

Penn's Stewards

News from the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation

Fall 2020 Newsletter



The mission of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation is to inspire stewardship of Pennsylvania's state parks and forests.

Vision: To be the trusted voice and advocate to sustain and enhance Pennsylvania's state parks and forests.

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PAParksAndForests.org



Ready for a Staycation?

By Brook Lenker, Penn's Stewards Summer 2009 (updated by Marci Mowery, 2020)

Challenging trails. Breathtaking vistas. The silence of the deep woods. These are some of the reasons visitors flock to Pennsylvania's state parks and forests. Here's another: these amazing places are conveniently close to home—typically closer than half an hour's drive. During COVID-19, these special places have become more meaningful to millions as a means for providing healthy ways to connect with family and friends. (See page 5 for additional information)

Staycation prospects abound in the Keystone State. For every passion – in any season – superb destinations await. Some of our state parks and forests have seen very heavy visitation. Take in an adventure to a park or forest that you may have not yet explored.



*Above: Loyalsock State Forest in fall. Photo by Karthik Devarajan.
Right: Salt Springs State Park in winter. Photo by John Quimby.*

Endless Fun:

Proceed to Worlds End State Park where your worries will feel worlds away as you take in the view of the glistening canyon below from High Rock Trail. Miles of trails in the surrounding Loyalsock State Forest provides the visitor with endless fun—from hiking to hunting to cross country skiing when weather permits. Head northeast and take in Salt Springs State Park. Managed by the Friends of Salt Springs State Park, the focal point of the park is the old-growth hemlock trees, estimated to be between 300 to 400 years old. Take in the water falls at Fall Brook, then head to the town of Montrose for lunch.

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President's Message

Marci Mowery

I am sitting in my home office, snuggled in a sweatshirt, marveling at how quickly the weather can change. We spent the weekend campground hosting at Caledonia State Park, where the campsites, cottages, and yurts were filled to capacity, a testament that colder weather does not stop the intrepid outdoor adventurer.

Our parks and forest have played a pivotal role this summer in keeping Pennsylvanians healthy, in providing places where people could connect with family and friends, and in supporting local economies. Unprecedented visitation across the state meant that some of our parks were very heavily used and witnessed some user-conflicts. PPFF is supporting the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in their efforts to disperse visitors through the creation of some educational materials. Learn more about them later in this newsletter.

We anticipate seeing sustained use of our state parks and forests as we head into colder months. I hope the lead article provides you with some ideas of places to visit. Keep in mind that when heading out, you should always have a backup plan in case your destination is being heavily used—perhaps another trail to explore or a nearby park that may have fewer visitors.

Some of our fall water-based recreation may be impacted by a sustained drought across the Commonwealth. This drought also means that fire danger is high, so please practice fire safety at home (when doing yard work) and when camping (never leave a fire unattended and extinguish all fires when retiring for the evening or leaving camp).

Like you, our Friends and the Foundation were all forced to find new and creative ways of engagement during the pandemic. I would like to take a moment to thank all of the volunteers and friends groups who stepped up to assist the parks and forests that they represent during this time. Not only were many groups finding ways to do their regular volunteer projects, but groups selling firewood had an increased demand that needed to be met; parks with heavy visitation depended on friends to assist with crowd control and litter pickups; and heavy trail use meant our trails needed lots of additional love. Additionally, volunteers took on beautification project to ameliorate damage caused by improper usage. Thank you to all!



Despite the love our parks and forests have shown the public, we at the Foundation are monitoring multiple pieces of legislation that would cut the very feet from under these special places. To learn more about the legislation that we are following, commenting upon, and opposing or supporting, visit our website at:

<https://paparksandforests.org/get-involved/take-action/>

We could not do it without you. This has been a difficult year for everyone and we appreciate beyond words your continued support through membership, donations and store purchases. Without your support, we could not advocate for our parks and forests nor could we tackle the projects both big and small that improve the visitor experience and protect the places that provide enjoyment to so many. Without you, we could not serve as an umbrella to 46 amazing friends groups. Thank you!

Yours in the Outdoors, Marci



Above: Pine Creek Gorge.
Below: Yurts provide unique camping. (Both archival photos.)

