Monmouth County Park System

Clayton Park

Upper Freehold, NJ

www.MonmouthCountyParks.com

Welcome to Clayton Park

This scenic 450-acre tract in Upper Freehold is located amidst the rolling farmland of western Monmouth County. A tranquil, wooded property, Clayton Park is known for its stately stands of mature trees. Nearly 7 miles of forested trails are a popular destination for bicyclists, hikers, and equestrians.

Park History & Environs

The Park System purchased the first 176 acres of this park in 1978 from farmer Paul Clayton and his daughter Thelma. Mr. Clayton avoided modern farming methods and worked the fields by hand with his five horses growing potatoes, tomatoes, grain and corn until 1971 when he retired at age 87. After resisting offers from people interested in purchasing the property to harvest the trees, he sold his farm to the Park System for a price below market value. The remaining acres were acquired over time from local landowners.

The area surrounding Clayton Park retains its historic charm. Pass through the winding main street of quaint Imlaystown to glimpse an authentic 18th-19th century mill village with narrow roads, closely spaced houses and old-fashioned landmarks.

Activities

The most outstanding feature here is the natural setting–the trails, creek, pond (pictured), fields and forest. Enjoy fishing, bicycling, horseback riding, hiking and nature activities such as birding or tree and flower appreciation.

Clayton Park Activity Center

The former Imlaystown Elementary School (built in 1931) was acquired by the Park System in 2015. It is now open when arts and recreation programs are scheduled. See the *Parks & Programs Guide* for more info.

Protect Your Parks

The Park System preserves and manages natural and cultural resources on more than 17,000 acres of land in Monmouth County. Protecting water quality, eliminating invasive plant species, and promoting healthy wildlife populations are just a few objectives. Please help protect the park by leaving flowers, plants, animals, and other features as you found them; adhering to the posted park rules; using designated containers for trash, recyclables, and pet waste; and keeping your pets leashed. Possessing or consuming alcohol beverages is not permitted.

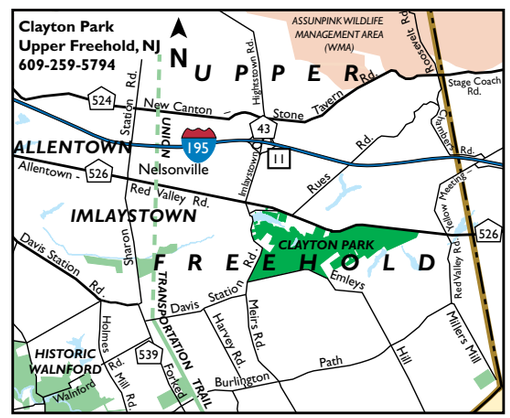
An overabundance of white-tailed deer in and around the parks is threatening the health of native plant and animal species. Portions of Clayton Park may be open for deer hunting during some or all of the State regulated hunting seasons. All hunting areas are clearly posted. For more information, visit **www.monmouthcountyparks.com** or call 732-842-4000, ext. 4312.

Park Hours

Clayton Park is open every day of the year free of charge. Hours: 7 am - dusk.

Avoiding Tick Bites

Ticks that may cause illness can be active year-round. Take precautions: use insect repellent; wear light-colored clothes, long sleeve shirt tucked into pants/pants tucked into socks; check yourself for ticks during and after park visits; shower soon after being outdoors. To minimize contact keep to formal trails, walk in the center; stay away from tall grasses, brush/shrubs, leaf litter, branches and woodland edges next to lawns and athletic fields. Protect your pets. Read more at **www.cdc.gov/ticks.**



For More Information

Call 732-842-4000, ext. 4312 (TTY-TDD 711) if you would like more information about Monmouth County's 43 parks and golf courses. Or, visit us online at **www.monmouthcountyparks.com.**

From the Garden State Parkway (North or South): Exit 98 to Interstate 195 West.

From Interstate 195 East or West: Take Exit 11 (Imlaystown/Cox's Corner). Westbound, turn left; Eastbound, turn right onto Route 43 (Imlaystown/ Hightstown Road). At first intersection, turn left onto Route 526, then immediately right to continue on Route 43 (Davis Station Road). Follow for 1 mile. Turn left onto Emley's Hill Road and follow to park on left.

From Northern Points: Follow Route 34, 79, 18 or 9 South to Route 537 West to Interstate 195 West. Follow directions above.

Monmouth County
Board of County Commissioners
Board of Recreation Commissioners

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Environment & Wildlife

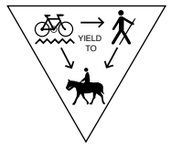
Clayton Park protects a high quality forest of mature trees with a pronounced understory of herbs, shrubs and saplings, and a diverse assembly of animals, especially birds. Notable tree species include ash, beech, birch, black oak, and tulip poplar. Many ferns such as grape, Christmas and hay-scented line the trails under spicebush and viburnums in the shrub layer.

Clayton Park is one of the best spring wildflower sites in the Park System. Look for jack-in-the-pulpit (right), trout lily, spring beauty, wild geranium and the rarer trillium and wild ginger during April and May. The bright hepatica flower (*Hepatica nobilis*) pictured on the cover is a welcome contrast to the forest floor colors of early spring.

Also, note how the plant life changes on trails near the creek, and keep your eyes peeled for bird species such as the wood thrush and red-tailed hawk.

Trails

A favorite spot for all-terrain bicyclists, Clayton Park offers approximately 7 miles of rugged, mostly moderate trails for outdoor enthusiasts. Please obey the rules of protocol for right of way on the trails: **bicyclists yield to all other trail users, and pedestrians yield to equestrians**. Stay on the marked trails, plan your route and take a trail map with you.



