

TRAILS OF ALLAIRE STATE PARK

Allaire State Park offers over 20 miles of official, blazed trails in both the main area of the park near Allaire Village and on the south side of the park next to Hospital Road. Many of the trails are multi-use (for hiking, biking and horse-back riding), but closer to the historic Allaire Village, they are for hiking only. Permitted uses are indicated on trail signage.

The Manasquan River meanders through Allaire State Park, occasionally flooding the area creating rich floodplains. The abundance of bog iron in these swampy areas was the main reason the Howell Works iron furnace (Allaire Village) was established here. Trails go through oak and pine forests, past retired farmland, through the historic village, along an old canal path and railroad bed, through a swamp, and close to floodplains of Allaire State Park. The south side of the park (off Hospital Road) offers a change in ecology as well as more varied elevations. Here the sandy hills support an almost pine barrens habitat –with pitch pine, scrub oak, blueberries and mountain laurel.

Allaire State Park is a perfect place for hitting the trails, with a variety of lengths, terrains, and easy-moderate difficulties. Most of the trails around the historic village and family campgrounds are relatively flat, while the trails on the south side offer a little more variety, but not more than a 60' change in elevation. These trails are very popular with mountain-bikers, especially on holidays and weekends.

TRAIL SENSE AND SAFETY

Trail Markings: Official trails in the state park are marked with colored blazes – either on plastic posts or as paint on trees and (occasionally) on paved paths. Horses and bicycles must stay on designated trails, roads or paths; this is also encouraged for hikers. Occasionally, there's a link between, or to, official trails. These "connector trails" are indicated on the map with a tan-colored line and in the park with a brown post or blaze. Often a color arrow will indicate the color of the trail ahead. **Please keep the trails safe for everyone – do not alter the trail** markings in any way. Note: A small percentage of the unofficial trails are represented on the printed map as a thin dotted line.

Be prepared: Consider bringing water, snacks, sunscreen, insect repellent, and wearing a hat. Check the weather before you go, dress appropriately, and tell someone where you intend to hike and when you expect to finish.

Ticks: It is best to stay on trails to avoid prime tick habitat. Ticks, however, always seem to find us wherever we go ☹️ Repellent is recommended. Also, wear light-colored clothing, tuck long pants into socks, check yourself all over when you get home, and put clothing into wash immediately (A wash might not kill ticks, but 20 minutes in the dryer should.)

Report: If you observe any trail maintenance issues, please report them to the Park Office (732) 938 - 2371

Allaire Trail Lengths at a Glance

 Upper Squankum Trail - 2.2 mi	<u>South Side Trails:</u>
 Canal Trail - 2.8 mi	 Pine Trail - 4.5 mi
 Brisbane Trail - 2.8 mi	 Mountain Laurel Trail - 3.1 mi
 Nature Trail - 1.5 mi	 Oak Trail - 2.7 mi
 Capital to Coast Trail - 1.9 mi	 Boy Scout Trail - 1.3 mi

THE TRAILS OF ALLAIRE

Nature Center Trail (red)

 1.5 mile loop

Easy to Moderate: Steps, some uneven terrain. Caution! Steps may be muddy or slippery when wet.

Hiking and Multiuse (Hiking on single tracks; multiuse on woods roads over half mile from village per signs)

Trailhead: Park in the Nature Center parking lot, follow the path to and cross in front of the Nature Center, walk between the kiosks and across the canal bridge. The trailhead is across from the bridge.

The Nature Center Trail (red blaze) is a loop trail through shaded woodlands, a bog, and on sandy roads.

After crossing the bridge, go straight to enter the woodlands. The trail follows along the top of a ridge overlooking a freshwater wetland, then goes down steps (use extreme caution when wet!) and becomes a boardwalk through a peat bog.

After leaving the bog, the trail twists to the right and meets a sandy road at a T-junction. Turn left to stay on the Nature Center Trail (red blaze). This part of the trail is wide, easy, and flat, going through a mixed forest with vernal pools visible in the spring. Along the trail, sweet gum, red maple and oaks share the forest with sassafras and wildflowers. If you need a quick route back to the nature center, turn right on the connector trail (brown posts) at the T-junction.

The Nature Center Trail meets the Canal Trail (green blaze) at a second T-junction. Turn right to stay on a combined Nature Center Trail/Canal Trail (red & green blazes) to get back to the nature center or Allaire Village. If you turn left, you'll add quite a few extra miles to your hike!

