

# PLYMOUTH OPEN SPACE TRAIL GUIDE

Welcome to the Walking  
Trails of Plymouth!



**SCAN QR CODE TO ACCESS  
FULL GUIDE & MAPS  
AND FIND MORE INFO ON  
PLYMOUTH OPEN SPACE**



*Pictured is Beaver Dam Conservation Area  
V6 April 2025*

# IMPORTANT TRAIL INFORMATION

- **All Town Conservation Areas and Preserves are multi-use and open to passive recreational activities.** These include but are not limited to: hiking, biking, nature viewing, snow-shoeing, hunting, fishing, and trapping.
- **Hunting is allowed on Town Conservation Areas and Preserves** in accordance with state and federal laws. DNR recommends walkers and their dogs wear 'hunter orange' gear when utilizing these areas during hunting seasons. Please refer to the Fishing, Hunting and Trapping Seasons "Quick Link" on the Town website. To report hunting violations or safety concerns, please contact the Massachusetts Environmental Police at 800-632-8075.
- **Dog waste must be removed.** Please bag and dispose of dog waste at home after your visit to the property. Leaving waste on the trail is hazardous for other pets and wildlife and takes away from the aesthetic of the walking trail. Bagging waste and leaving the bag on the trail only serves to introduce unnecessary plastic into the environment.

## *Special Thanks and Acknowledgments*

Printing of these trail guides was generously sponsored by SHP Financial and other private donors.

Thank you to David Gould and Plymouth's Department of Energy and Environment and to Patrick Farah for their valuable contributions.

The artwork throughout the book was drawn by artist Heidi Mayo, and provided by SEMPBA.

Trail descriptions written by Diane Griffiths Peck amended from the Take a Hike column in the Old Colony Memorial. Guide compiled by Andrea Dickinson in collaboration with the Open Space Committee.



(508) 746-2400 | [www.SHPFinancial.com](http://www.SHPFinancial.com)



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Trail & Plymouth Open Space Information.....	1
Massachusetts Coastal Pine Barrens.....	2
Overview Map .....	3
● Beaver Dam Conservation Area .....	5
● Black Cat Preserve.....	7
● Center Hill Preserve.....	9
● Clear Pond Preserve.....	11
● Comassakumkanut Preserve .....	13
● Crawley Woodlands Preserve.....	15
● David E. Alper Preserve .....	17
● Dixon Preserve at Hio Hill.....	19
● Eel River Preserve .....	21
● Foothills Preserve.....	23
● Hedges Pond Recreational Area & Preserve.....	25
● Indian Brook Conservation Area.....	27
● Kapell Pinnacle Preserve.....	29
● Morton Park.....	31
● Rocky Point Preserve .....	33
● Russell Mill Pond.....	35
● Russell Sawmill Pond Conservation Area.....	37
● Town Brook & Patuxet Preserve.....	39
● Town Forest Conservation Area.....	41
● Whispering Woods .....	43
Wheel Friendly Trails.....	45
Tips for Reducing Litter.....	47
Additional Trails - Mass Audubon.....	48
Additional Trails - Wildlands Trust .....	49
Glacial Landforms in the Plymouth Area .....	51
Trail Notes .....	55

## A C T I V I T Y   L E V E L   G U I D E

● Easy   ● Easy to Moderate   ● Moderate



## ABOUT PLYMOUTH OPEN SPACE COMMITTED

As the largest municipality in Massachusetts by area, Plymouth currently has approximately 28% of our 65,000 acres designated as protected open space. Plymouth contains the third highest per square mile occurrence of rare, threatened and endangered species of any community in Massachusetts, 36 miles of coastline and 365+ inland ponds including 32 globally rare coastal plain ponds. The town also sits on the second largest sole-source aquifer in the state.

Plymouth's abundance of open space presents both a threat and an opportunity. Substantial development of currently vacant lands would strain the Town's ability to provide services, maintain rural character, and protect natural resources. Successful open space planning will facilitate Plymouth's efforts to control sprawl, maintain water quality, and protect natural resources. Open space preservation is also a key component of Plymouth's efforts to attract tourism and provide recreational opportunities.

**Plymouth's Open Space Committee** was established in 2002 with a mission to advocate for the preservation and maintenance of open space for current residents as well as for future generations in order to protect our aquifer, our environment, and the character of our town.

The Committee carries out its mission by seeking opportunities to conserve natural and recreational open space, as well as working with partner groups to promote educational efforts and recreational outings on conserved land.

The Committee meets twice monthly with meeting dates, times, agendas and meeting minutes posted on the Town website. Members of the public are always welcome whether they are generally interested in open space or concerned about a specific piece of land.

*Since 2002, the Open Space Committee has helped to conserve more than 360 acres!*

### HOW CAN I HELP?

- Explore, appreciate and help advocate for Plymouth's open space.
- Pick up trash when you see it!
- To report trail issues, visit [plymouth-ma.gov/938/report-a-concern](http://plymouth-ma.gov/938/report-a-concern)
- Volunteer for trash cleanups and trail maintenance projects.
- Consider donating land to conservation.
- Forgo single use plastics when you can to help reduce litter.
- Get involved with local sustainability initiatives.

## THE MASSACHUSETTS COASTAL PINE BARRENS EARTH, WIND, FIRE AND WATER!

- The interaction of fresh and salt water, sand, vegetation and fire differentiate these Coastal Pine Barrens from all other ecoregions.
- In places hundreds of feet beneath and filtered by a mantle of sand left by the glaciers, immense, priceless reservoirs of water have accumulated.
- Above the sand, fire has always been a critical element, and many plants and animals have evolved to withstand, and even thrive after each conflagration.
- And unique to Coastal Pine Barrens is the ocean: both buffer and border.

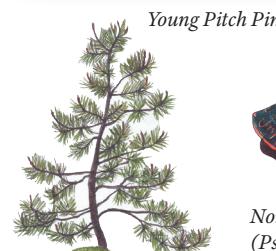
### AN IRREPLACEABLE ECOREGION!

The second largest remaining ecoregion of its kind in the world, providing coastal and inland habitat for over 220 of Massachusetts' rarest species, including the Northern Red-bellied Cooter, Barrens Tiger Beetle, Piping Plover, and Plymouth Gentian.

### THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

Equally unique are the smaller 'natural communities' that comprise this ecoregion, including one of only three Maritime Grasslands in the nation, primordial Atlantic White Cedar Bogs, Sandplain Grasslands, Coastal Plain Ponds and – the signature community of the ecoregion – the globally rare savannahs of the Pitch Pine-Scrub Oak Community.

*From Duxbury and Plymouth in the north, Marion and Mattapoisett to the south, across Cape Cod and the islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, the Massachusetts Coastal Pine Barrens stand apart, a legacy from our past that speaks urgently to the future.*



Young Pitch Pine



Northern Red-bellied Cooter  
(*Pseudemys rubriventris*)

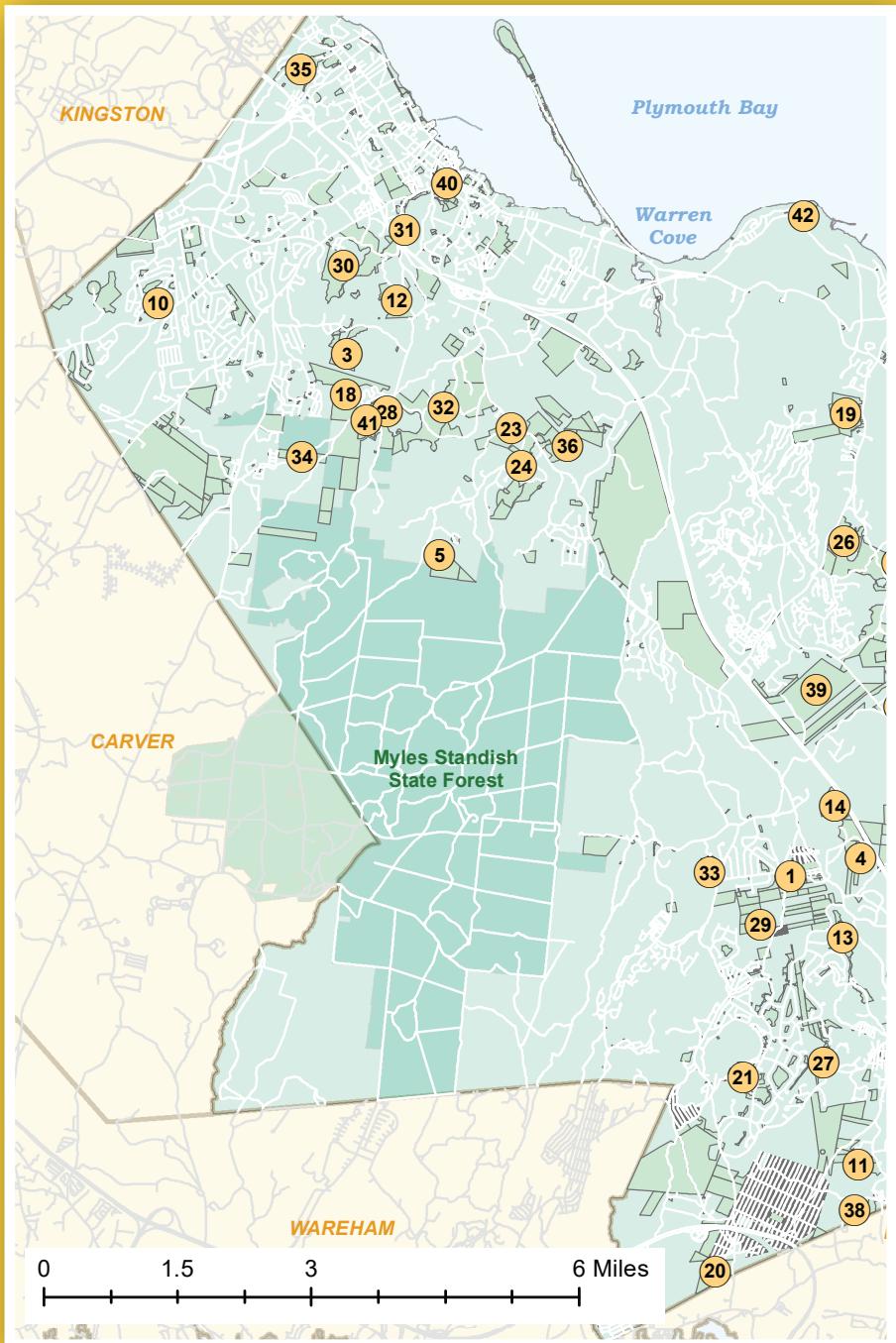


Mature  
Pitch Pine

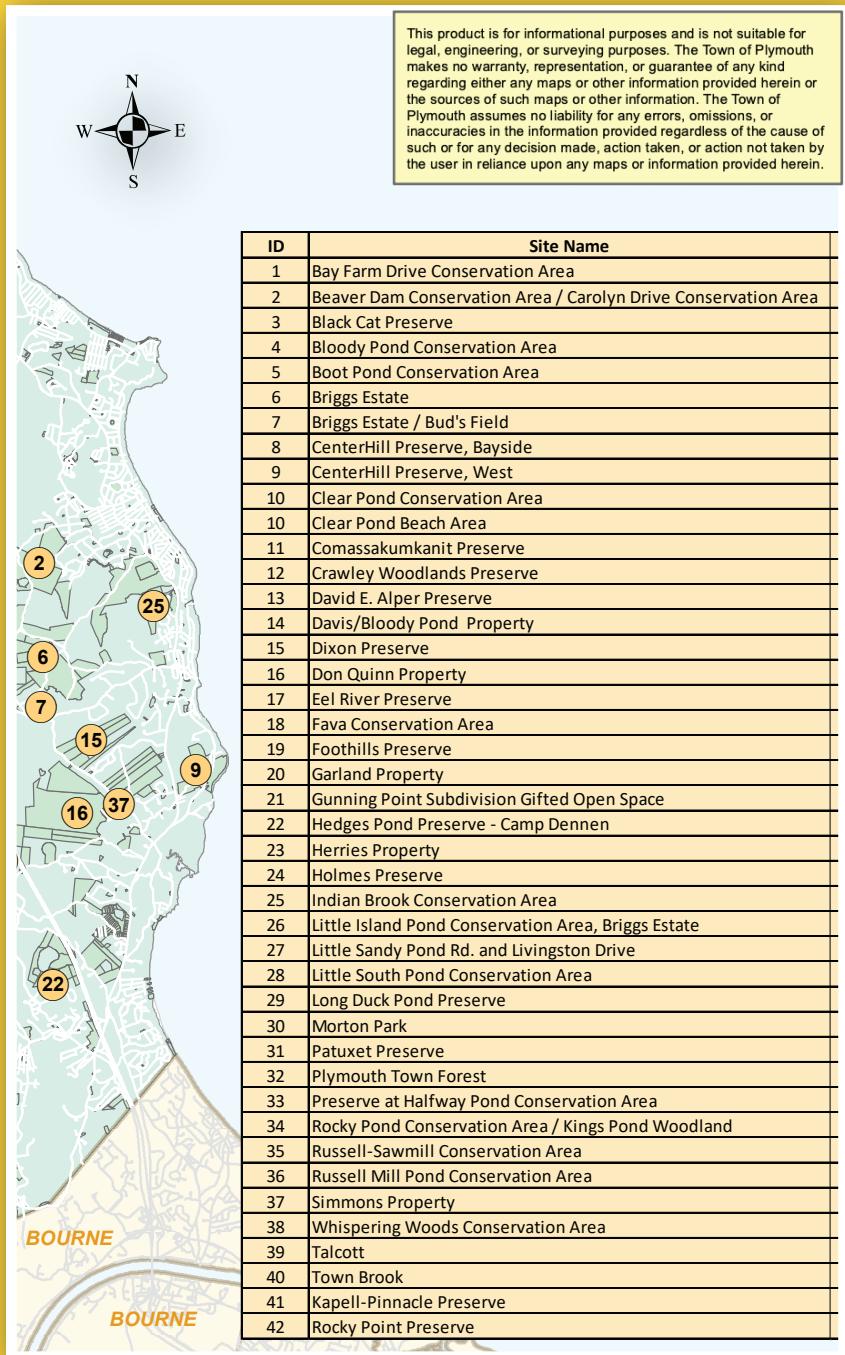


Barrens Buckmoth  
(*Hemileuca maia*)

*Information provided by the Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance*



Dogs are allowed on all conservation lands and preserves but they should be leashed in accordance with the town's leash by-law.



Prepared for the Plymouth Open Space Committee  
March 25, 2025  
Plymouth Office of Planning & Development

# BEAVER DAM CONSERVATION AREA

The Beaver Dam Conservation Area is one of the town's older trail systems. As such, it is showing the wear and tear of age. Still, it is a nice loop of rolling terrain with lots of water views, which your kids or your dog will love. These are challenging and fun paths for mountain bikers, too.

Look for the parking swale at the sign. Enter through the grove of mature pines onto wide paths carpeted with pine needles. These trails generally have less side growth and no grass, making it harder for ticks to catch a ride onto your clothes. The trail is well marked into the woods, but with the many cut-throughs, dirt bike and game trails, it can be confusing. Follow the trail markers where the forest wardens are trying to establish a logical route. One hundred yards into the forest the path divides with a short leg left, down to the shore of Little Island Pond. Below a sandy incline is a small beach area which affords a long southerly view down the length of the pond. The water is clear and the bottom is pebbly, firm sand; good for wading for the dog or the children.

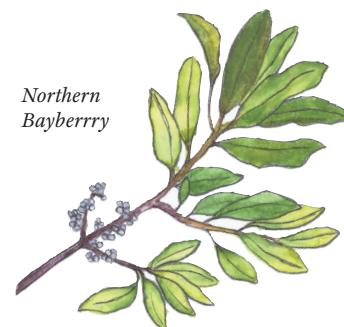
Return to the main path and turn left down a gentle hill to the T intersection. The trail is a 2.4 mile loop from this point. If you are one to eat dessert before dinner, turn left here, keeping the pond on your left. Otherwise go right, counterclockwise, climbing into the hills and save the pond side stretch for last. We will turn left. Note the short boardwalk into the pond on the left a bit beyond. Soon thereafter is another tiny beach. Note the large sentinel white pines at pond's edge alongside the skeletons of tall dead trees, on which raptors love to perch.

The sinuous pond side path continues up and down and in and out of piney groves, with scant undergrowth alternating with mixed hardwood thickets. The path levels out but degrades into the undulations caused by ATV traffic which make it tiresome for walkers. Having reached the end of the pond, the path turns west, through a ferny lowland and comes to a T. The trail to the left continues as The Eight Ponds Pass Trail, a route for another day. For now, follow the trail markers to the right until there is a fork; you will go right. Here a short detour to the left leads to an

interesting overlook of an old kettle pond gradually turning into a bog, with a cedar studded islet in the middle.

Back to the main trail through the uplands which are the classic knob and kettle terrain of Plymouth's glacial outwash plain: where the glacier ground to a halt, melted down and dumped all the debris it was carrying into steep, untidy hills and deep hollows. Huge chunks of ice calved off the glacier and formed bowls, some of which are vernal pools, wet in the springtime and which dry up in the summer. Or they may hold water year round, ringed by distinctive wetland vegetation, such as high bush blueberry. Fourteen thousand years later, we are climbing up and down these hills, through stands of pine that send their roots across the path like stair risers. Here again, the trail shows its age, as we cross patches of "ancient" plastic litter, demonstrating that, like perverse diamonds, plastics are forever.

On the left, through this seemingly remote forest, we can see the backside of the landfill hill covered in grass and hear sounds from the transfer station. On the right, you may have peek-a-boo views of the pond. At our feet, the "undead" plants thrive in this area with all manner of mushrooms, lichen, and Indian Pipes. After a curving, twisty course, we finally return down to pond level near Beaver Dam Road. Follow the trail markers around to the right and close the 2.4 mile loop back at the first T intersection. Head left, or due north, about a tenth of a mile back to the parking area.



Northern Bayberry



**Location:** 276 Beaver Dam Road, just northeast of the transfer station

**Activity Level:** Moderate hills with some easy stretches

**Parking:** Limited to two or three vehicles, and alongside the road

**Distance:** Just under 3 miles

**Duration:** 1.5 to 2 hours

**Features:** Pond views, white pine groves, glacial terrain, good mountain biking

# BLACK CAT PRESERVE

Black Cat Preserve features two abandoned cranberry bogs, and a winding route through variable uplands. The trail system is shaped roughly like a jagged letter U with a strip of private property in the middle, formed when the two parcels of land obtained by the Town were joined to form this preserve.

The trail starts toward the left out of the parking lot. Pass by the front bog, filled with red maples which sprang up spontaneously after the bog was abandoned and which are spectacular in the Fall. Cross a wooden footbridge over a small stream. Follow the Loop Trail signs right up onto the hill, with water views of the Briggs Reservoir on your left. Passing through a forest of mixed hardwoods and pines, the roots and the steepness make this the most difficult part of the Black Cat trail system.

