



## Mount Loretto Unique Area

6450 Hylan Boulevard  
Staten Island, NY 10309

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) manages the 145 upland

and 49 underwater acres of Mt. Loretto Unique Area.

It includes an unusual mix of hardwood forest, grasslands, freshwater wetlands, tidal wetlands and coastal marine habitats. In addition, Mt. Loretto has the only red clay bluffs in New York City.

For educational opportunities at Mt. Loretto, contact:

Environmental Educator  
718-482-7287  
mtlorett@gw.dec.state.ny.us

For more information about DEC, contact:  
www.dec.state.ny.us

NYSDEC - Region 2 Office  
47-40 21<sup>st</sup> Street  
Long Island City, NY 11101  
718-482-4900  
FAX: 718-482-4502

Line art courtesy of Robert Savannah of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, except scallop and tracks  
Cover photo USFWS

Printed on recycled paper



# Mt. Loretto's Wetlands Interpretive Trail



Great Egret (left) and Snowy Egret

## Open Dawn To Dusk

New York State  
Department of Environmental Conservation

### Mt. Loretto's Wetlands Interpretive Trail

Mt. Loretto's Wetlands Interpretive Trail—open from dawn until dusk—is a mile-long trail marked by posts identified by number to correspond with this brochure.

The self-guided trail will increase your awareness, appreciation and understanding of the animals, plants and ecology of this beautiful area. Be prepared for a fairly steep climb between posts #3 and #6.

**Before You Go: Caution!** Poison ivy and ticks are community members here. Remember the old adage: **"Leaflets Three, Let it Be."** Poison ivy grows on the ground, as a shrub, and as a hairy vine on trees. After you finish your walk, check yourself and your companions for ticks. **Avoid poison ivy and help us to protect nesting grasslands birds by staying on the marked trails.** Thank you.

### 1 - Variety of Birds

Many bird species can be seen in the various habitats that make Mt. Loretto a unique area. With grasslands to your right and a hidden freshwater wetland on your left, listen for the rattling voice of the belted kingfisher or the "Intruder!" call of the eastern kingbird.

Watch for the yellow and black American goldfinch or the grey and white northern mockingbird as they pass overhead.



Northern Mockingbird

Note: Between Post #1 and Post #2, there are two unnumbered posts along the trail.

### 2 - Tidal Wetlands

Here you begin to see a transition from grasslands to wetlands, creating a tidal wetland where land and sea meet. The wetlands are home to a wide variety



Bay Scallop

of plants and wildlife. Because of abundant water, wetlands are the most productive plant communities on earth.

Mt. Loretto's wetlands are important resting areas for migratory birds, which feed on the multitude of invertebrates and fish present.

The wetlands also serve as nurseries for many commercial baitfish, such as Atlantic silversides and mummichogs, and shellfish like oysters, clams and scallops.

At Post #4, you can view the entire tidal wetland complex.

Muskrat and Tracks



### 3 - Pond Life

This freshwater pond can be found on maps dated as early as 1911. Frogs, salamanders, turtles, many bird species

and creatures so small they can't be seen with the naked eye all live here. Can you spot insects called water striders on the surface of the pond or find muskrat trails leading into the pond?

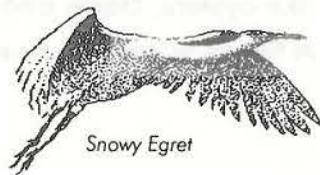
### 4 - Overview of Tidal Wetland

Enjoy a great view of the entire tidal wetland here. Most native plants have been overrun by phragmites—the tall, reed-like grass you see. Tidal wetlands make up approximately 5.4 acres of the Mt. Loretto Unique Area and are fed by an inlet that flows into the eastern section of the property. These wetlands contribute to the marine food chain, provide habitat for wildlife and help to control flood waters and stormwater runoff.

To get to Post #5, continue on this path and go a short distance into the woods. Watch your step!

### 5 - Tidal Inlet

As you emerge from the woods, you will find a stream cutting across your path.



Snowy Egret

This is actually the inlet that connects the tidal wetland to Raritan Bay. Saltwater from the bay passes in and out of the inlet with the rise and fall of the tide, so the inlet may be dry at low tide. The course of the water changes with the force of the wind and waves from the bay.