Nature Notes

Peat bogs are wetlands with acidic water that is hypoxic (very low levels of oxygen). These conditions greatly slow down the rate that plants decompose, creating a pulpy mix of rotten plants called peat. Peat bogs are like living museums. Items in the peat - plants, animals, layers of ash, pollen, tools - are preserved for hundreds, even thousands of years. Scientists can get a very good record of what has happened in the environment by digging down through the layers peat.

In the bog, mounds of sphagnum moss are home for skunk cabbage and cinnamon fern. Look for swamp magnolia shrubs and Jack-in-the-pulpit plants blooming in the spring.

Canal Trail (green)



2.7 miles, with a loop.

Easy: Even terrain, packed earth/gravel

Hiking only within a half a mile of the historic village, then Multiuse. Look for the signs!

Trailhead: From the Visitor Center parking lot, walk towards the Visitor Center and turn right at sign for “Historic Allaire Village”. Turn right to follow the trail alongside the canal.

The Canal Trail (green) parallels the historic canal through the forest, sharing the path with the Nature Center Trail (red/green) for a while, then goes under Interstate 195 and crosses Atlantic Avenue (CR524) near the family campground. ***Be very careful if you choose to cross this road.*** The Canal Trail skirts a field at the entrance to the family campground, passes Long Swamp Pond, and then splits three ways. The right and center forks are both part of the loop that will bring you back to this junction. The trail parallels the Upper Squankum Trail (yellow) for a while. The extreme left fork (no blazes) leads to a parking lot on Atlantic Ave.

This is a great trail for watching birds and pond life. In the waters of the canal and the freshwater ponds along the way, herons large and small hunt for sunfish and frogs and the occasional kingfisher can be spotted. In the forest, blue jays cry a harsh “Jay! Jay!” all year long. The male wood thrush sings his trembling “Ee-o-lay” in the spring and early summer.

Nature Notes

The canal along this trail was built to move water from local streams to the Mill Run during iron production. Pause at the pond near the Nature Center to watch sunfish, large-mouth bass and frogs enjoy the warm water.

After you pass the pond, cross over the bridge towards the Nature Center to find two very different species of pine, Eastern white pine and pitch pine. Both are native to New Jersey, but the Eastern white pine is more common in the northern part of the state and at higher elevations. Pitch pine is very common in Allaire and throughout the coastal plain. It can be identified by its clusters of 3 stiff, twisted needles and oval, bristled cones growing in clusters along the branches. Pitch pine is fire-resistant and is the keystone of the Pine Barrens. Eastern white pine has clusters of 5 soft needles, and long slender cones. It is much more valuable economically. Both species serve as important winter shelter for birds and small mammals. Cross back over the bridge to continue your hike.

The mixed forest of pines, oak, and beech along either side of the trail is great for bird-watching. During the winter, expect to find blue jays, Carolina chickadees, white-breasted nuthatches, hermit thrushes, and tufted titmice among others. In the spring, migratory birds such as yellow warblers, wood thrushes, and scarlet tanagers join the winter residents. The trees fill with song as the males sing to attract mates and declare territory. Watch for grey squirrels and Eastern chipmunks gathering nuts and acorns from the trees in the fall. Both will store the nuts for winter food. Chipmunks will store food in the underground burrow where they spend the winter. Squirrels, who are active all winter, bury each nut separately throughout their territory. Some of these nuts will be uneaten and grow into trees.

Brisbane Trail (orange)



2.8 miles

Easy to moderate: Mostly flat, with some sandy and wet patches

Multiuse

Trailhead: Parking lot on Atlantic Avenue. Turn right along the paved bike path and follow orange blazes. Alternative entrance: At pedestrian crossing on Atlantic Avenue (walk through the gate).

From the Capital to the Coast Trail, you can cross Atlantic Avenue at the pedestrian crossing to join the **Brisbane Trail**. Here, the **Brisbane Trail** parallels the Upper Squankum Trail (yellow), but in the shade of a pine forest skirting around the outside of the Brisbane property. This sandy undulating trail has a couple of picturesque stops where streams cross under the path. Pause to enjoy the sounds of running water and frogs plopping in. This shady trail is home to the most common oaks of Allaire State Park. Red, black and scarlet oaks, white oaks and chestnut oaks all produce acorns. Look for blue jays, wild turkeys, grey squirrels, and white-tailed deer eating acorns from the ground in the fall. Coming south again, look for a group of black walnut trees. Fat green luna moth caterpillars feed on the leaves in the spring and summer.

