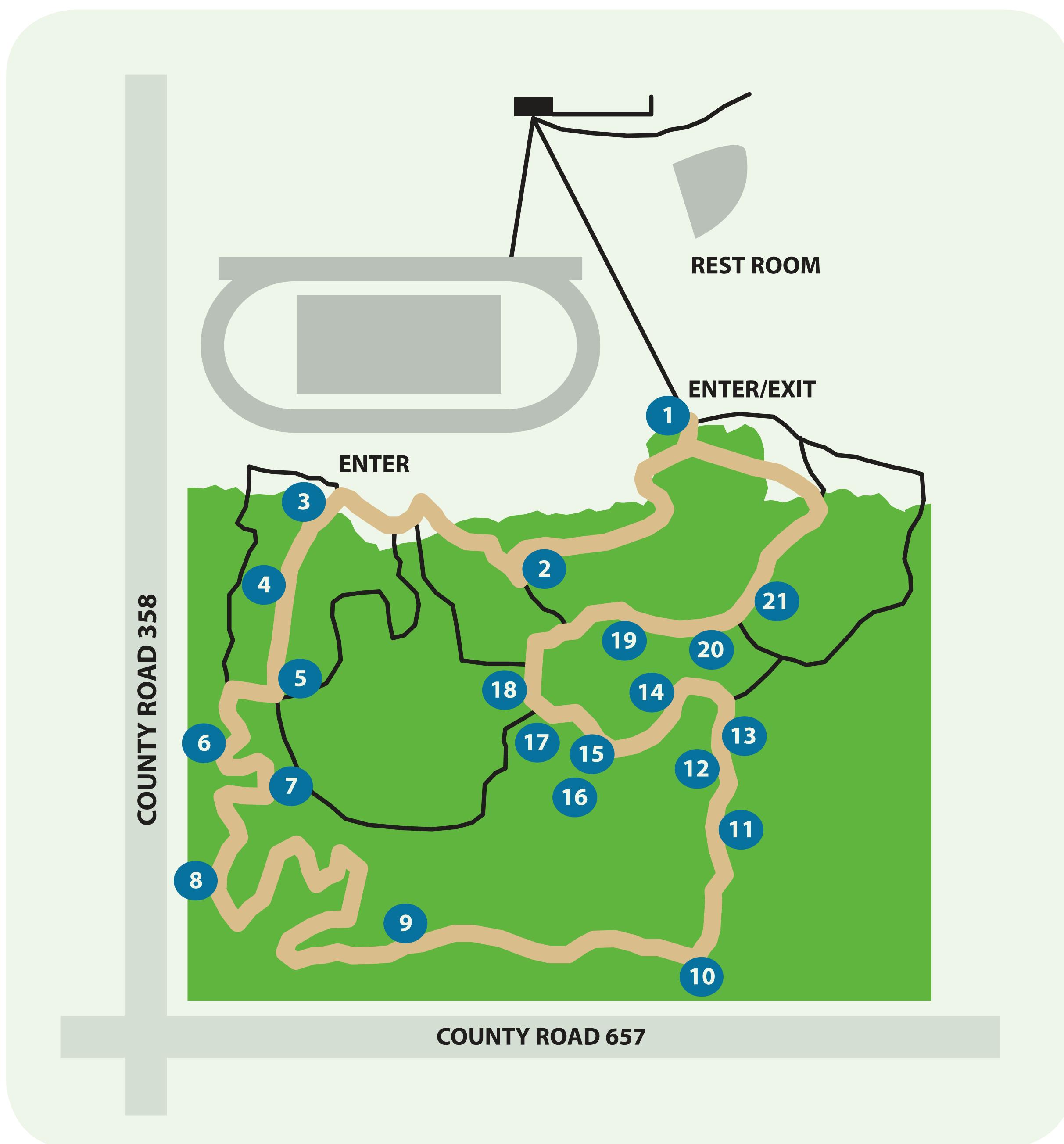


WILLIAM STRONG ARBORETUM AND NATURE TRAIL

Est. 2006



POINTS OF INTEREST

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The William Strong Trail is one of many in the woods. Deadwood logs are stacked at trail intersections and indicate die path to follow. The trail is rigorous, and includes a change in elevation of approximately 100 feet over it's 0.8 mile length. Some obstructions (fallen logs and boulders) remain in the trail as cross country course obstacles. Be sure to look for the posts with numbered signs that highlight twenty points of interest in our wood-lot Please stay on the path, take your time, and enjoy the trail.