From this spot, retrace your route to just beyond Post #3 and head uphill to the left. This path will take you to Post #6 and the remainder of the Wetlands Trail.

### 6 - Scenic Vista of Mt. Loretto

Take a moment to catch your breath, and then turn around for a spectacular view of Mt. Loretto. You can see most of the different habitats on the property from here. Can you envision what this site looked like 100 years ago when it was the most productive farm on Staten Island? Imagine keeping the lighthouse lit for the safety of ships passing through Raritan Bay.



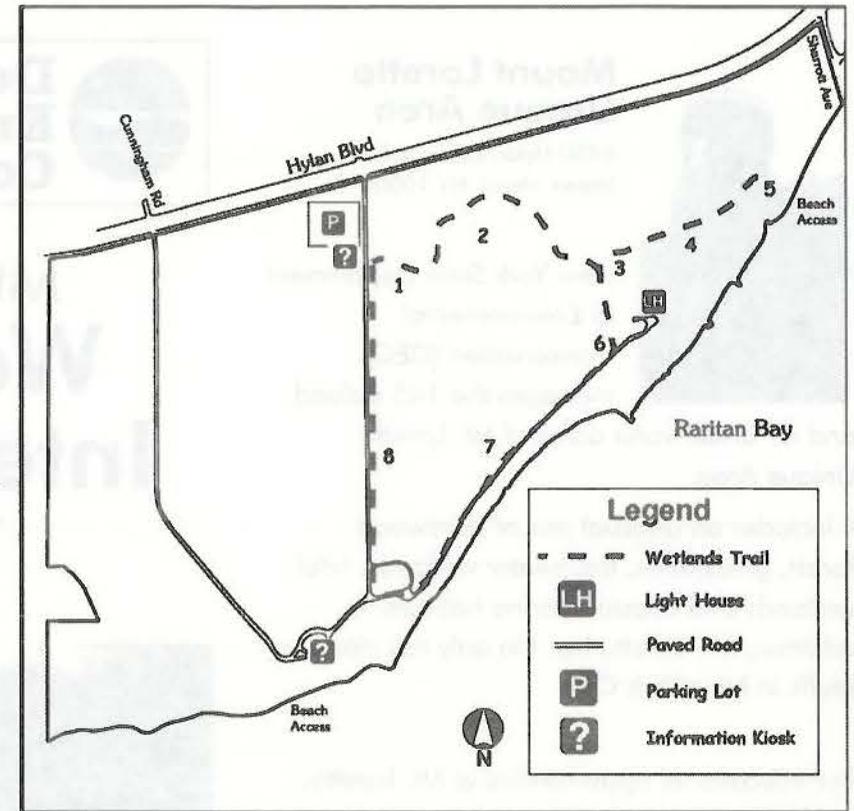
Bird Watching

### 7 - Raritan Bay

A bay is a body of water partially enclosed by land with a wide opening allowing access to the sea. You can see red and green buoys mark the shipping channel through Raritan Bay. These guide ship captains to the deepest and safest sections of water so they do not run aground. From boat or shore, anglers fish here for striped bass, bluefish and porgies.

### 8 - Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are landlocked ponds created by runoff water that collects in low-lying areas. These ponds may hold water most of the year but usually dry up in late summer. Look ahead and to the right to see whether the pool—one of Mt. Loretto's larger and longer-lasting vernal pools—is wet or dry.



### End of the Trail

Having completed your walk on the trail, follow the paved road down the hill and past the information kiosk to the parking lot. We hope you enjoyed yourself and that you will return to explore more of the Mt. Loretto Unique Area.

### Mt Loretto Unique Area

As one of the most southerly natural areas in New York State, the Mt. Loretto Unique Area might be the state's first spring resting and feeding habitat for northbound bird and butterfly migrants, and last in the fall for those that are southbound. Acres of tidal and freshwater wetlands at Mt. Loretto provide Staten Island with wildlife habitat, watershed protection and open space for education and recreation. Here, both northern and southern species of plants and animals thrive, offering yet another indication of the area's uniqueness.