

# Energize your Mind with a Woodland Stroll



Tired of being cooped up? How about a hike along Fairfax County's picturesque trails? The escape into nature is a perfect way to clear your mind, and there's lots to see this time of year from the birds to the blooms.

"There's a wide variety of wildflowers in bloom in our parks, and the ones around here are remarkable," said Riverbend Park naturalist Julie Gurnee. "In early April, you're sure to see a sea of Virginia bluebells in a variety of colors carpeting the Potomac Heritage Trail."

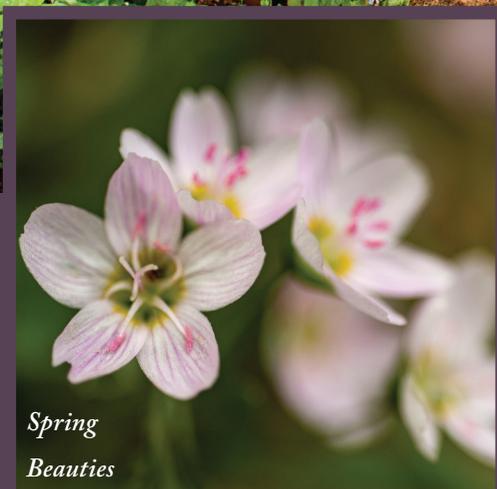
Bluebells aren't the only wildflowers at Riverbend. In early spring, Gurnee says harbinger of spring and spring beauties are among the first to emerge. Some other spring wildflowers include cutleaf toothwort, which is steeped in Native American culture and was used for food and medicine. A perennial favorite is Dutchman's breeches, which gets its name from the shape of the white flower, which looks like a pair of pants or breeches. Some of Riverbend's trees and shrubs will start flowering as well, including the spicebush with its distinctive, tiny yellow blossoms.

"Riverbend's banks are a great habitat for wildflowers, which come up before the trees start to get their leaves," Gurnee said. And if you look skyward, there's a good chance you'll catch a glimpse of our national bird.

"Eagles are nesting about a quarter of a mile upriver from the visitor center," she said enthusiastically. "You can see the nest from the shore, and depending on when you visit, you might be able to see the parents feeding the baby eaglets."

You're bound to encounter other birds setting up their summer homes along the trail, too, and you might even spot turtles, snakes and other woodland creatures. They're all hopeful signs that summer is right around the corner and the best of times are yet to come.

The Park Authority offers a wide variety of naturalist-led walks along park trails. To find a program near you, turn to the Nature section.



*Spring  
Beauties*



*Dutchman's  
Breeches*