



# Context for Teachers: The Abbott Marshlands – a natural and cultural wonderland

Author(s): Tulpehaking Nature Center

Course(s) and School(s)/School District: Abbott Marshlands

The unique Abbott Marshlands have diverse habitats that include tidal and non-tidal marshes and swamps, ponds, and upland forests. Found here is the northernmost tidal freshwater wetland on the Delaware River. These varied habitats create an oasis in an urban landscape, are homes for numerous kinds of plants and animals, and are an important resting/feeding place for spring and fall migrating birds. Recent inventories have reported 245 bird and 927 plant species seen here. It is possible to see Bald Eagles soaring overhead or gnawed trees near water that are evidence of beaver. Besides supplying habitat for wildlife, these wetlands provide important benefits by improving water quality and minimizing the impact of flooding.

The 3000 acres designated as the Abbott Marshlands have a number of owners, including municipalities (Bordentown City, Bordentown Township, Hamilton Township, and Trenton), Mercer County, the state of NJ (e.g., DEP, DOT, NJ Transit), and private owners. An Abbott Marshlands Council has been established to facilitate communication and provide connections between owners, partners, and diverse interest groups concerned with the marshlands.

The area also has a rich cultural history. There is evidence that Indians lived here 13,000 years ago. The first colonists, Quakers escaping religious persecution in England, settled in the Bordentown area in the late 1600s. There are local connections with the Declaration of Independence, the Revolutionary War, and the Civil War. Prominent residents included Thomas Paine, Patience Wright, Joseph Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon, and Clara Barton.

What to do here

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- Visit the Tulpehaking Nature Center (157 Westcott Avenue, Hamilton) for programs and exhibits.
- Plan a class trip. Contact Kelly Rypkema, nature center manager (609-303-0704 or [krypikema@mercercounty.org](mailto:krypikema@mercercounty.org)).
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- Marshlands-focused lesson plans are available at the nature center, or after Nov. 25, 2015 on [www.abbottmarshlands.org](http://www.abbottmarshlands.org) (see the [Tulpehaking Nature Center page](#)). These can be scaled up or down depending on the age and expertise of the students that will be visiting.
- Other activities that can be done on your own include: hiking, photography, wildlife study, plant study, birding, and picnicking. Information about walks and programs can be found at the nature center or see: the calendar – [www.marsh-friends.org](http://www.marsh-friends.org) or <http://www.marsh-friends.org/calendar/>. (Or [www.abbottmarshlands.org](http://www.abbottmarshlands.org))
- A Roebling Park trail map can be found at <http://njtrails.org/trail/abbott-marshlands-roebbling-memorial-park/>.

## Roebling Park rules for teachers and students

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Roebling Park is a designated Natural Area. Injury, damage, or removal of any park structure – tree, plant, flower, bird, animal, rock, or artifact is prohibited. Do not remove animals and plants or pick flowers.

Walk on trails. The Marshlands are a fragile resource. Trampled plants may not recover. Trails are marked with plastic arrows or paint blazes.

The park is open year-round during daylight hours. Visit anytime of the year; each season has its own specialties. Be sure to dress appropriately for the season and wear layers to accommodate changing temperatures and levels of exertion.

Littering is prohibited. Waste must be put into refuse or recycle containers, or taken with the visitor upon departure.

## Safety

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### **Do not allow children to enter water.**

Tidal waters (e.g., Watson Creek) can be fast flowing, deep, and dangerous. The edge of Spring Lake and other wetland areas can drop off sharply and the water becomes deep rapidly.

There are no poisonous snakes. Those here are an important part of the ecosystem. Usually they slip away, but individuals may be aggressive if cornered. Don't bother them. If you see one, use it to explain protective coloration, and/or role of carnivores in the wetland ecosystem.

Learn to identify poison ivy. It has 3 leaflets and its woody stems may grow directly from the ground or climb trees. If you see a vine on a tree covered with many tiny roots, that's poison ivy. (Adages – leaves of three, let it be; hairy rope, don't be a dope). If you or your students touch this plant, wash with soap and water as soon as possible.

Watch for ticks. Ticks may be active any time of the year. They are of concern because they may carry Lyme and other diseases. Precautions: wear light colored clothing, tuck pant legs

into socks, use a tick spray or an insect stick. At home remove clothing and make a tick inspection; when bathing, lather body thoroughly. Inspect clothing; do not put it on your bed; if clothing is not laundered right away, put it into the washing machine or plastic bag.

Mosquitoes. Care should be taken to prevent mosquitoes from biting; they may carry diseases. Mosquitoes are generally not a problem during the day.

Roebing Park is in an urban location. Use good judgment when visiting. Don't leave your camera or valuables lying about. Any suspicious behavior should be reported to the Hamilton Police (609-581-4000). In an emergency call 911.

Kayaking and canoeing are permitted. Enter tidal waters (e.g., Watson Creek) only if you are a competent paddler. Be aware that currents can be strong and dangerous. Wear a life vest at all times. Follow canoe/boating safety rules at all times. Take guided trips if you are not an experienced paddler ([www.marsh-friends.org](http://www.marsh-friends.org)); tide information can be found in local newspapers or at the marsh website.

Contact/information

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For questions and for sampling permission, contact Kelly Rypkema (609-303-0704 or [krypikema@mercercounty.org](mailto:krypikema@mercercounty.org)).

For additional information about marshland habitats and the organisms found here, as well as the cultural history of the Abbott Marshlands: see [www.abbottmarshlands.org](http://www.abbottmarshlands.org).

Oct. 2015