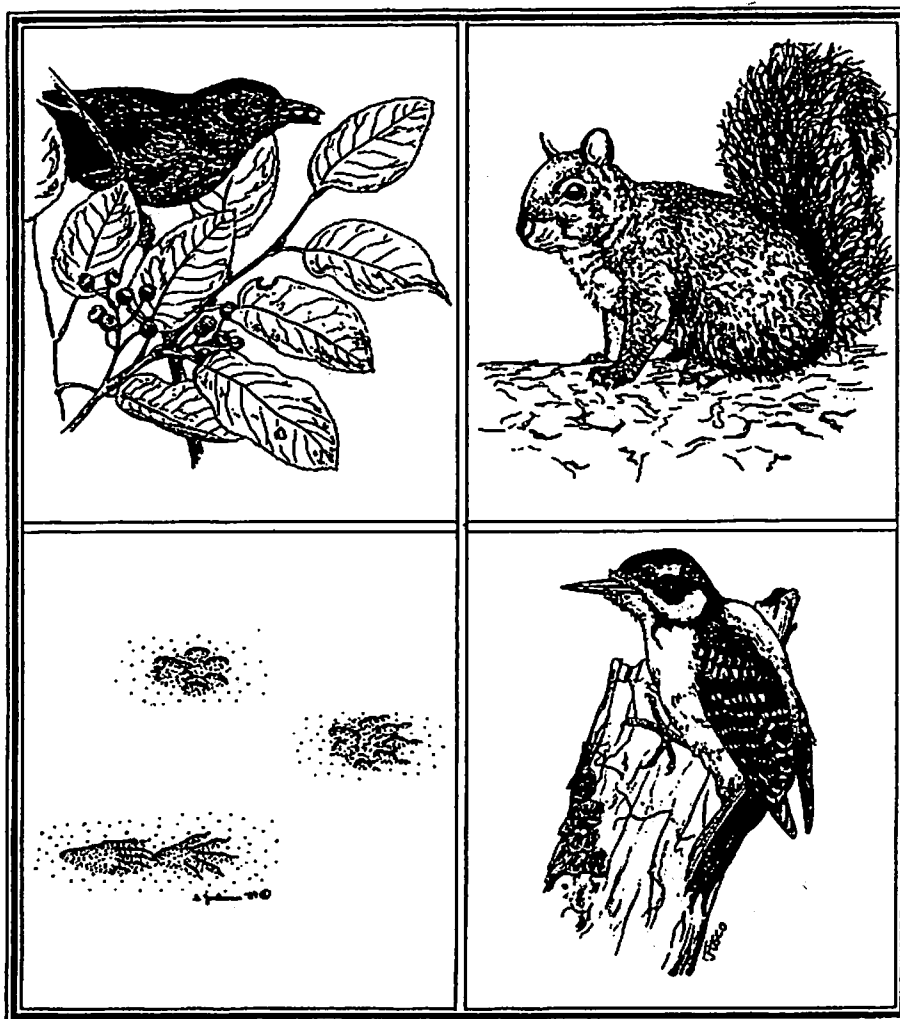


New Britain Parks and Recreation Department Presents...

# A.W. Stanley Park Trail Guide



Written by  
**Peter M. Picone**  
Wildlife Biologist

This nature trail was designated a White House Millennium Trail in 2000.

## The Benefits are Endless...

## A.W. Stanley Nature Trail

Welcome to the A.W. Stanley Park Nature Trail. This area was developed to encourage students, teachers, and area residents to learn more about the habitats and wildlife found within the area. It is hoped that projects like this will foster a greater understanding and appreciation for wildlife and its habitat. The development of this trail required the teamwork of the town and state officials, groups, companies, and individuals. Please enjoy it and care for it. Please leave only your footprints and take out any trash. Please return this guide to the trail head box so that others may use it.

