

An Outdoor Classroom

Rugar Woods is a wonderful educational resource for SUNY Plattsburgh students, as well as the greater Plattsburgh community. The trail system is an approximately one mile interactive loop.

Multi-Use Trail

Many SUNY Plattsburgh students use these woods for independent research, which includes avian, amphibian, invertebrate, mammal, forest, and wildflower surveys. Faculty explore the woods as an



outdoor lab to provide students with nature-based experiential learning activities.

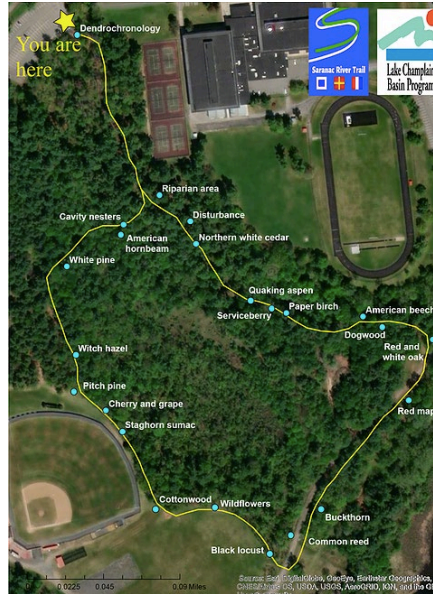
Cross-country athletes navigate the Rugar Woods trail system during their training and races.



Recreational enthusiasts hike this trail with their pets and those who enjoy a good game of Frisbee golf.



Rugar Woods Interpretive Trail



Project made possible by funders:

SUNY Plattsburgh's Campus Committee for Environmental Responsibility's (CCER)

"Your Green Fee at Work"

Lake Champlain Basin Program's Champlain Valley Natural Heritage Program (CVNHP)



Thanks to our AWESOME students!

Brochure credits:
Carlee Koritkowski (Class of 2020)

Trail Origin Story

Rugar Woods nature trail began as many things do, with a student and his professor. CEES graduate **Joshua Domenico (Class of 2011)** used his GIS and trail steward skills to map and mark our trail system. **Jennifer Krech (Class of 2012)** interpreted the trail with beautifully intricate watercolor paintings. Faculty from SUNY Plattsburgh's Center for Earth and Environmental Science (CEES)(Drs. Mary Alldred, Danielle Garneau, Mark Lesser) and Biology annotated the nature signs and created a detailed wayfinding map. **Stephanie Gray (Class of 2019)** developed a website to supplement trail signage and enhanced signs with QR codes to make accessing this information easy for those in our community with smart devices. SUNY Plattsburgh's Maintenance and Operations staff installed these signs ensuring they will remain for your enjoyment for years to come.

ENJOY your hike!



Riparian Area

Rugar Woods is situated adjacent to the Saranac River in the town of

Plattsburgh.

Rugar Woods trail can be found behind the SUNY Plattsburgh campus field house. The nature trail largely follows a

stream, making it a riparian ecosystem transitioning between terrestrial and aquatic habitats. The unique organisms inhabiting riparian areas provide ecosystem services such as maintenance of water quality and flood control. Disturbances in riparian habitat, such as land-use change, as well as wind and ice storms can alter the ecosystem services.



Mixed Forest

Rugar Woods is diverse in woody and herbaceous plant species. Trees are both softwood (conifer/evergreen) and hardwood (deciduous).

Coniferous trees have needle like leaves, and reproduce using cones. Here, you can find coniferous trees like Northern White Cedar, Pitch Pine, and White Pine.



Deciduous trees are broad, seasonally color-shifting leaves lost in fall. Quaking Aspen, American Beech, Dogwood, Red and White

Oak, Buckthorn, Black Locust, Black Cherry, and Red Maple are common.

Spring

Ephemeral wildflowers, like Hepatica emerge taking advantage of the leafless forest canopy. The early delicate flowers of Serviceberry become visible, attracting pollinators including the Common Eastern Bumblebee and the Monarch Butterfly. Over-wintering insects, such as the Golden-rod Gall Fly emerge. By mid-April migratory birds, like the



Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Yellow-rumped Warbler are returning to the region.

Amphibians, such as the Northern Leopard Frog begin their migration from terrestrial to aquatic habitats, where they will breed and deposit eggs. Wood frogs resume activity following a period of supercooling (chilling body fluids below freezing point without becoming solid) and venture to vernal pools (ephemeral ponds) which fill with snowmelt.

Summer

The woods are the quite active during this time, as the warm weather brings a plethora of resources for wildlife. Deciduous trees such as Oaks, Maples, and Aspen are



in full leaf. Insects are pollinating flowers, soft mast fruits like cherries and grapes are ripening for bird and mammal seed predators. Summer brings bounty to many, but as resources dwindle species compete. Community interactions such as competition, predation (one species benefits, the other is harmed) and mutualism (both species benefit) shapes the diversity we see in these woods.



Fall

Wildflowers like the New England Aster and goldenrod are found along the trail in canopy gaps, meadows, and streamside. In the forest, Red Maple and Quaking Aspen turn deep red and bright yellow, respectively before abscission (leaf drop) in late fall. Few flowers will remain later in fall, with the exception of Witch-hazel which dazzles the mid-canopy with stringy yellow flowers. Migratory birds begin their winter departures, while Eastern chipmunks, cache seeds.



Winter

Conifer stands provide winter refuge for residents including small mammals, while winter-active tree squirrels such as Gray and the Red squirrels build dreys (tree nests) in the crooks of tree branches.



Some mammals, including the northern short-tailed shrew and deer mice remain active tunneling through the subnivian (zone between the snow and ground surface). A number of birds are also winter residents, including the Pileated Woodpecker and the Northern Cardinal, our mascot **BURGHY**.



To learn more about our the flora and fauna along the trail visit the Rugar Woods trail website:

