

10 Near this area is a large shagbark hickory. Look for the tall tree with long, peeling strips of bark. Bats use this tree for shelter!

11 You can see the remnants of an old boardwalk that lead you across the former creek bed and up the hillside. When you reach the top of the stairs, turn around to observe the floodplain forests you just walked through. Notice the diversity of the plants growing from the wet soil. When the area is flooded, please continue straight on our alternate route.

12 The large tree near this post is a tulip poplar, Kentucky's state tree! The large tulip-like flowers of this tree are visible in late spring and early summer.



13 As you make the slow winding ascent up the slope to the ridgetop, you may notice the terrain of the trail is unlike other areas of the trail system. This road was once used for access from "Prather Road" up to where a home foundation dating to the late 1800's is still present today. The road parallel to the trail is Newburg, with Bellarmine in the distance.

14 Near this spot you will find our native hackberry, easily identifiable by its bumpy bark. Give it a touch!



15 Another native hardwood tree found along the ridgetop is the Sassafras tree. They are unique in that they have 3 different leaf shapes on the same tree. Can you find all 3?



16 Can you find the oldest tree in this area? It is an oak tree growing tall and straight with a large canopy. This tree grew when there was little competition for space. See if you can find other significantly larger trees as you continue on the trail.

17 You've been walking through a grove of spicebush. Spicebush features delicate lemon yellow flowers in early spring, with light green deciduous foliage in the summer and red berries in fall. Gently massage a leaf to smell its spicy scent.



18 Can you find the standing dead tree with large holes in it? These holes were made by woodpeckers for nesting or finding food. Can you spot similar trees in the preserve?

19 The uprooted tree to your left with large thorns on its bark is a honey locust tree. They produce sweet smelling, sticky seed pods in the fall that megafauna from the ice age used to eat! The thorns protected the tree from being pushed down by mastodons. Honey locust and Osage orange trees give us a glimpse into an extinct past.



20 As you approach the end of the trail, look at the covered hillside to the right. The landscape is terraced, giving us evidence of human influence on the property. We do not know the exact reason behind this terraced landscape, but we can assume it has ties to agriculture. Next time you walk the trail, see if you can find old barbed wire that has been entombed by trees and metal fence posts.

Interpretive Trail Guide

Beargrass Creek State Nature Preserve provides a unique opportunity to experience a natural setting within the city. Located approx. 5 miles from downtown, our 80 acres of upland and floodplain forest is home to a diverse population of plants and animals. This property is owned by the Kentucky Nature Preserve and managed by the Louisville Nature Center, a non-profit organization.

You are on ancestral lands of the Shawnee and Cherokee.

1790's: Revolutionary War land grant to William Prather from Maryland. Prather estate raised livestock, farmed, planted apple orchards and bred horses.

1870's: John B. Castleman buys property and names it Fox Hill.

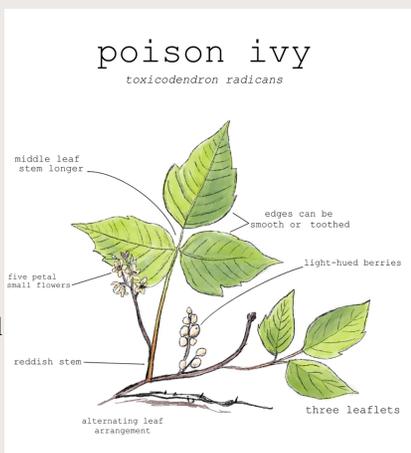
1917-1921: Camp Zachary Taylor was a demobilization center for soldiers to process out of the military. More than 2,500 acres were auctioned off in 1,500 parcels .

1940's: Collings horse farm; main house now serves as headquarters for Louisville Parks and Recreation.

1964: A group of environmentally concerned citizens start the Louisville Nature Center.

1982: 41 acres adjacent to Joe Creason park is purchased and dedicated as the Beargrass Creek State Nature Preserve.

It is important to learn what poison ivy looks like before venturing into the nature preserve. With its leaves grouped into clusters of three on long vine-like stems, this itchy plant can be close to the ground and small or an amazingly thick "hairy" vine growing up a tree.



4 Look to your left and right and you'll see small trails winding through the forest. What do you think made these? If you guessed White Tailed Deer you're correct! Our forest is home to dozens of deer. They cut through the forest looking for food, water and shelter. See how many more you can spot as you continue on the trail.



