

The Grasslands Scavenger Hunt Checklist

Throughout your hike you will find many fascinating plants and animals all around you!

You can keep track of your observations with this scavenger hunt checklist!

Don't worry if you can't find everything on the list, since some species are more prominent depending upon the season and time of day.

1. Tall Grass
2. Hawk in the Sky
3. Butterfly
4. Milkweed
5. Deer
6. Animal Tracks
7. Acorn
8. Bee

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What is missing?



Have questions? Looking for more ways to reconnect with nature?

- * Stop by the honors gardens to find more information on Maryland natives or to sit, relax, and find a moment of solace.
- * Introduce yourself to a couple of our friendly animal residents!
- * At the Conservancy, you can find our terrapin turtles (along with the other reptiles) inside the Nature Center. Downhill from the farmhouse is where you can meet our goats and hens!
- * Our residential barred owl is named Ranger. You can find Ranger's screened-in shelter behind the Gudelsky Center.
- * While inside the Gudelsky Center, pick up a map so you can plan your own hiking route! Brochure racks are just inside the entrance on both levels.
- * The Community Garden at Mt. Pleasant is always a very active place for gardeners to meet and share ideas, provide help, and learn to grow organic fruits and vegetables on their own 20' x 25' plot of land! Walk across the parking lot, away from the outbuildings to find The Howard County Conservancy Community Garden.
- * We are always hosting new and exciting activities at Mt. Pleasant! Please stop by the Gudelsky Center today and sign up for our newsletter. You will receive updates related to educational opportunities along with many other fun family events held right here at The Howard County Conservancy!



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connecting people to nature

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THE HOWARD COUNTY CONSERVANCY

A SELF-GUIDED HIKE THROUGH THE GRASSLANDS



On this hike, you will venture through the grasslands, walk alongside the Davis Branch Stream, locate some of Maryland's native species, and discover how individual efforts, along with community outreach is helping to restore our natural landscapes!



Have Fun During Your Hike!



Stop #1: Montjoy Barn

Although **Montjoy Barn** is considered the newest outbuilding (dedicated in 2007) at Mt. Pleasant, this barn was actually built around 1792.

The barn was brought to its current location in pieces. The reconstruction and preservation of **Montjoy** was a true community effort!

Once a bank barn, **Montjoy** was built into a sloped hill, so both the upper and lower floors were accessible from ground level.

Over the years, it has been used for many purposes ranging from storing wheat to housing livestock.

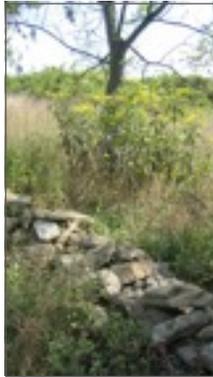
What else do you think Montjoy was used for? Explore the interior and find clues to help you out!

Stop #2: Stonewall Trail

After **Montjoy**, enter into the grasslands and you will find a fork in the path.

Take the **Stonewall Trail** on the left, which will lead you downhill to the stream.

You will soon be able to figure out how this trail received its name!



This retaining wall was built hundreds of years ago by the original occupants of the area.

It is very difficult to imagine how much time and effort went into mining these rocks and transporting them uphill to form this structure!

If you were to guess, how many rocks were used to build this wall? How long did it take to build?

*Remember to keep your eyes and ears open so you won't miss the colorful creatures that are all around you!!



Stop #3: The Davis Branch Stream



Continue down the **Stonewall Trail** and you will reach a bridge.

Take a rest here to stop and study the **Davis Branch Stream**, which flows in a NorthEast direction, eventually meeting up with the **East Branch** (located on the other side of the property).

From the bridge, you can look down into the stream and get a sense of how our local water systems operate.

The water in the **Davis Branch** is currently making its way downstream to the Chesapeake Bay. Eventually, this same water will flow all the way to the Atlantic Ocean!

This is why keeping our local rivers and streams free of harmful pollutants and trash is one of the best things you can do for the environment!

Would you consider the stream to be moving fast or slow? What creatures rely on this stream for survival and for what reasons?

Stop # 4: The Milkweed and The Monarch

After stopping at the bridge turn back and take the path to your left which runs parallel to the stream.



On this path, you will be able to discover beneficial plants and insects native to Maryland!

One very important (and beautiful) insect living in Maryland is the **Monarch Butterfly**.

The Monarch Butterfly has adapted a very clever mechanism in order to stay alive in the grassland, where it has many predators. Although the Monarch butterfly is very beautiful, its body contains a toxic chemical. Since the **Monarch's** predators are very smart, they have learned to steer clear of the colorful orange and black insect in order to not get sick!

The **milkweed plant** and the **Monarch** butterfly share a very close connection in nature. The **milkweed plant** is the only place this species of butterfly will lay its eggs and retreat back to in the Spring and Summer.

Depending on the season, you can find the **milkweed plant** in one of its various stages of development.

In its early stages of development, the **milkweed** develops hard and spiky pods, making it easy to identify.

Inside these pods are the **milkweed's** seeds. This picture shows a cluster of seeds from within the pod.



At the end of each seed are white cotton-like fibers which carry each seed to its final location by using the wind.

Every plant has a unique way of dispersing seeds each year. Besides the wind, how else are seeds dispersed in nature?

Stop # 5: The Environmental Impact of Erosion

After passing the **milkweed plants**, continue until you see a split in the trail. Turning left would take you down to the banks of the **Davis Branch**. For this hike, turn right and take the path leading back into the **grasslands**. But before you begin hiking uphill, take a moment to study the soil on the path.

Do you notice any differences between the path you were just on, and the path leading up the hill to your right?

The exposed rock and uncovered layers of soil that you find on the sloped path are caused by **erosion**. Both natural and human activities impact erosion - a continuous wearing away of the earth's surface.

Each time it rains, layers of topsoil from uphill are gradually washed downhill into the **Davis Branch** stream.

It may take months or even years, but eventually the act of erosion can create an entirely new landscape!

Proceed uphill on this path and you will soon find more native species such as **Goldenrod**, **Queen Anne's Lace**, and even more **Milkweed**!

Keep heading straight up the path until you are back where you started your hike at **Montjoy Barn**!