

Forever Wild Nature Preserves of New York City



Stretching along North America's eastern coast from Florida to Nova Scotia, the Atlantic Flyway hosts millions of birds, butterflies, bats, and dragonflies as they migrate each fall and spring.

The elusive, nocturnal Flying Squirrel resides in many of our forested parks.

Bald Eagles were re-introduced to Inwood Hill Park by the Urban Park Rangers in 2002.

Diamond-back Terrapins and the globally-rare plant Nantucket Juneberry can be found in the sandy hummocks of western Staten Island.

Peregrine Falcons have made a spectacular recovery from the brink of extinction and now nest in such prime real estate as the MetLife Building and the Brooklyn Bridge.

Eastern gamagrass, a rare plant found in wetlands, grows up to eight feet tall and is striking in bloom, with both orange and purple flowers.

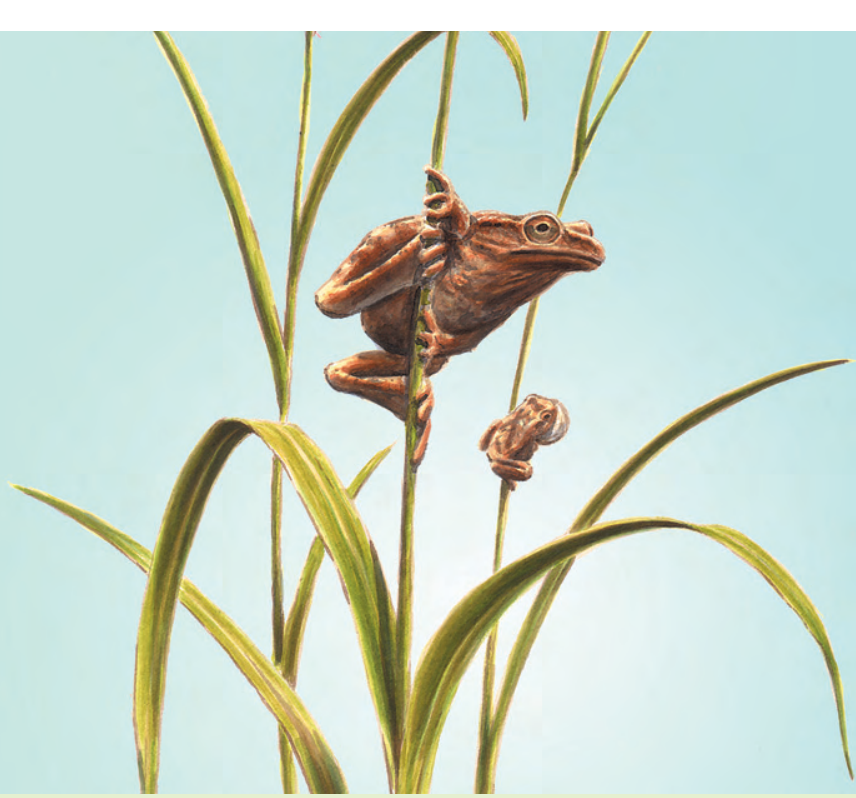
The Terminal moraine is a high ridge of sand and rock that formed 15,000 years ago, at the end of the last ice age. When the Wisconsin ice sheet retreated, it left behind a unique topography made up of hills and bowl-shaped depressions that are now home to diverse wetland and upland ecosystems.

Piping Plovers are federally endangered shorebirds that have been building nests on the beaches of Far Rockaway since 1996.

Stretching from Staten Island to the Bronx, the Harbor Herons Complex includes over a dozen islands and nearby natural areas that provide habitat for egrets, ibises, and herons.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Bronx Park Preserve | 22. Willow Lake Preserve |
| 2. North Brother Island | 23. Forest Park Preserve |
| 3. Pelham Bay-Hunter Island Marine Sanctuary | 24. Idlewild Park Preserve |
| 4. Pelham Bay-Thomas Pell Wildlife Refuge | 25. Udalls Park Preserve |
| 5. Pelham Bay Park Preserve | 26. Spring Creek Park Preserve |
| 6. Riverdale Park/Raoul Wallenberg Forest Preserve | 27. Arden Heights Park Preserve |
| 7. Seton Falls Park Preserve | 28. Bloomingdale Park Preserve |
| 8. Van Cortland Park Preserve | 29. Blue Heron Park Preserve |
| 9. Four Sparrow Park Preserve | 30. Clove Lake Park Preserve |
| 10. Fresh Creek Park Preserve | 31. Conference House Park Preserves |
| 11. Marine Park Preserve | 32. Deer Park Preserve |
| 12. Paerdegat Basin Park Preserve | 33. Eibs Pond Park Preserve |
| 13. Prospect Park Preserve | 34. Evergreen Park Preserve |
| 14. Central Park-The North Woods | 35. Fairview Park Preserve |
| 15. Central Park-Hallett Nature Sanctuary | 36. High Rock Park Preserve |
| 16. Central Park-The Ramble | 37. Isle of Meadows Preserve |
| 17. Inwood Hill Park-Shorakapok Preserve | 38. Islington Pond Park Preserve |
| 18. Alley Pond Park Preserve | 39. Lemon Creek Park Preserve |
| 19. Arverne Shorebird Preserve | 40. Long Pond Park Preserve |
| 20. Cunningham Park Preserve | 41. Pralls Island Preserve |
| 21. Dubos Point Wildlife Sanctuary | 42. Reeds Basket Willow Swamp |
| | 43. Saw Mill Creek Marsh Preserve |
| | 44. Shooters Island Preserve |
| | 45. W.T. Davis Wildlife Refuge |
| | 46. Staten Island Greenbelt Preserve |
| | 47. Sweet Bay Magnolia Preserve |
| | 48. Wolfe's Pond Park Preserve |