William Strong was a former Ecology and Biology Teacher at Lawton Community Schools 1969-1975. He was instrumental organizing the Lawton Involvement Future Environment (LIFE CLUB). Mr. Strong was the Advisor of the Lawton Ecology Club 1970-1975. The Lawton Ecology Club received National, State and local environmental awards. The LIFE CLUB was chosen by the Ecology Council of America in cooperation with Keep America Beautiful as the number one Ecology Club in the state of Michigan. Pepsi-Cola sponsored the LIFE CLUB to spend a three-day youth environmental seminar at Catoctin Mountains Park, Md.

In 2006 Lawton Science Teachers, in partnership with Researchers from Michigan State University, attempted to increase the focus on environmental literacy in Lawton's K-12 science curriculum. A nature trail (William Strong Arboretum and Nature Trail). The nature trail would be used by students, teachers, and Lawton Community. The nature trail highlights twenty-one points of interests and provides facts about various plants and natural features. Hikers can be provided a guide on the Lawton School Website (About Us) and the map can be used via cell phones. (Less Paper=More Trees). Students and community members have a place to enjoy nature and learn about nature, but also see and experience it, will make a lasting impression on them.

The youth of today will be the next environmental stewards to enhance awareness to protect and preserve our planet...
—William Strong—President of Keep Michigan Beautiful

WILLIAM STRONG ARBORETUM AND NATURE TRAIL

Est. 2006

POINTS OF INTEREST

1 Poison Ivy

BEWARE!!! Throughout die walk there are numerous areas where poison ivy grows on the ground and on the trees! Do not touch any plant that you are not familiar with especially if it has a three leaf formation. Please stay on the path at all times to minimize the risk of coming in contact with this plant.

2 Windfalls

In this area many of the trees have been blown down in what is referred to as a windfall. This may seem like a bad thing but actually it is a normal and healthy process called succession. Every woodland area goes through a series of stages in which different species of trees and other plants dominate it. As trees die or are blown down they make holes in die canopy, which allow a new tree to grow into its place. Since this tree may not be the same as its predecessor, this can add diversity to the forest.

3 Kalamazoo Moraine

You are standing on the edge of the Kalamazoo Moraine. This feature was created during die most recent ice age, about 10,000 years ago. It was deposited as the last continental glacier began to melt back and retreat to the north. You can follow die moraine from the city of Kalamazoo to Mattawan, then to Lawton, and south of Decatur to Cassopolis. As you drive along Valley Road toward Decatur you are traveling along the foot of die moraine.

The large boulder near this post was also left here by the last glacier. Boulders such as these are called glacial erratics. They were actually part of rock formations far to our north, sometimes as far away as the Upper Peninsula and Canada. As the glaciers advanced southward they carried all kinds of earth materials in die ice, dropping diem far from their origin when the ice melted.

4 Cathedral

The area you are about to go through is comprised mainly of white pines and is one of the most beautiful areas in this walk. The enormity of it makes you feel like you are passing through a giant Cathedral. The trunks of die trees seem like huge columns leading up to a high vaulted ceiling adorned with bright patches of sky and light. (More information about white pines is available later in your walk).

5 Mulberry/ Wild Grapes

Mulberry trees provide berries for wildlife in the woods and generally are found where there is lots of sunlight. Mulberry leaves come in three different shapes and the berries ripen to reddish- black berries. Grape vines also grow throughout the woods. Although the wild grape is native to Michigan, the grape vines in our woods may have started as cultivated grapes and were later left to spread on their own. They are an important food source for birds and wild animals, such as mice, chipmunks, squirrels, raccoons, opossums, red fox, and deer, all of which can be residents of the woods. Look for tracks!

6 Multi-flora Rose

These roses are an invasive species often found along paths and edges of woods. They overtake open fields out-competing other species like sumac and sassafras. Their dowers are clumps of white blossoms and seeds occur as bunches of red berries called rose hips. Rose hips provide food in the fall and winter for many animals in the woods.

7 Jack Pines

This tree is a Jack Pine, which is a tree native to Michigan. The jack Pine is very important and unique because it is the only tree under which the rare Kirtland's warbler will nest. Kirtland's Warblers are small birds with blue-grey backs and yellow stomachs. These birds winter in the Bahamas and nest in Michigan. They are very picky and will nest only in jack Pines, which are between Eve and twenty feet high, and in a full forest of 300 acres or more. While you probably will never see one of these birds in this particular tree, it is a good example of how plants and animals can have strong relationships.