[ An audio tape of this guidebook is available at the New Britain Public Library ]

## Urban Wildlife Habitat

Wildlife habitat is made up of four basic things: food, water, cover, and space. This small forest provides a limited yet functional habitat for many species of wildlife that have adapted to this suburban area. Although this tiny forest has seen many disturbances, it now has a variety of plants ranging in size from the tall oaks to a short blade of grass. You can find common birds such as the northern cardinal, but do not be surprised to see some less common birds like the pileated woodpecker and neotropical migrants that stop to feed here during their southerly migration in the fall or their northerly migration in the spring. For more information about urban wildlife and habitat please contact:



Department of Environmental Protection  
Bureau of Natural Resources  
Wildlife Division's Urban Wildlife Program  
Sessions Woods WMA  
P.O. Box 1550  
Burlington, CT 06013  
Telephone: 860-675-8170 Fax: 860-675-8141

Written and produced by Peter M. Picone, Urban Wildlife Biologist,  
February 1999. Illustrations by Paul Fusco, Steve Jackson, and Susan  
Stewart. Printed by New Britain Parks and Recreation Department.

DEP Wildlife Division, Urban Wildlife Program

## A.W. Stanley Park History

Mr. John Stanley, one of the original settlers of the Town of Farmington, was allotted 120 acres of land in 1644 as a reward for his services in the King Phillips War. This was the beginning of the Stanley land holdings in what is now the City of New Britain. Another noteworthy Stanley family member was Colonel Gad Stanley, an American Revolutionary War hero.

In 1927, Alix W. Stanley deeded 360 acres to the City of New Britain for use as a park. The property consisted of forested hills, meadows, small farm and several brooks. It comprises the A.W. Stanley Park and Golf Course. The entire property lies in the center of the old settlement, known since colonial days as the "Stanley Quarter".

On July 17, 1933, work was begun to develop the A.W. Stanley Swimming Pool and Recreation Center. Approximately 500 men from the C.W.A. program were employed on the project. The project included the construction of several field stone buildings that contained men's and women's bathing pavilions and lockers. Some raw materials such as field stone and timber used to construct the buildings were collected from the park.

The central focus of the Recreation Center was the 4.5 acre swimming pool (now the cattail pond, stop 1). The waters from two brooks passed through warming basins, settling basins, and sand filters before entering the pool. This process warmed, cleaned and purified the water.

Approximately, 2 miles of paved road and several miles of foot paths were built through the property to provide access to other recreational features. These included an 8 acre lake for fishing and ice skating, a Boy Scout cabin, baseball diamonds, tennis courts, horseshoe pitching courts, playgrounds, and picnic grounds supplied with tables, benches and fireplaces. The remains of the fireplaces are still evident today. When completed, the A.W. Stanley Recreation Center was considered one of the finest recreation centers in New England.

New Britain is very fortunate that Alix W. Stanley had the foresight and generosity to donate this magnificent piece of land where residents have enjoyed a variety of outdoor recreational activities. It is hoped that the development of this nature trail will help the citizens of New Britain learn about the natural environment of the park.

**Note:** Historical information provided by Friends of A.W. Stanley Park; Elaine Lechowicz, with excerpts from "The Swimming Pool" N.E. Weekly Pub. Co.

## **Stop 1 - Cattails / Pond**

---

This man-made pond was once a 4.5 acre swimming pool and was a central focus of the A.W. Stanley Recreation Center. It was abandoned and is now covered with cattails and other aquatic vegetation. The cattails provide valuable habitat especially for muskrats and red-winged blackbirds. **Look for numbered yellow painted poles throughout the nature trails, they correspond to the numbers in this guide.**

## **Stop 2 - White Ash**

---

White ash(*Fraxinus americana*) produces seeds in the fall that are eaten by birds and small mammals. Only the female ash tree produces the seeds. White ash wood is quite strong and is used in making baseball bats, canoe paddles and furniture.

## **Stop 3 - Historical Building**

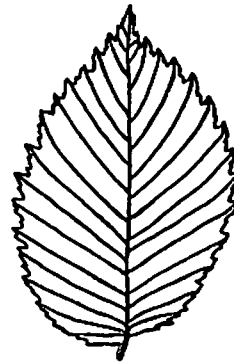
---

This building once housed the food concessions for the A.W. Stanley Recreation Center. Some raw materials such as field stone and timber used to construct many of the buildings were collected from the park.

## **Stop 4 - American Elm**

---

American Elms(*Ulmus americana*) are known to grow in river floodplains and were once planted along city streets. New Haven, known as the "Elm City" had many elms along its streets. A disease called "Dutch elm disease" devastated most of the trees. Today, this tree still survives in many forested areas like this one. The seeds which are produced in the spring are eaten by birds, mice and squirrels.

