



Natural Resource Quarterly | Summer 2025



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Newsletter of Natural Resources in the National Capital Region

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Inventory & Monitoring Scientist in Park intern Fernanda Arevalo examines oak leaves



A trailhead sign advises visitors: We Are Watching You! Removing Plants is Illegal!

Theft Prevention—For Plants!

Illegal harvesting of plants for individual use or for sale in medicinal, culinary, and floral markets is a concern for many parks. This year, George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) joined other capital region parks including Catoctin Mountain Park in addressing plant poaching.

After several recent incidents of damage to ramps (a type of native leek; *Allium tricoccum*), GWMP natural resource staff took the steps below to curb resource damage this spring. And all evidence so far indicates that it worked!

- **Trailhead Signs:** Signs posted at trailheads informed visitors that the area was under surveillance and that removing plants from the park is illegal.
- **Website Update:** The park's "Basic Information" page now features a message about "[Protection and Preservation of Natural Resources](#)"
- **Coordination with Park Police:** The District Commander for US Park Police and her staff coordinated with park natural resource staff to visit sites of concern and learn about species targeted during different seasons. In addition to increased patrols during ramp season, they recommended placing signs at trailheads and other park kiosks, which the park aims to implement next year.
- **Trail Camera Monitoring:** Trail cameras were positioned in conspicuous places near ramp patches. They captured images of foxes, raccoons, deer, and a few people well off trail—one of whom had a bag that seemed intended for collecting.

Resource Protection

Federal law, as outlined in 36 CFR 2.1 ([Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 2.1](#)) protects all natural, cultural, and archeological resources on NPS property. Unless otherwise stated in the superintendent's compendium for a specific park (a collection of local regulations which a park superintendent may put in place) foraging for plants and plant parts is prohibited.

The takeaway: Don't collect any material in a park unless regulations specifically allow it! Leave what you find to preserve the biodiversity and beauty of our parks. Everything we find in nature has a role to play in the health of the environment.



Biologist Andrejs Brolis collecting water measurements

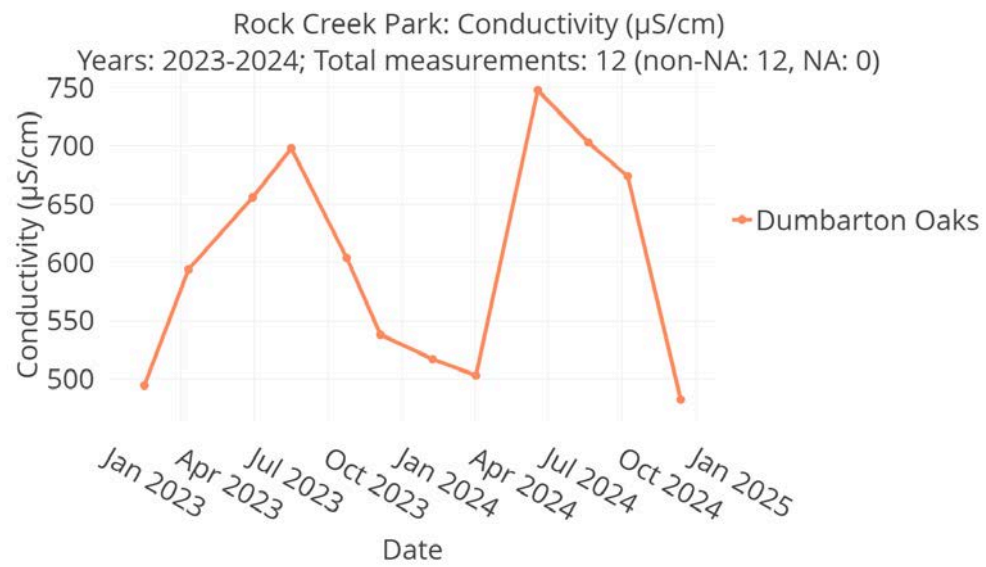
Visualize Park Water Data

Water quality data for National Capital Region (NCR) park streams are now explorable in an interactive [Online Water Quality Visualizer](#)!

This tool updates and expands an earlier visualizer, and allows users to “pour” over water **data for 37 streams across 10 NCR parks collected from 2005 to 2024**. Display options include line graphs, maps, boxplots, and data tables. See photos of water monitoring sites across the seasons. Users can compare water quality parameters (like water temperature and dissolved oxygen levels) in a given stream using “Correlations” or compare several streams in a park by selecting multiple sites under “Time Series” (like all three monitored streams at Catoclin Mountain Park). You can even download plots as image files.

The visualizer displays [published water monitoring data from the NCR Inventory & Monitoring Network](#) and uses R Shiny code ([static copy on Data Store](#); [development version on GitHub](#)).

Special thanks go to NCRN Data Manager Charlie Wainright and Scientist in Parks interns Fernanda Arevalo and Jacob Cohen for their work on quality assurance and quality checking nearly two decades of NCRN water data and for combing through and fixing up the code used in this visualizer.