You are on top of what appears to be an esker, made by a long, snaky river of melt water that flowed under the glacial sheet, paradoxically creating a raised rock and gravel bed. On the right is the sandy cliff of a borrow pit, from where sand was excavated to be spread on the cranberry vines every year. After about a half mile, there is a T-shaped intersection. Turn left here, and go to the end of a short in-and-out trail which offers a small viewing area on the pond edge. Return to the trail and take the first left which is the Loop Trail, passing into more open forest. Look for an enormous pitch pine towering above on the left. Descend toward a vernal pond at the bottom of a kettle on your left where amphibians breed in the spring. Because



these ponds are temporary, fish cannot live in them and consume the eggs. The tadpoles hatch out and grow legs to become toads and frogs before the wet area dries out for the summer. There are a lot of "No Trespassing" signs and numerous cross trails in this area, some with wooden gates, as we skirt private property for a while. Do keep to the well-marked walking trail so as not to aggravate the abutters.

About a mile into your hike, you come to the intersection of the Rear Bog Trail. Here, you can stay on the Loop by going straight and by following the marked trail you will be back to the esker trail, which returns to the Front Bog. Or, turn left to follow the markers to the Rear Bogs, a meandering there-and-back-again path with interesting variety. The trail climbs knobs and descends into kettles before turning right onto a cart path. The Rear Bog trail takes a left off the cart path at the trail marker. As always, stick to the marked trail so as to not wander into some one's backyard.

This leads down to one of two cranberry bogs, which are in the process of returning to the wild. If it is springtime, you may see snapping turtle eggshells in the loose sand here. Keep to the right about halfway around and do a sharp hairpin turn to the right, which brings you to the second Rear Bog. Follow the path right around the bog, crossing a second wooden bridge. Return to the Loop Trail by retracing your steps to the Rear Bog sign at the intersection, and turn left. Take the next left off the Loop, back up the esker trail and to the parking lot.



**Location:** Black Cat Road, just west of Briggs Reservoir, opposite #164

***Parking:*** Four cars

**Activity Level:** Nearest Black Cat Road is a flat, easy circle around the bog. Once into the uplands, the going is moderate.

**Distance:** 3 miles

**Duration:** Approximately 1 hour and 50 minutes, shorter depending on the route.

**Features:** Waterviews, rewilding bogs, esker

# CENTER HILL PRESERVE

The Center Hill Preserve is a 98 acre property fronting on Cape Cod Bay. The Preserve is divided into two areas separated by Center Hill Road. On the east side are 28 acres of coastal land with  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of accessible ocean beach, with a large coastal freshwater pond and marsh. On the west side, there is a meandering trail system through upland forest and a decommissioned cranberry bog. Depending on your goals, go east, go west or do both! Any season of the year is a good time to go.

The public is invited to visit the Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance (SEMPBA) Discovery Center at the Center Hill Preserve. Here you will find information on the globally rare Coastal Pine Barrens Ecosystem, nature education programs, and how to become involved in any of several citizen science programs offered by SEMPBA. Visit SEMPBA.org for hours and information. The driveway to the Discovery Center is just north of the ocean-side parking lot.

## OCEAN SIDE

Center Hill East beach is an easy 6 minute walk down the woods path from the southeastern parking lot. Watch out for poison ivy! You will cross a little boardwalk over the freshwater marsh, then sink into a soft, deep sand path, bordered by seagrass, until you clamber across a mound of rocks like bowling balls down onto the shore. The beach here is a narrow strip of sand above the high tide mark, and wide swaths of stones, rocks and boulders below that, especially at low tide. Not your typical pleasure beach. This is prime seal spotting shoreline; at any time of year you are likely to see the dog-like heads of harbor and gray seals surfacing and dipping below the water. They are often seen lounging across some of the larger rocks at lower tides. Please do not disturb them, and per the Marine Mammal Protection Act, ensure that you stay at least 150 feet away at all times. Seal waters can mean shark waters, so take extra precautions with children and dogs at higher tides. This beachfront is perfect for children with pails and water shoes to hunt for all manner of crabs, periwinkles, and mussels. There is a forest of different seaweeds to be examined. Admire the contorted cedar trees, mature but wind-stunted like bristle cone pines. During the strong storms of recent years, the ocean shoved a wide tongue of sand into the freshwater marsh, bisecting it. The Town built

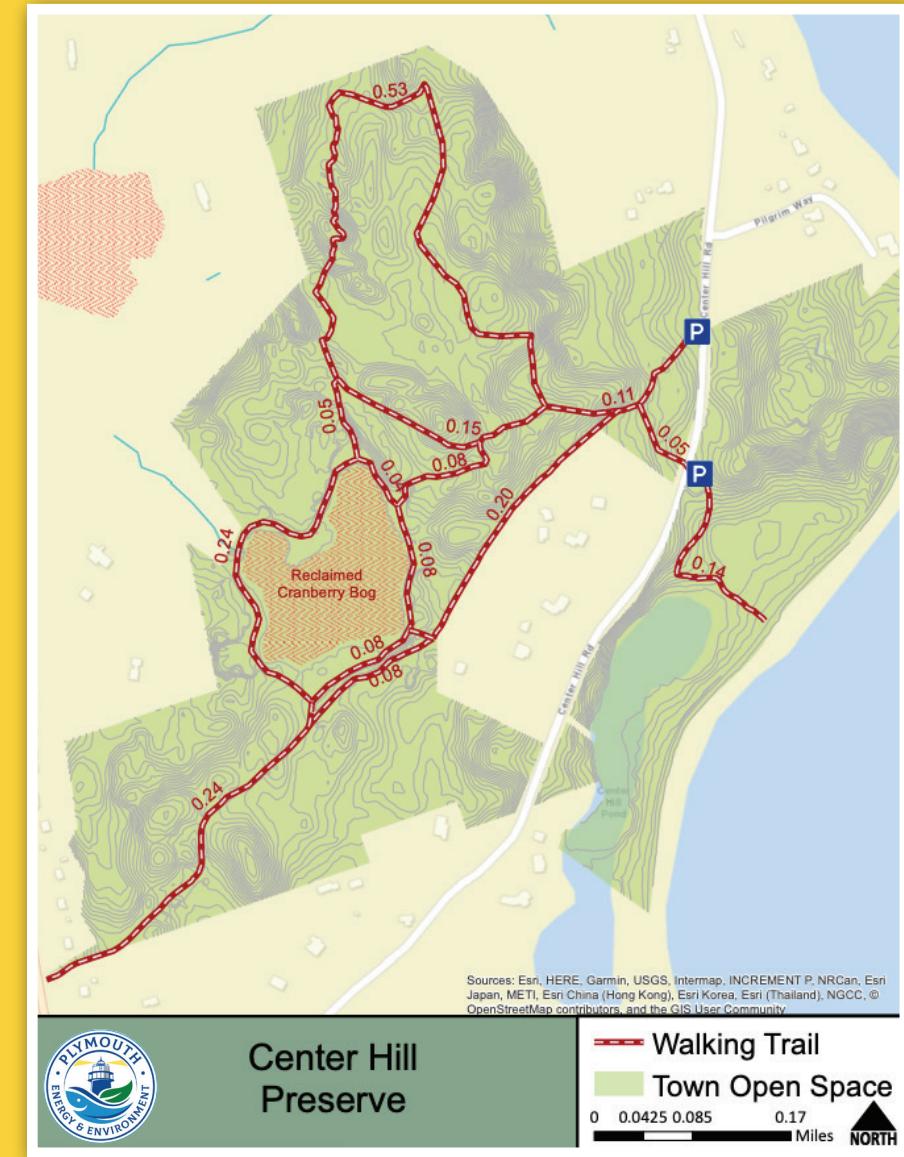
up a dune and planted it with dune grass to stave off further incursion. Cross this dune at the north end, being careful not to tread on the grass, to see the “beach” which you aren’t getting out front. The distance and duration of this walk on the beach vary widely..

## WOODS SIDE

Enter Center Hill West from the northwest parking lot. From there, pass down onto the “Old Back Road” and take a left. Or cross from the Center Hill East parking lot and turn left at the split rail fence. Almost immediately there is a marked trail option up to the right, where narrow, winding trails loop through a rolling topography of thickly wooded upland habitat. Note the scattering of glacial erratic boulders among the trees. If you stay on Old Back Road, you will reach a former cranberry bog which frequently becomes inundated with water. Numerous species of waterfowl can be seen here during the wet events. Follow this road straight to the terminus at State Road and return to the bog. Or bear right into a circuit of the bog to the north east side. Look for two unmarked access points to the upland trail system, the first behind some piles of sand.

Once in the woods, the trail is well marked. It meanders up and down over the classic knob and kettle terrain, short stretches of which are moderately difficult. The marked trail is crossed repeatedly and confusingly by dirt bike trails. While these woods offer the characteristic flora of Plymouth County, what is noteworthy is the large number of tall sassafras trees. This tree is easy to identify because of the mitten shaped leaves. Sassafras was hugely important to our 17th century settlers, as the bark, leaves, roots and lumber were all valuable commodities. The medicinal tea made from sassafras was said to cure many ailments from fevers to syphilis! So high was the demand, second only to tobacco in the English New World, that the forest resources were depleted within about 25 years of the first commercial harvest in the 1620s. Centuries later, this tree is thriving undisturbed here in the Center Hill Preserve.

Following the marked trail, you will rejoin the woods road, and turn left toward the start of your walk. The distance and time of this hike on the woods side vary widely, but a wide loop is approximately 1.75 miles and about one hour long.



**Location:** Center Hill Road, off State Road just north of Ellisville State Park

**Parking:** Plenty of parking in two lots

**Activity Level:** West side: mostly easy, with short stretches of moderate hilly terrain. Beach: easy , can be rougher over the rocks.

**Distance:** Variable, from 1/5 mile to about 3 miles

**Duration:** Variable, 6 minutes to two hours

**Features:** Ocean beach, rewilding cranberry bog, upland woods

# CLEAR POND PRESERVE

Clear Pond is a small body of water, pretty to look at, but near here historians tell us there was an epic Indian battle in pre-colonial times. Water offers a quick disposal of dead enemy bodies and, it is said, "large numbers of Narragansetts" were thrown in the pond after being defeated by the local tribe. Clear Pond was once named Narragansett Pond and drains southwesterly into a boggy wetland still called Narragansett Pond. Nearby to the southeast is the ridge where the battle was fought. Today the Clear Pond Conservation area offers a peaceful and gentle walk, especially good for preschoolers in "hiker training" and school age children.

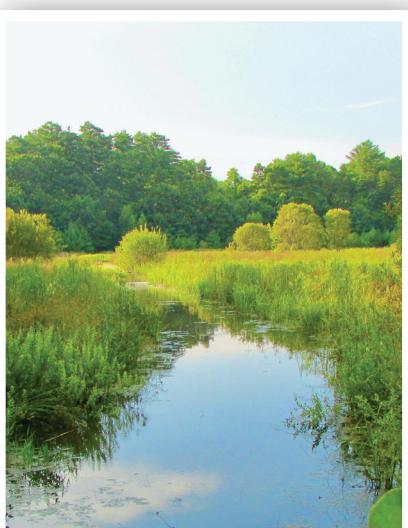
From the gate to the Clear Pond conservation area, follow the path down to the water's edge. After looking at the pond, turn right. You are passing through an easement over private property, so head directly for the metal swing gate back onto Town property. The path encircles a large wetland meadow which was once a cranberry bog, so turn either left or right at the concrete platform over a drainage channel. All manner of grasses, wildflowers and trees have colonized the old bog, including milkweed, bayberry bushes, cattails, high and low bush blueberries, and wild raspberries. The path itself is flat, wide

and grassy, and gets mowed occasionally, so the tick risk is lower. A special treat for children might be the "train tunnel" formed by dense young pine trees whose branches meet above the path to form a ceiling. This runs along nearly half of the circuit.

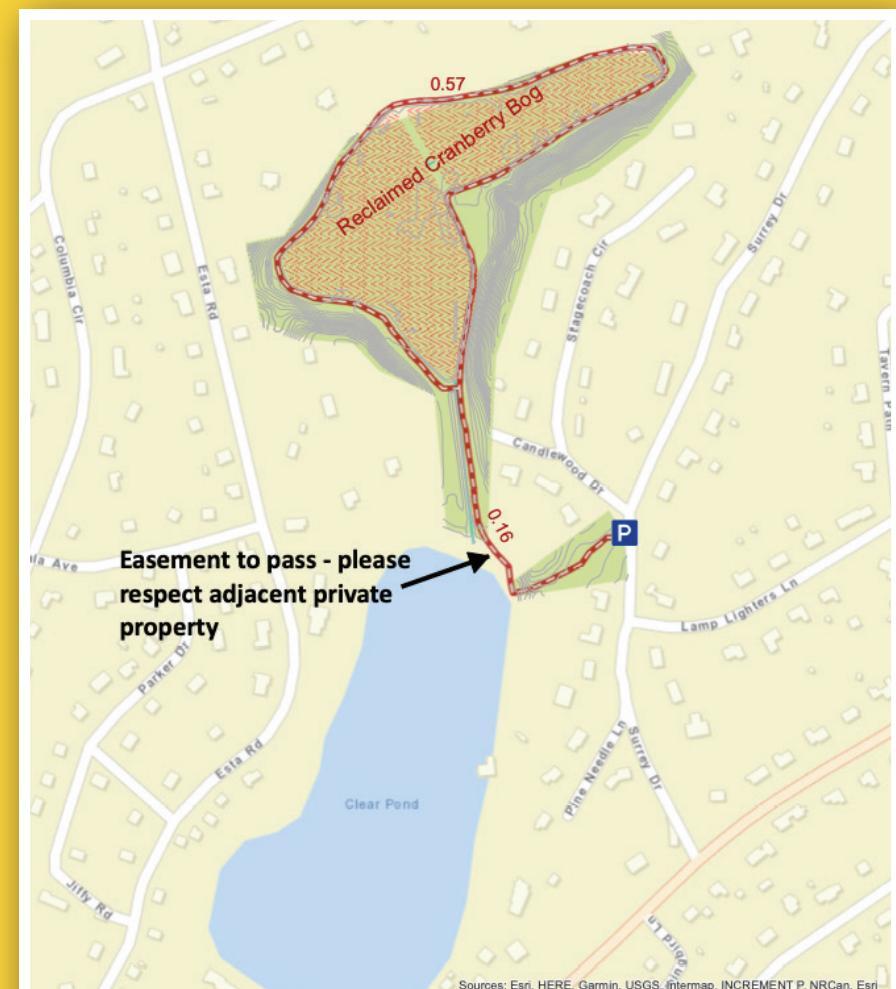
Silence. Although there are roads and streets all around, this area is surprisingly free of modern noise. The best time to visit is at dusk when the air is full of natural sounds: bullfrogs croaking at each other, the buzz of insects, the singing and chattering of many birds, the cheeping of tree frogs, the plops of amphibians leaping into the water. As still as it may look, you can see this bog teeming with life at every level: high above in the air the hawks circle, in the treetops the birds flit, the dragon flies zip around, and in the grass, critters skitter. The water strider insects skate across the surface of the water, and sometimes you can see shapes moving under the dark water.

Complete the circle at the concrete bridge and head back out. Don't miss the steps on the left leading back to Surrey Drive.

***Don't miss the steps on the left leading back to Surrey Drive!***



Eastern Redcedar



Trail Loop Distance: Approx. 0.9 miles



Clear Pond  
Conservation Area

Walking Trail  
Town Open Space  
0 0.03 0.06 0.12 Miles

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

**Location:** West Plymouth, Carver Road (old Rt 44) to Surrey Drive to intersection with Candlewood Drive. Opening through a wooden fence on the left. No signs, but a map kiosk.

**Parking:** Parallel parking for 2-3 cars

**Activity Level:** Easy, flat terrain

**Distance:** 1.25 miles

**Duration:** 30 minutes or longer

**Features:** Water views, decommissioned cranberry bog, fresh water marsh, "train tunnel"

# COMASSAKUMKANUT PRESERVE

This is a relatively short trail through a relatively unremarkable forest, almost the Bob Ross of trails: calm and serene, maybe a little bland. Yet it has two things going for it: a big name and a bright future.

The aboriginal name of this area around the south and west of Great Herring Pond was Commassakumkanut, sometimes spelled Comassakumkanit (spellings of the Wampanoag language can vary widely.) The English renamed it "Bournedale." This area is the geographic locus of the modern day Herring Pond Wampanoag tribe. There is a bountiful herring run each Spring as the fish make their way up the Herring River from the Cape Cod Canal, to enter Great Herring Pond to spawn. From there, some of the migrants push on up Carter's Brook to the end of the line at Little Herring Pond.

The meaning of the name remains a mystery. The only certain aspect of the name is the "-ut" or "-it," meaning "place." Some suggested translations include "the place of the standing rock," possibly referring to the enormous glacial boulders in the nearby Carter Beal Preserve in Bourne. Another is "the trail going south," perhaps a reference to aboriginal paths heading southwest to Bourne and Wareham. Lastly, it could logically mean "near the fishing place." But the early English who recorded this place name may have garbled the pronunciation and then the spelling. Or, the name may not be in the Wampanoag tongue at all. (With thanks to Melissa Ferretti of the Herring Pond Wampanoag tribe for the linguistic input.)

