

Round Lake Preserve

T O W N O F M A L T A , N Y

GWC

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As subcontractor to The LA Group, members of the GWC, Inc. worked on Phase I of a project to develop an interpretative plan and way-finding strategy for communicating with visitors to the new Round Lake Preserve in the Town of Malta about the rich nature, history, and culture found at the site. Our clients, Town of Malta, New York and Saratoga PLAN land trust, teamed up to protect the Lake and establish the recreation area for public use and enjoyment.

GWC provided creative services and public involvement assistance during this phase of the project. The GWC design team then continued the firm's involvement with the project; and worked on Phase II, writing and designing interpretive panels; and providing fabrication recommendations for the signs that are installed on the recreation area kiosk and along the canoe launch trail.

Thriving on Diversity A Wealth of Natural Communities

Why Wetlands Matter

When two habitats meet, plant and animal diversity soars. In wetlands, water merges with land and creates one of the most productive and diverse ecosystems in the world. Birds, amphibians, fish, mammals, and countless invertebrates feed and shelter in the cover of wetland plants.

By absorbing rainfall and snowmelt like a giant sponge, the wetlands of Round Lake Preserve help reduce flooding downstream in the Anthony Kill, Hudson River, Mechanville, and the Hudson River. Leafy wetland plants break the erosive force of rainfall. Their roots hold soils in place and filter out excess nutrients and contaminants.

Not long ago, wetlands were considered wastelands, often filled in to create more "usable" land. Today we know that wetlands are critical to maintaining biodiversity, water quality, flood control, and a host of other ecosystem services. Round Lake Preserve protects more than 93 acres of wetlands, safeguarding their life-giving functions.

Tune in to a Changing Landscape

Within its 92 acres, Round Lake Preserve encompasses a broad array of habitats. From the upland farm fields that surround you, the land slopes toward the open waters of Round Lake and the Anthony Kill. In between lies a patchwork of hedgerows, meadows, upland forest, streams, and five different types of wetlands. Each habitat supports a distinct community of plants and animals.

As you explore Round Lake Preserve, watch and listen to the changing landscape around you. Which kinds of plants dominate in the ground wet or dry? What animals do you see and hear in each habitat?

Walking from upland fields to the wetlands, and open water you move from a landscape dominated by grassland species like eastern meadowlark, red-tailed hawk, and cottontail rabbit and enter the world of wood frog, great blue heron, and marsh wren. Many animals use various habitats to feed, raise young, and take shelter. That's why Round Lake Preserve's wealth of natural communities is so important for wildlife.

Round Lake Preserve kiosk panel

People of Round Lake Drawn to Bountiful Waters

**Lavery Seaplanes:
High-flying
History Nearby**

In the 1930s and '40s, the buzz of airplane engines echoed at Round Lake, home base to Lavery Seaplanes. Over the years, from Lavery and his staff trained thousands of men and women in pilots and gave rides to countless more, including such famed passengers as Eleanor Roosevelt. During World War II, the military designated Lavery Seaplanes Base as a regulation training point and storage base.

Residents remember the excitement of those days when seaplanes raced across the water, carrying passengers to hunting camps in the Adirondacks and on overnight tours. In summer, Lavery docked the seaplanes on the beach by the old Cannons but later's were ash.

In 1947 Lavery bought a piece of land just north of the present property and built a landing strip and airplane hangar to better storage and maintenance. Did you notice the landing strip on your right as you drove in?

Millennia Along the Lakeshore

For thousands of years, people have been drawn to the waters of Round Lake. Located at the juncture of the lake and its outlet (the Anthony Kill), Round Lake Preserve is rich in artifacts dating back more than 4000 years, evidence of the long connection between people and this land.

The same natural abundance that attracted native inhabitants drew the first white settlers to Round Lake. In 1868, Round Lake became the site of a Methodist revival camp meeting that attracted some 8,000 people to its first gathering. Soon, Round Lake became a summer destination, centered on religious camp meetings and educational programs. Before long, people began winterizing the summer cabins and living here year-round.

Throughout that time, the lake remained the hub of community life. In warm weather, residents boated, fished, and swam. In winter, they skated, ice-fished, raced horses on the frozen lake, and cut blocks of ice to cool their iceboxes year-round.

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Round Lake Preserve kiosk panel

Round Lake Historic Home to Native Peoples

Mohican Tribe Today

Since 1895, one of the tribes of this area, the Mohicans, have been based far from their original homelands. Uprooted and pushed across half a continent since contact with the Dutch, this tribe today has 1,000 members and resides on a 23,000-acre reservation in northern Wisconsin. Consultation on projects like Round Lake Preserve is one way the tribe maintains a connection to its Hudson River or Muck-be-con-moak—the "waters that are never still"—homeland. For more information visit www.mohicans.com.

The Mohican Nation today is governed by a Tribal Council (above) and enjoys close-knit community life marked by cultural celebrations such as the annual powwow (above).

Uncovering the Past

During the planning process for Round Lake Preserve, archeologists conducted surveys to look for historic artifacts below ground. They uncovered remarkable evidence that these lands have been used as a seasonal settlement for more than 4,000 years. Mohicans lived in the region at the time of contact with the Dutch in the 1600s, and Mohawk Indians hunted in present-day Saratoga County during the 17th and 18th centuries.

They likely stayed here during the warmer months of the year, living in sapling-framed houses and hunting and fishing at Round Lake.

Preserve planners consulted with officers of the Mohican and St. Regis Mohawk tribes to minimize the impact of construction on the land's cultural artifacts.

Round Lake Preserve wayside panel