Into The Wilds:

Take a bike ride on the renowned Pine Creek Rail Trail snaking through the heart of Tioga and Tiadaghton State Forests and Pennsylvania's own Grand Canyon. The spacious deck or dining room of Slate Run's Hotel Manor serves heavenly dinners at earthly prices. As night falls, the stars rise at Cherry Springs State Park, home to the darkest skies east of the Mississippi. Retire in Mongolian comfort to one of the yurts at Little Pine State Park. Indulge in a morning paddle on the park's bucolic lake and then it's off to the Golden Eagle Trail to really let your spirits soar!



Above: M.K. Goddard State Park. Photo by James Law.
Below: Erie Bluffs State Park by DCNR Secretary Cindy Dunn.

Exuberantly Erie:

When we think of Erie, most people immediately think of Presque Isle State Park with its birdwatching, beaches, kayaking, ice sailing and bike riding. Yet a lesser known park just down the road provides a glimpse of the lake before development—Erie Bluffs State Park. Spend the morning fishing for Steelhead on Elk Creek – it's the "reel" deal for serious anglers, or take in the unbroken shore line of Lake Erie. A quick drive down Route 79—or for the more adventurous a scenic drive on backroads—takes you to Maurice Goddard State Park, where you can jump onto your bicycle and pedal the John C. Oliver Multi-Purpose Loop Trail. In colder months, enjoy sledding, snow-mobiling, ice fishing, ice skating and more! Be sure to keep an eye on the bald eagles that regularly visit the lake.



Above: Spruce Flat Bog.
Photo by Clare Kaczmarek.
Right: Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail. Photo by Ted Massa.

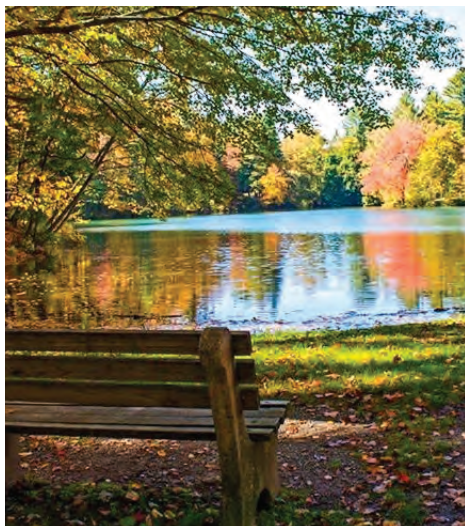


Loving The Laurels:

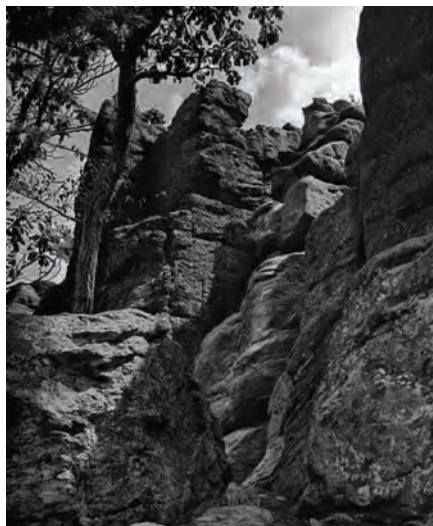
The Laurel Highlands region of Pennsylvania packs a lot of adventure, anchored by the 60,000 acres of Forbes State Forest. Start your visit with a climb of the fire tower at Mt. Davis, the highest point in Pennsylvania at 3,213 feet. Backpack in the Quebec Run Wild Area or take a short walk from Laurel Summit State Park out to the Spruce Flat Bog to catch her in her autumn glory.

Enjoy longer adventures? Keep in mind that the Great Allegheny Passage is the king of all rail trails and well worth a day-long or half-day ride! It connects Pittsburgh to the C&O trail at Cumberland, MD and, ultimately, Washington, DC. Hit the former tracks from one of the area's "trail towns," including secluded Deal where a quick five-mile round trip takes you to the Eastern Continental Divide and through a 3,300-foot long tunnel to an overlook certain to take your breath away. Or enjoy the 70-mile Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail, nestled in the 1,362 acre linear Laurel Ridge State Park. Log-built camping cottages at Ohiopyle, Linn Run or Laurel Hill State Parks are a fun lodging alternative.

