

Stop 5: Be a Nature Detective!

Even if you didn't **see** any animals today, you can look for their traces. A trace is a clue that an animal left behind, such as a track (footprint), a hole, or a feather. Stand quietly and listen for signs of animals too; maybe you hear chickadees ("chick-a-dee-dee-dee") or wrens ("tea kettle, tea kettle, tea kettle, tea"). Look for these other animal traces. Can you guess what animal left them behind?

- A partially eaten walnut or acorn
- A squirrel nest (looks like a ball of leaves high in the tree)
- A snail shell
- A 2-inch hole in the ground (often made by chipmunks!)



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LITTLE ACORN TRAIL



Warner Park  Nature Center

Welcome to the Little Acorn Trail. This trail brochure is designed especially for children 6 years and under. The trail is a 150 yard loop which begins 200 yards from the Nature Center trailhead. The total distance from the trailhead, around the trail, and back again is just under 1/3 mile. The trail goes alongside Vaughn's creek, up the hill by fallen trees, and circles back to the bridge. To hike this trail follow the green arrows.

Before beginning this pleasant walk, there are a few things we would like for you to remember...

- Avoid poison ivy (leaves of three leave them be); remember the leaves drop in the fall
- Always stay on the trail
- Do not litter
- Do not remove anything (plants, insects, rocks etc.)
- Keep your dog on a leash
- Be observant
- The quieter you are, the more you will see and hear
- HAVE FUN!

By following these simple requests, you and other Park visitors are sure to enjoy this trail today and in the future.

Stop 4: Our Roots Are Showing!

Be very careful as you walk down to stop #4. The natural steps down the trail are formed by tree roots. Roots keep the tree sturdy, so it doesn't fall over when strong winds blow. They also drink water from the ground for the tree. For these reasons, we don't cut all of the roots that grow through the dirt path.



Soft, Soft Moss



Moss is a green plant, like an oak tree or a violet wildflower. Its roots and leaves are very different from other plants though, and it does not make seeds either!

Some moss grows in very wet, shady places. You can see moss on the roots and trunks of the trees along the Little Acorn Trail.



Poison Ivy leaf in summer.



Poison Ivy vine Very hairy!

There are five stops along this trail. Please stop at each numbered post and read about the things around you.

Stop 1: The Creek

Do you hear the creek flowing? This is Vaughn Creek, named after a family who had a farm nearby. Look at the creek while you read these questions:

- Is there water in the creek? If not, why not? In the summer and fall, it doesn't rain a lot in Nashville.
- The area where the creek water meets land is called the creek bank. Tall grasses called river cane (bamboo) grow along the creek bank. Do you see any river cane (bamboo)?
- The rock on the creek bed (the bottom of the creek) is blue. Notice that the rocks scattered on top of it are all different colors. These rocks came from the big hill behind you.



Stop 2: Oak Trees & Acorns

Look for squirrels bounding from tree to tree. This is a great place for squirrels because there are a lot of acorns here. Acorns are the nuts of oak trees. Squirrels love to eat them. Can you find an acorn?



Not all of the acorns are eaten by squirrels. Some acorns are gently covered with fallen leaves, watered with rain, and warmed by the Sun. They will sprout roots and leaves, and become new oak trees. The old oak trees will die and fall; they will become homes for animals, food for mushrooms, and new soil to feed new life in the forest. Do you see any old oak trees that have fallen?



Stop 3: A Brush Pile

A brush pile is a wonderful, magical place where many animals can find shelter, especially in the winter. Birds such as Eastern Towhees and small sparrows and small mammals like chipmunks will run to brush piles when they are approached.



Tufted Titmouse

Shh! If you want to see some animals you must be very quiet. You can move through the woods more quietly if you walk softly in a single file line. This will also help you stay on the trail.

Use your senses to explore the world around you:

Listen to a Tufted Titmouse singing “Peter, Peter, Peter”

Smell the fresh scent of the forest.

Feel the wind blowing in your face.

Look at the beautiful wildflowers and tall trees of the woods.

Don't **taste** any plants along the trail; some may be poisonous.

Plants and animals change with the seasons. To experience these changes, hike this and other trails at different times of the year.

The old road bed you walk on to reach the trail is the historic Natchez Trace. Once upon a time, this road went from Nashville all the way to Natchez, Mississippi. It was used by early American Indians, later by settlers and in the 1700s by Mississippi boatmen as a northern route after floating their cargos down the Mississippi River.

Now to the trail...



Towhee



Chipmunk



White-throated Sparrow