



Please enjoy yourself on the trail and help us maintain it by placing your litter in the marked receptacles along the way.



Additional Information

NAS Oceana sponsored Scout Troops may use the camping area on a reservation basis. Scouts utilizing these facilities contribute to this beautiful natural area by helping with regular maintenance.

WARNINGS:

No vehicles are authorized to drive past the gate without prior approval and appropriate passes and identification. Park in designated parking areas ONLY.

No off-road or 4-wheel driving is authorized.

Be aware this is a natural area and there are venomous snakes and poisonous plants on the premises. It is unlawful and strictly PROHIBITED to harm, disturb, or collect plants and animals.

The release of fish of or other aquatic wildlife not caught on the premises is PROHIBITED.

The release of any animals or the planting of any plants without the written approval of the Base's Natural Resources Manager is PROHIBITED.

Alcoholic beverages, glass bottles, and firearms are PROHIBITED.

Fishing and use of the archery range are by permit ONLY.

It is recommended that individuals recreating on site use insect repellent.

It is required to provide, when requested, appropriate identification, permits and passes to Base Security and Conservation Law Enforcement Officers.

Public Access

Oceana Pond is open to anyone with Base Access privileges. Members of the General Public that would like to recreate on Oceana Pond must have a Base Sponsor. Base sponsors can be active or retired military or government civilians with current base access identification. To recreate at Oceana Pond or for other questions regarding Natural Resources Programs please contact the Natural Resource Center (NRC) at 757-433-2151 or stop by the NRC, Building 78, to ensure you have all appropriate access documentation.

You may also visit the Natural Resources Website at: <https://www.cnic.navy.mil/oceana/Programs/NavalStationDepartments/NaturalResources/index.htm>

In case of an emergency call 911 or 757-433-9111.

Naval Air Station Oceana Oceana Pond Outdoor Recreation Area



Welcome to the NASO Oceana Pond – natural area preserved and restored through the collective efforts of the Navy's Construction Battalion Unit #415, the Chesapeake Bay Youth Conservation Corps, the City of Virginia Beach Habitat Enhancement Committee, NASO's Natural Resources Division and volunteers.

The pond area supports several natural habitat types including forested wetlands, freshwater wetlands, open water, and upland forests. Due to the diversity of habitats, the pond supports a variety of wildlife including various waterfowl, deer, songbirds, small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.

The NASO Oceana Pond is one of the premier outdoor recreation areas on NASO were fishing, nature watching, hiking, picnicking, and canoeing are authorized.



Trails

Trail Map



The Oceana Pond Trail starts near the Natural Resources Center (at the wildflower meadow) and continues for nearly a mile through forested area. The naturally maintained trail then loops around the eight-acre Oceana Pond, providing hikers with a continuous circuit for observing the plants and animals within the area. The nature lover exploring the trail will encounter a host of native plants. Some of these plants are marked along the trail, while the location of others is noted on this trail map.

We hope that you will enjoy your visit and are able to apply some of the concepts utilized here in your own back yard. Some of these concepts include: the use of native plants for landscaping (which are more drought and disease tolerant than many ornamental plants), bluebird and wood duck boxes (with predator guards), bat boxes, the retention of some dead trees for woodpecker and squirrel nesting, and the use of fallen leaves, or "leaf litter," for compost. The following points of interest, which reflect many of these concepts, are identified along the trail:

1. WILDFLOWER MEADOW

The wildflower meadows may have a variety of flowers in bloom, depending on the time of year you visit. Wildflowers are not only beautiful, their nectar, leaves and seeds provide a valuable food source for a number of small creatures, including, birds, butterflies, and other insects.

2. BORROW PONDS

The footpath leading to the pond passes on the south side of two small ponds shaded by an assortment of forest trees. Typical trees in this area include ash, sweet gum, black cherry, oak, and poplar. These trees and their associated wetland habitat serve as a source of food and water for many species of birds and small mammals. The ponds are also

home to a number of amphibians and reptiles.