Continued on page 4...



Left: Pine Grove Furnace State Park. Photo by Adele Group.
Right: Michaux State Forest. Photo by Josh Wisotzkey.



South Mountain Sampler:

The South Mountains are a hiker's wonderland. Lace-up and traverse the rocky Appalachian Trail from Caledonia State Park to Pine Grove Furnace State Park – the mid-point of the esteemed National Scenic Trail. The hike promises two long but rewarding days. Prefer your hikes in smaller bites? Visit Kings Gap Environmental Education and Training Center and pick a trail that suits your ambitions and abilities. The surrounding Michaux State Forest is a paradise for mountain biking enthusiasts. Relax under the stars at Caledonia State Park or Pine Grove Furnace State Park. Be sure to visit some of the amazing farmers markets in the area to pick up some of the area's finest apples for a true taste of autumn.

Philadelphia Freedom:

The Greater Philadelphia Area offers plenty to see and do within just a short drive of the city. Take in the fall hawk migration at Fort Washington State Park or enjoy a bike ride at Delaware Canal State Park. History your thing? Check at the Tri-State Marker of the Mason-Dixon Trail at White Clay Creek Preserve or visit French Creek State Park and the nearby Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site to learn more about this period of our history. Geology your passion? Visit the Goat Hill Wild Plant Sanctuary, part of the William Penn Forest District, to view plants unique to this barren ecosystem.




Goat Hill Wild Plant Sanctuary. Photo by Joe Frassetta.

Remember:

Reservations are recommended for campsites, yurts, camping cottages, and cabins. Many private outfitters offer equipment, guiding, and information that can enhance your outdoor experience. The trips described above only scratch the landscape of the abundant possibilities available in each region. To turn your getaway dreams into reality, explore www.dcnr.state.pa.us and www.visitpa.com.

Have a favorite adventure story? Consider sharing it with PPFF to add to our website. Visit www.paparksandforests.org to read about others' adventures.




THE BEST GIFT IS A LIVING GIFT

Share Your Love of Pennsylvania's Special Outdoor Places with a Living Gift from the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation

Honor friends and family this season with the purchase of a gift membership or a native plant or tree. Or donate to support playground installations, environmental education programs, preservation of historic buildings*, or the work of the Foundation

Visit <http://bit.ly/PPFFLivingGifts>

*All living gift contributions are aggregated into a restricted fund and used for their stated purpose as soon as sufficient donations are accumulated to make a purchase



Outdoor Recreation— More Popular than Ever

By Jessica Aiello

If you have been out for a hike or a leisurely stroll lately, you probably passed by more people than you normally would. That's because people are turning to the outdoors in record numbers to improve their mental health and physical wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. It certainly helps that [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) supports visiting parks and recreational facilities, especially those close to home, as a way to protect yourself and others from the virus.

In Pennsylvania's state parks, attendance jumped by more than 1.5 million visitors, or 36 percent, in May 2020 compared to the same month last year. Not only that, but 19 state parks experienced more than a 100 percent increase in that same time period. This wasn't a once-and-done phenomenon either – August's visitation was up by 1.4 million people, a nearly 30 percent increase.



Photo by Marci Mowery

Once people arrive at their favorite park or forest, they participate in a variety of activities. Market research by The [NPD Group](#) shows bike sales have increased more than 120 percent and kayak sales approximately 85 percent. More evidence shows that boat launch permit sales are up 54 percent from last year and fishing license sales are up 20 percent in Pennsylvania state parks. Research commissioned by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) found that trail use spiked by as much as 200 percent in some parts of the state during March when compared with the same month in 2019. And a July 31, 2020 article in [The Washington Post](#) wrote that online searches for terms like "trails near me" and "state parks" have jumped "to unprecedented levels in recent months."

This surge in outdoor recreation can be great for the struggling economy. For example, an [article](#) in the June 1, 2020 Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* wrote that Americans are "turning with zest to recreational vehicles as they look for safe ways to take a break from being locked up." With the price of a new RV estimated between \$10,000 and \$300,000, depending on the style and features according to [Camper Report](#), that translates to a lot of cash flowing into the economy.



