

THE MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL

Trails Stewardship Committee

Spotlight on Howard County: Patuxent River State Park, Annapolis Rock Area

by Katherine O. Rizzo

Patuxent River State Park is located between Rt 27 and Rt 97 in Howard and Montgomery counties. The park contains the upper 12 miles of the Patuxent River watershed before it eventually extends 115 miles to the Chesapeake Bay.

Although there are several parking lots at various trail heads, there are only two permitted for horse trailer parking: one on Annapolis Rock Road in Howard County and one on Georgia Avenue in Montgomery County. This month's column highlights the Annapolis Rock Area in Howard County.

The entire park spreads over 6,700 acres of natural areas and farmlands with 1,579 acres dedicated as a State Wildlands Area. Maryland Wildlands are areas of state-owned land or water that have retained their wilderness character or contain rare or vanishing species of plant or animal life or similar features worthy of preservation.

The Annapolis Rock Area of the park is around 450 acres of mainly wooded areas with some steep hills and river crossings. It is part of the State Wildlands Area. The trail system is multi-use and unfortunately, not very well marked with many unmarked "social" trails that have been created by trail users, wildlife, and volunteers over the years. These trails should be considered "rugged" in nature.

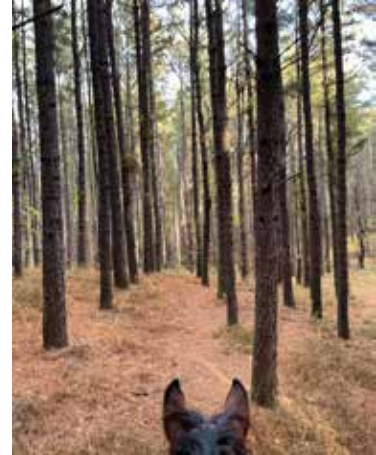
The Maryland Department of Natural Resources, which maintains the park, posts on the park's website that "these trails are not maintained by park staff and should be used at your own risk." The website also indicates that plans are underway to create an official trail system that will replace this network of social trails.

Over 5,000 acres of the park are open to hunting, including archery,

muzzleloader and firearm deer hunting, so please check the Maryland hunting season calendar found here before planning your trail riding outing: https://dnr.maryland.gov/huntersguide/Documents/Hunting_Seasons_Calendar.pdf...

Trailer parking for the Annapolis Rock Area is on Annapolis Rock Road between Hipsley Mill Road and Woodbine Road/MD Rt 94. The lot is a grass field clearing among pine trees and can get muddy after heavy rains. Drive slowly as the entrance can be easily missed. Look for an opening in the tree line and an old metal gate.

For those looking for an easier trail experience, we suggest staying on the main trails through the pine forest at the trailer parking area. There are several easy loops within the pines as well as areas where the trail follows the edge of farmed fields. The park also crosses both Annapolis Rock Road and Hipsley Mill Road with additional trail loops on both sides. Of note, as of mid-October of this year, *Equiery* staffers noted the trails across Hipsley Mill are quite overgrown with thorn bushes and not easy to follow. GPS trail maps are highly encouraged.



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