3. LEAF LITTER

Underlying the forest canopy, you will note an abundance of dry leaves. Leaf litter provides natural organic compost in woodland settings. Within this leaf litter, fungi, bacteria, and small organisms, such as beetles and worms, break down the leaves into a nutrient-rich mulch. The small absorbing roots of trees and shrubs then proliferate in this mulch, accelerating the growth of the plants.

4. IRONWOOD

American hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*) is also known as ironwood or musclewood due to the strong muscle-like appearance of its trunk and the density of its wood. Ironwood bears fruit, which is eaten by many birds such as cardinals, goldfinch, wood duck, bobwhite, pheasant, and wild turkeys. Rabbit and deer also nip and browse on new shoots. This pretty native tree, which is usually found along rivers and streams, serves as an excellent example of a tree species that provides abundant food for wildlife and can also be used in a naturalized landscape. Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) is another native plant that makes a nice addition to the landscape while providing food and shelter for approximately 94 species of birds.

5. NATIVE FERNS

Late spring is an excellent time to observe ferns along the trail. Just south of the pond there is a wet depression with five different species of ferns, including royal fern and cinnamon fern. In the early spring, fern fiddleheads serve as a food source to deer, squirrels, and small mammals. Ferns are also an attractive native ground cover for partially shaded areas.

6. Highbush BLUEBERRY

Vaccinium corymbosum, or highbush blueberry is an excellent understory shrub. This species is an important food source for deer and birds. Highbush blueberry is well adapted to Virginia and makes an attractive native ornamental backyard plant. The shrub does very well in shaded corners of buildings and along the shady side of fences.

7. TREE SNAG

Many birds and small mammals, such as woodpeckers and squirrels, use the crevices of decaying trees as nesting sites and perches. Instead of cutting down damaged trees, Natural resources personnel encourage leaving some snags for wildlife.

8. WOOD DUCKS

Take a moment while viewing the pond to observe (but not disturb) our wood ducks. Wood ducks, which adapt to a variety of wetlands, including artificially constructed ponds and ditches, nest in both natural cavities and nest boxes. The wood duck boxes in the pond provide additional shelter during the nesting season. The round metal flashing around the underside of the boxes is installed to deter raccoons, opossums, and various snakes that will eat eggs and baby ducks if given an opportunity. If you install a wood duck box in

a marsh or pond, remember to include this "predator guard." Other waterfowl that you may observe include the wigeon, mallard, gadwall, and hooded merganser.

9. WETLANDS MITIGATION AREA

The nature trail winds around to the east, through a wooded lane that opens into a marsh area on the southeast corner of the pond. This area was designed by the Natural Resources Division to compensate for minor wetland losses associated with construction projects on NAS Oceana. The marsh is an excellent place to view wetland plants. Wetland species in this area include those that were planted and many "volunteer" species. Trees planted in the mitigation area include Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), Atlantic White-cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*), and River Birch (*Betula nigra*).

10. BOAT RAMP

The ramp located on the northwest side of the Pond is for recreational use. Watercraft on the lake are limited to handpowered boats and canoes. A life jacket is required for each person in the boat and persons under the age of 10 years must wear jackets while aboard boats.

11. NATIVE SHRUBS

The understory around the Pond includes many native shrubs, such as dogwood, holly, blueberry, and pawpaw. Many of these species have the advantage of being shade-tolerant, which allows them to survive in the shaded understory. Many other tree/shrub species do not survive in the decreased sunlight environment of the forest floor.

12. DECAYED LOG

Over 85 bird species forage on decayed logs. Fungi often colonize on fallen trees and limbs, providing an additional food source for small mammals. Insects, such as beetles, grubs, and centipedes, live and breed in the logs, while slowly consuming the wood. Decayed wood provides lignin, which is an important nutrient source for these lower organisms.