Nature Notes

*The Brisbane Trail is the best trail on this side of Allaire State Park to see the key species of oaks of the outer coastal plain. Oak species are in two groups – the white oaks and the red oaks. White oaks have lobes (bumps along the side of the leaf) with rounded ends. Red oaks have lobes with pointed or bristled ends. The most common white oaks in this area are white oak (*Quercus alba*) and chestnut oak (*Quercus prinus*). White oak leaves are 4–7 inches long with 7–10 rounded lobes. The acorns are oval with a bowl shaped cap. Chestnut oaks bear leaves with a wavy edge and acorns that are 1–1 ½ inches long with a loose cap. Chestnut oak acorns are the first to fall in the autumn, up to a month earlier than other species.*

*There are three oaks in the red oak group that are common in Allaire State Park – red oak (*Quercus rubra*), scarlet oak (*Quercus coccinea*) and black oak (*Quercus velutina*). Red oaks have leaves that are 5 – 8 inches long with 7–11 bristled lobes. The acorns are round, less than an inch long, and have a flat cap. Scarlet oaks bear leaves that are 3–7 inches long and have 5–7 lobes with 3 teeth on each. The leaves turn a brilliant red in the fall. Acorns are ½ - 1 inch long with a cap that covers half of the nut. Black oak leaves can be very large – up to 10 inches long with 7–9 lobes, but its acorns are small – only ½ - ¾ of an inch long.*

The seeds of all oaks are called acorns. White oak acorns mature in one year and red oak acorns mature in two. Oaks are mastng trees – they produce very large crops of acorns every 3 – 5 years. A mature white oak can produce up to 7,000 acorns in a mast year! Acorns are an important food for wild turkeys, blue jays, black bears, grey squirrels, Eastern chipmunks, and rufous-sided towhees. They store well and are stored for winter by both grey squirrels and eastern chipmunks. Native Americans stored acorns for several seasons after gathering them. Raw acorns taste extremely bitter because of chemicals called tannins. Acorns in the white oak group have lower levels of tannins than red oak acorns. While red oak acorns need to be soaked multiple times to draw out the tannins, white oaks require much less preparation. After preparing acorns, Native Americans would grind the acorns into flour using special stones. The flour was made into small cakes. Acorns are used in some Korean dishes, and were widely eaten by early peoples.

As you approach the end of the loop, the trail turns right and moves between a fence and the park boundary. A row of black walnut trees grows along the fence. Black walnut trees cannot tolerate shade and grow very quickly in sunny areas. They begin producing nuts at about 20 years of age. Look for fruit on the ground in late September and early October. A bright green husk covers a nut with a hard ridged shell. The green husks contain juglone, a bitter chemical that stains brown. As the husks rot, the juglone enters the soil and works to control the growth of other plants around the tree. Fruit trees, blackberries, and mints do not seem affected by juglone and do quite well near walnut trees. Luna moth caterpillars feed on the walnut's leaves and its wood is highly valued.

Upper Squankum Trail (yellow)



2.2 miles

Easy - moderate: Mostly flat, with some sandy and wet patches

Multiuse

Trailhead: The north trailhead is at the Hurley Pond Road parking lot about 1/3rd of a mile from the junction of Hurley Pond Rd and Squankum Road. Alternative entrance: At pedestrian crossing on Atlantic Avenue

The Upper Squankum Trail starts in the Hurley Pond Road parking lot to the right of the white & green building, following a woods road through the gate towards an old railroad bed. From there, the trail is straight and flat until it gets close to I-195 where it takes a sharp turn to the right. Here it is a single pedestrian track through a field of blueberry bushes, skirting the east (rear) of the family campground, and down to the edge of Atlantic Avenue (CR524). The trail parallels the chain-link fence under I-195, and then veers to the left to eventually meet up with the old railroad bed again.

You can walk the straight and narrow on the Upper Squankum Trail, or make life a little more interesting and take one of the two loops – e.g. the **Canal Trail (green)** or the **Brisbane (orange)** - off the trail, or join the **Capital to the Coast** bike trail to Hospital Rd. Just make sure you have the energy to get back or have someone to pick you up!


History Notes

Most of this trail – the straight part – is on an old railroad bed that was once part of the Freehold and Jamesburg Agricultural Railroad.

In 1872, 27 miles of the Freehold and Jamesburg Agricultural Railroad helped connect the Jersey Shore to Trenton, Philadelphia, and New York. In 1879, the Pennsylvania Railroad acquired the Freehold and Jamesburg line. From the 1870s through the 1920s, over six trains a day, both passenger and freight, travelled on these tracks.

