

Beauty around us: SUNY Broome's Nature Preserve

October 8, 2015

A slight breeze shifted the changing leaves on the hillside as a flicker darted over the trail, its bobbing flight marking it as a member of the woodpecker family.

While the summer had been dry, some of the wetlands were still filled with murky water and ringed with reeds. Frogs plopped into the water as footsteps approached, too quickly to be caught by a camera.

SUNY Broome's Nature Preserve is a little-known campus asset. A new mile-long nature trail, however, makes this a fine time to get acquainted.

"We're hoping to have more student involvement," said Biology Professor Victor Lamoureux, who is also the Steward of the Campus Natural Areas. "We'd like to see more interdisciplinary work."

The campus owns approximately 125 acres in an odd-shaped lot that reaches around the Broome County Sheriff's Office to the surrounding hillside. The newly built nature trail represents the first phase of the natural areas project, which will eventually give access to other parts of the parcel as well.

The mile-long trail begins behind the baseball field, near Campus Services. Community members can park along Lt. Van Winkle Drive, across from BAGSAI, and walk over.

On a gray late September day, a half-dozen monarch butterflies drifted from flower to flower on the hillside as Lamoureux led a trek. He pointed out the new amenities, including information kiosks, a bridge, a gazebo and six new wetlands built by the Upper Susquehanna Coalition. Some of them are fenced, to show the difference between ecosystems with and without deer access.

Phase B of the project is expected to take shape next year. But there are challenges, namely a 4-foot deep gorge. Engineering students will be working on a bridge to cross it, Lamoureux said.

Biology students already use the nature preserve, as do students collecting ticks for Lyme disease research. But Lamoureux hopes to see more, whether art students seeking to paint a beautiful landscape or budding poets seeking to describe nature in verse.

He plans to begin offering nature hikes through the preserve every Tuesday. If you're interested in exploring the campus' natural beauty with a knowledgeable guide, you may want to consider lacing up your boots to join him.

“We can use this,” he said of the preserve. “We can walk through here.”



**A new mile-long walking path
gives access to the campus' Nature
Preserve**

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