

Chicopee Woods Park Does Not Allow Dogs or Pets On-site.

As advocates for the outdoors and all living things, it should be no surprise that staff and members are big fans of animals.

As an organization, however, we are charged with responsibilities and are legally bound to make decisions that must sometimes supersede our personal feelings.

One example is our **No Dogs/Pets Policy, which expressly prohibits any dog (or other pet) on Chicopee Woods Park property, with or without a leash.* This includes the Mountain Bike Trails, Hiking Trails, parking areas and Elachee Nature Science Center.**

Why can't pets be brought on the trails?

Wildlife protection.

Even though dogs rarely succeed in catching other animals, they can injure or kill wildlife. Even when dogs are unsuccessful in catching the wildlife, the potential prey expends a significant amount of energy in order to survive. Meeting a squirrel or rabbit can be the single exciting event in the day for a visiting dog but this extremely stressful, occasionally fatal, experience for the wildlife involved can be repeated by multiple dog visitors over the course of the day and exhaust the animal.

Disease

Not all pet owners vaccinate their pets. Even pets with current vaccinations can shed viruses that affect wildlife.

Abandoned Animals

Not all owners take their pets home after visiting a preserve or park. The dumping of unwanted animals into natural settings is a large unwanted problem and can negatively affect the entire ecosystem.

Droppings

Not all pet owners pick up after their pets. Wildlife scat can be interesting to examine, and the droppings are fairly odorless. But dog and other pets' excrement can be stinky, messy and keep watchable wildlife away.

Dog poop can also add a significant amount of nitrogen to the soil, which can encourage the growth of non-native plants at the expense of native plants.

Visitor Safety

Not all pet owners keep their pets on a leash. Many visitors who enjoy watching wildlife have reported negative encounters with off-leash dogs ranging from jumping to full canine attacks. We realize that this policy might be perceived as unfriendly toward domestic animals and their owners. However, we also hope that, as an animal-lover, you will understand and fully cooperate with this policy.

Alternate Dog Walking Locations

- Highlands to Islands Trail: Park at Chicopee Woods Baptist Church
 - Laurel Bark Park: 3100 Old Cleveland Hwy, Gainesville, GA 30506
 - Wilshire Trails: 849 Wilshire Rd, Gainesville, GA 30501
 - Mulberry Creek Community Center and Dog Park: 4491 J M Turk Rd, Flowery Branch, GA 30542
 - Cherokee Bluff Community Center and Dog Park: 5867 Blackjack Rd, Flowery Branch, GA 30542
 - Don Carter State Park: 5000 N Browning Bridge Rd, Gainesville, GA 30506
 - Williams Mill Greenspace: 6166 Blackjack Rd, Flowery Branch, GA 30542
- *For more information regarding service animals for persons with disabilities, please call 770-535-1976.



No Dogs or Pets Policy



Please read to learn why Chicopee Woods Park does not permit any pets at any time on all trails and Chicopee Woods property as of January 1, 2021.

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The Impacts of Dogs

There is overwhelming evidence from scientific research that dogs negatively impact wildlife. People with dogs, on or off leash, are more detrimental to wildlife than people without dogs. Wildlife perceive dogs as predators just as they would their wolf ancestors.

Displacement

Displacement may be the most significant impact of a dog's presence. It causes most wildlife to move away from an area which, temporarily or permanently, reduces the amount of habitat available to wildlife. It negatively impacts both an area's wildlife carrying capacity and visitors' viewing experiences.

Studies have shown that people with dogs disturbed and altered wildlife behavior far more than humans alone. Research demonstrates that migratory songbirds are less abundant in yards with dogs. One study demonstrates lower deer trail activity, and the effect extended >100 meters off-trail. This negative effect is also seen in small mammals such as rabbits, squirrels, and chipmunks, with the impact extending >50 meters off-trail. Evidence also shows that while some wildlife can become used to non-threatening disturbances, such as people walking on

a trail, this was not the case with the presence of dogs because wildlife consistently views them as predators. Wildlife still reacts to people without dogs, but the amount of habitat affected is much smaller. These negative effects increase when dogs and people ventured off-trail, or the dogs are off-leash as they affected a larger amount of habitat and reduce the wildlife population and biodiversity in a larger area.

Furthermore, wildlife avoids areas where the scent of dog urine or feces is present, and the impact lingers long after the dogs are gone.

Disturbance and Stress

Dogs cause wildlife to be more alert, which reduces feeding, sleeping, grooming and breeding activities. This stress wastes energy reserves that often mean life or death, especially in winter or when food sources are low.

When wildlife is alarmed, they cease their normal activities and increase the amount of energy used, while simultaneously reducing their opportunities to feed. Acute stress response (when an animal reacts to an immediate situation) can benefit an animal by triggering it to respond appropriately to a threat. However, chronic stress (such as repeated

disturbances over time) may cause long-term impacts including reduced reproduction and growth, suppressed immune system and increased vulnerability to disease and parasites.



Hiking Trail Courtesy

- Leave No Trace. Pack it in, pack it out.
- Do not remove natural materials
- Respect wildlife and keep your distance
- Share the trail. Announce before you pass.
- Know your route and plan accordingly
- Stay on trails, single file, and do not take shortcuts

Leave No Trace Principles

1. Plan Ahead and Be Prepared
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces.

*Please note that no camping is allowed within Chicopee Woods Park at any time.

3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts

*Please note that no campfires are allowed within Chicopee Woods Park at any time.

6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