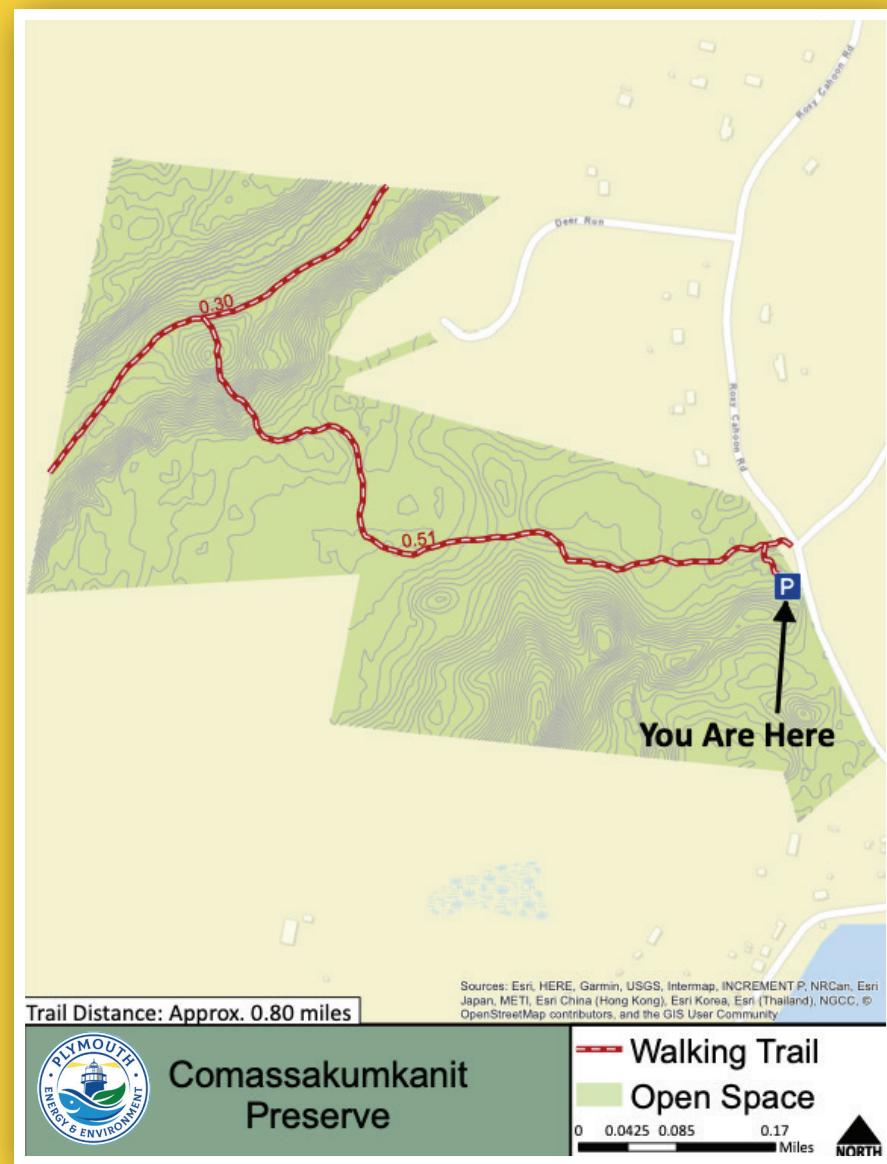
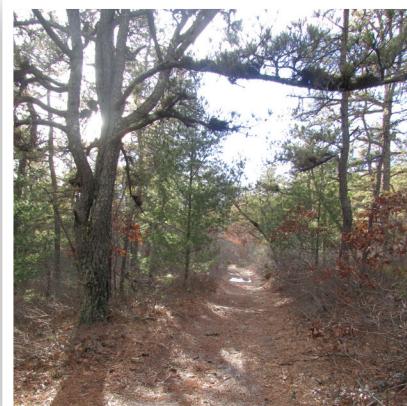
The bright future is that the preserve area, which was originally 71 acres, is expanding. Recent acquisitions of 36.2 and 117.5 acres to the west bring the protected lands to almost 222 acres. So whereas it is a short, in-and-out trail at present, there will in future be an elongation of the trail system, and connections to existing trails and other features.

Park at the designated area and enter the preserve in one of two ways: from the parking lot, there is a short, bumpy segment to the main trail. Just north of the

preserve sign is a wider, easier access from Roxy Cahoon Road.

Before you are 71 acres of upland mixed forest, with oaks, white pines, and pitch pines. Although the pitch pines are all approximately the same age, notice how some are extremely tall and others are shorter, reflecting the soils, water and rocks beneath the surface. Also notice the lush growth of lichen on the tree trunks, an indication of the purity of the air in this area. The trail winds gently under the canopy of Bob Ross's "happy little trees." A new bench offers respite to the walker. The path is about 3 to 5 feet wide and firm, with few roots. There are a few cross trails laid down by the neighbors, and a path to the left leading out of the Preserve. Stay right and follow the trail signs. The track will lead you to the edge of a 40 foot deep ravine. You can turn around and head back at this point or descend down the hill into a valley carved by a river of meltwater from the last glacier, draining toward the Herring Ponds. The ancient footpath at the bottom is the unpaved stretch of Valley Road. It leads southwest toward the infamous "Thousand Acres" which is a very large tract of undisturbed forested land which owes its preservation to a Byzantine tangle of deed irregularities. This trail is unmarked and not at present part of this preserve, but plans are afoot.

Check out this preserve near the great fishing place soon and then come back in the future to see how it evolves.



Trail Distance: Approx. 0.80 miles



Comassakumkanut  
Preserve

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Walking Trail

Open Space

0 0.0425 0.085 0.17 Miles



**Location:** 107 Roxy Cahoon Road, west of Great Herring Pond

**Parking:** Up to 6 cars

**Activity Level:** Easy, flat terrain, one optional hill

**Distance:** About one mile round trip

**Duration:** 20 - 40 minutes

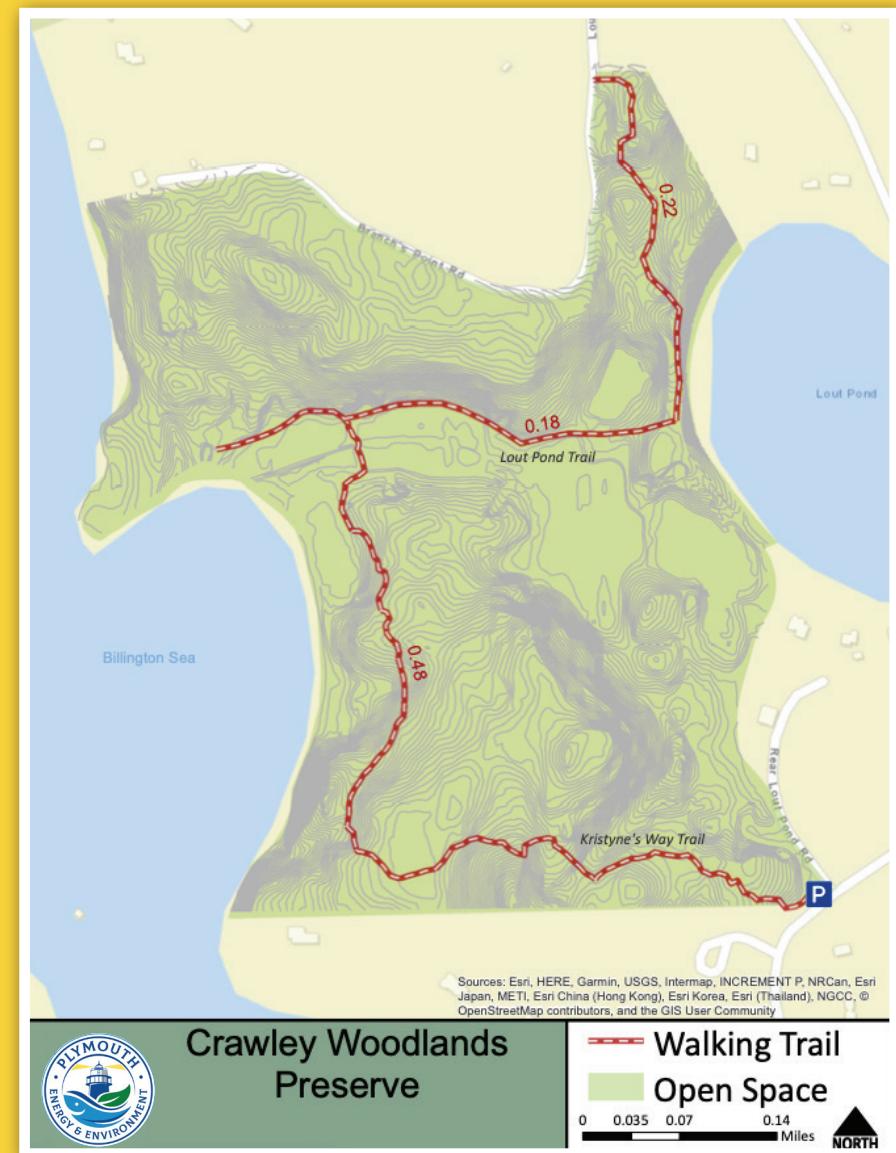
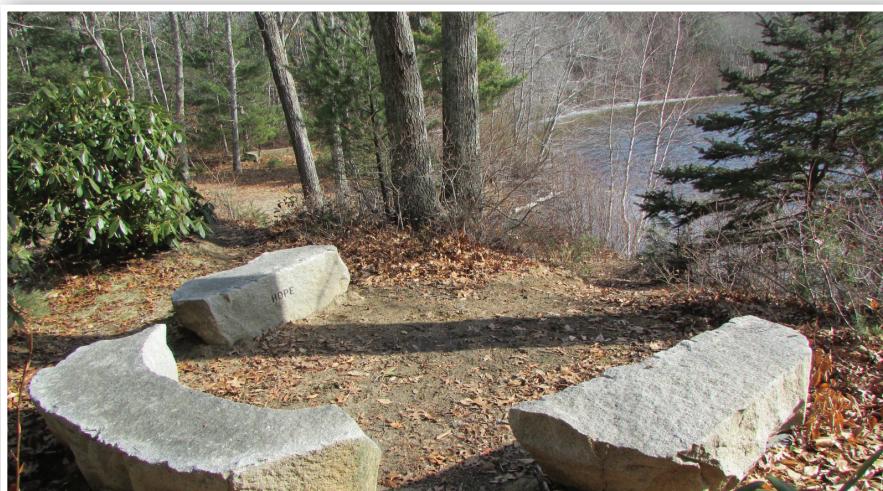
**Features:** Mixed upland forest, 40ft deep valley, Wampanoag history, connection to historic road

# CRAWLEY WOODLANDS PRESERVE

A hike with variety and interest is the Crawley Woodlands Preserve, along the shore of Billington Sea. Begin your hike crossing a small meadow to the trail sign just west of the parking lot. There are plans for a pollinator garden here. The first third of this hike is classic glacial knob and kettle glacial terrain, with towering white pines, deep hollows, abrupt hills, old cart roads and winding paths. The paths mostly rim the bowls, but there are some ups and downs. Good views of Billington Sea are on the left, especially in winter when the leaves are down. As the forest changes to mixed hardwoods, the trail flattens out. Here you are entering an area of long abandoned cranberry bogs, now forested with mature trees, with watergates and ditches still in place. Contrast this with the Headwaters of the Eel River, Foothills, and the Tidmarsh Preserves where such structures were removed to restore the bogs to their natural states.

Soon after you cross a water channel connecting Lout Pond with Billington Sea, the trail comes to a T. Turn left to reach a small open area on Billington Sea, which has the ruins of a pump house and a sluice gate. Up a short set of stone steps are three granite benches, nice for sitting on while gazing at the water. Returning back to the T, follow the path east, looking deep into the woods on your right to see traces of bogs

and more water channels. At another T, go left onto Lout Pond Road. The path at this point traverses an excellent example of a glacial esker, a sinuous raised ridge between a wetland and a pond. This brings you to the boundary of the preserve, marked by three small granite pillars. Climb a bit up to the left at this point and get a good view of a working, active cranberry bog. Returning down the trail, turn right, west, to retrace your steps. Or you can follow the road south, with lovely views of Lout Pond on your left. In the woods you may be able to see more old cranberry infrastructure. Walk past some private buildings and a cranberry bog to return to the start.



**Location:** 331 Billington Street

**Parking:** 4-6 spaces available

**Activity Level:** Easy to Moderate

**Distance:** Approximately 2 miles

**Duration:** 30-60 minutes depending on your pace and any detours

**Features:** Abandoned cranberry bogs, glacial terrain, benches, water views

# DAVID E. ALPER PRESERVE

The David E. Alper Nature Preserve offers highly contrasting experiences. One can enjoy a pleasant woods walk or, with a little effort, one can put in a kayak or canoe and have a delightful one or two hours on Little Herring Pond and Carter's Brook. This is the public's only access to Little Herring Pond. The 43.6 acre preserve was acquired by the Town in 2015 and is a quirky juxtaposition of rough, unimproved tracks and nicely prepared walking trails.

Begin the walk from the cul de sac, at the Alper Preserve sign. The woods road runs straight along a ridge, likely an esker, running between Triangle Pond and Little Herring Pond. Take a pleasant loop off the main ridge road to the right which swings down to the outlet of Little Herring Pond, at a disused dam, and back up again, about one third of a mile in length. The unique Plant ID Trail along the ridge road is a learning experience, with trees, shrubs and ground cover tagged with informative labels. The path continues through open mixed hardwood and softwood forest to a fork. Bearing right will lead to the end of the Plant Trail and out of the preserve. Bearing left at the fork, and left again will bring you down into a grassy meadow bordering the small, quiet Triangle Pond. At this point, you have left the preserve, so return to your start.

For kayakers, there are two put-ins, both of which present problems. It is possible to drive down the first right near the entrance over an increasingly rough road, but you'll have to have a vehicle with very high clearance. Put in at the little dam. Alternatively, drive straight along the woods road from the traffic circle for about 90 yards. Pull off to the right at the top of the hill to unload and carry the kayaks down a steep hill, bearing left. You will come to a short, very steep incline, then continue to the put-in. Remember that returning from the trip, you will have to carry the kayak back up this hill!

Little Herring Pond is 90 acres of shallow, clear water with a mostly sandy bottom. No motors are allowed except small electric ones that won't scatter the wildlife or impinge on the enjoyment of this very fine pond. Although only 3 feet in average depth, the water is quite chilly as its source is hundreds of little springs on the pond bottom, called "colander springs," especially at the north end. They form tiny "volcanoes" in the sandy

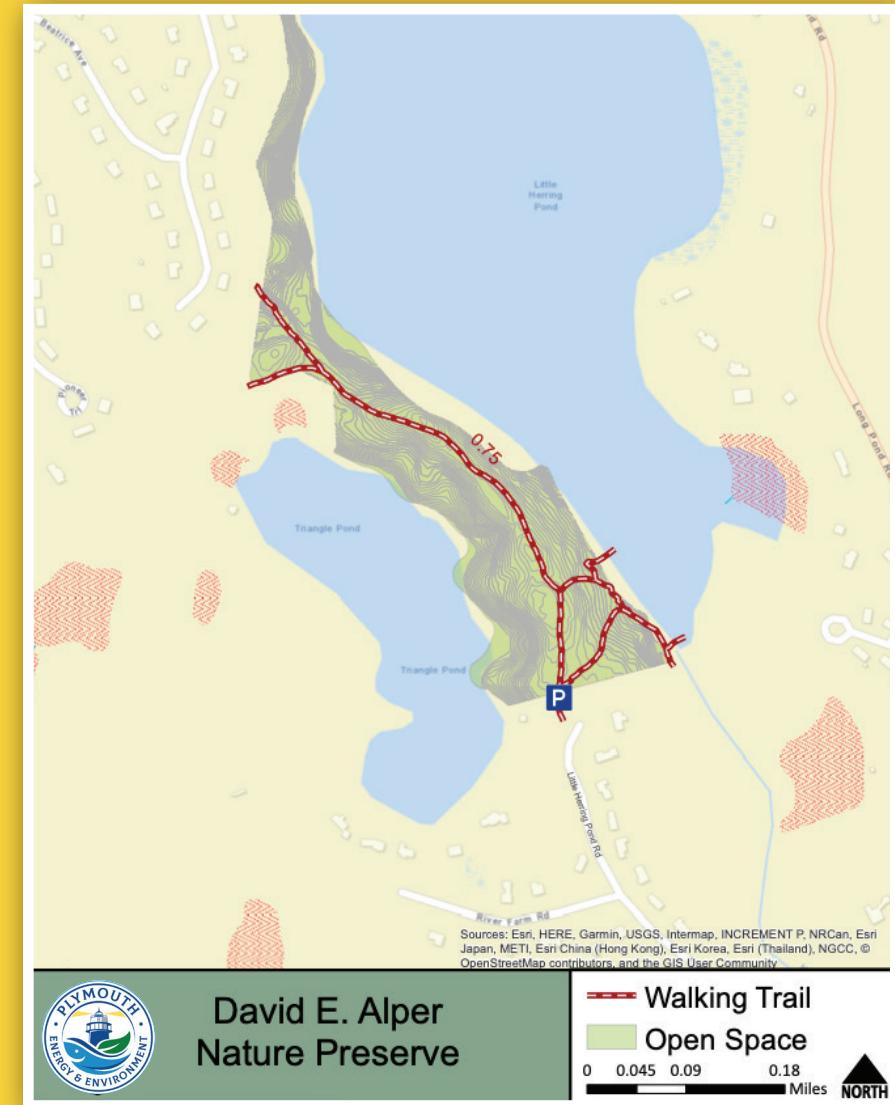
bottom, puffing away endlessly, and are a delight to watch. There is a great variety of waterfowl on this pond, and the clear water makes for interesting fish watching, too.

At the south end of the pond, you can glide right on through the old dam into one of the sweetest stretches of kayaking in Plymouth. This is Carter's Brook, which flows into Great Herring Pond after about a mile of luxurious, leisurely floating. You ride the shallow, clear water on a snappy current, over a sandy bottom, through a tunnel of overarching leafy branches. You will see turtles, fish and freshwater marsh birds. There are swampy stretches with lily pads and shoreline thickets, and while some lengths are bushy, the channel is fully passable.

About 15 minutes from the dam, there is a dilapidated culvert. This is an easy run downstream, although will take a lot more work to get through on the way back upstream. Thirty minutes from the dam, you reach the real obstacle of the Carter's Bridge Road. There would have been no problem had the workmen not hung a large sewer pipe below the span of the bridge. Here, you can get out of the kayak, shove it through the culvert, cross the road on foot and catch it on the other side. Short or limber people can scrunch down in the kayak and "walk" under the pipe. Or portage. Or turn around and head back.

Just a few yards beyond the bridge, the brook pours out into Great Herring Pond, where the chilly water blends in with the warmer water of the big pond. Here, in times of lower water, there is a convenient sand bar for sitting on. Now is a great time for a refreshing dip. This pond is "fully recreational" meaning motor boats, jet skis and water skiing will lessen the kayakers' peaceful experience. Plus, there are often stiff winds barreling up the length of this huge pond. A very different scene here, so head back upstream.

The trip back up Carter's Brook is much less leisurely, but thirty minutes or so of steady paddling will get you back to Little Herring Pond without too much effort. If you are not taking out at the dam, paddle back onto the pond, bearing to the left until you find the put in. And then up the sloping trail to where you parked. Isn't it remarkable how much heavier the kayak is at the end of a trip!



**Location:** At the end of Little Herring Pond Road, off Carter's Bridge Road

**Parking:** Plentiful, at the cul de sac and in three separate areas within the preserve

**Activity Level:** Hiking is generally easy; kayaking is easy but the put-ins are problematic.

**Duration:** Hiking about one hour, kayaking around the pond about one hour, kayaking down Carter's Brook to Great Herring Pond and back, about one hour.

**Distance:** Walking paths 1.5 to 2 miles, paddling length of the pond about 1 mile

**Features:** Water views, upland forest, excellent kayaking

# DIXON PRESERVE AT HIO HILL

The Dixon Preserve at Hio Hill is a relatively short loop. It has a killer view of Cape Cod Bay at the top of a gradual hill. Along the way, there is a jumble of elephantine boulders that school age kids will love to climb over. This nature preserve has trailhead signage, roadside parking, and benches for taking in the vista. There is a big pay-off to be had here for a little effort.

