preserve is part of a horseshoe-shaped mountain that was formed by volcanic activity during the Triassic Period 200 million years ago. The Lenni Lenape called this area “Cushetunk,” meaning “place of hogs,” due to the settlers’ hogs who at times escaped and roamed the mountains. Settlers called the area “Hog Mountain.” Diabase rock made the area unsuitable for farming, so timber was the dominant early use. The natural bowl shape of the valley led to the state’s selection of this site for the creation of Round Valley Reservoir in the 1960s. Ten homes in the valley were demolished and 16 others were relocated before the area was flooded. At a depth of 180 feet, the reservoir is the second deepest body of water in NJ. In 1981, the county acquired 380 acres as open space.

Hunting

Hunting is permitted to control the deer population, and hunters must obtain a permit issued by the Division. Visitors during hunting season are strongly encouraged to wear blaze orange or confine visits to Sundays.

(Revised 3/2017)

The Hunterdon County Division of Parks & Recreation is dedicated to preserving open space and natural resources, providing safe parks and facilities, and offering educational and recreational opportunities, all contributing to an enhanced quality of life for present and future generations.

It is the policy of the County to provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities upon advance notice of need. Persons requiring accommodations should make a request at least two weeks prior to program attendance.

With the exception of park properties with reservable facilities, all properties are “carry in / carry out” and trash/recycling receptacles are not provided. Please plan accordingly and do not leave any trash/recyclables behind.

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Location: Cushetunk Mountain Preserve spans across the border of Clinton and Readington Townships. The parking area is located at 106 Old Mountain Road, Lebanon 08833. This park is open from sunrise to sunset. *There are no restroom facilities at this park.*

Directions from the Clinton Area:

Take I-78 east to Route 22 east. On Route 22, travel until the junction with Route 629. The junction is at a traffic light and marked by a sign for Round Valley. Turn right on Route 629 and proceed for about 0.5 miles until a left-hand turn for the “Boat-Launching Ramp.” Turn left and follow the road for another 1.4 miles to Old Mountain Road. Make the right and travel 1.5 miles. On a curve just before the railroad tracks is a gravel parking lot on the right side.

Directions from the Whitehouse Area:

Travel west on Route 22 and exit to the right for Lebanon/Cokesbury. Use the jug handle and cross over Route 22. At the “T” intersection with Main Street, turn left and then make the right-hand turn onto Cherry Street. Go 0.4 miles and after passing under the railroad bridge, turn left onto Old Mountain Road. After 1.5 miles, on a curve just before the railroad tracks is a gravel parking lot on the right side.

Recreational Trails

Cushetunk offers many forms of recreational activity, including hiking and mountain biking. The trails leading to and including the Ridge Trail are considered difficult, but offer scenic views of the reservoir. For a moderate hike, walk from the parking lot to the interior trail and then down to the meadow to return to the parking lot. Horse-back riding is prohibited.

NOTE: From January 1st to August 1st each year, certain areas of Cushetunk and Round Valley Recreation Area are closed to the public for the protection of the Bald Eagles’ nest and habitat. Please help protect the Bald Eagles and obey these closures.

Round Valley Recreation Area

Access to the Round Valley Recreation Area is prohibited from the Cushetunk Mountain Nature Preserve. For information about Round Valley, contact their office at (908) 236-6355 or <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/parks/round.html>.

Readington Connector Trail

In 2010, the County and Readington Township collaborated to create a connector trail between Cushetunk and Pickell Park. Readington Township Parks: (908) 534-9752 or http://www.readingtontwp.org/parks_main.html.

Wildlife & Habitat

The preserve resides on the northern side of the Cushetunk Mountain. Since it is out of direct sunlight, the habitat is wetter than the southern side. Trees in the park include chestnut oaks, tulip trees, beeches, and hickories. A variety of woodland birds can be seen or heard throughout the park, including warblers and thrushes in spring. Evidence of woodpeckers can be found on dying trees. Rocky outcroppings and moist seeps provide excellent habitat for reptiles and amphibians.

Bald Eagles

The Cushetunk Mountain range has been home to a nesting pair of Bald Eagles for over 15 years. Bald Eagles are the county’s largest raptor, with a wingspan of seven to eight feet. The white head and tail do not develop until its fifth year. Fish are the staple of the eagles’ diet, but eagles are known to steal food from other raptors and scavenge off of carcasses.