In 1965, with the pending collapse of the Northeast railroad industry, the tracks between Manasquan and Farmingdale were removed, thus ending rail service through this area.

Capital to the Coast Trail (purple)

 2-mile-long section in Allaire; 7.1 miles to end (in Manasquan)
Wide, paved surface, with benches along the trail.
Multiuse. Paved.

Trailhead: Enter the Visitor Center parking lot, immediately turn left. Trailhead and kiosk will be on your left.

The Capital to the Coast Trail, is a planned multi-use trail route spanning New Jersey from the City of Trenton to the Borough of Manasquan. Once complete, the envisioned trail will be 55 miles long and will link parks, wildlife areas, towns, and a college campus along the way. The section of the trail in Allaire is a 2-mile spur off the main route. Starting at the trailhead, you can walk or cycle 2 miles to join the main route.

In Allaire State Park, **The Capital to the Coast Trail** is on the old rail bed of Freehold-Jamesburg Railroad. Norway spruces shade the section near the Pine Creek Railroad before the trail crosses the Mill Run. Many of the plants along the path do well in disturbed areas like roadsides and fields. Look for native plants like dogbane, goldenrod, poison ivy, staghorn sumac, and the milkweed that monarch butterflies love. There are also alien invasive species like autumn olive and multiflora rose. The trail passes through a thicket of American holly with beautiful mature trees and past Kessler's Pond, a great spot for watching waterfowl. Towards the end, it passes between the golf course and some historic farmland. You can stop at the new interpretive signs to learn about the history of the area and the railroad. In summer, look for monarchs and other butterflies in the milkweed meadow beside the interpretive waysides.

At the end of the path on Hospital Road, the **Capital to the Coast Trail** continues outside the park running southeast (straight) for another 5 miles to the ocean. Most of this route is shared with the Edgar Felix Bicycle Path, however the last section is on streets in Manasquan. There is a partially-finished route southwest paralleling Hospital Road that will eventually link to Allaire's parking lot for the south side trails.

Nature Notes

Many plants that thrive in disturbed areas grow along this trail. Disturbances can happen for many reasons. Some are natural – a flood, fire, or fallen trees. Humans cause others like clearing a forest for cropland or building a road. Whatever the reason, many plants are adapted to take advantage of these disruptions. They can handle direct sunlight, dry conditions, and physical damage. Often these resilient plants get a bad rap as weeds. Some are native to New Jersey, such as dogbane, Eastern red-cedar, poison ivy, staghorn sumac, and goldenrod. These species are part of the natural process of ecosystem succession, the process that changes a field into a shrubby area to a forest. Many other plants are not native, and arrived here with settlers and travelers. Multiflora rose, dandelions, autumn olive, plantain, and thistles are familiar plants that come from other parts of the world. Some of these become invasive. Without disease or predators to control them, they multiply quickly and drive out native plants. Many invasive shrubs bear fruit and berries that are eaten by birds. The birds then spread the seeds inside in their droppings. Others, like dandelion, have seeds spread by the wind.

The trail also passes through a thicket of American holly with beautiful mature trees. A native evergreen, American holly berries are popular with birds towards the end of the winter. Look for American robins and Northern mockingbirds enjoying the bright red berries. After leaving the American holly, the path opens up, passing Kessler's Pond on the left. Listen for the "conk-a-ree" song of the red-winged blackbird from early spring into the fall. In the winter, look for wintering ducks on the water.

SOUTH SIDE TRAILS


The trails in the south side of Allaire State Park, reachable from the parking lot on Hospital Road, are multi-use trails that are very popular with mountain bikers and horseback riders as well as hikers. Whatever the reason for your visit, please be courteous and help ensure everyone has an enjoyable experience. Pay attention to the yield signs.

There are four official, blazed trails in this section. Only marked trails are maintained. Please refrain from using unmarked trails as this can be dangerous and may cause damage to the natural environment.

Riders, please follow the IMBA "Rules of the Trail" guidelines for trail etiquette and ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET.

The topography and ecology of this area of Allaire is noticeably different from the other side of the park. Here the soil is sandy, and the forest begins to look more like pine barrens. Pitch pines and oaks are the most common trees. There is a thick understory of mountain laurel, an evergreen shrub that produces beautiful pink and white flowers in late April and early May.