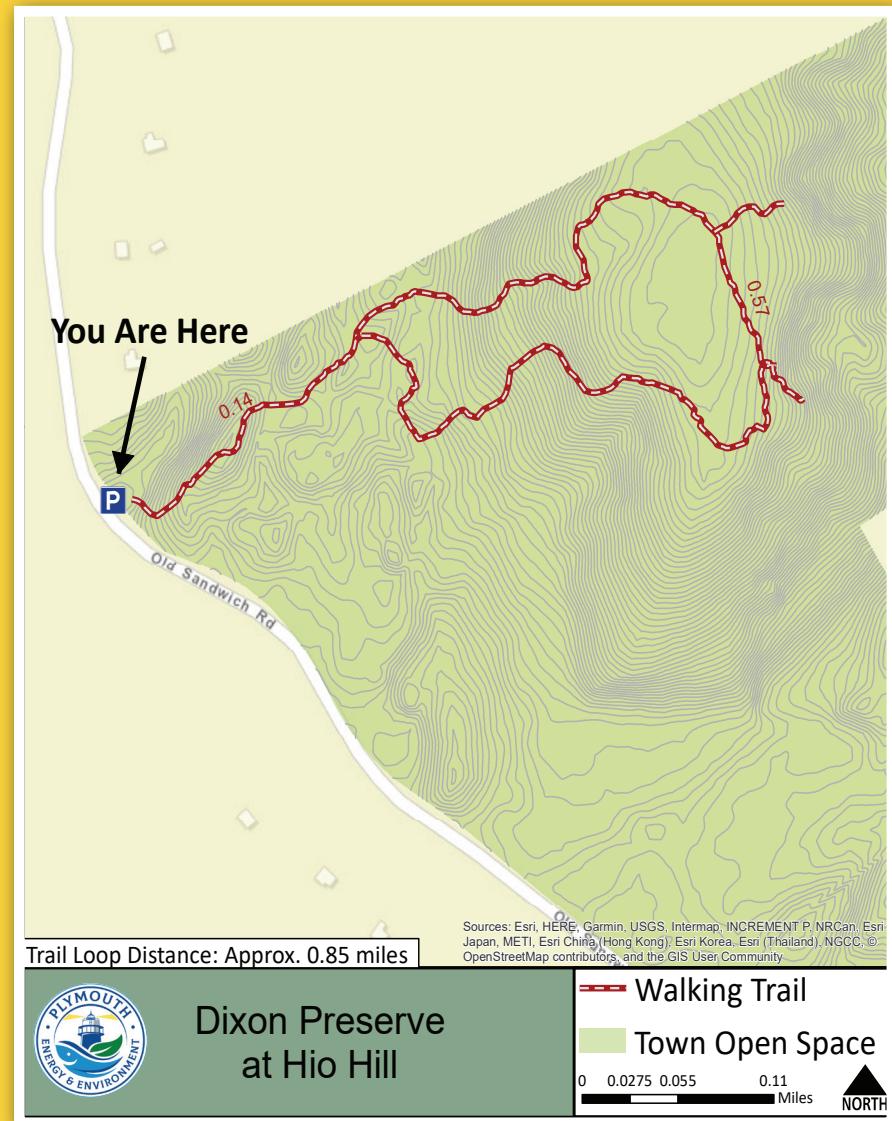
The 88 acre property was purchased by the Town using Community Preservation Funds in 2018, and supposedly derives its name from a contraction of “Ohio.” Hio Hill is one of the tallest hills in town. The single entrance trail makes its way up undulating terrain. The first landmark is a clearing in the woods, anchored by a very large pitch pine tree. From here, a loop begins and ends. Head up toward the right. Coming back down, be careful to watch for the trail markers at the north end because dirt bike tracks cut into the preserve’s trail and lead off into private properties, confusing people walking the loop.

The trees are the white and pitch pines, oaks, beeches and hollies common to Plymouth forests, with a thick understory of shrubs. Seasonally, there is a great deal of bird song in the air. As you ascend the

hill, you will pass through a boulder field of glacial erratics half buried in the forest floor. These megaliths dropped down out of the melting glacier over 13,000 years ago. They are all rounded, suggesting that they tumbled along inside the ice shield for vast distances from the bedrock off of which they broke. Torrents of melt water washed away smaller rocks and gravel, leaving only these enormous stone masses strewn about like a toddler’s blocks. The boulders are coated with various types of lichen, some smoother and sea green in color (medallion lichen,) some have big gray scales like alligator hide (toadskin lichen.)

Near the top of the hill the wide horizon of the ocean comes into view, from the electric power plant on the Cape Cod Canal to the south, all along the inner arm of the Cape to Provincetown, and finally deep out to Massachusetts Bay to the north. The view is not unobstructed; there are lots of trees. With the leaves out, the breadth of this vista is somewhat reduced. Still at any time of year, given clear weather, it is beautiful.

Follow the trail down through more glacial erratics, back to the lone pine in the clearing, and on out to Old Sandwich Road.



**Location:** Old Sandwich Road, south of the intersection with east Ship Pond Road, near #1190

**Parking:** Parallel parking for three cars. Trail map kiosk and a wooden fence

**Activity Level:** Moderate, hill of 204 ft. above sea level, about 180 feet elevation from the trailhead.

**Distance:** About one mile

**Duration:** Less than one hour

**Features:** Ocean view, massive glacial erratic boulders

# EEL RIVER PRESERVE

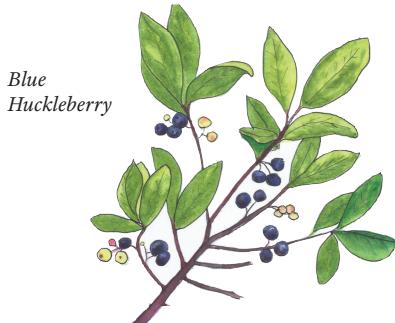
The cranberry bogs that were acquired by the Town in 2003 are the core of this, the first bog restoration project in the Commonwealth. The goal was to re-establish an Atlantic white cedar swamp, which were once common in our area and had been essentially logged out by the middle of the 20th century. In 2010, the cranberry growing infrastructure of ditches, dams and culverts were pulled out to allow the shaping of a new riverbed, and the forming of hummocks of soil and multiple small pools to encourage a diverse population of plant growth. A large wire fence was in place for five years to prevent the deer from browsing the white cedar saplings. Much was learned from this experiment and applied to later projects, such as the Tidmarsh and Foothills bog restorations. Since this was completed, the irrational exuberance of Mother Nature has reclaimed her wetlands, as demonstrated in recent years by the first river herring seen west of Long Pond Road in over 100 years.

The trail begins in the parking lot and follows a short path through the woods to the bogside trail. Turn right at the storyboard and follow the edge of the bogs in a complete circle. This open trail is particularly good for horseback riders, dog walkers, and even bicycles. It is also outstanding for snowshoeing or cross country skiing in winter, as the squishier surfaces are frozen and you can get close to the Eel River. The trail is mowed occasionally in summer time, reducing the risk of ticks. But beware: when the grass is high, the numbers of ticks are also. It is muddy in places, due to seeping springs, but passage is generally not difficult, with bog boards across the muckiest parts.

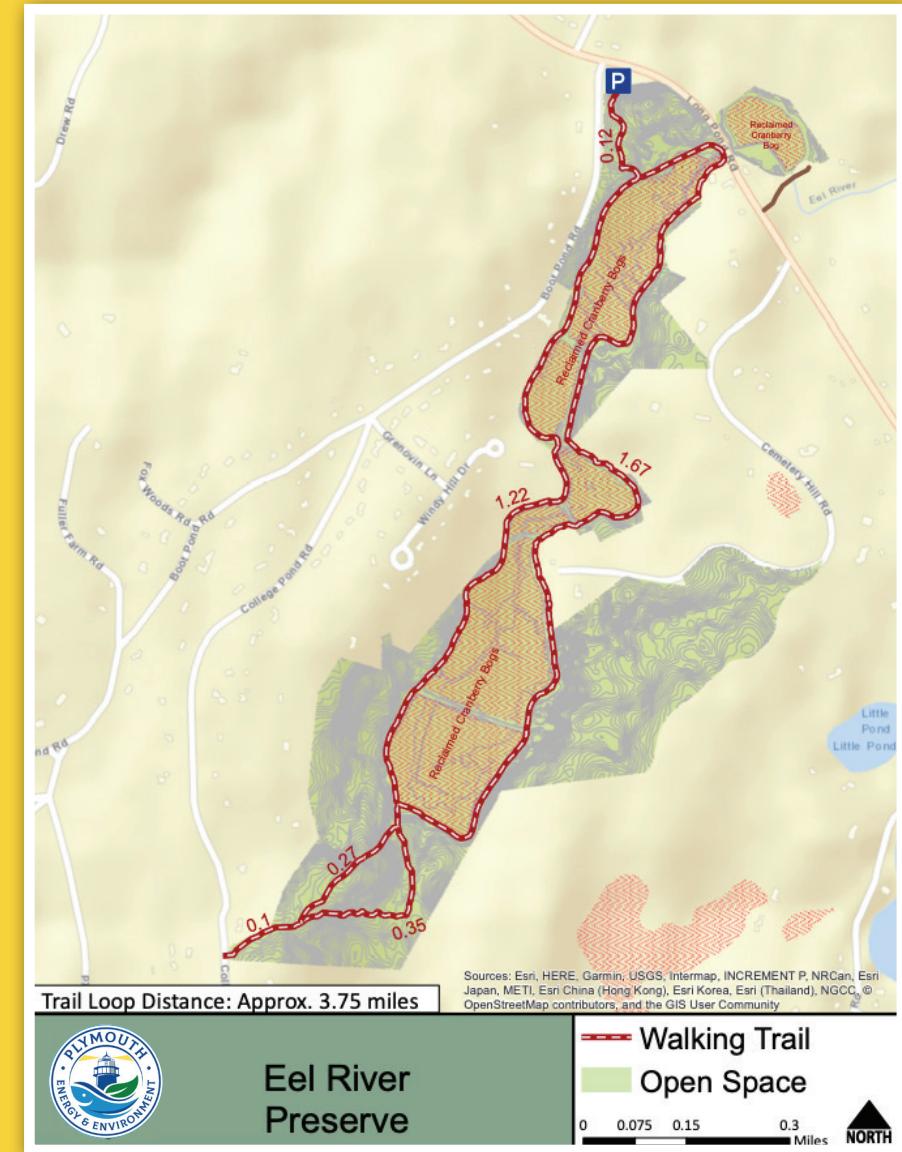
The first bog is carpeted with indigenous cattails, pussy willows, pitch pines, mosses and all manner of grasses. This area was mostly left for the shrubs and trees that thrive in wet soil to reclaim the wetland on their own. In

the second and third bogs we see the results of planting 17,000 Atlantic white cedars, when they were 12 to 18 inches tall. Some saplings died off in the areas too wet or too dry, or were eaten by voles. The drifts of cedars landing in the just right areas have reached over 30 feet in height and are spreading naturally through self-seeding.

Note the variety of bird life: ducks, geese, redwing blackbirds, and red-tailed hawks. In the springtime evening hours, there is a wonderful cacophony of peepers and frogs. The farthest back bog is filled with well established white cedars interspersed with volunteer white pines, birches, pitch pines, and shrubs. You will pass by a small, round pond; the icy cold water indicates large springs below. In the far corner, about 1.25 miles from the parking lot, a well marked offshoot trail leads up a hill to the right through upland forest and loops back to the bog. Hoyt's Pond is back here, too, but that area is not open to the public. Farther along the bogside trail, there is still evidence of cranberry cultivation: borrow pits in the hillsides from which the sand was extracted to layer onto the cranberry plants every year. Also here are an old foundation, and small doors behind which were the well heads for flooding the bogs. As you approach Long Pond Road again, the path takes a sharp left along a low fence, by the former cranberry screen house, which is private property. Follow the trail over the new culvert through which the Eel River crosses under Long Pond Road, and complete the circuit by rejoining the path to the parking lot near the storyboard.



21



**Location:** At intersection of Boot Pond Road and Long Pond Road

**Activity Level:** Easy, some hills on connecting trails

**Parking:** Plentiful parking, picnic table

**Distance:** 2.8 miles round trip

**Duration:** Very variable, about one to two hours

**Features:** Restored Atlantic white cedar swamp, ponds, brook views, decommissioned cranberry bog

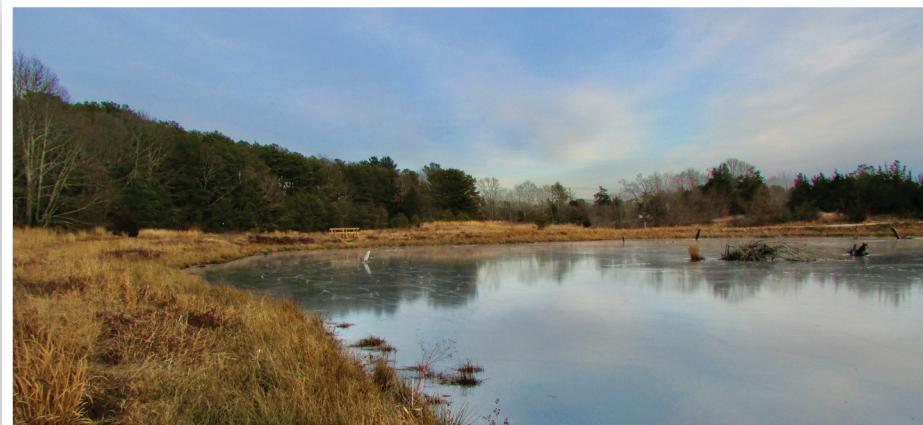
22

# FOOTHILLS PRESERVE

In the last fifteen years there have been a number of major cranberry bog restorations in the Town of Plymouth. The Foothills Preserve was completed in the Spring of 2021. This is a 126 acre preserve offering an easy circuit around former cranberry cultivation, which was methodically torn up in order to restore this wetland area to its more natural state. The goal was to return from a monoculture of cranberry vines back to a habitat supporting a wide diversity of plants and animals. In removing the bog infrastructure, the vine beds were dug up by the backhoes into pits and mounds, which provided little pools and drier hills for plants, amphibians and reptiles which favor different levels of moisture. These disturbed areas were then seeded and planted with native shrubs and trees to complement the natural seed bank that had been exposed after decades of agricultural activity. All of the plantings will need a solid few years of no disturbance to root and flourish, so please stay on the trails.

The terrain is flat, and the views are wide and clear. Sunrise and sunset are particularly impressive at this big sky site. In ten years, these long views will be lost as the trees grow and multiply; not that there is anything wrong with that! This maturation process can be best seen at the Headwaters of the Eel River Preserve, which is twelve years older than Foothills. The Pine Hills, Plymouth's most notable geological feature, hump up into the sky from the plain of the wetland. The wide trail suggests lessened tick risk.

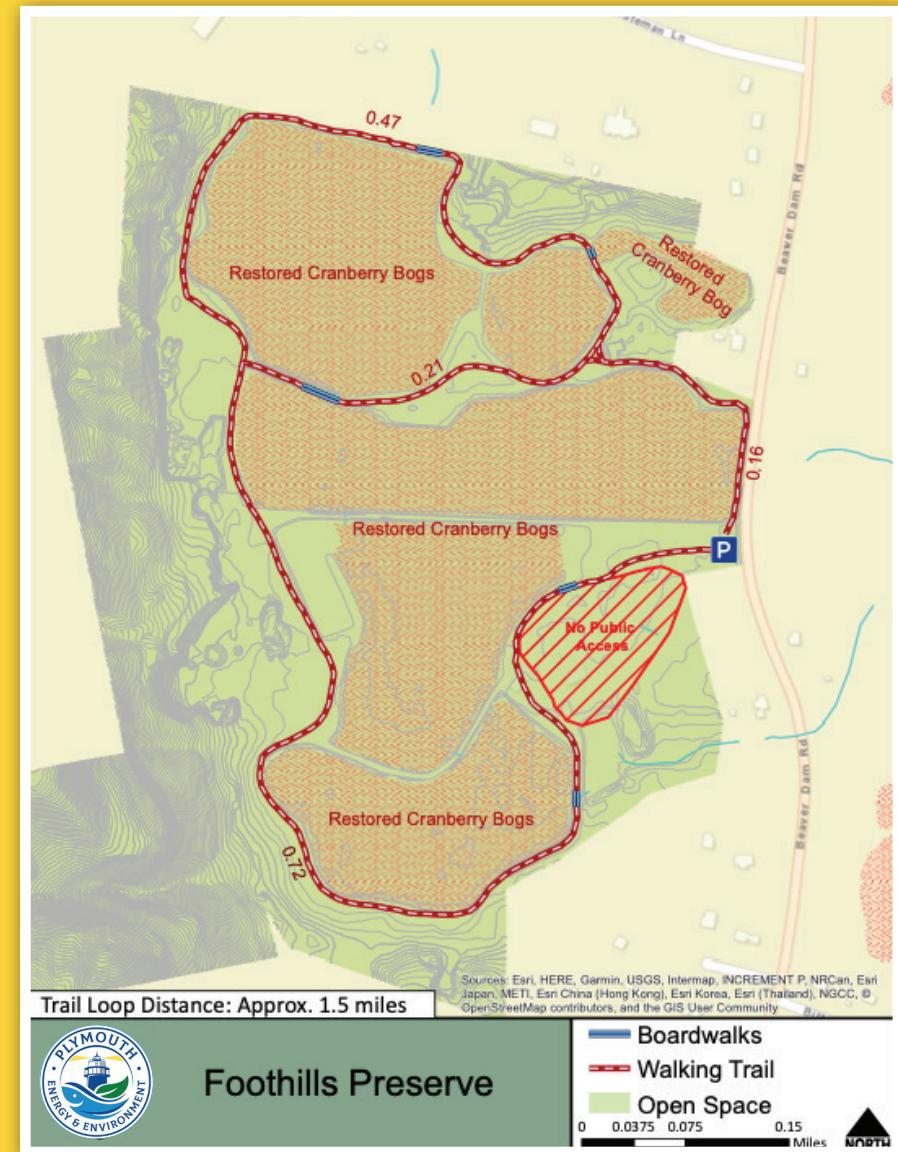
As part of the restoration plan, the straight drainage ditches were filled, and numerous, sinuous little channels were dug which



converge to form the newly named Manomet Brook. The brook meanders through the preserve for about one mile, exiting under Beaver Dam Road, and joins Beaver Dam Brook, eventually spilling into the ocean at White Horse Beach. Since nature famously abhors a vacuum, we can expect fish species, including blueback herring, brook trout and American eel, to recolonize these long lost breeding grounds. The restoration plan includes several open water ponds specifically constructed to promote duck and waterfowl habitat. Hawks and owls survey the freshwater marsh for prey from the tall trees lining the outer pathway.