Bald Eagle populations have grown since the banning of DDT and other pesticides, which once poisoned fish and accumulated in the eagles’ bodies. In 2007, Bald Eagles had recovered enough to be removed from the federal endangered species list, although they are still considered state endangered.

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Trail Map and Guide



Bald Eagle



Hunterdon County
Division of Parks & Recreation
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Website: www.co.hunterdon.nj.us
(click on “Parks & Recreation”)

Office Hours:
Monday to Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

SUMMARY OF RULES AND REGULATIONS

The rules and regulations governing use of facilities or properties administered by the Hunterdon County Division of Parks and Recreation are promulgated in accordance with provisions of the N.J. Statutes Title 40:32-7.12, which reads as follows:

"The Board of Chosen Freeholders may by resolution make, alter, amend, and repeal rules and regulations for the supervision, regulation and control of all activities carried on, conducted, sponsored, arranged, or provided for in connection with a public golf course or other county recreational, playground, or public entertainment facility, and for the protection of property, and may prescribe and enforce fines and penalties for the violation of any such rule or regulation."

These rules and regulations have been promulgated for the protection of our patrons and for the facilities and natural resources administered by the Hunterdon County Division of Parks and Recreation.

Permits: A fully executed Facility Use Permit, issued by the County of Hunterdon for any activity, shall authorize the activity only insofar as it may be performed in strict accordance with the terms and conditions thereof. The State of NJ, County of Hunterdon, or the local municipality may require additional permits.

Prohibited Acts: The violation of any Municipal, State, or Federal law. Advertising, solicitation, ice skating, ice fishing, any other on-ice activities, downhill skiing, bathing, fuel-powered modeled aircraft, the release of any animal, explosives of any kind, poisons of any kind, after-hours use, alcohol without a permit in a non-designated area, controlled dangerous substances, weapons, posting of signage, inappropriate attire, and climbing on, or rappelling from any cliff, rock face, or boulder, with, or without the use of specialized equipment.

Regulated Activity: The sale of merchandise, aviation, boating, cross-country skiing, bicycling, and sledding. Battery-powered modeled aircraft and horses must be in designated areas, dogs must be restrained with a leash not exceeding six feet, pet waste must be removed, camping/fires are by permit only. All groups of 15 or more must obtain a permit for use of any Park area.

Prohibited Acts for the Protection of Property: No person shall make, excavate on, destroy, paint, fill in, cut, remove or tamper with any property, organic or inorganic.

Prohibited Acts for the Protection of Natural Resources: No person shall disturb wildlife or vegetation in any manner. No person shall pollute waters, litter, dump debris, or release helium balloons in any property. It is illegal to remove any natural resource from, or introduce any plant material, bulbs, or seeds to any property without a proper permit or license.

Prohibited Acts for the Protection of People: No person shall obstruct a county employee/official, interfere with a visitor, conduct any unsafe act, or cause a hazardous condition.

Vehicles: All the provisions of the NJ State Motor Vehicle Act apply. Vehicles are not allowed in unauthorized areas. Parking is allowed in designated areas only. **ATVs, dirt bikes, and snowmobiles are prohibited on County Park lands.**

Enforcement: The rules and regulations of the County shall be enforced by duly authorized Rangers or representatives of the County under the provision of N.J.S.A. 40:32-2, thru 40:32-7.13. Any person who enters into a County Park for any purpose whatsoever has a duty and is presumed to be aware of the provisions of these rules and regulations governing the use of the facilities and properties administered by the Hunterdon County Division of Parks & Recreation.

Penalties: Any person violating any of the provisions of these regulations shall, upon conviction before a court or other adjudicative body of jurisdiction, be liable for the replacement, repair or restoration of damaged property, if any, and shall pay a penalty of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) or other amount in the discretion of the court or other adjudicative body, or may be sentenced to imprisonment in the County jail for the term not exceeding ninety (90) days, or both, provided that this section shall not supersede any applicable penalty provision for specific offenses, which may be set forth in the New Jersey Code of Criminal Justice, N.J.S.A. 2C:1-1, et seq., or in any other applicable state or federal law.

NOTE: County Park Rangers of the Division of Parks and Recreation have the authority to issue summons and make arrests for violations of rules and regulations governing the use of facilities and properties administered by the Division of Parks and Recreation. This is only a summary of the rules and regulations. Rules applying to special conditions, activities, or situations may be supplemental to these rules and regulations. When special rules apply, they will be posted at affected areas. The complete text of regulations is available for inspection at the Park administration office in Clinton Township during regular business hours.