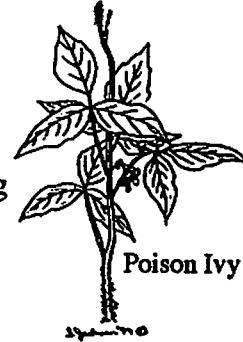


American Elm

## Stop 5 - Red Cedar and Poison Ivy

---

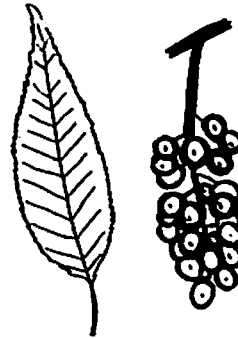
Red cedar( *Juniperus virginiana* ) is a pioneering plant that colonizes abandoned fields. The female cedar tree produces valuable berries (actually cones) which are eaten by many types of birds, particularly cedar waxwings. In winter, cedars provide good shelter and cover. The vine growing on this tree is poison ivy(*Toxicodendron radicans*). This plant can cause irritation to your skin. Learn to avoid it. "Leaves of three, let it be". Do not touch it. It also takes the form of a climbing vine or a shrub. Its leaves and berries are eaten by wildlife.



## Stop 6 - Black Cherry

---

Black cherry( *Prunus serotina* ) provides berries for wildlife in the early fall. Birds, squirrels and even raccoons eat the berries. This plant grows best in full sun but its seedlings are tolerant of the forest shade. Historical and current human uses of the wood for furniture and its berries are used in making pies and jams.



## Stop 7 - Pin Oak

---

Pin oaks(*Quercus palustris* ) are found mostly on poorly drained soils. They have many lower branches that usually stay on the trunk even after they die. These trees are often used in landscaping because they lack a tap root and are easily transplanted. Its acorns are small but abundant.

## Stop 8 - White Oak

---

White oaks( *Quercus alba* ) are important nut producers in the forest. Its' acorns are preferred by wildlife over the red and black oak. They are sweeter tasting and contain less tannin (bitter compound found in many trees). White oak is also Connecticut's state tree known as the Charter Oak.

## Stop 9 - Hop Hornbeam

---

Hop hornbeam( *Ostrya virginiana* ) usually doesn't get taller than 30 feet. It's seeds are eaten by squirrels and chipmunks. It is also known as "ironwood" because of its strong wood and once used in making handles for small tools.

## Stop 10 - Shagbark Hickory

---

Shagbark hickory( *Carya ovata* ) has a unique shaggy bark which is utilized by a variety of wildlife for cover. Some bats may use the bark crevices for roosting. Insects may hide under the bark for shelter and predator avoidance. The nut produced by this tree is eagerly eaten and stored by squirrels in the early fall, before the acorns start ripening. They are usually teeming with squirrels in the fall. Humans have historically collected the sweet tasting nuts for food and used its strong wood for making furniture and bows (archery). A gray squirrel nesting box is in the tree. While gray squirrels commonly nest and seek shelter in holes in trees, artificial nest boxes can encourage them to use areas where tree cavities are limited. The lack of suitable den sites can be a limiting factor for most cavity-nesting species.



## Stop 11 - American Hornbeam

---

This tree is also called "musclewood" because its smooth textured bark gives the appearance of human muscles. American hornbeam ( *Carpinus caroliniana* ) likes to grow in the moist understory of forests and edges. It produces seeds which are eaten by squirrels, chipmunks and some birds.

## Stop 12 - Eastern White Pine

---

White pine( *Pinus strobus*) provides evergreen cover for wildlife. Their seeds are sought after by various small mammals and birds. White pine was originally harvested by the colonists and shipped back to England to produce ship masts. The trees that were slated for harvest were marked with a symbol called the "Kings Mark". Today, white pine is a softwood lumber used in making furniture and other woodworking items.

## Stop 13 - Red Oak

---

Red oaks( *Quercus rubra*) produce acorns every other year that are sought after by squirrels, chipmunks and other small mammals. When given a choice, wildlife prefer to eat white oak acorns first. Red oak acorns are more bitter than white acorns. Red oak acorns sometimes persist on the ground and are eaten when other foods are scarce. Red oak is a highly prized wood for making veneer and quality furniture.

## Stop 14 - Red Maple

---

Red maples( *Quercus rubrum*) produce winged seeds in the spring. Its seeds are eaten by squirrels, chipmunks and some birds. Red maples tolerate moist soils and are known to have cavities (hollows in which animals seek out for shelter or nesting). Red maple turns a bright red in autumn.

