

Greenbrook Sanctuary is a 165-acre woodland preserve on top of the Palisades in Tenafly and Alpine, New Jersey. The Sanctuary is managed and maintained for the use of its members by the Palisades Nature Association, a non-profit organization founded in 1946.

Palisades Nature Association was founded to preserve the natural character of the Palisades cliffs and to develop a wild sanctuary in the Greenbrook area. Today it provides a place within the metropolitan area where interested persons can study nature and relax in a peaceful, undisturbed setting. To foster an appreciation of the unique Palisades environment and history, and to spread its conservation message to all ages, the Association sponsors walks to explore nature, geology, and ecology in Greenbrook Sanctuary, illustrated lectures, and special group programs (by appointment) — all conducted by a professional naturalist. In addition, careful censuses of the flora and fauna are made from year to year to serve as scientific records of the sanctuary's changing diversity and species composition.

Greenbrook Sanctuary is primarily an oak forest, especially along the cliff edge where red oaks, hickory, and black birch dominate. In cooler, moister, more fertile coves, sugar maple, beech, dogwood, and tulip trees are common. Swampy, poorly drained areas are covered with red maple, sweet gum, elm, tupelo, hornbeam, pin oak, ash, and willow. Common shrubs are witch hazel, laurel, blueberry, wild azalea, poison ivy, grape, and, in wet areas, spicebush.

A five-acre pond and small adjoining bog increases the great diversity of this sanctuary. Five major streams drain the area and Greenbrook Falls tumbles 250 feet down the ancient diabase cliffs into the Hudson River. Views of this waterfall, the Palisades, and the densely populated cities across the Hudson, are possible from several vistas which overlook the river.

Over 250 species of birds have been identified in the sanctuary. During the spring migratory season, it is not unusual to observe eighty species in one day, including twenty species of colorful warblers. In the fall, bald eagles, ospreys and thousands of hawks can be observed soaring along the cliffs on their southward journey. Among the more exciting nesting birds are great horned owl, pileated woodpecker, wood duck, scarlet tanager, rose-breasted grosbeak and worm-eating warbler.

Mammals species include eastern coyote, red fox, raccoon, striped skunk, gray squirrel, chipmunk, white-footed mouse, short-tailed shrew, and common mole. American mink, flying squirrels, and several species of bats are also occasionally seen.

Each March, the pond, bog and swamps come alive with the voices of spring peepers and egg masses of wood frogs and spotted salamanders can be observed. Later in the season the calls of pickerel, green and bullfrogs are heard. The dominant reptiles are eastern garter snake, northern water snake, black rat snake and painted and snapping turtles. Rarely, copperhead snakes, milk snakes and five-lined skinks, are seen.