



Department of
Environmental
Conservation



Lily Pond Loop Self-guided Interpretive Trail

Introduction

Welcome to the Lily Pond Loop self-guided interpretive trail at Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve. This trail is 0.3 miles long. Please stay on the trail to avoid poison ivy and leave all plants and animals undisturbed. Return the brochure to the recycling box at the end if you do not wish to keep it. Remember to sign out when you leave!

On this self-guided interpretive trail you will explore animal homes. All animals require three things to survive: food, water, and shelter. To most people, shelter means the house we live in. The animals in Reinstein Woods live in a variety of homes, including houses provided by people!

1. Hi-rise Hotel

Look up at the large trees with deeply ridged bark along the edge of the trail. These are **eastern cottonwood** trees, which produce tiny wind-dispersed seeds attached to white fluff in the spring. **Wild turkeys** often roost up on the branches at night. Do you see any clusters of leafy branches stuck in the forks of the trees? These are **leaf nests** (also called **drays**). Built primarily by young **gray squirrels** during the summer, they are easiest to spot after the leaves fall. During the winter, squirrels make their home inside holes in trees.

2. Barbed Fences Mean “Keep Out!”

Examine the shrub in front of you, but don't touch! The **multiflora rose**, like the related cultivated rose, has sharp, curved thorns. Because it grows densely and spreads quickly, some people plant it as a natural “fence.” Large animals have a difficult time passing through, but birds can move easily between the thorny branches. **Catbirds** and **robins** often build their nests within the safety of these branches. In fall and winter, you can often find their nests inside the tangle of thorny branches.

3. Animal Highways

Do you see the well-worn pathway across the trail? This is a **beaver trail**, made by beavers traveling from one pond to another. These trails are often used by white-tailed deer as well. Just like humans build roads to make travel to their homes easier, animals like white-tailed deer and beavers will use the same pathways for ease of movement.

These deer trails are especially noticeable in the deep snow. You may even see tracks going across the pond in the winter!

4. Snagged!

Look around you—do you see any dead trees? Standing dead trees are called **snags**. They are easy to see in summer— they have no green leaves! Snags may not look as pretty as a living tree, but they are very important for wildlife. Many insects, such as carpenter ants, live in and feed on dead trees. Woodpeckers carve out holes in these trees to hunt for ants. The carved holes, or **cavities**, are then used by woodpeckers, wood ducks, squirrels, and other animals for nests or shelter.

Look for trees with holes along the trail. What animals might live in these holes?

5. Bed & Breakfast Bush

Have you ever seen a bush with red branches? The shrub in front of you is **silky dogwood**. This species can grow in wet areas, and the branches are brightest red in the spring. Not only does it provide a place for birds to build nests, but it also produces berries that ripen in late summer/early fall that are a favorite of songbirds. Look for catbirds and robins eating the berries and bird nests in the branches after the leaves have fallen.

6. Wild Windbreak

Gaze up at the **evergreen trees** along the trail. These trees were planted more than 50 years ago by Dr. Reinstein to reforest the open meadows of Reinstein Woods. The branches provide protection for birds from the wind. Owls, such as the **great horned owl**, often use these trees to perch in during the day or while scanning the ground for prey. Look at the ground near the trail—you might find an owl pellet (regurgitated bones, fur, and feathers) by these trees.

If you hear a group of crows cawing loudly near the evergreen trees, they may be harassing an owl who is roosting there during the day!

7. Man-made Homes

Do you see the long wooden box on a pole in the water? This is a **wood duck** nest box. Wood ducks naturally nest in tree cavities close to water, where the female duck will lay 10-15 eggs and incubate them for 30 days until they hatch. They will use a man-made nest box if no natural cavities are available. The cone-shaped structure on the pole below the box is a **predator guard**. This barrier prevents raccoons from climbing up the pole and eating the eggs.

8. Home for Herons

To your left is **Heron Pond**. It was named for the **great blue herons** that visit Reinstein Woods. Herons build big bulky nests with sticks and branches high up in trees. Great blue herons migrate south late in the fall and return in early spring. You may even be lucky enough to see one during the winter, if the temperature is warm enough to thaw the ice on the pond so they can find fish or frogs to eat.

9. On the Edge

Pause for a moment and look to the left of the trail. How does it compare to the area you just walked through? The large beech, maple and cherry trees in this section of the Reinstein Woods look very different from the low shrubs and wetlands on the first part of the trail. Many wildlife species favor this **edge**, or transition area from fields and shrubs to forest. White-tailed deer, blue jays, and black-capped chickadees are only a few examples of animals that prefer habitat edges.

To the left of Post 9 is the State Symbols Trail, a 1/4 mile trail featuring nine New York State symbols on trailside panels. The trail re-joins the Lily Pond Loop before Post 10.

10. Animal Engineers

Across the water is a **lodge** built by **beavers**. Beavers cut trees, pile the branches, place mud on top, then dig out an entrance underneath the water. Maintenance of the lodge is a family affair, with the adults, yearlings, and kits all working together at night on their daytime place of rest. In fall, look for tree branches sticking up from the water nearby. This **food cache** is gathered by the beavers to eat during the winter after the pond freezes over.

Look for another beaver lodge along the right side of the trail up ahead!

11. Lily Pond Lookout

Like all of the wetlands in the Preserve, the **Lily Pond** was man-made to provide habitat for wildlife. Use your senses to observe some of the many species that call this pond home. Listen for **frogs** and **toads** calling and look for **turtles** sunning themselves on logs during the spring and summer. If you look carefully, you might see mallards, wood ducks, or herons in spring through fall. Search in the mud for **tracks** of deer and raccoons who have stopped to take a drink at the pond edge, and look for the footprints of animals taking a “short cut” across the pond in winter.

Conclusion

This concludes the Lily Pond Loop self-guided trail about animal homes. Some of the homes were provided by humans, and some were created naturally by the animals themselves. Think about your own habitat—what could you do provide homes or habitat for the animals in your yard or community?

We hope you have enjoyed your walk around the Lily Pond Loop and will return to enjoy the changes each season brings. Continue to follow the trail to return to the parking lot and restrooms, or take a stroll down the boardwalk to the Lily Pond overlook. See if you can spot more animal homes and signs of wildlife on your way!

Please stop by the Education Center for information on the schedule of nature walks and educational programs at Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve.

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