Pine Trail (orange)

 4.5 miles
Moderate: Uneven terrain, hills, sandy surface
Multiuse

Pine Trail is the longest of the south side trails, with the most varied terrain. From the trailhead at the parking lot, keep going straight to follow the trail clockwise. To go counter-clockwise, look for the orange blazes marking the trail to the left of the old gravel road. For bike riders, this trail is challenging in parts with soft sandy areas and a steep "staircase" near the power lines. Riders seem to enjoy the switchback on this trail. Many unmarked unofficial trails cross the Pine Trail, so be sure to look for blazes at trail junctions.

If you look down, you will see many kinds of mosses and lichens. Though small, they are very important. Moss and lichens work to hold the soil together and trap moisture. They provide a place for small plants and seedlings of plants like mountain laurel to grow. Parts of the Pine Trail are cut deeply into the soil. Most of the soil is sandy, but a thin top layer is dark and rich. This is the layer where plant leaves have decomposed, adding nutrients back into the soil.

Nature Notes

*The **Pine Trail** goes through of the pine-oak forest with areas dominated by each type of tree. The eastern side of the loop has many oaks, the northwest corner has some stands of all pine. Regardless of where you are on the trail, if you look down, you will see many kinds of mosses and lichens. Mosses are a group of non-vascular plants, meaning they lack the special tissue that most plants use to move water through the plant. They lack leaves and stems. Mosses are able to grow on tree trunks, exposed rock, and bare ground with little harm.*

Lichens are examples of symbiosis – two organisms that need each other to survive. In lichens, a fungus provides structure and algae provide food through photosynthesis. Lichens can grow in some of the most extreme habitats on earth – from the Arctic tundra to tropical rainforests. Though small, both lichens and mosses play an important role in the ecosystem. They work to hold the sandy soil together, trap moisture, and provide a place for small plants and seedlings to grow.

Mountain Laurel Trail (blue)



3 miles

Easy to Moderate: Uneven terrain, sandy surface, soft sand spots.

Multiuse

The Mountain Laurel Trail has fewer hills than the Pine or Oak Trails. It runs through dense mountain laurel stands and along the flank of an abandoned sand pit. The trail is especially beautiful in May and June when the mountain laurels bear showy pink and white flowers. As the trail skirts the edge of the sand pit, look for small circular ant-lion sandpit traps at your feet. Also called doodlebugs, these insect larvae with large jaws wait in their traps ready to seize any unlucky ant that falls in.

Nature Notes

Mountain Laurel Trail runs through dense mountain laurel stands and along the northeastern flank of an abandoned sand pit. The trail is especially beautiful in May when the mountain laurel bears showy pink and white flowers. The flowers have spring-loaded anthers that when touched fling sticky pollen up to a foot. The pollen sticks to the furry body of bumblebees, which carry it to the next flower they visit, ideally creating a seed. Worm-eating warblers build their nests in the branches. Listen for the male's dry trill in spring and early summer.

Mountain laurel is an evergreen shrub that grows quite well in sandy soils, but needs spots of rich soil or moss to sprout from seed. It is a member of the Heath family of plants, which also includes cranberry, blueberry, huckleberry, and rhododendron. Heaths can grow in acidic and or poor soils, so they are common in the pine barrens and outer coastal plain. Like most pine barrens plants, mountain laurel is fire-resistant, sending up many new shoots after a burn, as well as having seeds that can survive in the soil for 4 years or more. Fire plays an important role in the ecology of the Pine Barrens. Most of the plants have some degree of fire resistance. Pitch pine has thick bark that protects the tree from minor fires, and resprouts readily. Pine seedlings have difficulty growing in areas with lots of leaf litter from oaks, and do best when the litter has been burned off. In general, in many areas where fire has been suppressed for decades, oaks overtake pitch pine as the dominant tree. To simulate natural fire, controlled burns are conducted periodically in the park.

As the trail skirts the edge of the sand pit, look for ant-lion pits in the sand at your feet. Also called doodlebugs, these insect larvae with large jaws wait in a hole at the center of the pit, ready to seize any unlucky ant that falls in. The sides of the pit are angled so that any pressure on them causes sand to slip, making escape impossible. The ant lion adult is a large insect that does not feed. It looks similar to a damselfly, but has long antennae and flies at night.