■ New York City Parks ■ Forever Wild Sites



Nature in New York City?!



Strack Pond, Forest Park, Queens

That's right! You don't need to leave the City to get a taste of the wilderness—nature is all around you! So get on the subway or bus and explore New York City in a whole new way.

The **Forever Wild Program** is an initiative of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to protect and preserve the most ecologically valuable lands within the five boroughs. The 47 Forever Wild Nature Preserves include over 8,700 acres of towering forests, vibrant wetlands, and expansive meadows. These vital open spaces are home to thousands of critters, including flying squirrels, bald eagles, and fascinating rare plants. They also give New Yorkers and visitors the chance to walk in the woods, paddle a stream, or observe wildlife with family and friends.

What Makes These Places Special?

1. They contain functioning ecosystems, composed primarily of **native plants and animals**.
2. They're big! Many plants and animals require a **large undisturbed area** to survive and reproduce.
3. Two or more preserves may be **nearby or connected to each other**; this enables wildlife to move easily between sites and allows plants more room to disperse seeds and pollen.
4. They have **healthy soils**. Soil is the foundation of an ecosystem, takes many years to develop, and is easily disturbed in the urban environment.
5. They are home to **rare plants and animals**.

Parks not designated as Forever Wild Nature Preserves are still very important. Small parks, undeveloped land, and open spaces (like golf courses and gardens) that connect and buffer the Preserves are critical for sustaining wildlife and plant populations. All open green spaces, especially in a city, should be treated with respect.

Native Ecosystems of New York City

An ecosystem is a complex of organisms that interact with each other and with the soil, water, and air around them. What types of ecosystems do we have in New York City?

Salt Marshes



Udalls Park Preserve, Queens

Salt marshes are **among the most biologically productive ecosystems on the planet**. They provide shoreline areas with flood protection, serve as nursery grounds for fish and shellfish, and filter pollutants from coastal waters.

Freshwater Wetlands



Blue Heron Park, Staten Island

Freshwater wetlands **filter and clean our ground water**, help stop erosion, absorb rain during heavy storms, and are home to frogs, salamanders, turtles, and dragonflies. Less than one percent of New York City's historical freshwater wetlands remain today.

Forests



Van Cortlandt Park, The Bronx

New York City is home to some of the **finest and most diverse forests in the region**. A healthy forest includes trees, shrubs, and a vegetated understory. Wildflowers bloom on the forest floor in early spring, before trees and shrubs develop leaves.

Meadows



Pelham Bay Park, The Bronx

Meadows are **sunny and open fields of grasses and wildflowers**. Butterflies float over meadows while red-tailed hawks, kestrels, and barn owls hunt mice and voles. Unless meadows are maintained by fire or mowing, shrubs and trees will eventually take over and transform the area into a woodland.

Why Protect Natural Areas?



Great Egrets, Marine Park, Brooklyn

Reflecting remnants of their original ecosystems, Forever Wild Nature Preserves are important reservoirs of plant and animal biodiversity, including numerous rare, threatened, and endangered species. They provide a place for hiking, bird watching, dog walking (on leash), and environmental education. Natural areas also make a city healthier. Plants filter air and water, prevent flooding by absorbing storm water, and help keep the city cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

Get Out There!

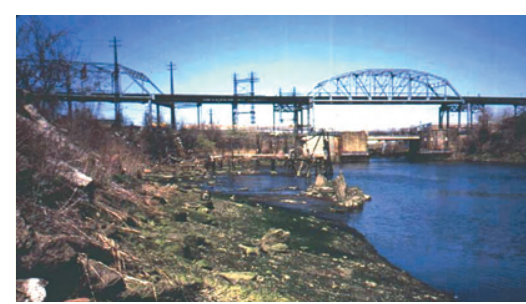


Peregrine Falcon, Wall St, Manhattan

Plant trees! Take a hike! Volunteer!