## Stop 15 - Sugar Maple

---

Sugar maple( *Acer saccharum*) produces winged seeds which ripen in the fall and are eaten by chipmunks, squirrels and some birds. Humans tap the trees in the late winter to gather sap to make maple syrup. The wood of the sugar maple is tough and used for hard-wood flooring.

## Stop 16 - American Sycamore

---

American sycamore ( *Platanus occidentalis*) is covered with bark scales which peel off and reveal a greenish white surface beneath. It gives the tree a "camouflage" look to it. This tree grows mostly in wetland or floodplain areas. It has been widely planted as a street tree in urban and suburban areas. Its seeds ripen in the fall and persist into the winter.

## Stop 17 - Birding Spot / Side Trail

---

This area is a favorite spot for birdwatching in the spring. Migratory warblers can be seen and heard throughout this area during their journey north. A good set of binoculars, a bird book and some patience is all that is required for birdwatching.

## Stop 18 - American Beech

---

American beech( *Fagus grandiflora*) provides nutritious nuts sought after by a variety of small mammals and birds. This tree is shade tolerant and sometimes maintains its browned leaves on its branches throughout the winter. The smooth gray bark is characteristic of this tree. Some have destroyed the bark of beeches by carving names into it. Please do not despoil the bark of such a beautiful tree.

## Stop 19 - Mulberry

---

This tree provides fruit for wildlife in early summer (usually end of June) when many birds are nesting. It has pinkish to red berries. The edges of this area has an abundance of seedlings and saplings that sprout from the undigested seeds of wildlife droppings. There is a native red mulberry in Connecticut and an imported non-native white mulberry from the Asian continent. Robins and Catbirds are especially attracted to this plant.





## **Stop 20 - Alien Invasions**

---

Here you will find a variety of non-native invasives. Oriental bittersweet( *Celastrus obiculatus* ), Japanese barberry( *Berberis thunbergii* ) and Multiflora rose( *Rosa multiflora* ) are found growing here. Oriental bittersweet was imported for its ornamental berries used in flower arrangements. Japanese barberry was imported for its decorative berries and wildlife food values. Multiflora rose was imported for its ability to make living fences around pastures to keep cattle in. Today most of these have invaded areas outside of their original planted locations and have displaced native vegetation. Do not plant non-native invasives in your yard.

## **Stop 21 - Bitternut Hickory**

---

Bitternut hickory( *Carya cordiformis*)has a characteristic yellow bud. The nuts produced by this tree are not as sweet-tasting as the shagbark hickory, hence the name "bitternut". It prefers to grow in moist soils. Its bark is not as rough as most hickory species.

## **Stop 22- Black Birch**

---

Black birch( *Betula lenta*) produces small winged nutlets which are eaten by birds and small mammals. It is also known as "sweet birch" because of sweet smelling and tasting inner bark. This tree tolerates shaded conditions.

## **Stop 23 - Snag / Den Tree**

---

Snags are dead or dying trees which woodpeckers and cavity-nesting wildlife need as habitat. Hollowed out trees that are still alive are called den trees. They provide shelter and nesting places for many of the cavity-dependent wildlife such as squirrels and screech owls. For your own safety, please do not lean on any tree that has decaying or dying wood.



## Stop 24 - Arrowwood Viburnum

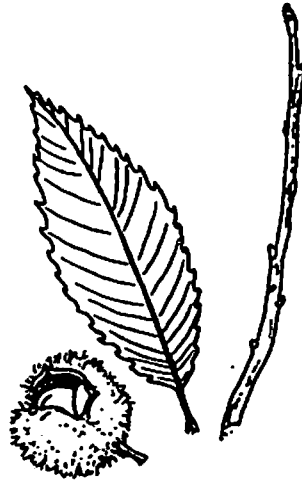
---

Arrowwood viburnum (*Viburnum recognitum*) is a valuable fall berry producer. It is one of Connecticut's finest native viburnum. It makes a nice ornamental shrub for your yard, as well. The Native American Indians used the straight shoots of this shrub to make their arrow shafts for hunting.

## Stop 25 - American Chestnut

---

American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) provided a valuable food source for many wildlife species. In the early 1900's, this tree species fell victim to chestnut blight, a disease introduced from Asia. Live stump sprouts, like these are still found in the forest. The chestnut blight does not affect the tree below the soil, therefore it resprouts and may reach 20-25 feet before succumbing to the blight and resprouting again. Scientific research on the American chestnut and the blight is being conducted at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven.



