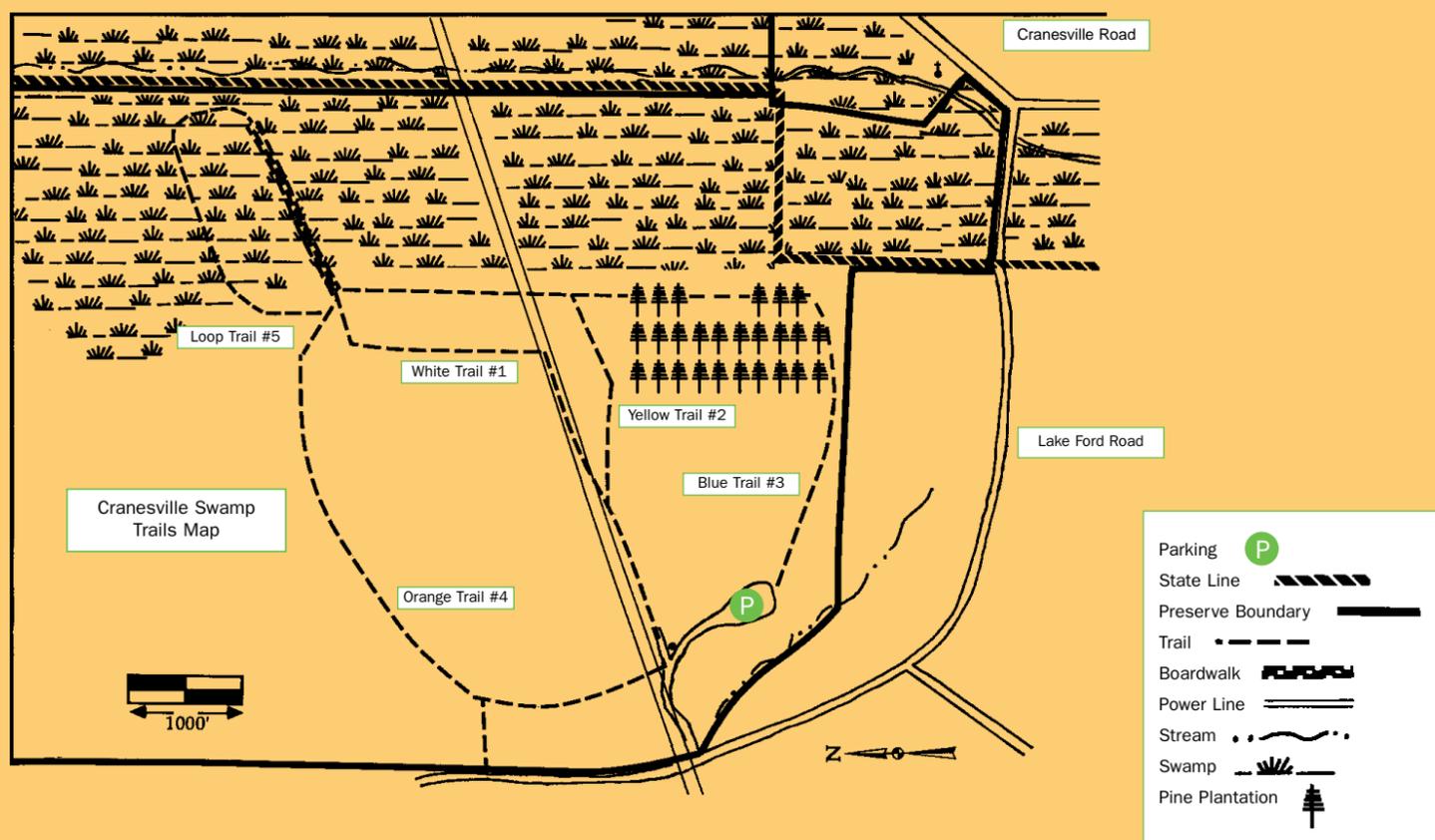


# cranesville swamp



## visiting the preserve

If you want to see, hear, and smell the swamp's plant and animal life—take a hike! There are five trails to choose from, all less than 2 miles long. Hiking boots are recommended, as some trails will be muddy.

The Cranesville Swamp preserve is open year-round during daylight hours for nature walks and birding in designated areas. While we encourage visitors to make the most of their visit, camping, pets, bicycling, and operating motorized vehicles within the preserve are strictly prohibited.

One of the highlights of the preserve is the 1,500-foot boardwalk, which allows for easy exploration over the wettest parts of the bog. Take your time and get a close-up look at the sphagnum moss, sundew, and tamarack. In the skies overhead you may see a raven, the largest member of the crow family in North America.