Photo by Mary Soderberg

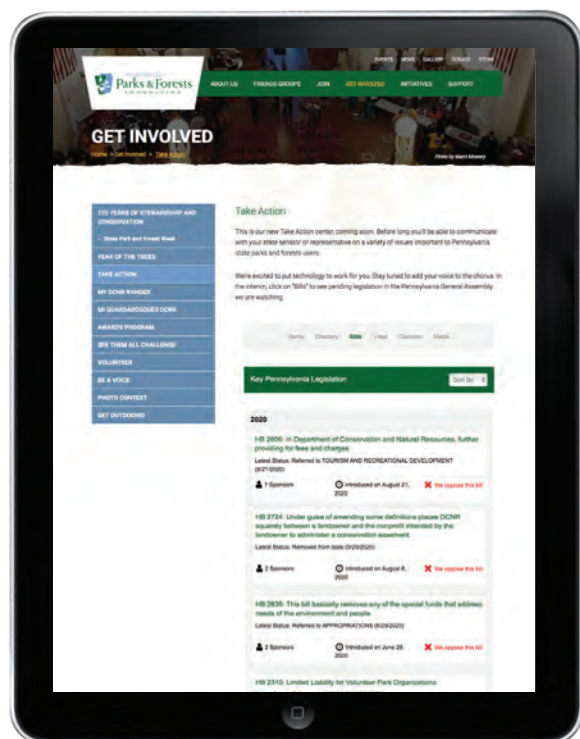
According to the *Post-Gazette* article, an RV dealership outside of Pittsburgh sold more units in the month of May than it did over a six month period the previous year. In late April there were 50 used RVs on its lot; at the end of May there were three left and half of the new RV inventory was gone. Peer-to-peer RV rental sites like RVshare have seen bookings soar nearly 1,000 percent since early April. The company expects to hit 20 million days booked by the end of 2020, as opposed to hitting the 1 million mark last summer.

So, the surge in enthusiasm for outdoor recreation can be great for the economy, but is there a flipside to the story? Yes, according to the article in *The Washington Post*. Due to the ongoing recession that is being fueled by the pandemic, money to staff and maintain parks is less readily available thanks to state and local government budget shortfalls. This trend will likely continue as governments try to fill budget holes created by reduced tax revenues.

A study by the National Recreation and Park Association found that government officials generally view park funding as a "luxury," but Marci Mowery, President of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, could not disagree more. "Now more than ever we see the values and benefits that our parks and forests provide for residents of, and visitors to, Pennsylvania. The surge in attendance at these public resources during the pandemic should be a reason for more, not less, funding. If you have enjoyed time in a state park or forest lately, please let your legislators know that our health and wellbeing require these places to exercise and unwind."



Photo by Mary Soderberg



New SoftWare will give us the SoftEdge

Not only is the PPFF website about to undergo a major overhaul but we've added a new and exciting resource called "SoftEdge."

Look for the Take Action center (currently living on the Get Involved page but headed TBD on the new site) where you'll be able to see and learn more about legislation in the Pennsylvania General Assembly we are watching (and supporting or opposing) as well as click directly to your senator or representative to voice your opinion.

In addition, SoftEdge gives us resources from "the back end" to easily invite the legislators and stakeholders (that's YOU) to park and forests visits in support of our campaign to secure permanent and dedicated funding for maintenance and infrastructure improvements.

Many Needs, Diminishing Tax Dollars

Have you read that the numbers of visitors to the state parks and forests is up by an average of 36% over last year? It's true – with many individual parks seeing increases far above that. Perhaps you are one of these many visitors!

As you might imagine, with increased use come increased problems - and yet increased opportunities to share what you already know is true. Pennsylvania's state parks and forests are an important part of each of our lives. These special places in the landscape not only help to keep us healthy, they are the places we are reconnecting and making memories with family and friends.

Join us in helping your state park and forest camping areas by supporting the campaign to replace worn equipment and improve the camping experience. Working together, we can ensure these special places are there for us when we need them. Thank you for your support and commitment to our shared public lands.

Many needs, diminishing tax dollars. Be a part of the solution. Purchase a needed amenity at ppff.gives/camping-enhancements.



Graffiti Removal

Boulder Point at Gifford Pinchot State Park was recently the target of some graffiti. A popular spot in the park for hiking and visible from the lake, the markings were an eyesore and detrimental to the environment.

