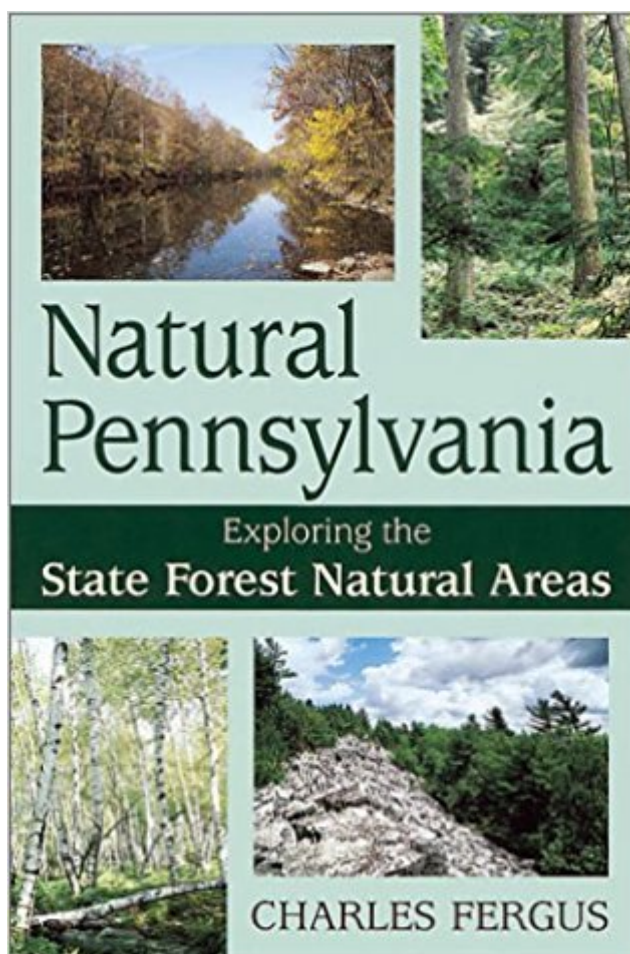


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Natural Pennsylvania: Exploring The State Forest Natural Areas



Synopsis

Throughout Pennsylvania, within the state forest system, are 61 officially designated Natural Areas, each offering a bit of wildness deemed worthy of protection: rare bird breeding sites, stands of old growth trees, fragile wetlands, ice age remnants, mineral rich mountainsides. To experience firsthand the unique features of each natural area, nature writer Charles Fergus spent a year visiting all 61. In this information filled book, he reports on what he found, offering readers a guided tour of some of natural Pennsylvania's most distinctive places. He also provides information on how to visit the areas, each of which is open to the public. Includes a description of a yearlong tour of some of the state's most interesting and scenic wild features.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Charles Fergus is the author of numerous books on nature and the outdoors, including *Wildlife of Pennsylvania* (0811728994), *Thornapples* (081172946X), *Swamp Screamer*, *A Rough Shooting Dog*, and *Summer at Little Lava*. He lives in central Pennsylvania.

The information provided in this book gives the reader easy access to information about Pennsylvania's Natural Areas. The author gives specific directions for how to get to each natural site.

just what my daughter who recently moved to Philly wanted!

This is a very enjoyable and informative guide to the 61 natural areas in Pennsylvania, which are usually far from the beaten path of the cities, major highways, and even well-known hiking trails. Fergus spent a whole year personally exploring every one of these areas, and proves it with his first-hand descriptions. Therefore this book is based on real experience, and was not written by someone who has never been to the places they're writing about (such as the error-prone Longstreet Highroad Guide to the Pennsylvania Mountains, which I can't totally recommend). As an extensive hiker in PA myself, I've been to some of these natural areas and can attest to Fergus' accuracy. He focuses on the flora, fauna, and topography of these natural areas, and tips on how to get to the more remote ones that may not even be accessible by trail, all in lively prose that walks the fine line between poetic and overly sentimental. Fergus tends to avoid the bad news on some of these areas, especially pollution, which would make the chapters on Little Tinicum Island (near Philly) and Sheets Island Archipelago (almost within sight of Three Mile Island) more informative; plus the complete absence of maps is a problem for the larger natural areas. But still, this book greatly succeeds in making the outdoorsy Pennsylvania fan yearn to visit these hidden secrets.

The landscape of Pennsylvania has endured such intensive logging, mining, and urbanization over the years that it's a wonder any wild places still exist within its borders. But they do, and Charles Fergus has hiked in all 61 of them. The natural areas he's talking about here are located in state forests and have few recreational amenities, so they're open only to foot traffic. Habitats range from the tidal waters around Little Tinicum Island in the Delaware River to the forested crest and tower at the top of Mount Davis in Somerset County, the highest point in the Commonwealth. Many of these areas gained governmental protection within our lifetime, and I'm sure other natives will learn about sites they never heard of before. Basic road atlases don't usually acknowledge these places. Fergus provides detailed directions for access, writes about the uniqueness of each site, and recommends the best seasons for visits. His commentary is accompanied by black and white photos and may include smatterings of geology, history, anthropology, botany, and zoology. Wildlife ranges from bears and bobcats to salamanders and the tiny critters they feast on. There are bird migration routes, sites for butterfly aficionados, many tall trees and rare plants. A path falls onto land where chips of indigenous tools can still be found, and another turns onto a trail made more recently by an illegal all-terrain vehicle. A map, list of resources, and list of forestry addresses contribute to the usefulness of this guide. Scanning just a few pages will have you reaching for your boots and daypack in no time.

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