

About Metuchen's Dismal Swamp

What is Dismal Swamp?

Designated by the US. Fish and Wildlife Service and the US. Environmental Protection Agency as a priority wetlands area, it is:

- one of Metuchen's most unique natural resources
- a unique habitat for flora and fauna
- an unusual and regionally rare wetlands area
- an area important to water systems
- a flood storage facility

How large is it?

Dismal Swamp covers nearly 650 acres. A 12-acre portion of its wetland and upland area is located in Metuchen.

What is its history?

Relics found in the swamp and upland section, including stone axes, spear heads, and arrow points show evidence that man used this area since prehistoric times.

Maps have given clues to the wetland's past use. During the 1700s, a vineyard existed in the swamp's southern portion, and viniculture was an important local farming endeavor during the late 18th and 19th centuries. By the early 1900s a Russian exile settlement had been established

where the swamp borders Metuchen. Today, only street names bear witness to this settlement.

How did the name originate?

Historians believe the name was derived from Dismal Brook, a narrow stream that flowed through the area.

What is Dismal Swamp's geological makeup?

The Passaic Formation found in the swamp consists of sedimentary rock composed of red-brown shale developed over millions of years from small, wandering water courses.

Why is Dismal Swamp unique?

- It represents one of the last remaining wetland ecosystems located in a highly urbanized environment
- Its wetlands provide natural flood control
- It is prime wildlife habitat
- It is useful for our economy: It influences a downstream fishery of the Raritan River Basin via the Bound and Green Brooks
- By filtering pollutants, it maintains water quality
- It appeals to nature lovers

Natural Resources In Dismal Swamp

Plant Communities:

The upland area, a deciduous forest with mature trees over 50 years old, includes the northern red oak; American beech; shagbark hickory; grey birch; and flowering dogwood.

The open areas contain numerous herbaceous species, including asters, goldenrod, milkweed, bulrushes, cinnamon fern, club moss, jewelweed, mayapple, lady's slipper, sensitive fern, skunk cabbage, starflower, trout lily, spring beauty, and wood anemone.

The wetlands area contains plant species such as the red maple, sweet gum, high bush blueberry, swamp azalea, and arrow root.

Wildlife:

Metuchen's Dismal Swamp supports a diverse and extensive number of wildlife species. An estimated 165 species of birds are found here, as well as a variety of amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. Dismal Swamp is also home to eight reptile species. Of particular importance is the presence of the loggerhead shrike, which is on the Federal threatened and endangered species list. Mammals include the eastern chipmunk, eastern cottontail rabbit, gray squirrel, muskrat, raccoon, red fox, white-tailed deer and woodchuck.

Personal Checklist of Wildlife found in Metuchen's Dismal Swamp

- Turkey Vulture
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Barred Owl
- Pileated Woodpecker
- Red-Breasted Nuthatch
- Brown Creeper
- Hermit Thrush
- Red-Shouldered Hawk
- Great Blue Heron
- Glossy Ibis
- Eastern Chipmunk
- Cottontail rabbit
- Gray squirrel
- Muskrat
- Red fox
- White-tailed deer
- Raccoon
- Woodchuck
- Wood duck
- Woodcock
- Wilsons snipe
- Coopers hawk
- Mockingbird
- Blue jay
- American goldfinch
- Canada goose
- Black duck
- Killdeer
- Robin
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Directions to Metuchen's Dismal Swamp

Follow Route 27 to Route 501 in Metuchen. Proceed onto Central Avenue, and at Liberty Street, turn left, continue to the end. There is a sign marking the trail entrance.

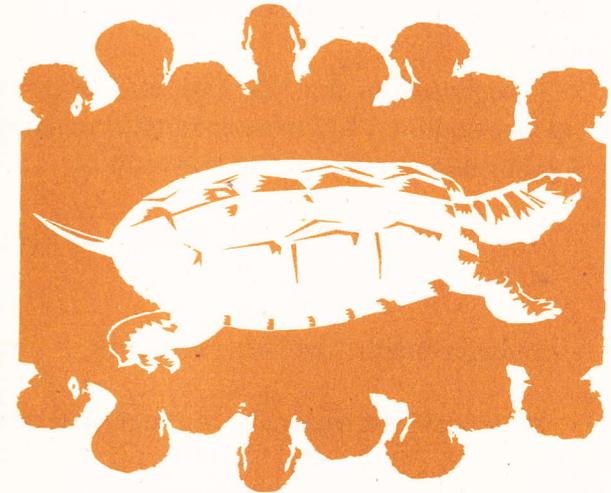
Local Attractions

Only 2.9 square miles in size, Metuchen offers a variety of cultural activities and special events year-round, including an annual Memorial Day Parade, Spring Fair, Fall County Fair, Jazz Festival, Winter Parade and Antique Auto Show. The town, nicknamed the "brainy borough," also has a Senior Citizen Center, a large shopping district and a wealth of restaurants.

Slide Program Available

A 25-minute slide show describing the wildlife and plants of Dismal Swamp is available at no charge for groups. To schedule the show – presented by the Metuchen High School Community Service Class in cooperation with the Metuchen Environmental Commission – call 732-321-8744

METUCHEN'S DISMAL SWAMP



A NATURAL RESOURCE GUIDE

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