

Why learn about ecology?

Understanding how plants, animals and other living organisms interact with each other and their environment allows us to make smart choices regarding our treatment of the earth. While we might not realize it, humans are also part of this delicate ecosystem. Humans may not consume squirrels and blue jays, but the actions we take do affect the environment around us. In turn, changes in the ecosystem affect humans. For example, if a pollutant in the Saucon Creek decimated the trout population, there would be quite a few disappointed fishermen. Learning about the environment enables us to both appreciate its beauty and think about the impact we have on its health.



Brochure designed by
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Heller Homestead Park

Location

The Heller Homestead Park is located in Northampton County just off of Friedensville Road. The park lies along the Saucon Creek just outside of Hellertown in Lower Saucon Township. The park covers 14 acres along the Saucon Creek and includes the historic Heller Homestead, a nature trail, and picnic area. The nature trail starts on the paved path along the Saucon Creek and continues into a clearing. The trail enters denser forest and slopes upward offering a magnificent view of the Saucon Creek. It then curves in the opposite direction and enters a grassy field near the Society Hill Community. Following the tree line, the trail ends where it began in the clearing. The path is marked by mulch bordered by branches.

Ecological History

The Heller Homestead Park is classified as an Eastern Deciduous forest. It lies on a bedrock of limestone. The erosion of limestone by rainwater which is slightly acidic creates calcium rich soil or "sweet soil". This calcium-rich soil is an integral part of the Saucon Creek Watershed's forest ecosystem.



What is an ecosystem?

An ecosystem is an interactive group of living organisms and their complex relationships with each other and their environment.

Lower
Saucon
Township
presents...



An
Interpretative
Nature Trail at
the Heller
Homestead
Park

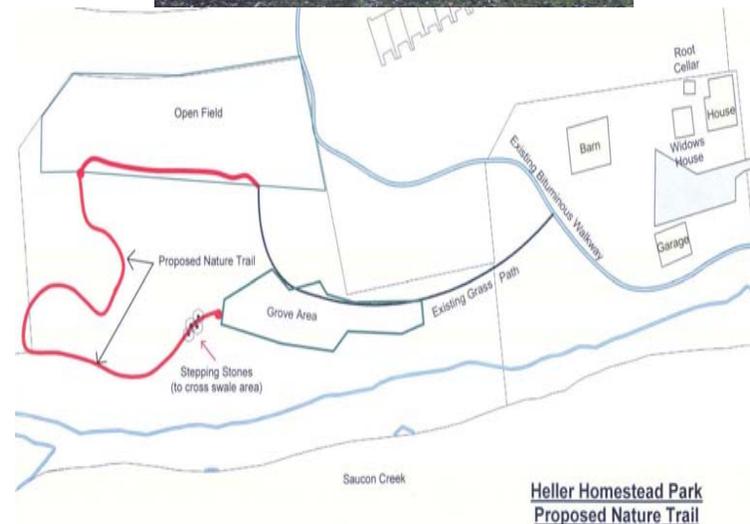
Why visit the nature trail?

This brochure outlines some of the plants and animals that are found along the nature trail. However, the best way to experience the area is to walk the trail and read the informational signs. The signs go into greater detail about plants and animals that are part of the Eastern Deciduous forest ecosystem.

In an area characterized by rapid development of open space, the protected land along the Saucon Creek stands as a reminder of the ecological roots of Saucon Valley. The purpose of this nature trail is to increase awareness of the local ecosystem and threats to its health while fostering an appreciation for the beauty of nature.



Map of Trail



Plants

Red Oak, Sugar Maple, and American Basswood are a few of the tree types that thrive in the Saucon Creek Watershed. Dogwood, Hornbeam, Witch Hazel and ginger also flourish in the sweet soil. It may come as a surprise that poison ivy is also a native and necessary part of this ecosystem. These plants are a source of food for birds.

Invasive Species

The biggest threat to ecosystems is often the invasion of non-native species. These plants and animals called invasive species compete with local species. They tend to have aggressive growth rates due to the absence of natural predators. Common invasive species found along the Saucon Creek include Japanese silk grass and honeysuckle.

Animals

The Saucon Creek is home to a thriving population of brown trout while the forest is home to salamanders, American toads, and blue jays. Squirrels and white-tailed deer are common sights. Lesser seen animals include flying squirrels and Screech owls.