From the parking lot, you can proceed either right between the road and the bog, or left through the roped off walkway, and circle the entire preserve. There is a berm so that you can cut across the eastern third of the bog, passing by a sentinel cedar tree of great age. It would be quite difficult to get lost, as your starting point is almost always in view. The wide, flat, hard sand trail is fine for bicycles, wheelchairs or strollers. Children will enjoy the footbridges and this is great dog walking terrain, also. In the southwest corner, near the Department of Energy and the Environment storage barn, note the partial whale skeleton. This whale washed up on a Plymouth shore years ago, and the bones are in the process of drying and bleaching in the sun.

Take advantage of the benches situated around the bogs to sit, admire the wildlife, and marvel how, when given half a chance, Mother Nature comes roaring back to heal the wounds of human activity.



**Location:** 81 Beaver Dam Road, opposite the Tidmarsh Audubon Sanctuary

**Activity Level:** Easy, no hills

**Parking:** Six cars

**Distance:** 1.5 miles to over 2 miles

**Duration:** Variable, 40 to 60 minutes

**Features:** Pond views, brooks, bridges, whale bones; good for dog walking, bicycling, strollers

# HEDGES POND RECREATIONAL AREA & PRESERVE

The Hedges Pond Recreation and Conservation Area is unique for offering great facilities for active recreation in addition to an ample woodland tract for passive recreation. "Active" refers to structured activities like sports and games, and "passive" means enjoying the forest on foot with minimal infrastructure, experiencing nature in a low impact way. There is a wide sandy beach near a pine grove for enjoying the clear, shallow water of this 26 acre pond. Additionally, there are many picnic tables, tennis and basketball courts, playing fields, restrooms, horseshoe pits, a toddlers' sandbox, and playground structures. Access is free at all times off season. Summer time is more complicated: from the third week in June through the third week in August, a beach sticker or \$20 is required. On weekdays during the summer, the area may be closed when Camp Clark uses it.

Call the Recreation Department at Town Hall to find out the latest information. 508-747-1620 Ext 10137 [recadmin@plymouth-ma.gov](mailto:recadmin@plymouth-ma.gov)

The trail enters the woods from either end of the beach area and circumnavigates the pond; just walk keeping the pond on the same side. Kayaks, canoes and paddle boards are allowed but no motorized watercraft.

The trails are generally well marked, but take care not to head off down an ATV track. There are two or three secondary trails, one closer to the shore. The shore trail starts at the very far southeast end of the beach area, keeping the pond on your right and the composting area up on the left. It soon comes to a T, go left to join the main trail. Or go right which leads down to a tiny beach. The main trail is almost entirely flat and wide, with just a few bushier parts on those secondary trails.

The width of a trail matters. First, because ticks are always a concern. Imagine the little buggers holding onto the tips of branches with four of their legs, waving the other four in the air waiting to snag a sleeve or a pant leg – or dog fur. (Ticks are arachnids, like spiders.) Unlike fleas, they do not jump, but static electricity or a draft can launch them onto clothes passing nearby.

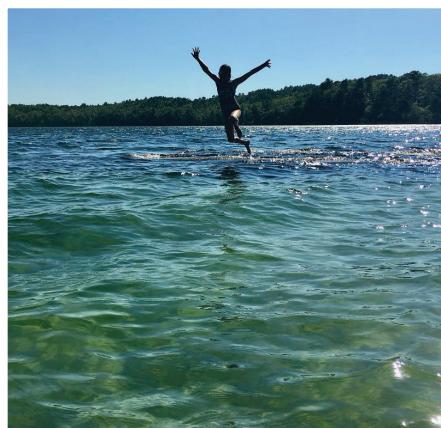
The forest is the familiar Plymouth mélange of tall white pines, pitch pines, scrub oaks, birches, beeches and woodland shrubs. At

certain times of the year, especially in the early morning or at dusk, the woods are alive with birdsong and peepers. Unfortunately, it is also alive with the traffic sound of the highway, bordering this preserve. When the leaves are out, this noise pollution may diminish. However, it does strike a discordant note when you are trying to lose yourself in nature.

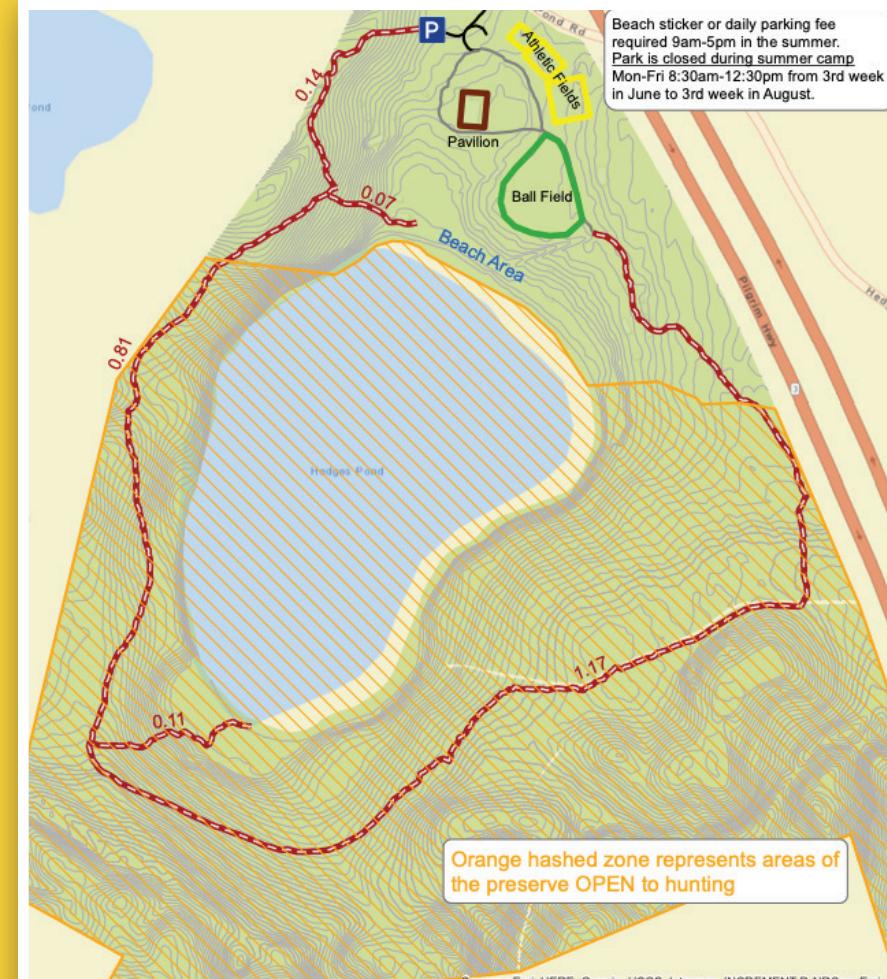
Of interest is a rhododendron grove planted ages ago by some forest gardener. There are no foundations or cellar holes nearby, so one can only speculate why they are here. Also, a path through these rhodies leads down into a kettle hole at the bottom of which is a black water wetland. Here and there can be seen remnants of hand-dug ditches, started and then abandoned. All very mysterious.

At the south end of the pond, there is a four way intersection. A path leads down to a small sliver of a sand beach, the width of which fluctuates with the seasonal water levels. At this point, the path heading west, only one tenth of a mile long, leads to the Long Pond Road access. This access is intentionally unimproved in order to discourage overuse. Keep on the main path to finish the circuit.

The Hedges Pond Recreational and Conservation Area offers a great deal to every family constellation: elders, dog walkers, toddlers, teens. Come for a simple soul nourishing walk, or bring a picnic and spend the whole day.



**\*\*Please note that this facility requires a sticker or parking fee for access during the summer months.\*\***



Trail Loop Distance: Approx. 2.25 miles



## Hedges Pond Recreational Area and Preserve

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



**Location:** 158 Hedges Pond Road, Cedarville. Additional access on Long Pond Road, near street number 1001, 0.7 mile past the intersection with Hedges Pond Road.

**Parking:** Two parking lots accommodating 30 to 40 cars, ample parking off season. Fees apply in season. At the Long Pond Road entrance, up to four cars depending on how people park. No signs, no trail markers there.

**Activity Level:** Mostly easy, some low hills

**Distance:** Variable, 1.5 - 2 mile circuit of pond, or as much as 3.75 miles

**Duration:** Variable, about 30 minutes to 90 minutes

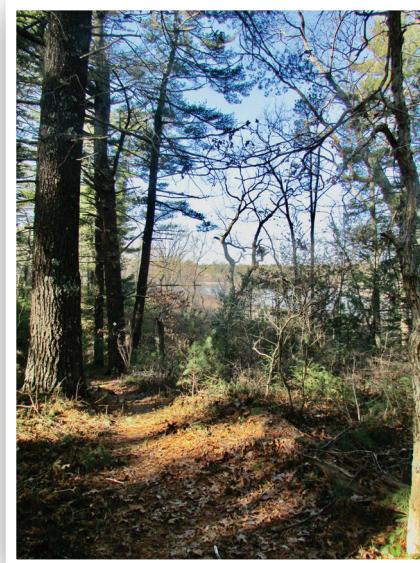
**Features:** Pond views, swimming, recreation facilities, kayaking, mountain biking, dog walking

# INDIAN BROOK CONSERVATION AREA

Within the 210 acre Indian Brook Conservation Area is an old trail that was reopened and extended to near the shore of Shallow Pond. This is a well marked there-and-back-again route, not a loop. Indian Brook itself has been impounded by a dam under State Road for decades, to form a reservoir for cranberry bogs, and the preserve fronts this body of water for about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile. This shoreline is not accessible except by way of some rough spurs off the main trail.

Find the beginning of the trail directly behind the children's playground, next to the last ball field. The path passes through mixed upland forest, with evergreens like white pine, pitch pine, mountain laurel and holly. The deciduous trees are oaks, maples, ashes, beech, birches and others common to Plymouth. In general, there is a lot of growth in the understory, so long views are limited, especially in the leaf seasons.

You may notice the two or three crude swales crossing the trail. These may be from erosion by heavy rain, but as one side is humped up higher than the other, it suggests that these are hand dug ditches. Like the channels in a drain board, these may have collected and directed the run-off from heavy rain down to the reservoir. Finding little mysteries like these can lead to pleasant speculation in the woods. There are a few side trails here and there, especially one off to the right which leads to the ball field. The main trail enters a grove of extremely large white pines with thick horizontal limbs, almost as if it were an old growth stand. If "old growth" means more than 150 years old, some of these pines may qualify. The trail comes onto a public dirt road; take a left here. Follow the dirt road down about 50 yards and watch for the trail marker on the right, which leads you back into the forest.



over gently undulating land. Follow the trail to a circle on a rise, where the conservation boundary line marker and a bench denote the end of a trail. In the winter, you'll see Shallow Pond.

On the way back, take a right onto the dirt road. One tenth of a mile down the way brings you to Indian Brook, which flows down to the sea at the north end of Seaview Drive. There are hopes for the future which include removing the dam under State Road to allow the brook to return to its long submerged riverbed and encourage fish to recolonize the habitat. Return back up the dirt road, watching for the trail marker on the right directing you back into the woods, and finally to the parking lot.

One more item of interest in this area is the Indian Brook Elementary School Trail, behind the school. Access it by walking past the cell phone tower near the playground. Find the trail which takes off from the northwest corner of the school, and enjoy a short circuit on a pine needle carpeted path, among large, old trees. Sometimes there is a Story Walk - a children's book whose pages are displayed along the trail - and it is always fun to look for the children's projects in this forest.



**Location:** 1197 State Road, Manomet Recreation Area, just south of the Indian Brook Elementary School.

**Parking:** Ample paved parking near the children's playground

**Activity Level:** Easy, small hills

**Distance:** 1.1 miles of trail, 2 plus miles round trip

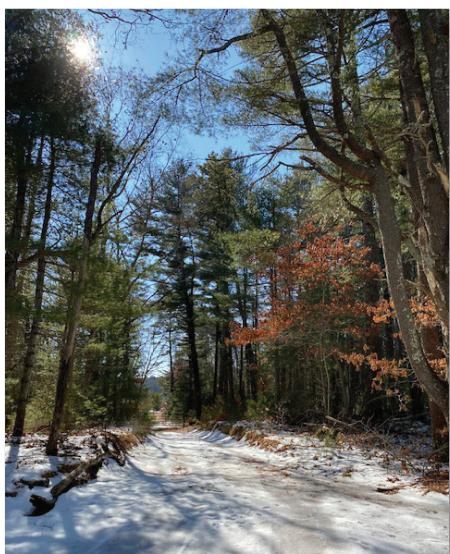
**Duration:** Less than 1 hour

**Features:** Groves of very large white pines, seasonal pond views

# KAPELL PINNACLE PRESERVE

Over one hundred years ago the cranberry industry exploded in Plymouth. Dozens of bogs were created out of many swamps and low lying areas; brooks and river beds were bulldozed, ground water channeled into ditches, berms and gates installed to control water levels, new ponds were dug, and reservoirs backed up behind dams. Within the last 50 years or so, with the cranberry industry facing stiff competition from “big agriculture” in Wisconsin, many bogs have been abandoned. A number of these, along with their forested uplands, have been acquired by the Town as conservation preserves, with the aim of restoring the natural land contours. Kapell-Pinnacle is one of the latest. Named both for its donor and for the nearby high point of Pinnacle Hill, this area has four decommissioned cranberry bogs and three ponds, one natural, two man-made. The trail is a wide, flat, grassy path around the bogs with an offshoot in-and-out trail through a stand of mature white pines.

From the parking swale, pass through the wooden fence to a short switchback trail that comes down onto the bog level. Turn left here to begin the circuit. This area is unusual in that it is a “kettle bog,” with no natural inlet or outlet. The water levels rise and fall as the water table fluctuates with rainfall or droughts. The drier uplands are the usual pitch pine, scrub oak and white pine woodland. Perhaps you will be struck

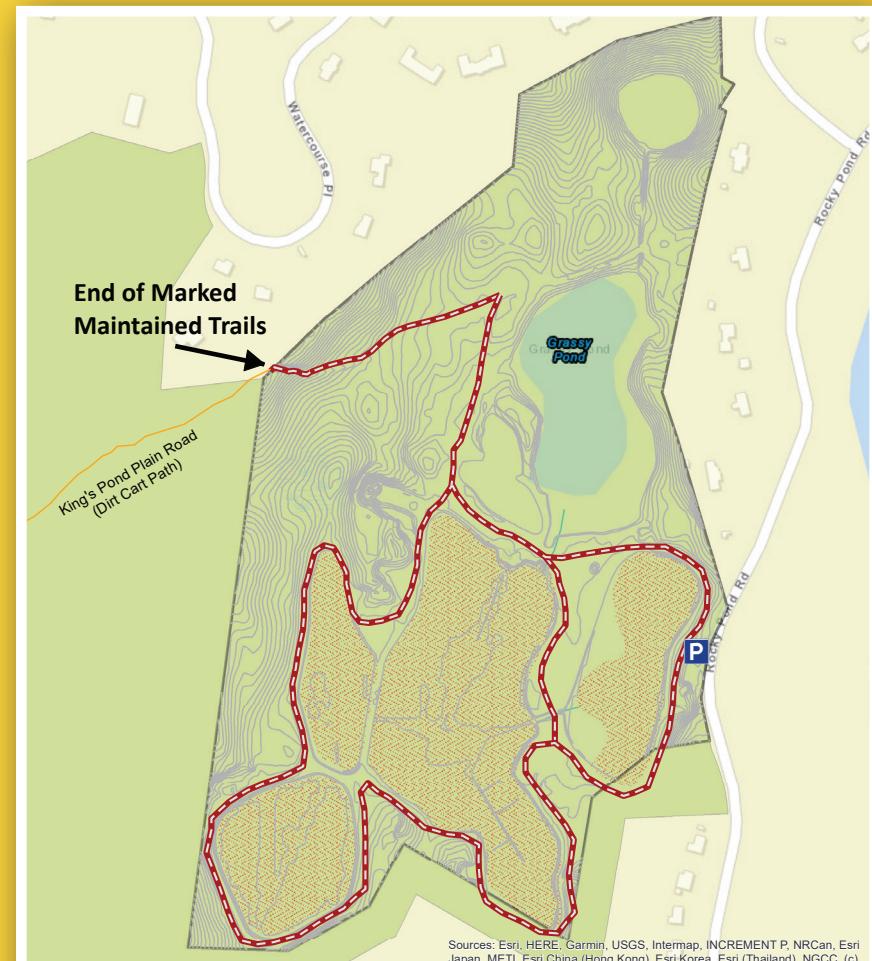


by the total, blissful silence, as the main road in this area is not heavily travelled. At this time, there is still a great deal of cranberry infrastructure, such as ditches and sluice gates. The plan is to fill in the ditches, pull out concrete water gates, restore the natural connectivity of the bogs, and churn up the sand layer to expose once more the peat and the long buried seed bank, allowing native plants to sprout.

The path is wide and flat; good for bicycles, strollers with big wheels, horseback riding, and dog walking. In winter time, cross country skiing and snowshoeing would be excellent. In the summer the path is mowed, but if the grass gets too tall, ticks will be a serious problem. As you make your way, notice the borrow pits at the edges of the woods: scooped out hillsides where the growers would excavate sand each year to spread over the cranberry vines. They “borrowed” sand but they never returned it.

The back bog has always had “too much water” for the growers who sometimes had to pump it out. Now it will reassert itself as a shallow pond, hosting ducks, herons, Canada geese and amphibians. There is a pitch pine grove along this back bog. In this area is a small but important sand plain grassland, a sunny meadow to be kept mowed to prevent woody vegetation overgrowth. Keeping to the left, leave the bogs and pass by two dug retention ponds, then enter the white pine forest, through the swing gate. About one hundred yards from the bogs, there is a T intersection. If you went left, you would leave Kapell Pinnacle to follow a woods road deep into the woods with cross trails to the Watercourse development, the Micajah Pond area, or Federal Furnace Road. But turn right, following the shore of a natural pond. Pass over a wide, dry ditch which was dug to capture runoff of rainstorms and direct the water through a sluice gate to the ponds. Just after this, locate the boundary marker and turn around. Straight ahead leads to Rocky Pond Road, but this is private property.

Return the way you came, bearing left at the artificial ponds and the pump house to make your way back on the trail to the parking area. As time passes, given ten or twenty years, Nature will reclaim her lost terrain with a vigorous, diverse community of trees, grasses and shrubs offering rich habitat for fish and fowl.

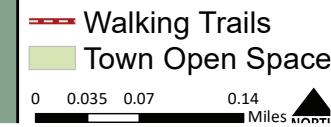


Trail Distance: Approx. 1.25 miles



## Kapell-Pinnacle Preserve

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community; Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community



**Location:** South of 75 Rocky Pond Road, parking swale on right. Sign about 50 ft further

**Parking:** 4 cars

**Activity Level:** Easy

**Distance:** 1.5 - 2 miles

**Duration:** About 1 hour

**Features:** Wetlands, pond views, flat grassy path, rewilding cranberry bogs

# MORTON PARK

Morton Park is the oldest and one of the most heavily used conservation areas in the Town of Plymouth. While the public beach area on Little Pond is well known to most people, the western half of this park is less well known. Park at the beach called "Red Springs." Despite research and inquiries, the origin of this name remains a mystery. Presumably it refers to the rusty reddish mud seen in many wetlands in this area, from which bog iron was once smelted. Yet looking down into the wetland behind the beach area, you see not only no springs, but no red - the water is as black as coffee, stained by tannic acid in leaves.