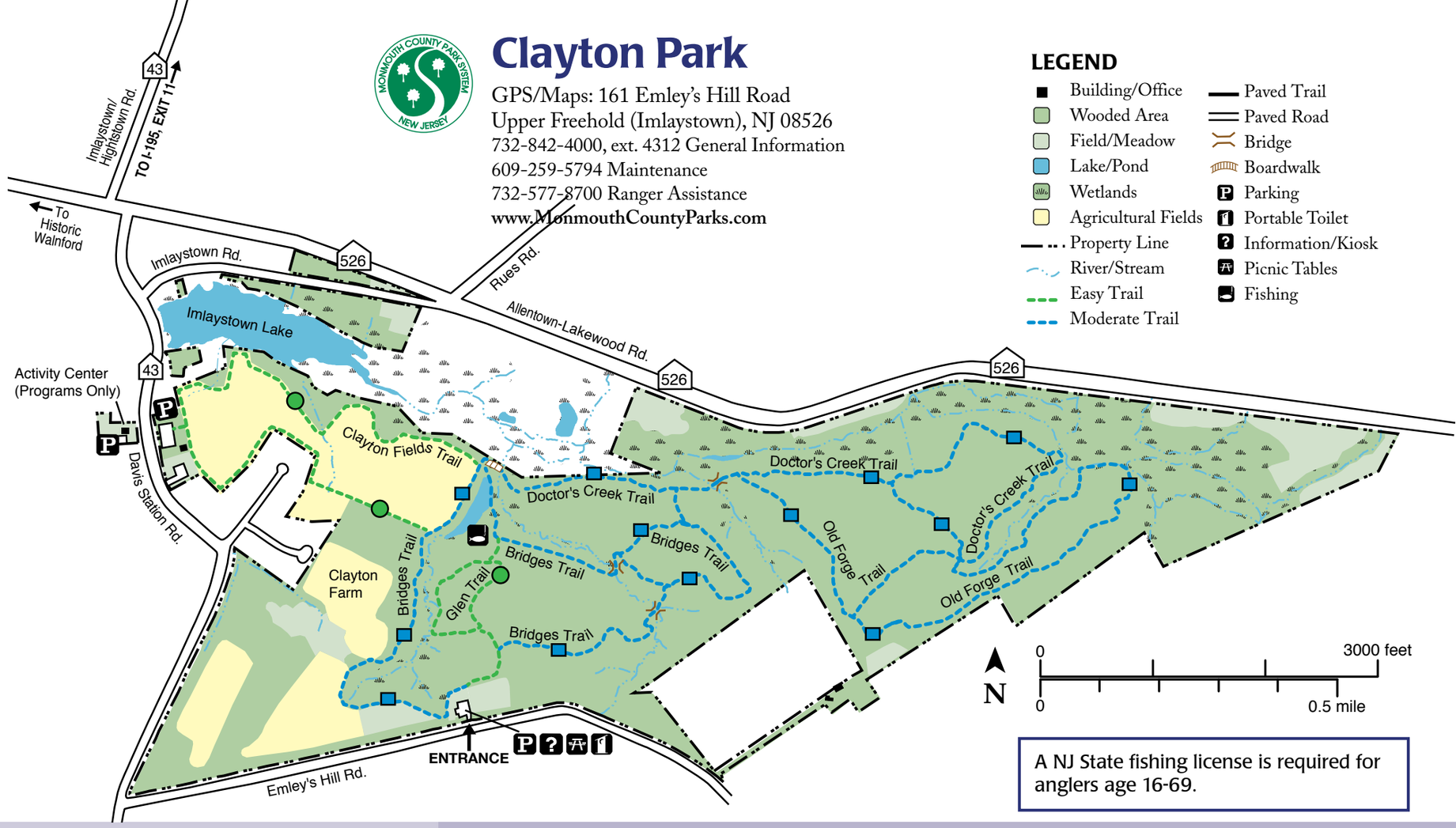
NOTE: At a brisk pace, it takes approximately 20 minutes to walk 1.0 mile.

Trails may be slippery due to seasonal conditions.

Pets must be leashed at all times.

Clayton Park

GPS/Maps: 161 Emley's Hill Road
Upper Freehold (Imlaystown), NJ 08526
732-842-4000, ext. 4312 General Information
609-259-5794 Maintenance
732-577-8700 Ranger Assistance
www.MonmouthCountyParks.com



A NJ State fishing license is required for anglers age 16-69.

Trail Standards

Easy: short,maintained or paved trails intended for casual walking; may have some grade changes/obstructions (eg. tree roots)

Moderate: longer trails or trails with grades/obstructions intended for hiking, equestrians and all-terrain bicycles (may be suitable for some walkers and runners)

Challenging: long, more primitive trails, with steep grades/obstructions; intended for hardy experienced hikers, equestrians, and all-terrain cyclists (none at this site)

Trail Key

Glen Trail - Take this 0.7 mile (1.1 km) loop trail with rolling hills (some steep) for a shady trek through the heart of Clayton forest.

Bridges Trail - This 1.8 mile (2.6 km) trail offers a diverse hike along field edges and through forest. A picturesque pond, boardwalk and bridges provide visual interest.

Access to the following trails requires traveling some distance along Bridges Trail.

Clayton Fields Trail - Travel along this 1.4 mile (2.3km) mowed field perimeter for a different, more open view of the park. Some wet areas.

Doctor's Creek - This 1.6 mile (2.6 km) trail provides great water and wetland views from the forest as it winds along Doctor's Creek, which drains into the Delaware River.

Old Forge Trail - A 1.5 mile (2.4 km) trail that explores older parts of this beautiful forest. It takes it's name from an old forge previously located on the property.