With help from the park staff and the Friends of Gifford Pinchot, PPFF organized a cleanup day to tackle the mess. Several volunteers and park staff lent a hand to spray and scrub. After a few hours of elbow grease Boulder Point is nearly restored to its former beauty. Thank you to everyone who could attend, and to the York *Dispatch* for photographing the event.



Photo by Sarah Scholl



Photo by Sarah Scholl

When Bald Eagle State Forest was hit with graffiti in several locations, we knew we had to do something. Thanks to the forest staff and volunteers, we were able to tackle two of the most prevalent instances of vandalism.

A passing rainstorm paused the efforts briefly but once the sun was back out so was the intrepid team. Volunteers also gathered several bags of trash at this scenic spots. Thank you to all who contributed!

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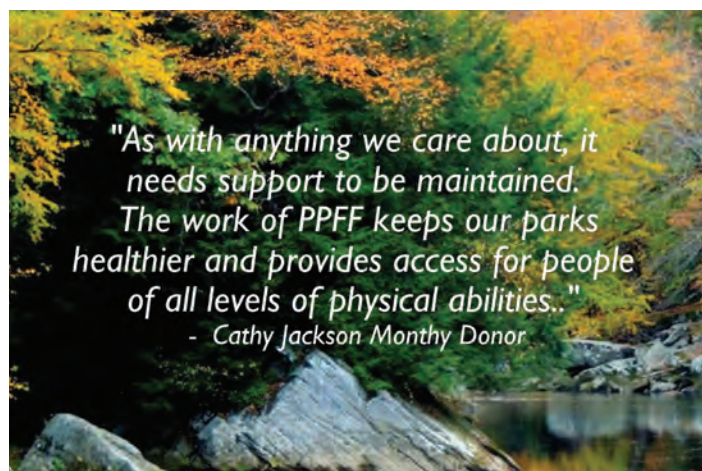
**Pennsylvania
State Parks and
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Snapshot: Meet Monthly Donor Cathy Jackson

A nature lover her entire life, monthly donor Cathy Jackson says the parks belong to all people. "They offer the natural environment to us. A place to play, exercise, think, volunteer, challenge ourselves, learn new skills and bond with friends and family. And just relax." After meeting Marci through a mutual friend, Cathy was impressed by the passion and mission behind PPFF and pledged her support.



Photo by Keith Smith



"As with anything we care about, it needs support to be maintained. The work of PPFF keeps our parks healthier and provides access for people of all levels of physical abilities.."
- Cathy Jackson Monthly Donor

A monthly donor for several years Cathy says "It is so easy to donate monthly by credit card or bank payments. After donating a few times individually and seeing the results of the work [the foundation] does, it was an easy decision."

Consistent giving, like monthly donations, are the best way for PPFF to provide support to our state parks and forests. Join Cathy and support our efforts with a monthly gift at PAParksAndForests.org



2021 State Parks Calendar Now Available!

On sale now in the PPFF online store!



New Format for Annual Report!

Look back at the accomplishments YOU made possible in the 2019 Annual Report video, a dynamic and engaging approach to the traditional annual report. Our hope is presenting the report this way will reach new audiences and inspire more stewards of Penn's Woods.

Watch now at YouTube.com/PAParksandForests

Friends in Action All photos courtesy of the Chapters shown



The Friends of Caledonia have all seasons covered with their purchases for the park. There's a new hose and pump for the pool in summer and a lot of wood for the campground in winter.



The Friends of Goddard finally have their playground. Planting grass seed and leveling the surface were the finishing touches.



The Friends of Parker Dam and the Moshannon Fire Fighters Association teamed up to chop and stack for Parker Dam and S.B. Elliott state parks.



Photo by Amey Johnson

The Friends of Mount Pisgah were able to host their annual Patriots in the Park event even with COVID-19 restrictions.



The Friends of Trough Creek and Warriors Path are not letting COVID-19 get in the way of improvements at their two parks – including rehab of the Warriors Path volleyball court.



A well-dressed group from the Friends of Pinchot in masks and long pants and sleeves spent a lovely morning removing Japanese stiltgrass (aptly named) from some of the park's meadows.



The Friends of Michaux did a little sprucing up of the pavilion at the Big Flat parking lot in August. Nothing like a painting party on a hot August day!