The western half of the park is encircled by a circuit road, within which are more loops of trails. It is confusing, but you won't get lost if you recognize which body of water is which, Little Pond or Billington Sea. The woods throughout this park are mature forest: white pines, birches, oaks, beech. The silence under this canopy of trees is profound – it is hard to believe that this park is so close to the bustling highways and downtown. The wetlands are a thicket of shrubbery, but in winter you can see the full extent of the black water swamp.

We will start by going southwest along a forest road, through a swing gate, keeping Little Pond on the left. This wide, easy road follows the shore of one of Plymouth's finest spring-fed, clear water ponds. As it has no outlet and no inlet, it is a classic kettle pond. As the road pulls away from the shore, on the right there is a path, marked by lined up logs. There's fun to be had in there, but we will get to that later.

Less than one half mile from the Red Springs beach, a boulder on the right marks another woods path option. Taking this will connect you across a neck of land to the western end of Billington Sea. Go down that path or continue straight until, through the trees, you can see Seymour Island out in Billington Sea. A large grove of beech trees is here.

There are options: stay on the road or find the pond side path, knobbly with tree roots, which parallels the road. Or you can circle Little Pond on the circuit road by turning left. Turning right will keep you in the western end of the park, leaving Little Pond behind. If you turn right, there will appear a four way intersection in a level clearing - for a shorter walk, take a right here. To extend the walk, go straight. This is the wind-sheltered

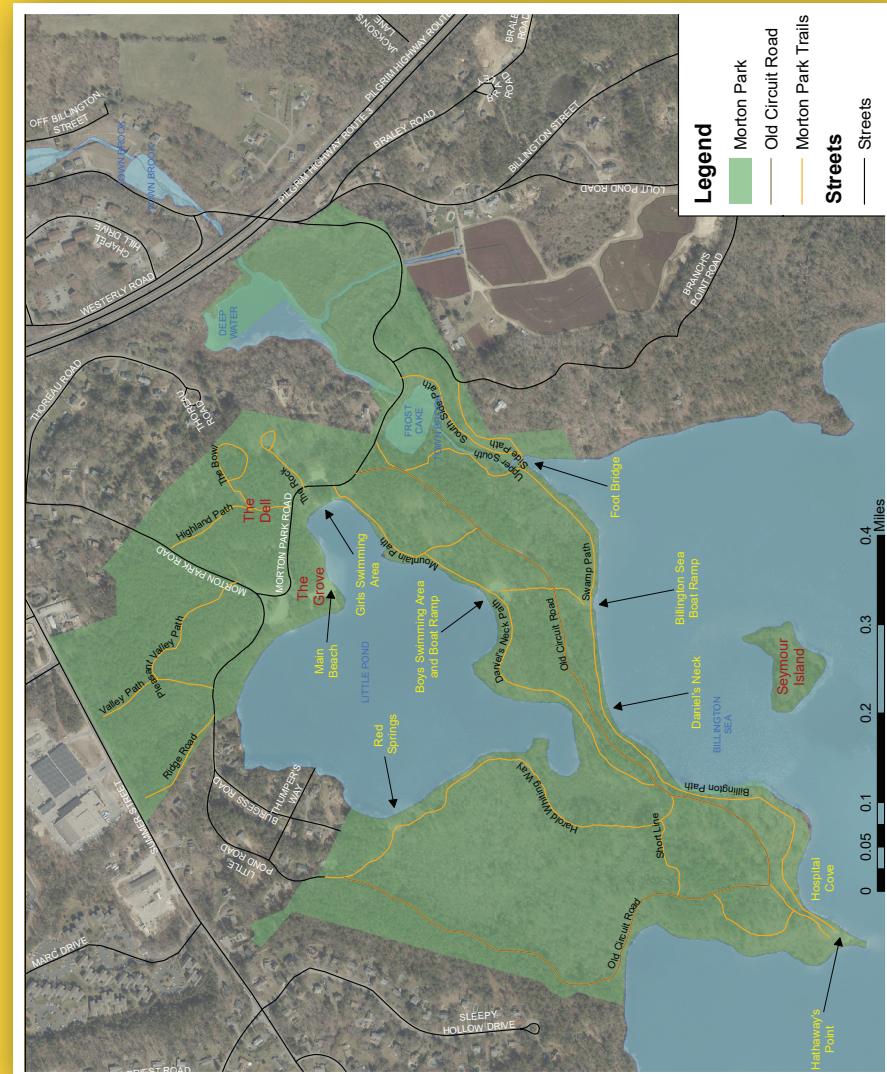
Hospital Cove or Hospital Landing, named for a quarantine hospital in the 1770s. In the early days of smallpox vaccinations, those being inoculated had to be isolated for about three weeks and this was where people were quarantined. No trace remains of what happened here except for the name.

The road and the shore path converge at Hathaway's Point, a thin finger of land extending out into Billington Sea, edged by a wide fan of sand under the shallow water. Both lobes of the large Billington Sea can be seen from this spot. Dozens of swans winter over on Billington Sea and can best be seen from this spot. The distance from the start of the hike to the Point is a little more than one mile.

From this point head back, following the circuit road, or taking the interesting ups and downs of the path along the Billington shore. Soon after that path rejoins the road, there is a cable threaded through a PVC pipe to form a gate. This is the western end of the path we saw earlier, near Little Pond. One option is to take this narrower path for about 100 yards. Here, another path takes off to the left for a cool little swamp tour along a sinuous low ridge line. This path is fun as it climbs a number of small mounds of glacial till, and crosses over standing black water on short boardwalks. It comes out onto the outermost circuit road near the western boundary of the park land. Take a right to head north to Red Springs.

A second option at the PVC pipe gate is to stay on the circuit road with Billington Seal on the left, running atop a low dyke. Note the culvert which is the only drainage of the large wetland to the right which we have been circling this whole time. The road forks to the right and leaves the Billington shore. The left fork leads into private property, so don't go there. This stretch of road is another "cathedral of the pines" experience, with thick pine needles forming a coppery carpet down the "aisle" framed by huge white pines. On the left is the trail leading to Sleepy Hollow Drive. On the right, easy to miss despite the logs lined up, is the entrance to the boardwalk swamp path.

Continuing on the road will bring you to the swing gate where the circuit road terminates at the end of Little Pond Road. Red Springs beach is visible to the right and you are back to the start.



**Location:** 236 Summer Street, rear entrance near 129 Billington St.  
Red Springs public beach at the end of Little Pond Road in  
Morton Park

**Parking:** During off season, plenty of spaces. Beach sticker or fee required in season, free parking after 5 PM.

**Activity Level:** Generally easy, open dirt roads, short hills, waterside paths have roots

**Duration:** Variable, maximum 1.5 hours

**Distance:** Variable, maximum 2.75 miles

**Features:** Water views, boardwalks, beech groves, swimming, and paddle sports

# ROCKY POINT PRESERVE

The Pine Hills of Plymouth, nearly 400 feet in height, lie on an almost exact north-south axis, and are made of bedrock with a thick overlay of glacial debris. The hills come to an abrupt end at Rocky Point, where a jumble of gigantic boulders spills down the steep slope, onto a terrace which levels out to become a high cliff overlooking the ocean. This is the dramatic terrain of the Rocky Point Preserve, a 24 acre recent acquisition by the Town. As you turn into the preserve, note the extremely old copper beech whose trunk is almost five feet in diameter. From the parking area, look back across Rocky Hill Road to the hill with giant rocks strewn all over. Then pass through the swing gate onto the tree lined driveway leading to the site of the old summer "cottage" which anchored this estate. Notice the long shallow pond on the right, the edges of which are lined with boulders. This fills with water seasonally, and never entirely dries out. It is too big to be a simple vernal pond, so was it designed as something scenic? Or was it a farm pond? Note the large old rhododendron signaling an approach to a home site. At the end of the driveway, where the house was, a wildflower meadow was planted in 2024. Please keep off this area for a few years while it gets established.

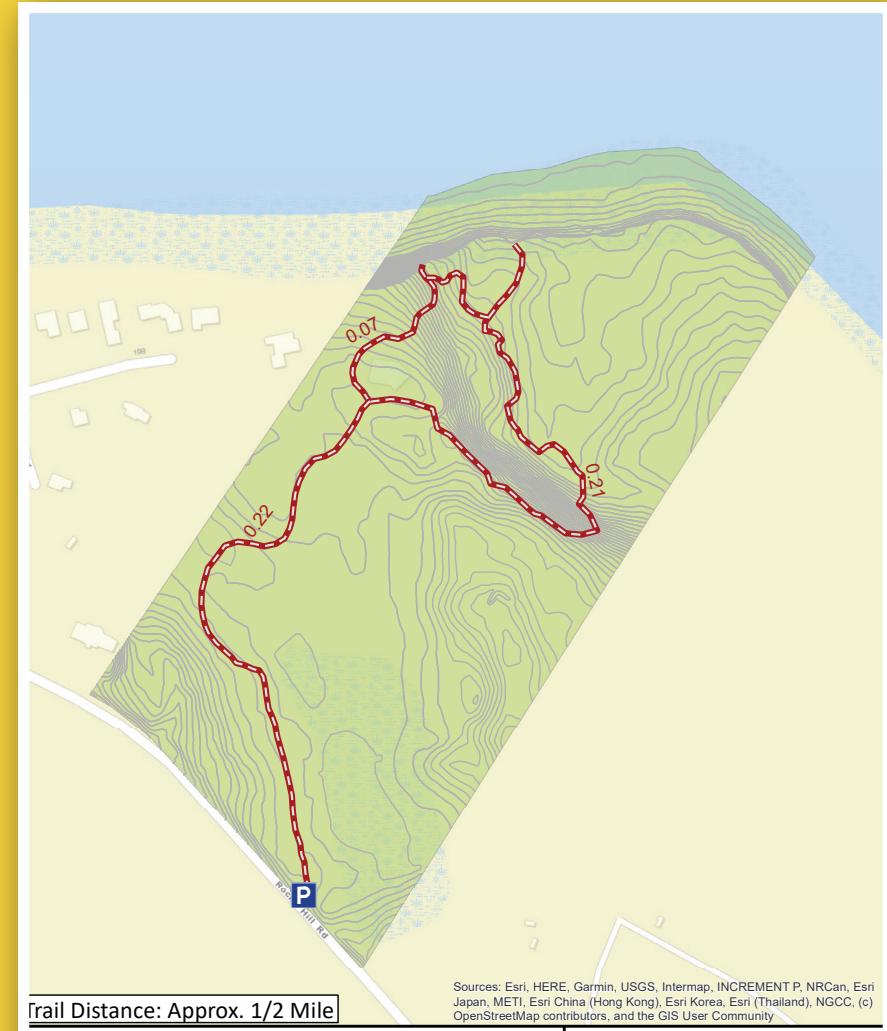


Walk around to the left and find the first of two short paths with views of the ocean. These points offer a thrilling overlook of Warren Cove, Long Beach, Saquish and the Gurnet, and to the right Cape Cod Bay. The railings are a reminder not to get too close to the unstable edge of the sandy, gravelly cliff. Please do not climb on this cliff as that will accelerate erosion. The boulder strewn "beach" below is more of a "look, but don't touch" place, not exactly welcoming. And the wind at this point can be fierce. But the view is stunning. Look for seals and various water fowl.

Follow the well trod path lower to the second spur to another view point, then come back along the stone wall on your left. Stone walls like these are a characteristic feature of southeastern New England, but for some reason, there aren't that many in Plymouth. This network of stone walls outlines a relatively wide, flat bowl suggesting it was once a tilled farm field, or at the very least, a pasture. Other paths to the right lead back up to the house site/ wildflower meadow. Continuing, cross left over the stone wall following the trail and skirt the inside of the bowl. Depending on the season and whether the leaves are out, you can appreciate a whole necklace of stone walls here.

At the place where the stone walls form an X, cross over and begin to climb up the switchback and to the right, reaching the trail on the rim of the basin. Along the rim, on the left is another trail. This short out-and-back path passes a majestic oak and ends at a large flat rock, overlooking the vernal pools and the long pond. Notice the many high bush blueberries which love the wet soil in places like this.

Retrace your steps to the edge of the bluff, jump the ditch, and follow the trail back to the house site. This small channel, the outlet of the wetlands, flows in the spring and is dry the rest of the year. Walk along the edge of the wildflower meadow to return along the driveway back to the parking swale.

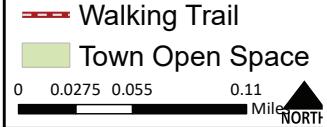


Trail Distance: Approx. 1/2 Mile



## Rocky Point Preserve

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



**Location:** 280 Rocky Hill Road

**Parking:** Three cars easily, maybe 5. Shoulders of Rocky Hill Road are **not** suitable for parking.

**Activity Level:** Easy, switch back trail on one hill

**Distance:** 1 - 1.5 miles

**Duration:** About 1 hour

**Features:** Ocean views, small ponds, network of stonewalls, boulder field

# RUSSELL MILL POND

This property was converted to recreational use at the same time as the Headwaters of the Eel River Preserve. As you leave the parking swale, on your left is a small former cranberry bog from which agricultural structures and ditches were removed. The area is now completely overgrown, naturalized with a combination of self-seeded volunteers, and planted trees and shrubs, such as pitch pines, white pines, birches, maples, and white cedars. A narrow channel was excavated to attempt to replicate the obliterated riverbed. The surface of this bog area was left intentionally quite lumpy, with vernal pools in the low spots. This knobby terrain creates pockets of favorable conditions for plants with different preferences for moisture. There are no walking paths in there, but along the northeast edge is a sandy path around the young forest with trails leading toward Tall Pines Road. The original source of the Eel River was out of Great South Pond and the river once ran through this area. Herring, shad and eels migrated up the river until twentieth century diversions closed it off.

The main path leads into a woodscape very different from the restored bogs. The pine trees tower high and the ground is well upholstered with copper pine needles. Here is the site of the 19th and early 20th century sawmill, once powered by the water impounded by a dam across the Eel River. Note the granite building blocks which are remnants of mill structures and raceways. The mill manufactured wooden boxes and barrels, and later made "shoddy" fabric. Most of the dam was removed during the restoration, which caused the mill pond to drain down

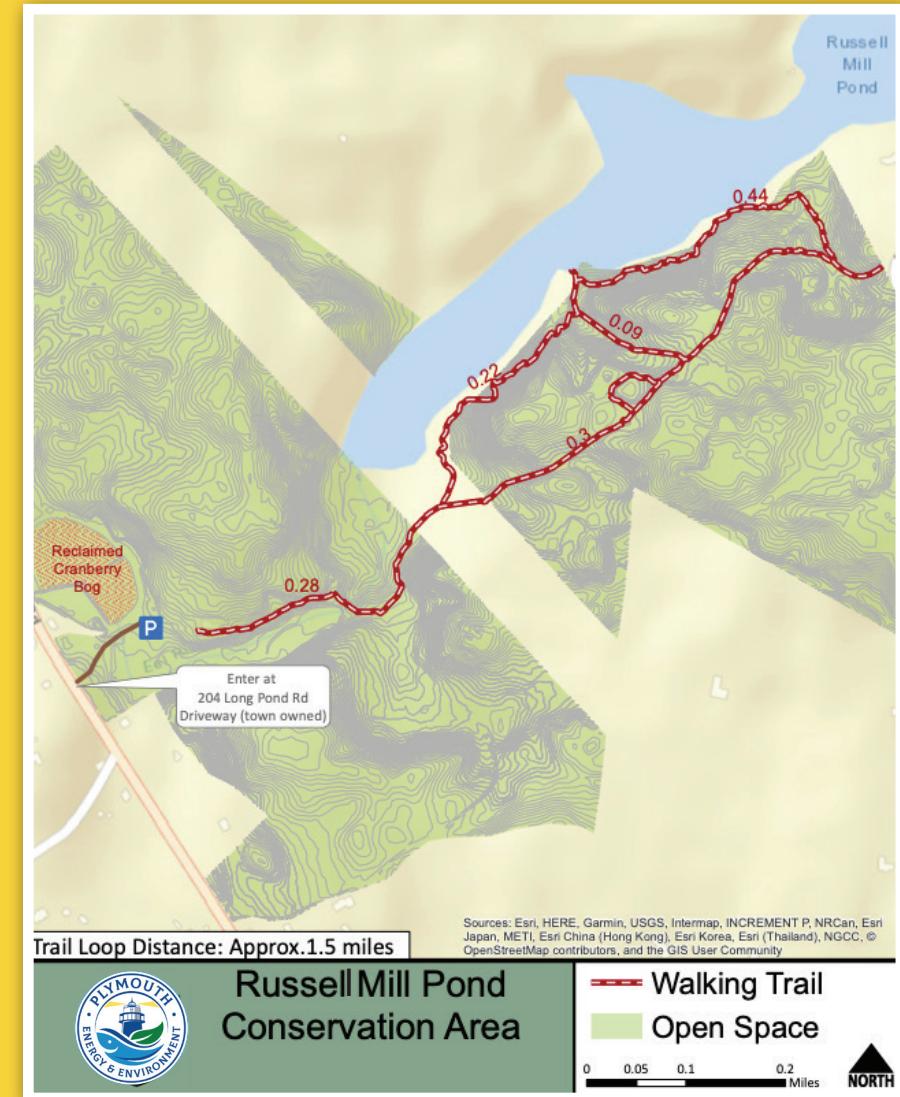
and allowed the ancient river bed to slough off two hundred years of accumulated sediment. A modern foot bridge spans this dam site, from which you can watch the clear, roiling water tumble down over boulders and around tree stumps.

Follow the well marked trail eastward, under the high tension wires, near where the brook opens out into a delta of marshland at the western edge of Russell Mills Pond. There is excellent birding in this area. Here there is a great deal of torn-up ground caused by motorized traffic, but pass over that to where the trail divides. To the right, the woods road follows an easy course for about a half mile to where it terminates at Kingfisher Lane. Turn around here and walk back about 1.3 miles to your car.

Another option is the pondside trail to the left, which is a narrow but well marked footpath snaking along the side of a steep hill. This can be tricky footing at times, icy or muddy, but it has water views the whole way and is worth the effort. Some stretches are difficult; volunteers are working to stabilize the path. At about the one mile point is a long abandoned fishing camp much abused by vandals. Nearby is a sandy little spit jutting out into the water where you can admire the full length of Russell Mill Pond. This trail follows the conservation land to the boundary, then loops right to join the woods road near Kingfisher Lane. Return south westerly, to the right, to head back. You will pass some small grassy meadows under large evergreens which are another special feature of this hike.