There are Forever Wild Nature Preserves in every borough. Almost every site is accessible by public transit, and many have trails, nature centers, and public facilities. Go to www.nyc.gov/foreverwild to find trail maps, driving and public transit directions, and information on guided tours and how to get involved. You can also call 311 and ask for Forever Wild.

Natural Resources Group



Bronx River wetland before restoration



After restoration

The Natural Resources Group (NRG) is a division of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. NRG's mission is to **conserve natural resources through acquiring and advocating for open space and by managing and restoring native ecosystems** within the five boroughs. Since its inception in 1984, NRG has helped acquire more than 1,600 acres of open space, rehabilitated another 950 acres of forest and wetland, and secured more than \$165 million in grants, natural resources damages claims, and public works mitigation funds.

Despite an increasing awareness of the importance of natural areas, they are still threatened by dumping, arson, and off-road vehicle use. **The Forever Wild Program aims to expand awareness, encourage stewardship, and provide site protection to ensure that these preserves retain their ecological and recreational value.**

Forever Wild Sites

	Acres	Habitat Information			Services				
		Forest	Wetland Fresh	Salt	Meadow	Hiking Trail	Ranger Tours	Visitor Center	Rest Rooms
The Bronx									
1. Bronx Park Preserve	35	•	•			•	•		•
2. North Brother Island	20	•					*		
3. Pelham Bay Park - Hunter Island Marine Sanctuary	138	•		•		•	•		
4. Pelham Bay - Thomas Pell Wildlife Refuge	371	•		•		•	•		
5. Pelham Bay Park Preserve	883	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
6. Riverdale Park/Raoul Wallenberg Forest Preserve	112	•				•	•		
7. Seton Falls Park Preserve	36	•	•			•	•		•
8. Van Cortlandt Park Preserve	573	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
Brooklyn									
9. Four Sparrow Marsh Preserve	67			•			•	•	
10. Fresh Creek Park Preserve	92			•					
11. Marine Park Preserve	530			•	•	•	•	•	•
12. Paerdegat Basin Park Preserve	161			•	•		•	•	
13. Prospect Park Preserve	208	•	•			•	•	•	•
Manhattan									
14. Central Park - The North Woods	34	•				•	•	•	•
15. Central Park - The Ramble	37	•				•	•	•	•
16. Inwood Hill Park - Shorakapok Preserve	136	•		•		•	•	•	•
Queens									
17. Alley Pond Park Preserve	549	•	•	•		•	•	•	•
18. Arverne Shorebird Preserve	84								
19. Cunningham Park Preserve	243	•	•			•	•		•
20. Dubos Point Wildlife Sanctuary	33			•					
21. Willow Lake Preserve	106		•						
22. Forest Park Preserve	274	•	•			•	•	•	•
23. Idlewild Park Preserve	242		•	•	•				
24. Udalls Park Preserve	31	•	•	•		•			
25. Spring Creek Park Preserve	75			•					
Staten Island									
26. Arden Heights Woods Preserve	185	•	•			•			
27. Bloomingdale Park Preserve	110	•	•			•			
28. Blue Heron Park Preserve	169	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
29. Clove Lakes Park Preserve	131	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
30. Conference House Park Preserve	105	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
31. Deer Park Preserve	40	•				•			
32. Eibs Pond Park Preserve	39		•		•	•			
33. Evergreen Park Preserve	22	•	•			•			•
34. Fairview Park Preserve	22	•	•						
35. High Rock Park Preserve	90	•	•			•	•	•	•
36. Isle of Meadows Preserve	100			•	•				
37. Islington Park Preserve	22	•	•			•			
38. Lemon Creek Park Preserve	16	•	•			•	•	•	
39. Long Pond Park Preserve	115	•	•			•			
40. Pralls Island Preserve	74	•	•						
41. Reeds Basket Willow Swamp	49	•	•						
42. Saw Mill Creek Marsh Preserve	117		•				•	•	
43. Shooters Island Preserve	26	•	•						
44. W.T. Davis Wildlife Refuge	428	•	•	•		•	•	•	•
45. Staten Island Greenbelt Preserve	1,352	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
46. Sweet Bay Magnolia Preserve	241	•	•		•				
47. Wolfe's Pond Park Preserve	207	•	•			•	•	•	•
Total	8730								

* Boat tours led by NYC Audubon

canoe tours



City of New York
Parks & Recreation

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