

Our Little Silver (LS) Walking Trails - Some Comments & Status Info

After our 2-month monsoon (over 9 inches in both April and May!) hiatus, I have been walking and trimming and cleaning up our designated LS trails again since June.

Flagged by another LS Environmental Commission (LSEC) member, I did a walk-thru of the Parker Pet Trail (Cooper's Loop), and found a big fallen tree blocking the trail. Also saw a need for clearing the high grass there and elsewhere on our walking trails. As you know, I do some of that - but the big tree and the 2.5 miles of trails needing attention was too much for me. Fortunately our LSEC chair arranged for some contracted work to address these problems - and that work was done (very well!) last week.

Which means all of our trails are very accessible again. And dry enough to walk normally without boots. So now is a good time to explore and use them. Do consider walking along one or more of them - or maybe in one of our LS parks. Breathe the outdoor air. Exercise those creaky bones. And note the variety of trees and other plants and animals - on the ground & in the air & on and over the waters. Watch out for crazy or inattentive drivers. And if you avoid rubbing the plants and shrubs, you will probably avoid the summer ticks as well.

Some things to look for

Here's a few challenges for you if you visit our downtown Memorial Park. See if you can find some of these trees:

White mulberry?	Green Ash?	Willow Oak?
Silver Maple?	Norway Maple	Box Elder?
Serviceberry?	Sycamore?	Blue Spruce?

Or how many of these smaller plants you can find:

Hydrangea?	Butterfly bush?	Bamboo?
Milkweed?	Japanese knotweed?	English Ivy?
Poison Ivy?	Virginia Creeper?	Wild grape?
Rose of Sharon?		

Or could you spot any frogs? Bullfrogs? Any deer - with fawns? And how many butterflies did you see? Which kinds? Yes, you probably saw robins; but how about catbirds? And could you see any of our downtown chimney swifts swooping by overhead?

All of our LS trails are again dry enough to walk normally without boots. Yes, parts of our trails continually need some mowing and trimming attention, particularly in the Summertime. Fortunately, recent efforts (above) have things under good control. But the grasses and weeds and nonnative, invasive plants (e.g., phragmites, Japanese knotweed, and Asian multiflora rose) can be bothersome in a few spots. I work on much of that, but it is occasionally a real challenge in some areas. Clearly, our LS DPW is also helping in certain areas. And a few adjacent landowners are extending their lawnmower work in spots to help keep the nearby trail more walkable.

How to get there & be there

I've found you can walk all of the 2.5 miles of listed woodsy LS trails in an afternoon round-trip walking tour of about 6 miles. And of course, you may be living close to one of our trails already and decide to take a little time for a shorter outdoor tour.

You can also jump on your bike and tour parts of our town, perhaps stopping for a trail walk. That's another good way to see a bit more of our town, its people and neighborhoods and where some of the wild things are.

And most of our trails have nearby parking, so you might just hop in your car with a spouse or friend or grandchild to go and take in one of our trails. Or maybe take your dog for a walk on the Parker Pet Trail (Cooper's Loop).

Water Pattern Observations

We have had standing water at times at a few points on most of our trails (tho not much right now). And it occurred to me that all of our trails traverse fresh water or salty wetlands. Of course, that's why those areas are still wild and woodsy, public and without houses or buildings - good places for walking trails.

But it means parts of our trails will be wet at times. So we build bridges and walkways to help avoid and reduce the wet spots. And while we might do a bit more of that, you just can't eliminate all the wet spots from wetlands areas.

If you have an idea for reducing occasional trail wetness problems, the LS Environmental Commission would certainly like to hear about it. But do recognize the necessary compromises above.

BTW, I was noticing how long the Creekside Adventure Trail was staying flooded and re-flooded near Woodland Street during April and May. And I also noticed lots of trash collecting in a small low spot there. Then I noticed how the water was rushing downhill toward the train-track area on Woodland Street and into the woods during rainstorms - which explained both the extra flooding and the collecting trash.

Wild Animals

Not too surprising that the wilder places in town are a good place to spot wild animals. Though it does seem that deer are easier to spot lately even in daytime on or near our roads and front yards.

I'm noting turtles in some streams and in the local ponds. I spotted a "big mama" snapping turtle in the Parker House pond about 10 days ago, and I've heard of additional sightings by a few other folks.

The rabbit population seems to have had a bigger than average springtime explosion this year.

Groundhogs (woodchucks) are doing well around Sickles and the Parker House - and a few other places.

And tho we don't seem to have them in my part of town, chipmunks seem to be quite noticeable in yards near some of our trails.

I'm sure many of you have spotted ospreys overhead. They are over Point Rd waters, sometimes in trees over the Parker House pond, and occasionally checking out all the cell towers in town. I've now spotted at least ten different active osprey nests on former Fort Monmouth land - and if you want to stay in town, you can spot some of their antics from the public boat launch area at the south end of Riverview Ave.

I've also spotted Bald Eagles at least twice near my house on Point Rd in the past year. And I am hearing of several eagle sights by others on the south side of LS, as well as by people on the Oceanport side of Parker's Creek. There are at least 3 known successful Eagles' nests in this part of the Jersey Shore. Maybe an Oceanport or LS sight will soon be added?

If you have comments or suggestions on any of these outdoor observations and ideas, I'd love to hear from you. (Have you spotted an interesting bird or animal? Do you know of any unusual trees or plants in town?)

Any suggestions about our existing trails or maybe a new trail?)

Let's hope for more temps below 85 F, both decent rains and plenty of sunny days, and maybe a young Bald Eagle fishing in our waters.

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