*Sweet Pepperbush*



**Location:** 204 Long Pond Rd., Plymouth  
**Parking:** Three or four cars. One can also park at the Eel River Preserve parking lot and walk to the south and east across Long Pond Road  
**Activity Level:** Mostly easy, some steep hillside path sections  
**Distance:** 2 to 2.4 miles, round trip  
**Duration:** Variable, likely 45-60 minutes  
**Features:** River and pond views, mill ruins, freshwater marsh, woodland meadow

# RUSSELL AND SAWMILL POND CONSERVATION AREA

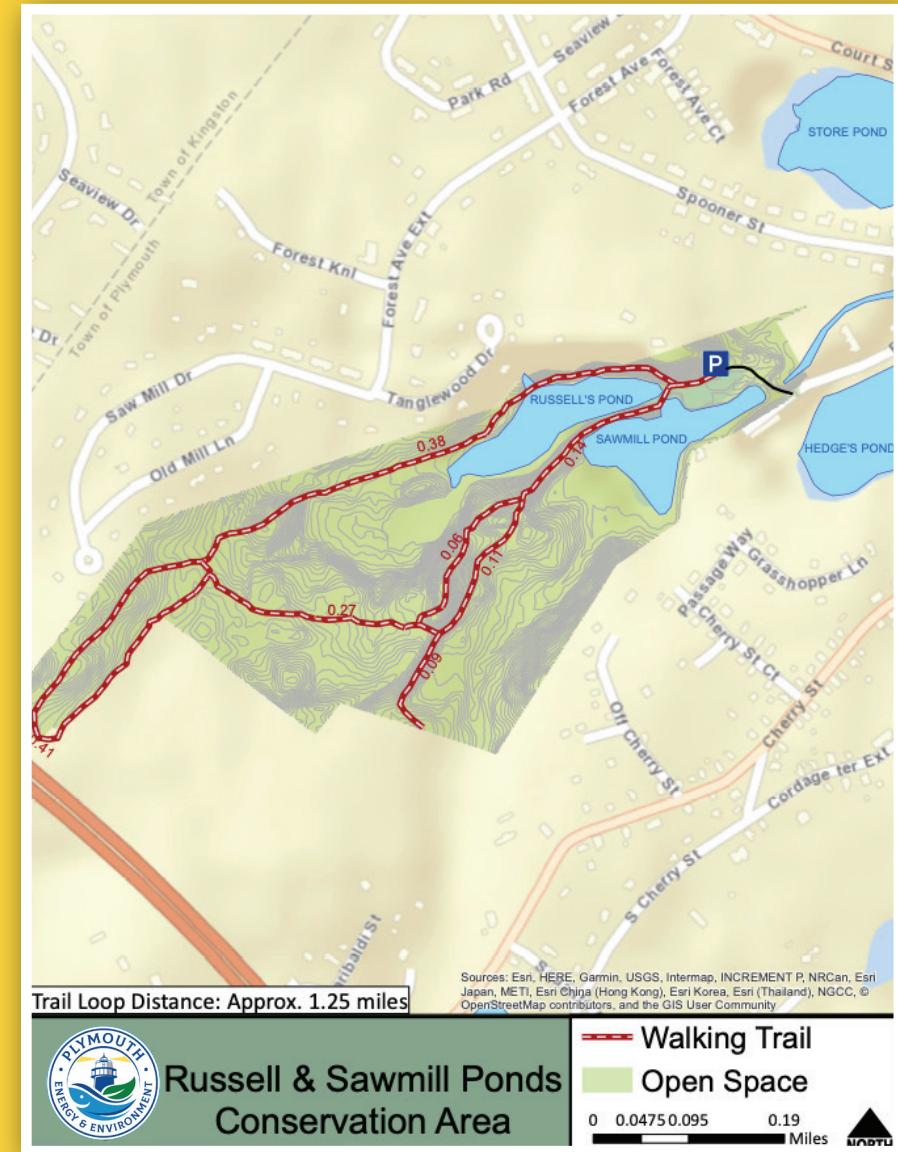
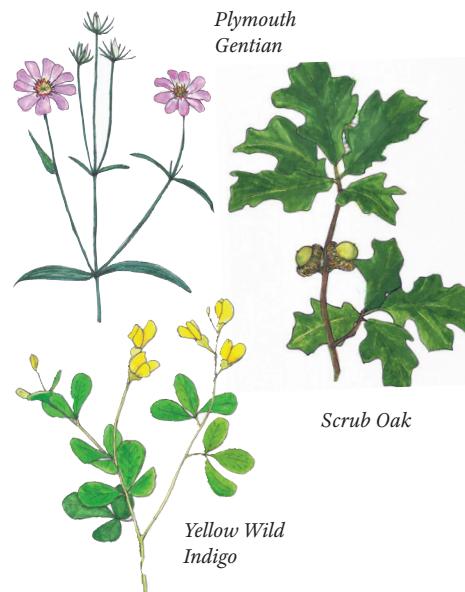
The Russell and Sawmill Ponds Conservation Area is a 64 acre retreat in the densely populated neighborhood of North Plymouth. Unfortunately there is confusion about this area and other ponds elsewhere in Plymouth also named Hedge, Russell, and Sawmill, plus some maps labeling Sawmill Pond as Stone Pond. This preserve makes for a pleasant, not overly ambitious walk, especially good for children and small dogs. It is popular with young people and demonstrates heavy usage, not always benign, as evidenced by spray painted tree trunks, missing trail markers, camping debris and litter. It is also clear that other good citizens are valiantly trying to stay ahead of the vandals. So it is a very accessible hike with a lot of variation: tall stands of mature pines, beech groves, upland scrub oak forest, ponds, a long meadow and a brook.

The two ponds are formed by a dam near the entrance where one assumes the namesake sawmill was located, although no trace of 19th century mill works remain. These ponds are stocked with fish, and there is much fishing activity in season. The source of Russell Pond is at its west end, a wetland spongy with multiple mucky springs. Sawmill/ Stone Pond is fed by a clear running brook which arises in the wetlands south of Cherry Street and Squanto Road.

Begin the hike at the swing gate. The hiking route is a long looping circle, with two offshoot, in-and-out paths. Despite the criss-crossing and back looping trails, it would take some effort to become lost as the preserve boundaries are quite evident. Bear left beyond the gate, walking on the causeway between the two ponds and follow a cart path up into the woods. About a third of a mile in, the trail marker suggests a turn to the right. You can proceed straight on the cart path for an in-and-out side trail, which follows the brook, to the end of the preserve at someone's well marked backyard. Walk back to the trail marker and turn up into the pine grove, following a soft, pine needle strewn path. This stately grove draws the teenage night life and vandals defacing tree trunks.

After about an eighth of a mile another offshoot trail on the left, with intermittent trail markers, leads up between dry kettle holes and scrub oaks until it peters out. Back to the central pine grove, keep bearing left / west and join the old cart paths. It is always interesting how really old dirt roads become deeper over time, just as many Civil War battlefields have a "Sunken Road." About a third of a mile in, you will reach the point where the 20th century construction of Route 3 cut off the cart path. Turn right here, making a U-turn east toward the ponds, under the electric power lines, in a long, golden, grassy meadow. Keeping the woods on your right, follow the hilly meadow until the trail marker points you back into the pine grove. It is possible to continue straight, however, along a somewhat overgrown path until it bears to the left (unmarked) into the trees, paralleling the back fences of the houses on Tanglewood Drive. This path skirts Russell Pond, through a lovely beech grove, on a gently undulating, root bound path. The loop closes as you approach the causeway and the swing gate.

If you have walked the two offshoot paths, you will have walked about 2.80 miles.



**Location:** At the western end of Bourne Street, off Standish Avenue, in North Plymouth; turn right at the preserve sign,

**Parking:** Lots of space for many cars

**Activity Level:** Mostly easy, a few low hills

**Distance:** Varies depending on route, about 1 to 3 miles

**Duration:** Varies depending on route, about 1 to 2 hrs

**Features:** Brook, two ponds, meadow, pine groves

# TOWN BROOK & PATUXET PRESERVE

This in-town hike follows the ancient native path along Town Brook, once known as the Namassakeeset trail, meaning “at the fishing place.” Town Brook flows out of Billington Sea and less than two miles downstream it empties into Plymouth Bay, with the trail running alongside for most of the distance. This trail can be done in a number of segments, from many starting points. Patuxet Preserve, a pocket park at 88 Billington St., is a good place because it is at the halfway point and parking is easy. Patuxet is the Wampanoag name of the village which, having been depopulated in the 1610's by a series of horrific plagues, was resettled by the Pilgrims in 1620. Patuxet means “at the little falls,” which is descriptive of the brook as it descends from its source down 80 feet to sea level in frequent short steps.

Patuxet Preserve is the site of the “first water privilege” where the brook was impounded behind a dam and its water channeled through raceways to run the machinery of the mill. The high and dry dock in front of what was the mill owner's mansion illustrates the big change that took place when the mill pond water was released. Be sure to read the information kiosks all along the trail to learn about the factories which operated here for about 150 years. Despite a series of fish ladders over the years, the spring migration of fish was impeded and thousands would pile up at each of five dams along the Town Brook. Now it is a mostly clear shot to their goal, Billington Sea, where various types of fish arrive each April, May and June to spawn. These include blueback herring, shad, alewives, and smelts. Juvenile eels make this trip, also, but not to spawn. They migrate to the fresh water ponds to live out most of their lives, after which the eels head back out to the open ocean to begin their reproductive cycle.

From Patuxet, you can walk upstream to the start of Town Brook at Billington Sea or walk downstream to the ocean. Billington Sea is reached by walking a quarter of a mile west along the street to the back entrance of Morton Park. Follow the dirt road to just before the old stone bridge over Town Brook, where there is a path down to the left which follows the brook to the wooden foot bridge at the outlet. Alternatively, stay on the road over the stone bridge, bearing left at the fork to find the second path, on the left. This way takes you through a remnant of an Atlantic white cedar swamp, with a few very old, very tall cedars.

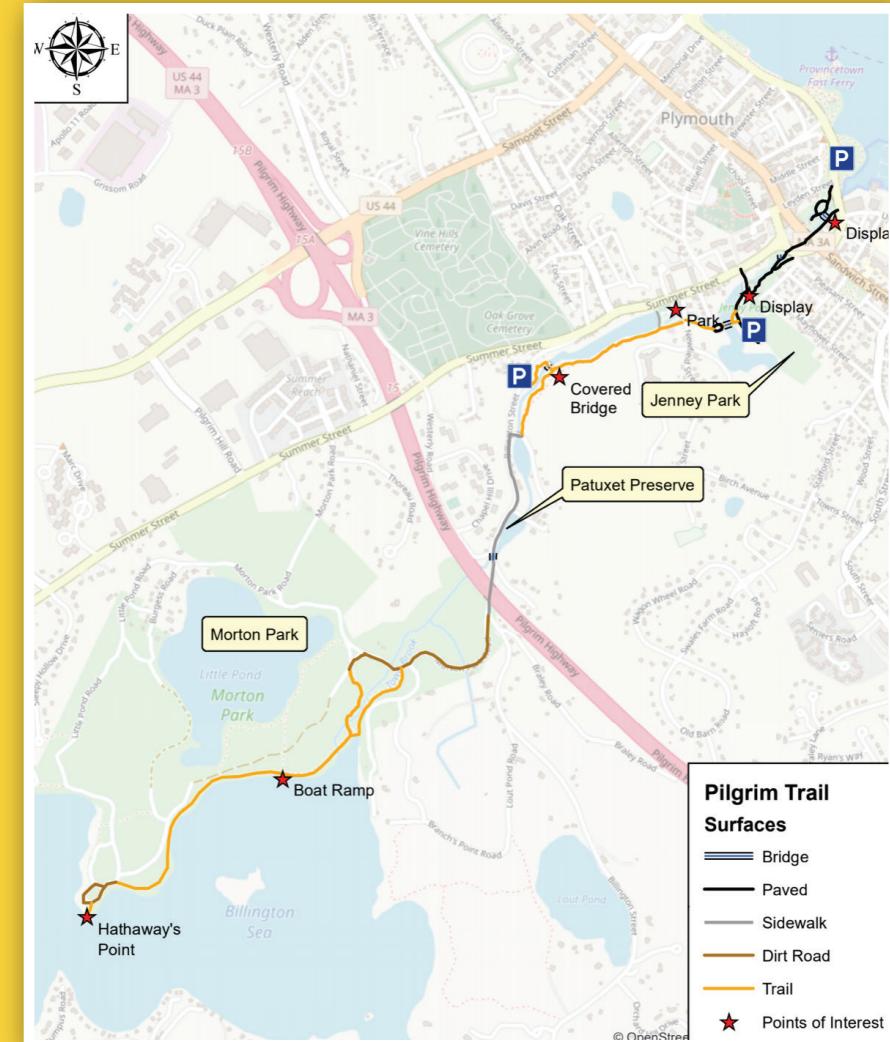
Another option is to walk from Patuxet northeast along Billington St until you reach the new stone bridge to the right, and the start of Town Brook path. This was the “second water privilege” where more factories were located. Note the stone retaining walls of another mill pond, and traces of factory foundations. Just beyond this is the site of yet another dam, which in 2002 was the first to be removed from Town Brook, and the first coastal dam deconstruction in Massachusetts. Farther on at the red covered foot bridge view the restored riverbed. Until the removal of the Holmes Dam in 2018 - 2019, a large mill pond backed up nearly to this point.

Walking on, you can appreciate the enormous number of new trees and shrubs planted by the Town to reforest this vale. The site of the Holmes dam, where there was a large factory complex, is a pinch point between high sandy hills, and a logical place for a high dam powering a number of industries. How thrilling it is now to see the schools of herring, smelt and shad work their way upstream under open skies once more.

The Holmes Park, along Summer St, is a state of the art recreational park that seems continuously busy. Some teenagers say that this skateboard park is the best on the South Shore. There is off-street parking for 8 cars at Newfield St. You are 0.6 mile from the Patuxet Preserve and another 0.6 mile from the bay. Follow the ramping walkway toward Jenney Pond, and pass over the arching wooden foot bridge. The pond has had many names, including Poorhouse Pond when the Town's alms house was here. At the Jenney Grist Mill are the last remaining dam and fish ladder, where there is a project underway to engineer free passage for the migratory fishes, eliminating the fish ladder and yet preserving the flow for the mill wheel and waterfall.

The path continues under the Market St and Main St Extension bridges, both of which have cheerful new murals painted recently by the high schools' art students. Pass by the pumping fresh water springs on the right and left of the brook, which were one of the reasons the native people and the Pilgrims chose this place to live.

At Brewster Garden, one of the 1920-21 restoration projects built to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the arrival of the English, the brook empties into Plymouth harbor.



**Location:** Morton Park to Brewster Garden. Jenney Grist Mill and associated parking are on Spring Lane, Patuxet is located at 88 Billington St.

**Parking:** Water Street - minimal parking; Jenny Pond - ample parking; Patuxet pocket park - four cars; Morton Park rear entrance - ample parking.

**Duration:** Variable, 40 minutes to about two hours

**Distance:** Variable, maximum four miles

**Activity Level:** Easy, gentle inclines

**Features:** Brookside path, history, archeology, seasonal herring run.

# TOWN FOREST CONSERVATION AREA

# TOWN FOREST CONSERVATION

The Town Forest is over 300 acres in size, some of which have seen some rough treatment, and some of which are as lovely as anything in Plymouth.

Start at the Town Forest sign and trail head, at the intersection of Drew Road and Long Pond Road. There is a short spur to the right with room for additional parking. The trail begins just behind the sign on a path paralleling Drew Road. Farther along, there is a gate and more parking as the trail bears right into the woods, into a tall stand of mature white pines. After a short walk, there is a confusing intersection – follow the trail markers to the right! In this area was one of the red pine tree plantations that were established all over town in the middle of the last century. Those non-native trees suffered an insect infestation and then died off all at once in the last ten years. That would be sad, except that the understory is a riot of white pine and other young native trees bursting out now that there is less competition for light.

Following the trail north, some trash and construction debris dumped illegally may still be visible. Town workers have striven to block access to these back trails, so there is less of this activity recently. Still, this isn't what we want to see walking in the woods.

Further on, the landscape is filled with old pines and mixed hardwoods, on gently undulating terrain. The trail is wide, making it harder for ticks to hitchhike onto your clothes. You will see the Plymouth Community Intermediate School (PCIS) on the right, and at a five way intersection (follow the trail markers!) make a sharp left. After grazing Cook's Pond Road, the pine needle carpeted trail veers to the southwest, through the Wildlife Management Area. Be sure to wear blaze orange if it is hunting season.

Soon flashes of blue through the trees reveal Cook's Pond, and we can turn down either of two spur paths to the edge of the pond. It is worth walking down to enjoy the view and the peace.

The trail leads to a grassy clearing under the high tension wires and pylons. Follow the trail marker to the right. Motorized bikes and vehicles have churned up the sandy soil, making it a bit of a slog for a short distance. These open meadows contrast with shadowy forest and are much appreciated by hawks and owls hunting rodents. We pass by active cranberry bogs down below on the right and left.

Halfway up the slope to the left the marked trail enters the woods again. These oaks and pine trees are shorter: either younger than the other side of the forest, or stunted by winds and thin soil up on this hill. There is more illegal dumping in this area. Some of the junk is so old that it has a thick green

carpet of moss over it, making it almost pretty in an exasperating way.

After crossing Drew Road, pick up the trail again, slightly to the left. It soon forks, with the right path descending down to the edge of Little South Pond. On a sunny day, this is an exquisite little glen with a copper colored pine needle floor and a tiny beach of the whitest crystalline sand. The sparkling water is colored the full spectrum of Caribbean blues. These ponds of the Town Forest are coastal plain ponds, whose water levels fluctuate widely from season to season. The sandy apron widens as the water level drops in summer.

At some time decades ago, the natural outlet of Great South and the major source of the Eel River was closed off and a connection was dug between the two ponds so that Great South Pond could flow into Little South Pond, reversing the natural flow. We follow the marked trail along this channel, brimming in seasonal high water. It is a stunningly beautiful little passage. The trail opens onto Great South Pond, with a wide arc of beach. Crystal clear water covers a broad floor of rippled white sand. The Town Forest marked trail loops back to the left at this point, but ambitious hikers are able to follow another trail to the right. Not pictured on the map but 0.75 mile (one way) is Pinnacle Hill. Cross over the concrete bridge, west across DCR land, keep to the left at the fork, and head into Cortelli Preserve, a Wildlands Trust property. An energetic climb to the top of Pinnacle Hill, a dramatically high cone of glacial till, gives you an awesome view. This is the third highest point in Plymouth!

The Town Forest trail leaves the Great South Pond shore heading northeast, skirting the flank of another dramatic hill. Clearly the glaciers went nuts in this particular neighborhood, with massive bergs forming the ponds, wetlands and dry kettles, and enormous depositions of rock and sand forming the knobs.