8 Highest Elevation

You are standing on the highest elevation in our woods, 940 feet above sea level. The highest elevation (1060 feet) in Van Buren county is only a little south and east of this spot near the intersection of CR 358 (Third Street) and 26th Street.

9 Original Trees

This oak tree is one of the original trees on the hillside; across the road you will also see original maple trees. Vegetation in this part of the county was originally an Oak Savanna which meant that there were full grown oak trees with open canopy allowing for grasses to growth underneath the trees.

10 Norway Spruce

These Norway spruce are non-native trees. Notice how limbs grow all die way to the ground providing protection for small animals from predators and weather. If these grew in your yard Norway spruce would provide privacy for your home, just as they do for animals in the woods.

11 Snags

Look at the woodpecker holes on this snag! Snags are standing dead wood that provide food for insects, holes for birds to nest and places for small animals like raccoons to have their young. These big holes were pecked by the Pileated Woodpecker, one of die largest woodpeckers in North America. The Pileated is just returning to this area of Michigan; look for a large black and white bird with a red crest.

12 Invasive species

The autumn olive is a good example of an invasive species. Invasive species are non-native organisms that have taken over a habitat. In order for a species to be invasive and successfully take over an area, they must be able to mature and reproduce quickly. In -this way they are able to overwhelm and out-compete native species. Other examples of invasive species found in this area include the following; the spotted knapweed, the buckthorn and the multilora rose. Also notice the Club Moss growing at the foot of the bush, they usually grow in deep shade where it's damp. These moss plants could be fort}- years old!

13 Sugar Maple

The tree you are looking at is a Sugar Maple. It will be part of the climax community if the woods are left undisturbed. Sugar Maples provide sap in die spring from which maple syrup is made. Historically honey and maple syrup were the only sweeteners for settlers to use in cooking.

14 Man's plan vs. Nature's plan

At one point in time this whole area was bare of all but a few trees. Grasses and possibly some shrubs were strewn across the slopes of this hill. To prevent erosion some helpful citizens decided to plant native trees along the contours of the hill. These trees preserved the structure of die hill and eventually allowed more trees to find homes on these slopes. The rows of original trees can still be viewed today by anyone who cares to look. Without these trees it would have taken much longer for such growth to occur on this hill.

15 Recycled Plastic Bench

The fifth grade class (graduating 2013) provided this bench for a well-deserved respite at the top of the hill. In the future this area will hopefully become an outdoor classroom to teach lessons about ecology.

16 Black Oak History Tree

This tree is 200 years old and would place the tree growth in 1800's. This tree is unique because it was involved in a Michigan "Blowout". A Blowout is when sand covers vegetation. This tree is half buried in sand.



05/20/17

17 Eastern White Pine

The oldest White Pines in our woods are perhaps 60 years old. The towering White Pine was chosen as the state tree of Michigan on March 4,1955. The white pine was the focal point of one of Michigan's earliest industries—lumbering. White pine, a lightweight soft wood with few knots resisted warping, grew in pure stands, and proved to be long lasting and strong. Theses characteristics made it a perfect tree to harvest for building materials in the 1800s. Michigan's rivers made for easy access to the Great Lakes. Many of today's cities along the Great Lakes began as lumbering towns. When the white pines were gone, lumbermen turned to the hardwoods like oak and maple for flooring, the carriage industry, and early cars.

18 Beech Tree

This little Beech tree will one day be part of the climax community in the woods. Beech trees have distinctive gray bark that remains smooth. The leaves turn almost white in winter and stay on the tree until spring. The hard wood is prized for making durable wooden objects, such as a judge's gavel.

19 Black Oak

The Black Oak has many dead branches near the bottom because of the shade around the tree, if out in the open leaves would cover the tree from top to bottom. Black Oaks have dimorphic leaves, in other words, the shape of the leaves change as you go up the tree. Leaves at the top of the tree will have very indented lobes where as leaves near the bottom of the tree will be very broad and the lobes are hardly noticed.

20 Sassafras

Sassafras trees, like the Mulberry, have leaves in three shapes, oval, mitten, and tri-lobed. The roots of these trees were used to make sarsaparilla, the original root beer. This area of the woods provides the perfect spot for squirrels to build summer nests—look for the large clumps of dried leaves tucked in the branches.

21 Black Cherry

Black Cherry trees grow along with sassafras when a woodland area is first being established. Later they give way to Oak and Hickory trees. Black Cherries provide food for small animals and birds.