

**PUBLIC USE**

Cattus Island County park is open to the public from dawn to dusk every day. We encourage public activities that do not impact on the conservation-natural area designation of the Park. No special permission is needed to come to Cattus Island during regular open hours except that we require all groups to register in advance. We encourage all visitors to stop and see the exhibits at the Environmental Center prior to their use of the Park grounds. We aspire to meet all ADA standards and discriminate against no persons. If you need special assistance, please call the Cooper Environmental Center prior to your visit.

**GROUP USE**

All groups must register in advance of their visit to Cattus Island County Park. Due to the nature of the facility, we encourage Naturalist-guided tours for all groups. We advise group leaders wishing to have a guided tour of Cattus Island to make arrangements well in advance of their desired visit.



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Prepared and Printed by the  
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**FACILITIES**

- Cooper Environmental Center ♿
- Public Picnic Area ♿
- Six Miles of Marked Trails
- 1500 Foot Boardwalk ♿
- Dr. V. Eugene Vivian Library ♿
- An Extended Viewing Deck to the edge of the saltmarsh ♿
- Pedestrian Bayshore Access
- Osprey Nesting Poles
- Bay Beach for Seining
- Tree & Shrub Identification Loop ♿

**TRAIL MILEAGES**

	Maritime Forest Loop	1.7 miles
	Swamp Crossing	.4 miles
	Cedar Line Short Cut	.3 miles
	Island Loop	2.2 miles
	Hidden Beach Loop	.7 miles
	Unpaved Road	1 mile

**TRAIL BLAZES**

-  Right Turn
-  Left Turn
-  Beginning / End

**Park open daily dawn - dusk;  
 Center open daily 8 - 4 :30 p.m.**



# CATTUS ISLAND COUNTY PARK



**Cattus Island Park/Cooper Environmental Center**

1170 Cattus Island Boulevard  
 Toms River, NJ 08753  
 (732) 270-6960  
 Toll-Free 1-877-OC PARKS  
 TTY (732) 270-5573  
[www.co.ocean.nj.us/parks/default.htm](http://www.co.ocean.nj.us/parks/default.htm)

## AN INVITATION

Welcome to Cattus Island, one of your Ocean County Parks. The Board of Chosen Freeholders dedicated this park for nature conservation and education. This designation provides a quiet, less congested setting for the public. The preserve supplies a place to enjoy and learn about our local natural heritage. Protected within our over 500 acre park, saltmarsh and pine forest flourish with natural creatures living undisturbed by human interference.

Cattus Island is primarily a pedestrian facility. Arriving vehicles stop in our parking area. Visitors may then take advantage of over five miles of marked trails and two miles of unpaved road. We encourage cyclists to remain on the fire road only. Persons who cannot walk may use their park via a barrier-free loop which connects the parking lot, environmental center, saltmarsh and picnic grove. Of course, all visitors should first stop at the Cooper Environmental Center to enjoy the exhibits and get a copy of the calendar of events.

So, come walk, sightsee, birdwatch, bicycle, and witness nature. To get to Cattus Island, take Fischer Boulevard north from its intersection with Route 37 in Dover Township (Toms River). At the third traffic light turn right onto Cattus Island Boulevard. Or, from Hooper Avenue, take Fischer Boulevard south. At the second traffic light turn left onto Cattus Island Boulevard.

## COOPER ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

Named in honor of the late Ocean County environmentalists A. Morton Cooper and his wife Elizabeth, the Center was designed to meet the growing environmental educational and recreational needs of Ocean County as perceived by the Board of Chosen Freeholders and its advisors.

Our 5,000 square foot building includes an eighty seat meeting room, major exhibit area, library, and the Park's restrooms. The Park staff updates displays regularly in order to reflect the seasonal cycle of nature.

The staff conducts numerous public programs. These are held most weekends, and some evenings. To find out about the many public programs offered at Cattus Island, please obtain a copy of the Park system's quarterly schedule, available at the center.



## AN ECOLOGICAL GEM

As a gemstone often shows its many sparkling facets, so too does Cattus Island. Here we find estuaries, freshwater streams, and majestic stands of vegetation unique to each habitat. Within our acreage, extensive saltmarshes and pine-oak forests are interspersed with Atlantic White Cedar swamps, freshwater bogs, maple-gum swamps, and successional fields. Huge specimen pines and hollies tower over other native species such as Swamp Azalea, False Heather, Sundew, Lady Slipper, Turkey Beard, and Sand Myrtle. Close to 300 plant species grow in the park.

The base of the marine food chain, saltmarshes and wetlands, make up 70% of the Cattus tract. Our public accesses afford an opportunity to observe this important ecosystem firsthand. In the marsh, a whole panoply of salt-tolerant plants spreads out before you. Located here are Bulrush, Chairmaker's Rush, Salt Hay, Cord-grass, and Common Reed. Large pink and white species of Marsh Mallow paint a spectacularly vibrant picture in August, while the feathery fringe of Common Reed provides a backdrop throughout the winter.

All provide food and shelter to birds, mammals, fishes and an amazing assortment of minuscule creatures which together form the Greater Barnegat Bay Ecosystem.

## BACKGROUND OF A UNIQUE AREA

Cattus Island is primarily composed of a peninsula jutting out into the bay waters of central Ocean County. The peninsula divides Silver Bay from its parent Barnegat Bay. Although primarily a saltmarsh, numerous hummocks dot this wetland landscape, thus providing many scenic contrasts. On the upland edges of the marsh, small freshwater bogs and cedar swamps maintain a precarious foothold.

We call Cattus an island because it looks like an island when its surrounding saltmarshes are inundated by tides. It also looks like an island when viewed from the water at a distance.

Cattus Island has remained a single parcel since the Board of Proprietors for the Province of East Jersey divided these shores in 1690. During the Revolutionary War, locals used the area to bring captured British vessels into the Toms River in order to off-load their cargoes. Later owners farmed the island, raised livestock, and harvested salt hay.

In 1895, John V.A. Cattus, a New York importer, bought the land. Hunting, fishing and boating were his family's favorite sports. Mr. Cattus also used the area as a pleasure retreat for his metropolitan friends.

Land buyers purchased the property in 1961, but the NJ Wetlands Act of 1970 and the NJ Coastal Area

Facilities Review Act of 1973 precluded any kind of construction projects.

In 1973, the Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders utilized public tax dollars and Green Acres funds to purchase and save the land as an open space development project. Our Freeholders placed Cattus Island under the jurisdiction of the Ocean County Department of Parks & Recreation. The land lay as a conservation area until 1976, when public environmental tours began on a regular basis.

County parks personnel started the active development of a trail system at Cattus in the winter of 1977-78. In the fall of 1980, the opening of the Cooper Environmental Center completed the development of Cattus Island County Park. The Freeholders recognized the need to provide regular public input into the operation of this unique facility and established a Cattus Island Advisory Council in the spring of 1981. In 1987, the Freeholders purchased the Johnson Estate, which lies adjacent to the Park.



## JUNIOR NATURALISTS

Too young to be called volunteers, a small group of local children began coming to the Center regularly in 1981. They helped maintain our live animals and displays and assisted the Naturalist staff in guiding people around the facility. Organized that summer under the title of Junior Naturalists, these youngsters have since come to augment the regular volunteer organization and complement the professional staff. The group is supervised by the Naturalists and works closely with them. Anyone interested in becoming a Junior Naturalist should contact the staff at the Cooper Center.