Beech leaf disease characteristic leaf stripping

Effects of Pests and Pathogens on NCR Forests

Several forest pests and pathogens are active in National Capital Region Network (NCRN) parks. As part of long-term forest vegetation monitoring, the I&M team documents damage caused by emerald ash borer and beech leaf disease, as well as the presence of other pests like spotted lanternfly. Learn what forest vegetation monitoring data fthrough 2024 shows about the spread and effects of these pests and how parks are protecting their forests. **Read more at:** <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/pests-and-pathogens-2024.htm>



Wildlife Biologist Scott Bates (right) talks with Mireya Stirzaker

Farewell Scott Bates, NCR Wildlife Biologist

After 26 years of service to NCR parks, Scott Bates retired on May 30, 2025. Scott has been instrumental in helping parks complete Environmental Impact Statements and Environmental Assessments to manage overabundant white-tailed deer. He helped parks estimate and model annual deer densities and establish annual culling targets. He assisted with long term monitoring of small mammal populations in many of the parks. He worked with and helped represent park needs with national Natural Resource Stewardship and Science (NRSS) staff over the decades and continually brought in subject matter experts as issues arose like chronic wasting disease. Scott remained active and maintained his professional Wildlife Biologist Certification through the Wildlife Society.

I&M Completes Data Packages, Publishes Updated Bird and Amphibian Protocols

The National Capital Region (NCR) Inventory & Monitoring Network has been gathering long-term ecological data in NCR parks for almost two decades. And now ALL data, cumulative through 2024, are available in the NPS Data Store (see list below). The publication of these data packages should help provide quicker responses to data inquiries from parks and researchers:

- [DataStore - NCRN Amphibian Monitoring Data Package - cumulative through 2024](#)
- [DataStore - NCRN Stream Water Quality Data Package - cumulative through 2024](#)
- [DataStore - NCRN Forest and Grassland Bird Monitoring Data Package - cumulative through 2024](#)
- [DataStore - NCRN Forest Vegetation Monitoring Data Package - cumulative through 2024](#)
- [DataStore - NCRN Biological Stream Survey Data Package - cumulative through 2022](#)
- [DataStore - Surface Elevation Table Measurements Along the Atlantic Seaboard, 2025 Cumulative Data Package](#)

Protocols

Over the years of monitoring, some procedures and methods have changed for I&M's monitoring of amphibians and forest and grassland birds. These changes are reflected in revisions to the monitoring protocols:

- Amphibian Monitoring: [DataStore - NCRN amphibian monitoring protocol: Revision 2.0, 2024](#)
 - Landbird Monitoring: [DataStore - NCRN Landbird monitoring protocol: Revision 2.0, 2023](#)
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The beetle 'Euxenus punctatus' LeConte, a new state record for Virginia

207 Beetle Taxa New to GWMP

"An inordinate fondness for beetles."

-Scientist J.B.S. Haldane, when asked if there was anything that could be concluded about God from the study of natural history.

It's clear from a recent publication by Brent Steury, Natural Resources Program Manager at the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP), that Steury has an inordinate fondness for beetles. His recent overview of 20 years of research in the park includes:

- 207 Coleoptera (beetle) taxa in 51 families that are reported for the first time in GWMP
- 24 species reported in published literature for the first time from Virginia in the families Anthribidae (2), Histeridae (15), Melyridae (2), Ptinidae (1), Scirtidae (1), and Staphylinidae (3)
- 1 species, *Habroxenus politus* Valentine (Anthribidae) which had not been previously reported anywhere in over 120 years
- 20-year summary of inventory efforts documenting 1,739 Coleoptera taxa
- 5 species pictured, including 2 of the new state records

Read more in: Steury, B. W. 2025. Two-hundred and seven beetle (Coleoptera) taxa new to a national park in northern Virginia and the District of Columbia with a summary of sampling effort from 1998 through 2023. *Banisteria* 59: 52–81.

Nature News ICYMI

Interdisciplinary regional support ensures protection of park resources (NPS SharePoint May 30, 2025)

NCR Venison Donation 2025 - Region 1: National Capital Region (NPS News Release April 16, 2025)

03-24-2025-White-tailed deer tests positive for Chronic Wasting Disease at Manassas National Battlefield Park (NPS News Release March 24, 2025)

[National Park Service approves DC Water's Piney Branch Tunnel project to improve water quality - Rock Creek Park](#) (NPS News Release March 6, 2025)
[Who manages that park?](#) (NPS SharePoint January 5, 2025)
[DOEE Provides Fish Consumption Advisory Update](#) (DOEE News Release, December 18, 2024)

The Natural Resource Quarterly provides updates on the status of natural resources and science in National Capital Region parks.

[NCR Natural Resources](#) | [Previous Issues](#) | [NCR Inventory & Monitoring](#)