Just before the pandemic really took hold and changed all our lives, the Friends of Worlds End placed a bench at the park in honor of local outdoor legend Ruth Rode.



Sailing is a popular pastime at Yellow Creek State Park and the Friends were happy to finally get a new dock built for use in programming and education.



Humor and hard work are the hallmarks of the Lackawanna State Park Trail Care Crew. Shown here is the Quarry Ridge trail following a "haircut and a shower."

You Made it Happen



Photo by Marci Mowery

ADA Dock at Little Buffalo

Spending time on the water is a great way to not only enjoy our state parks, it has also been shown to reduce stress, build endurance, improve mental health, and create a sense of community with other paddlers. Now everyone has easier access to Holman Lake at Little Buffalo State Park with the placement of an ADA launch at the park. To see the launch in action and a list of contributors to this project, visit our youtube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/PAParksandForests/videos>



Photo by Marci Mowery

Hyner View Clean Up

When Hyner View State Park fell victim to vandals, the local community of Renovo stepped up to restore their beloved park. Volunteers from the local fire company and community joined PPFF and park staff to remove the graffiti that was sprayed on the historic Civilian Conservation Corps overlook. Many visitors to the park that day not only saw the view, they received an education on park and forests stewardship.



Photo by Marci Mowery

Sam Lewis State Park

What was once an aging concession stand used to house outdated equipment is now a sparkling new environmental education center at Sam Lewis State Park. With your support and the talent of park staff and volunteers, the open-air center will now provide educational programs to students and the public. Furnishings for the center were purchased with your Gifts of Education through our Living Gifts Program.

Lackawanna State Park

Strolling and rolling along at Lackawanna State Park just became easier with your support and grants from Scranton Area Community Foundation and the Pocono Forests and Waters Conservation Landscape. The lake front paved trail was repaved and soon educational signs will be placed along the trail.



Photo by Rob Barrese

Thanks to donor support and the Mantandon Bassmasters, the boat launch at Shikellamy State Park is undergoing improvements to lighting and road markers. Look for the final product later this year.



Continued on page 11...

You Made it Happen

Testimony at Hearing About Friends Groups

The efforts of the Friends were given a boost when Marci and Friends of Pine Grove Furnace chair Andre Weltman testified before the Joint Legislative Air & Water Pollution Control & Conservation Committee (the "JLCC") on some of the challenges faced by friends groups in securing insurance coverage (and other financial considerations) for events and volunteer opportunities. John Norbeck, Deputy Secretary of DCNR, testified remotely as to the value and contributions of friends groups. Marci was proud to share with the JLCC that since 2008 (when we started keeping track of the figures), PPFF chapters have raised and contributed through their volunteer labor a staggering **\$20,077,806** to the parks and forests.

Ironically, on the occasion of its 50th anniversary serving the legislature as a bipartisan, bicameral (hence "Joint") research committee, the JLCC was "zeroed out" of last year's budget at the very last minute and will close next July. There is legislation (HB 2797) to reinstate it which we support. Doesn't it make sense now (just as it did 50 years ago when the committee was formed) to have a place where members of both parties and both bodies of the General Assembly can come together and learn about environmental issues? It certainly does to us!



Photo by Sakura Ung

Education and Outreach

President Marci Mowery spent her weekends since camping resumed in the role of campground host, joining Joe who was there throughout the week. From this came a series of videos aimed at helping the new camper build their skills and to understand the expectations for visitors at our state parks and forests. These videos can be found on our YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/PAParksandForests/videos>. Please like and share the videos with others—or post to your Pinterest page!



RESOURCES YOU CAN USE!

YouTube.com/PAParksAndForests




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Download a SKILL BUILDER or FACT SHEET
Information on other OUTDOOR ORGANIZATIONS



Outside your window

B	i	n	g	o
flowers in full bloom	big fluffy clouds (cumulus)	evergreen tree	red flowers	green grass
stones or rocks	bird of any kind	budding flowers	flying insect	big tree
crawling insect	the sun		buds on trees	flock of birds in the sky
thin clouds (cirrus)	small tree	a bird's nest	proof of wind (waving flag)	soil
squirrel	water (rain, river or hose)	leaves	the moon in the daytime	yellow flowers



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