6 Along the trail, you'll notice lots of bricks and other materials used to build a road above the wet areas in this floodplain. Many of the oldest and largest trees in the nature preserve are along this corridor as they once lined the farmland and fences along old "Prather Road".

7 This spot was home to an old hollowed out sycamore tree, fondly referred to as "the hugging tree". It took its final resting place on the forest floor October 7, 2017. If you look beyond the fallen tree you'll see other sycamores nearby. Their white tops make them easy to spot. As they mature, they lose bark that can be found lying around the tree's base. How many Sycamores can you find in the preserve?

1 The wind storm on March 3, 2023 uprooted numerous trees in the preserve! The exposed roots used to provide the tree with water and stored energy. Now the large hole will provide habitat for small animals and insects. If you look beyond the root ball, towards the bird blind, you will notice a "mound". This is what root balls become after decades of breaking down back into the soil.

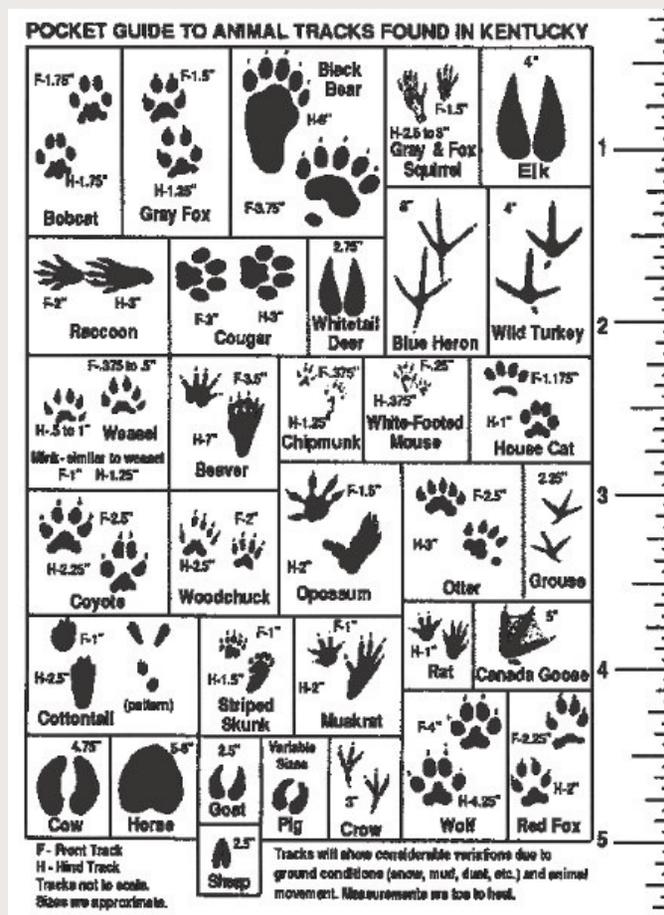
2 Jewelweed is an herbaceous plant that grows under the forest canopy and enjoys the shade of the trees. This plant produces a small, orange flower in the summer. The flower is a preferred source of nectar for hummingbirds that nest in the forest.



3 With #3 to your back, look at the forest floor and see it covered with Mayapples. The dark green, umbrella-like leaves emerge in spring and stay into the summer. Box turtles eat the yellow berry, dispersing the seeds. We do not recommend this as a wild edible since unripened fruit is toxic.



5 Look over the side of the bridge for animal tracks in the mud. Raccoon tracks are easy to spot with their long, five fingered foot prints. Can you find other tracks? Deer, opossum, turkey and squirrels also frequent this area.



8 Along the trail you will notice old logs that are decomposing before your eyes. A close inspection might reveal a young tree seedlings growing from the soft wood tissue as well as an abundance of insects and turkey tail mushrooms that will help to further breakdown these trees and return nutrients to the soil.



9 As you made your way to #9, you may have noticed pools of water off the trail. The vernal pools in this floodplain are indicative of the former path that the South Fork of Beargrass Creek made through this forests. These pools provide valuable breeding grounds and habitat. The streamside salamander (Ambystoma barbouri) is endemic to the Bluegrass region & our forest is one of the few remaining places they are thriving.