## Stop 26 - American Hazelnut

---

American hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) is a shrub that is generally found along woods edges. It produces small nuts which are eaten by chipmunks, squirrels, mice and some birds such as ruffed grouse.

## Stop 27 - Mapleleaf Viburnum

---

Mapleleaf viburnum( *Viburnum acerifolium* ) tolerates shaded conditions and is an understory plant. It produces blueish-black berries which are eaten by birds and small mammals and are also valuable winter food because they persist into the winter months.

## Stop 28 - Black Oak

---

Black oak( *Quercus velutina* ) acorns are not as preferred by wildlife as the white oak acorns because they contain more bitter-tasting tannin. However, during harsher winters or times of food shortage, wildlife will eat their acorns. The inner bark of this tree has a yellow color.

## Stop 29 - Witch Hazel

---

Common witch hazel( *Hamamelis virginiana* ) is an understory shrub that produces seeds in the fall. These seeds are eaten by chipmunks, woodland mice and some birds. They have shiny black seeds which are encased in nut-like pods and , when mature, they are propelled several feet from within the pods. Here in Connecticut, witch hazel shrubs are collected by industry to produce an astringent lotion .

## Stop 30 - Eastern Cottonwood

---

Eastern cottonwood( *Populus deltoides* ) is known for releasing its cottony seeds into the air during the months of May and June. Their silky-haired seeds give the appearance of being snowflakes floating through the air. Beaver favor the bark of this tree and ruffed grouse have been known to consume the buds.

## **Stop 31 - Wild Grapes**

---

Wild grape( *Vitis* spp.) vines can be found growing here. Wild grapes provide a good fall foods source for migrating birds. Local mammals such as red fox and raccoons also feed on the berries in the fall. Some years the grapes may persist into the winter and wildlife may feed on them even in winter. The shreds of bark from the grape vine are used by cardinals and other birds to construct their nest.

## **Stop 32 - Tree Stump**

---

Tree stumps provide testimony to human activities in this area. Stumps indicate that some trees were harvested over the years. The age of a tree can be determined by counting its rings.

## **Stop 33 - Big Tooth Aspen**

---

Big toothed Aspen( *Populus grandidentata* ) is distinguished by its leaves having large serrations. If you can find a leaf of the big toothed aspen, compare it to the cottonwood or quaking aspen. One thing that all native aspens share is the fact that the stems of their leaves have a vertically positioned leaf stem which causes them to sway differently than other trees with horizontally positions leaf stems. Compare the leaf stem of the aspens to those of the red maple or other hardwood.

## **Stop 34 - Wildflowers**

---

If you look carefully in the woods here you can find a variety of native wildflowers. You may find bloodroot, wild geranium, solomon's seal, trillium, and wood aster. Some of these are only visible during the spring. In fall and winter, you can see the Christmas fern and spotted wintergreen.

## Stop 35 - Japanese Knotweed

---

Japanese knotweed( *Polygonum cuspidatum* ) is a non-native invasive plant imported from eastern Asia. Its stems are hollow and bamboo-like. It is also commonly referred to as Japanese bamboo. It can spread rapidly and will displace native vegetation. Eradication of this plant is recommended wherever feasible due to its invasive growth habits. It was extensively planted to stabilize river banks and other steep embankments over the years. Today it has spread and continues to spread in topsoil and fill. This patch appears to have come in with some fill or debris. It has little wildlife value.

**Note: Please continue north along the main trail or you can take this westerly trail back to stop #3**

## Stop 36 - Sugar Maple Stand

---

Sugar maple( *Acer saccharum* ) is a valuable tree in several respects. Firstly, it provides the sap for making delicious maple syrup. It also provides a picturesque fall leaf color enjoyed by folks in the northeastern U.S. This tree is tolerant of shade and produces a fall crop of seeds which are eaten by wildlife such as squirrels, chipmunks and wild turkeys. There are plans to manage this area to improve growing conditions for the sugar maples to create a "sugar bush" or a place to tap sugar maples for their sap.