Oak Trail (white)



2.6 miles

Easy to Moderate: Uneven terrain, sandy surface

Multiuse

The Oak Trail shares the path with the much-longer Pine Trail for half its length. At the fork, go right with the Pine Trail for counterclockwise ride, or left with the Mountain Laurel Trail for the clockwise loop. Counterclockwise: Watch for a 90° turn to the left away from Pine Trail, then another 90° turn to the left to turn you back towards the trailhead. After a series of switchbacks, you'll join the Mountain Laurel (blue) Trail back to the old road and trailhead.

A walk on this trail will reward you with beautiful mature oaks, including the scarlet oak, named for its brilliant red fall color. The large lumps on the ends of oak branches are gouty oak galls, formed by tiny harmless wasps. Listen for the calls and drumming of woodpeckers, from the tiny hairy woodpecker to the large pileated. You may see them pecking away at trees to get to the insects inside or peeking out from their nests in tree cavities.

Nature Notes

The trails of Allaire pass through many acres of forest. Where there are trees there are woodpeckers. Common woodpeckers include the downy woodpecker, the red-bellied woodpecker, and in the summer, the Northern flicker.

The largest of the woodpeckers is the pileated. About the size of a crow, it has a black body and a distinctive red crest on its head. Like most woodpeckers and many cavity-nesting birds, males and females look very similar. Because they nest in enclosed cavities, the female does not need dull coloring to avoid predators while incubating eggs. Pileated woodpeckers have a loud laughing "kuk-kuk-kuk" call and can be seen and heard all year round. In spring they begin drumming, a heavy, rapid banging of trees to declare territory. A mated pair will defend its territory into the winter. Look for large rectangular holes in tree trunks where pileated woodpeckers have chipped away the wood to reach insects inside.

Boy Scout (pink)



1.3 miles

Easy-moderate. Short steep hills where the trail crosses a gully.

Multiuse

Trailhead: At entrance to group campsite on Squankum-Allenwood Road. Park outside the gate (unless you are a registered camper) Don't block the gate.

The Boy Scout Trail loops around the group campsites. At the back side of the loop, the trail dips down to cross a stream. The access to water has created a greater variety of trees in the gully compared to the rest of the loop.

RETIRED TRAIL

The Yellow Trail (AKA the Floodplain Trail, AKA the Furnace Trail) was retired.

The path behind the blacksmith shop to the base of the blast furnace is still open and usable. The part of the trail that used to continue across the floodplain of the Manasquan River has been flooded out so many times, it is no longer feasible to maintain it as a trail. While, with caution, you can still explore and enjoy this part of the park, it is no longer part of the official trails system of Allaire State Park. If you venture into the floodplain, you will see large river birches and sycamores rise over the river's orange waters. Look for flood debris (clumps of leaves and grass wedged in branches and against tree trunks) to learn how high the water has been. The damp soil is great for tracking animals that live here, including raccoons and great blue herons.

Nature Notes

The flood plain forest is one of extremes, routinely submerged during floods and dry at other times. Strong flood currents batter plants and carve away soil only to deposit it further downstream. As the water recedes and the current slows, rich sediments are left behind. Look for flood debris (leaves and grass wedged in branches and against tree trunks) to learn the extent of recent floods.

River birch, red maple, and sycamore are common trees of a flood plain forest, and can tolerate soggy soil. Sensitive fern and skunk cabbage grow along the ground out of the range of the worst flooding. The green and purple calyx of the skunk cabbage is the earliest flower to open in New Jersey, often blooming before March 1st. The plant gets its name from the rancid odor of the flowers, similar to rotting meat. The eye-watering smell is perfect for attracting flies, one of the only insects flying that early in the spring. Lured in by the smell of rotting meat, flies crawl over the flower before leaving, then carry the flower's pollen to another flower. In late summer, cardinal flowers use their striking red flowers to attract another type of pollinator – hummingbirds. Look for cardinal flowers growing in sunny spots along the banks of the Mill Run and Manasquan.

Look for raccoon tracks in the mud along the edge of the Manasquan River. Nocturnal animals, the raccoons are true omnivores – they eat fish, insects, fruit, birds' eggs, and anything edible they come across. They feed most often near water. In summer, females are followed by a litter of young kits. The river also provides food for birds. Watch for great blue herons patiently waiting, ready to strike out with their long bill to catch frogs and fish. Listen for the rattling call of belted kingfishers, who build their nests in holes along the riverbank.

As you walk along the Manasquan, notice the orange color of the soil. This is due to the high iron content, which made it a perfect spot for the bog iron industry. Much of the forest in this part of Allaire is only about a century old. Before that, most trees were cut for charcoal to fuel the blast furnace at the end of the trail.