Come prepared with sun protection, especially in the summer months, and wear footwear that is suitable for uneven, muddy surfaces. Bring insect repellent and take precaution against chiggers, mosquitoes, poison ivy, and ticks—especially deer ticks—that can carry lyme disease. To find out more about lyme disease, visit [www.lymedisease.org](http://www.lymedisease.org) or [www.aldf.com](http://www.aldf.com), or contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-311-3435.



## directions to the cranesville swamp preserve

**From Baltimore/DC (3.5 hours)** Take I-70 west. After Hancock, take I-68 west to exit 14/Keyers Ridge and follow Route 219 south for 19 miles. From Route 219, turn right (west) on Mayhew Inn Road, and after 1.4 miles turn left on Bray School Road. After 1.6 miles at a "T" intersection, turn right on Oakland/Sang Run Road (Route 15). After 1 mile, turn left on Swallow Falls Road and follow for 2.6 miles to a sign for Youghiogheny Mountain Resort. At the sign, take a hard right on Cranesville Road. After 4.2 miles, turn left onto Lake Ford Road. In .2 mile, turn right at fork. Cranesville Swamp is .2 mile on the right. Follow the preserve signs and turn right into the parking area.

**From Morgantown, W.VA. (2 hours)** Take I-68 into Maryland. Use exit 4 to Route 42 north, paralleling I-68 to church at top of hill. Turn left on Blooming Rose Road and cross over I-68. Follow Blooming Rose Road for 3 miles, then turn left onto White Rock Road, and go 8 miles. Take right onto Cranesville Swamp Road and continue for 3 miles. After passing Lake Ford Church, turn right onto Lake Ford Road. In .2 mile, turn right at fork. Cranesville Swamp is .2 mile on the right. Follow the preserve signs and turn right into the parking area.

# cranesville swamp

Formed 15,000 years ago during the last Ice Age, Cranesville Swamp sits along the border of Maryland and West Virginia near the western edge of the Appalachian Mountains. Home to a bog that contains peat more than three feet deep, plants that eat insects, a conifer that sheds its needles in fall, and an owl that fits in the palm of a hand, Cranesville Swamp is an unusual refuge for northern species below the Mason–Dixon Line. In 1960, The Nature Conservancy first began to protect Cranesville Swamp with land donated from Dr. and Mrs. Charles Baer. Since then, the preserve has grown several thousand acres through land purchases and generous donations from individuals.

**frost pocket** At Cranesville Swamp the elements of wind, water, mountains, and temperature have created a landscape that is both beautiful and rare. In combination, these climactic elements produce a local natural occurrence known as a “frost pocket,” a low area that collects moisture and cooler temperatures. As weather travels west-to-east across the North American continent, the hills surrounding Cranesville Swamp channel precipitation and chilled air into the valley, consistently making Cranesville one of the coolest and soggiest spots in Maryland and West Virginia.

Cranesville Swamp provides a range of habitats for seasonal and year-round birds. In particular, the conifer swamp forest is an important area for migratory songbirds, like the alder flycatcher and Blackburnian warbler. The saw-whet owl, a small owl with a strange, tooting call, also nests in stands of red spruce and hemlock in the conifer swamp forest. All told, 100 species of birds can be found at Cranesville, including eight that are state-rare.



**for the love of peat** The permanent cool, wet setting of Cranesville Swamp is ripe for the formation of peat. Peat is made of compacted sphagnum moss, which over thousands of years grows into thick, damp, mats of vegetation. The breakdown of sphagnum moss creates an acidic, nutrient poor environment for other plants, called a bog. While few trees can grow in the bog, plants that can tolerate the conditions—like cranberry, sedge, and sundew (a carnivorous plant)—thrive in these open areas.



**cold, wet blanket** Once moist, cool air moves into Cranesville Swamp, vegetation acts to keep it there. Conifer forests of red spruce, hemlock, and other evergreens form an insulating layer that filters out warming sunlight and drying winds from the forest bottom. In addition, the peat itself can have a chilling effect—studies at Cranesville have shown the peat to be 10 degrees cooler a foot below the surface.



Given Cranesville Swamp’s lush forest and wetland, it’s not surprising that it is home to an exceptional variety of animals. In total, more than 50 rare plants and animals live at Cranesville.

**challenges** The primary threat to the unique setting of Cranesville Swamp is a warming of the local climate, causing a loss of habitat and species. Historic logging, foreign insects, and an overpopulation of deer have depleted the forests of Cranesville, allowing sun and wind to dry and warm the ground. The Nature Conservancy is working to prevent a loss of species at Cranesville Swamp by replanting forests, managing wildlife, and promoting compatible land management in the valley.



**the nature conservancy** The Nature Conservancy is an international, non-profit conservation organization formed in 1951 to preserve the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. If you are interested in volunteering for The Nature Conservancy or becoming a member, please call 301-897-8570, write to 5410 Grosvenor Lane, Suite 100, Bethesda, Maryland 20814, or visit our website at [nature.org/marylanddc](http://nature.org/marylanddc)