## Stop 37 - Pond View / Wood Ducks

---

Here you get a nice view of the pond. Careful and quiet observation can result in spotting some unique wildlife that inhabit the pond. Green herons and great blue herons can be observed hunting for fish and frogs. Wood ducks, one of Connecticut's most colorful ducks can be seen early in the morning looking for acorns or aquatic insects. A wood duck nest box was placed in the water to provide it a nesting cavity. Wood ducks naturally nest in tree cavities, unlike the ground nesting mallards.

## Stop 38 - Young White Pine

---

This area supports young eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) seedlings. White pine provides evergreen cover and shelter for wildlife. As time goes by some trees will survive and others will die to leave a more sparse forest.

Connecticut's landscape is about 60 percent forested. Most of the forest is comprised of deciduous trees (lose their leaves each fall). White pine makes up less than 6 percent of the statewide forest cover. White pine provides additional evergreen cover for wildlife. Their seeds are sought

after by various small mammals and birds. White pine was originally harvested by the colonists and shipped back to England to produce ship masts. The trees that were slated for harvest were marked with a symbol called the "Kings Mark". White pine is a softwood lumber used in making furniture and other woodworking items.



## Stop 39 - Flowering Dogwood

---

Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) provides food for migrating birds in the fall. The berries are readily eaten by songbirds such as robins and wood thrushes. Many people know the flowering dogwood because of its brilliant white flowers in the early spring. Connecticut also has a variety of dogwoods which are shrubs.

## Stop 40 - Burned Woods

---

This area experienced a fire. You can see the charred stems of some of the trees and shrubs. Native American Indians used fire to manage vegetation. Today, it is used sparingly by State foresters in some of our State forests to manage vegetation to improve habitat for wildlife that use young forests.

## Stop 41 - Light Gap In Forest

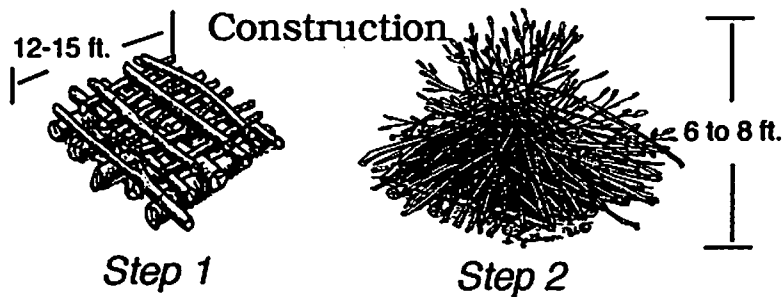
---

Connecticut is about 60 percent forested today. In 1810, it was 75 percent field or pasture. Many of Connecticut forests have re-grown on abandoned farmlands. Forests are influenced by many natural forces such as wind, fire, hurricanes, tornadoes, and ice storms. "Light gaps" allow increased sunlight to penetrate to the forest floor and some plants take advantage of this.

## Stop 42 - Brushpiles

---

Brush piles help wildlife by providing escape cover from predators such as foxes, hawks and owls. They provide important cover for many species of wildlife, including cottontail rabbits, opossum, woodchucks, skunks, chipmunks, frogs and salamanders. These were built from cut down non-native invasive trees by placing large logs at the base and smaller branches and twigs are placed on top.



*Brush Pile Construction. In step 1, the base is constructed with four tiers of logs three to eight inches in diameter (an average of 20 logs). In step 2, the base is covered by brush and smaller branches. Brush piles can also be constructed without a log base.*

## **Acknowledgements**

The City of New Britain Parks and Recreation Department wishes to acknowledge the following for their work on the development of this trail which required the teamwork and dedication of The Friends of Stanley Park, students and faculty from New Britain Sr. High School, Central Connecticut State University, Exercise Right Choice Program, the A.W. Stanley Park work crew as well as residents and other dedicated volunteers and businesses.

We also want to extend our sincere gratitude to the listed organizations for their generous contributions and support:

- US Dept. of Transportation Federal Highway Administration  
"Recreation Trails Program" administered by the State of Connecticut
- Tilcon Connecticut, Inc.
- New Britain Fence Company
- Peter Picone, Urban Wildlife Biologist, DEP Wildlife Division
- CCSU American Society of Engineers
- Connecticut School of Broadcasting



Stanley Park Nature Trail Guide

# Observations and Notes

DEP Wildlife Division, Urban Wildlife Program

**Map of A.W. Stanley Park, New Britain  
Urban Outdoor Nature Trail**