Soon we are back on Drew Road, taking note of the "No Parking" signs, meant to discourage summertime misuse of these exquisite pond shores. Apparently, there has been a great deal of bad behavior in the past. Non-motorized boating is allowed on the South Ponds, but swimming is not. It is legal to park in only two spaces at the brick pump house near the intersection of Drew and Rocky Pond Roads.

Following the trail back, retrace your steps until you pass under the utility lines and re-enter the woods. At the fork, bear right to come alongside the dead red pine plantation again. The trail markers will guide you to the right at an intersection, and lead you back to the start.



## Town Forest

**Location:** Drew Road, off of Long Pond Road

**Parking:** Four cars in one location near the sign, 2 cars at gate farther along Drew Road. Don't block the swing gate. No parking along Drew Road.

**Distance:** Variable, maximum 4.5 miles

**Duration:** Variable, maximum 2.5 hours

**Activity Level:** Easy, some inclines, loose sand stretches, Pinnacle Hill is moderate.

**Features:** Three ponds, glacial terrain, meadows, white pine groves

# WHISPERING WOODS

Way down south on the boundary between Bourne and Plymouth is Whispering Woods. Because of its remoteness, people may not bother to drive down there, but these thirty four acres are well used and well loved by the neighbors, and worth the trip for the rest of us. It is a relatively young preserve, but the paths are wide, carpeted by fallen leaves and pine needles, and appear much older than they are. The forest, while not exactly "old growth," has a number of very large, very old trees. There is a good diversity of white pines, pitch pines, holly, and scrub oak.

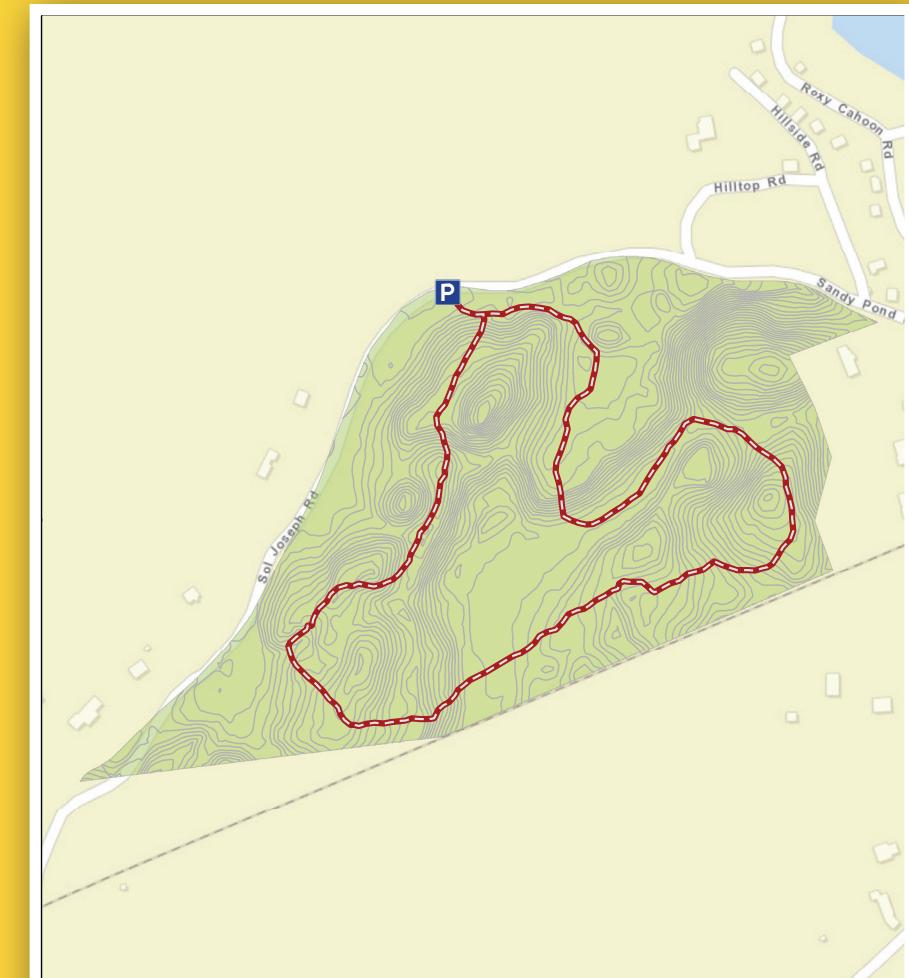
There are two notable features of this area. One is a grove of huge white pines standing in a pleasant hollow, where the sun pours through the branches onto the pine needled forest floor. It is the equal in beauty of the pine grove in Gramp's Loop near Halfway Pond. The near constant sound of wind in the pine treetops demonstrates how apt is the name of this preserve. The other notable feature: there is a very pleasant sinuous character to the trail, rising and falling in gentle hills. Many of Plymouth's conservation areas have deep kettles and steep knobs - Stairmaster work-outs - but this trail offers the same glacial terrain in more easy dips and rises. What you will not find here are glacial erratics, those huge boulders that fell out of the ice as the glacier melted. Glacial deposits are extremely random; here are sandy humps and hollows.



Leaving the parking swale, you will soon come to a fork in the trail. This is a complete loop, so go either left or right. But let's bear left. Much of the trail follows the rims of the bowls, but you dip down after a while and arrive at the pine grove, near the edge of the property. Follow the trail back up again onto the curving undulations of the ground. On your left, glimpses of a grassy meadow will appear, until you come to a short spur trail that leads you to a full view of the rolling farm field, under the electric lines( private property, look but don't go.) You are in Plymouth, the grass is in Bourne.

Leaving the boundary, you will walk back into the woods a bit, and may see, on your left, some very old metal things dumped here years ago. Funny how with the passage of enough time, and the work of fallen leaves and spreading moss, old trash can look attractive! Farther on, on the right, you may perceive a small hollow which has a rim of about seven large white pines. Here the pine saplings may have started off their lives equally, but the pines that grew in the "Goldilocks Zone," with just the right amount of water, light, and nutrients, dominate now.

Sooner than you may desire, you will have closed the loop. Some people turn around here and do the loop twice to get a longer walk. Sometimes walking back in the direction you came gives you almost a new trail!



Trail Loop Distance: Approx. 1 mile

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



## Whispering Woods Conservation Area



**Location:** Sol Joseph Road, an extension of Sandy Pond Road

**Parking:** Two or three cars. No parking on opposite side of the road

**Activity Level:** Easy

**Distance:** 1 mile

**Duration:** Variable, 20 to 40 minutes

**Features:** White pine grove, meadow view, gentle knob and kettle terrain

# WHEEL FRIENDLY TRAILS

*The Town of Plymouth has two locations that can meet the needs of those whose mobility depends on wheels. These "hikes" offer open space experiences with paved paths and present no barriers such as curbstones or steps.*

## THE SEASIDE RAIL TRAIL

Probably the single most popular trail in all of Plymouth is this one running in the 19th century rail bed along the bay shore, to the terminus of the Old Colony Line at Park St. Note some of the leftover rails! It begins at the north end of Water Street and Lothrop Street, behind the Copper Cove apartments, leads along behind Nelson Park and ends at the Cordage Park complex. The Seaside Trail is now about 1.5 miles long, one way, with mostly paved surface except for the Hedge Road to Cordage Park segment.

There are a number of food and beverage options at both ends, in season, including an open air beer garden, with million dollar ocean views. The trail varies from woodsy tunnels to wide open meadows, and offers views of the marsh with its well known osprey nest, the rolling grassland of Holmes Field, a flower garden alongside the track, April daffodil beds, and expansive views of Plymouth Bay.

The trail is totally flat. Far from busy Route 3A, the silence is blissful and serene, even when there are dozens of people on the trail. There is parking at Lothrop Street, at Nelson Beach, at the Cordage, and at the former terminus of the trail at the end of Hedge Road.

While there are no barriers or curbs, there are some problems: some of the transitions between surfaces are a few inches high, and the dirt road is an uneven surface at the north end. At Hedge Road, find the Cordage Park extension over to the right, along Sandri Drive. At the Cordage end, near the train station, there is a wooden gate which says "Seaside Rail Trail" and a fun, all too short boardwalk.

A possible issue is the "Grace Trail," the stones painted with "inspirational" words and phrases. Some people love this, others see it as a form of graffiti detracting from the natural environment.

## FORGES FIELD

There are few places in Plymouth better than Forge's Field for parents to take their school age children to practice their rollerblading, scooter and bicycle riding. The trail is protected from parking lots by a wooden fence and is completely separated from any vehicular traffic. There is plentiful parking in three large lots. If the group includes little ones, the best place to park is in the central lot, near the playground. There are chemical toilets nearby. Two miles of wide paved trails wind around and through the playing fields, in the woods but not too far. The terrain is undulating with only one real hill and the trails are all circular. The paved riding surface is generally smooth. The whole family can enjoy the leafy upland forest while wheeling along. There might be a "Story Walk" in place at one spot. Another feature of this location is the large number of glacial erratics; massive boulders that melted out of the ice field millennia ago. Some were probably bulldozed to the sides of the ball fields during construction and now they seem as intentional as furniture. They make for some good climbing.

## OTHER OPTIONS

There are three other options that are not Town of Plymouth properties.

One option is the bike paths in **Miles Standish State Forest**, where there are over 15 miles of paved surface for walking & wheeling. These two lane paths are entirely in the woods and far separated from automobile traffic. They are in generally good condition, not overly hilly, and have a pleasant sinuousness about them. There are sections with raised tree roots, or drifts of pine needles covering the asphalt. The only caveat is that spandex-wearing bike racers sometimes speed past slower travelers, but generally they keep to the automotive roads for their sprints. The Camping Pond Loop,

starting at the Forest headquarters on East Head Pond on the southern edge of the state park, is a relatively easy route that circles two beautiful ponds, Fearing and Charge. This route is a combination of dedicated bike trails and some very lightly trafficked roads. The most strenuous route is Rocky Pond Path. Parking at the East Entrance at Long Pond Road and using the Frost Pocket Path is not recommended because it is very long (5.4 miles one way,) tends to be busier and is a less interesting route, especially for someone on foot.

Another option is the walking trails in the **Pine Hills**. While technically this is private property, there is a busy public area around the Village Green and the Market. There is a large network of paved, five foot wide paths, open to all, generally very smooth and not bumpy. The paths do follow the roadways, but are not sidewalks - they are set apart from the road with a woodsy buffer. The roads are graded to accommodate automobiles and trucks, but the paths follow the natural knob and kettle contour of the land. The hills can be hard work in places, so this network is best for athletic stroller pushers and only older children on wheels. Two caveats: be careful where you park; around the Market is probably best. And stick to the signed walking paths and do not wander onto the golf cart paths.

Lastly, the **Cape Cod Canal** service roads in Bourne are very well known and are extremely popular and wheel friendly. This area is certified ADA accessible. No barriers, no curbs. There are 7.5 miles of paved path on the north and 6.5 miles on the south, in very good condition. It is readily accessible at a number of points, with ample public parking. On the northern side, one can park at Scusset Beach (entrance fee in season,) under the Sagamore Bridge, at the Herring Run or in downtown Buzzard's Bay near the railroad bridge. On the southern side, there is parking under the Bourne Bridge, at the Aptucxet Trading Post Museum, and at the Cape Cod Canal Visitor's Center near the electric power plant. Additionally, there are many other informal parking spots on both sides. This wheeling walkway is not a forest experience, but it is a highly entertaining waterside scene of people on the move, fishermen, restaurants, boats, bird life and migrating herring in season. The stunning views make it one of the most beautiful walks anywhere. The only issue is the winds, which can be fierce. Nice to have at your back, a killer trudging into a headwind.



## TIPS FOR REDUCING LITTER

Plastic waste contaminates all major ecosystems on the planet. Concern is increasing about its potential impacts on wildlife and human health, as smaller and more widespread plastic particles are identified in both the natural and built environment. (Science Advances, 2020)

- Get the facts at [www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/the-facts](http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/the-facts)
- Visit [www.sustainableplymouth.org](http://www.sustainableplymouth.org) for more ideas on reducing waste, preventing litter, and more.
- Use SeeClickFix to report quality-of-life concerns such as potholes, cracked sidewalks, litter, flooding, fallen limbs or trees in roadways, and so much more. Visit [www.plymouth-ma.gov/938/Report-A-Concern](http://www.plymouth-ma.gov/938/Report-A-Concern)

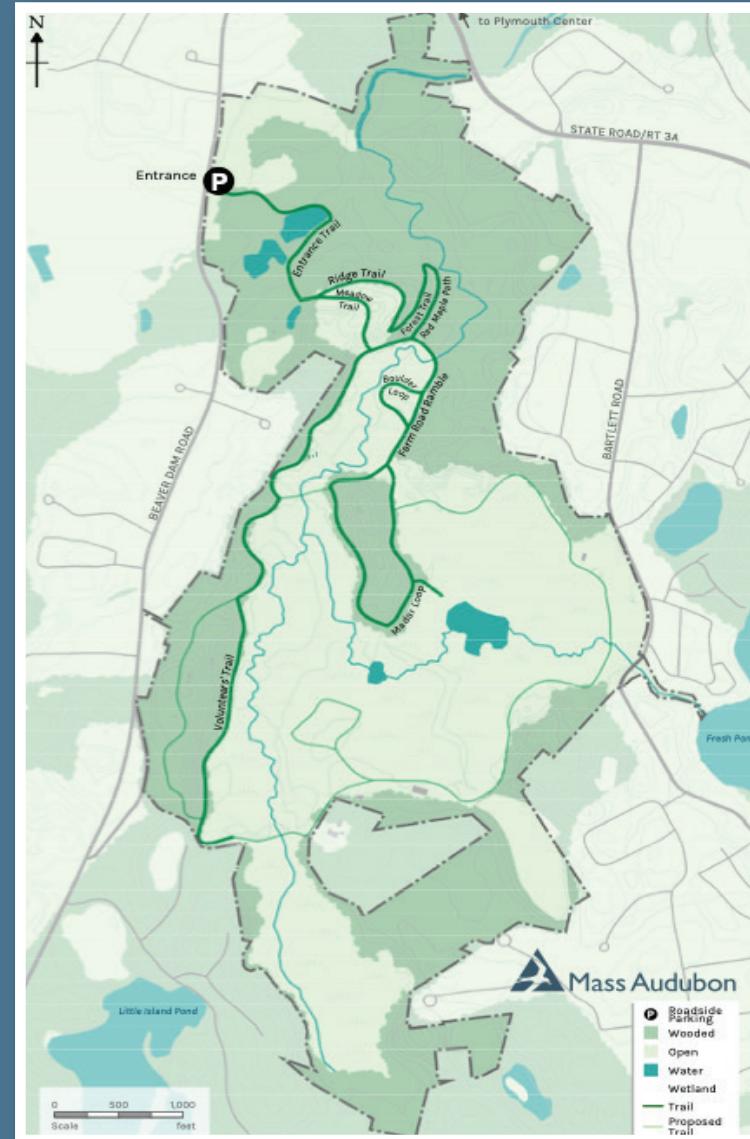


- Carry a litter bag with you
- Take your dog's waste bags out with you
- Carry a reusable water bottle
- Skip the straw or keep a reusable straw with you
- Forgo single use items when possible
- Keep reusable bags in your vehicle
- Smokers, throw butts in the trash
- Avoid excess packaging
- Recycle
- Secure trash can lids
- Join town wide cleanups
- Join a sustainability group
- Spread the word



## MASS AUDUBON

### TIDMARSH WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

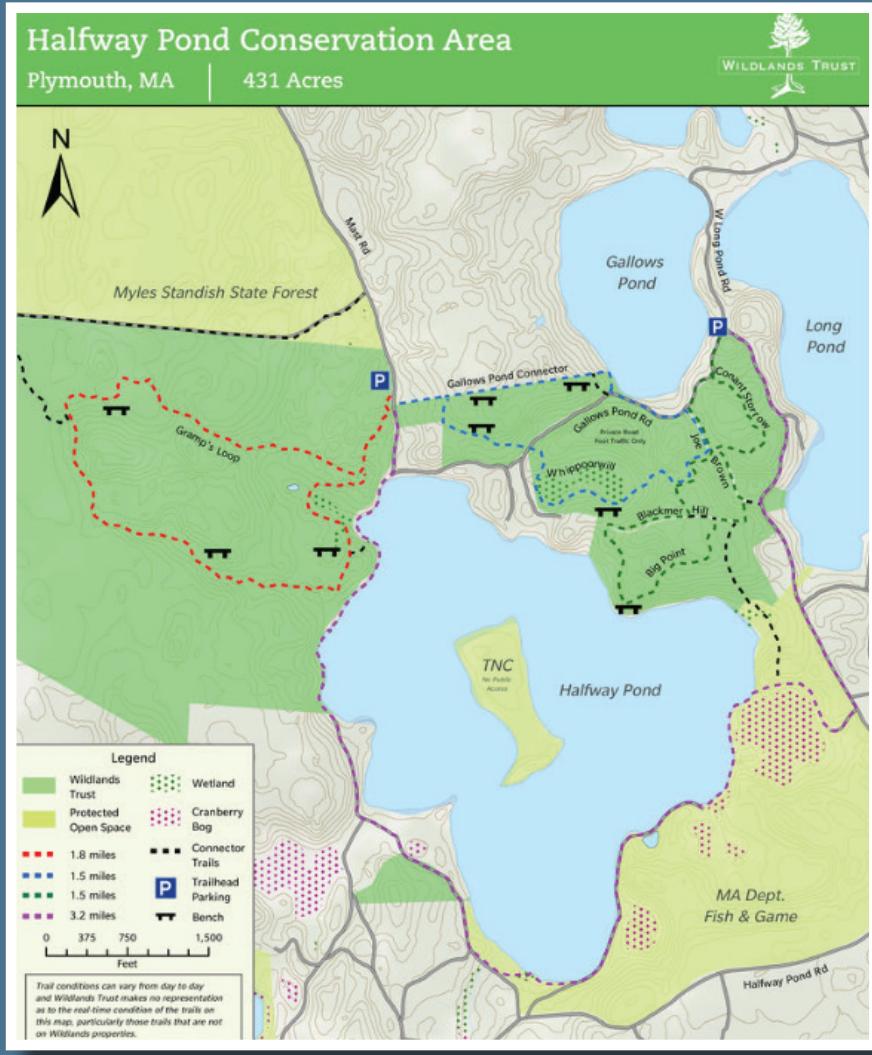


SCAN FOR  
MORE  
INFO!

ADDITIONAL TRAILS

**Location:** 30 Beaver Dam Road  
**Parking:** Very ample  
**Distance:** Variable, up to 3+ miles  
**Duration:** Variable, up to 2 to 3 hours  
**Activity Level:** Easy, one hill  
**Features:** Restored cold water stream X 3 miles, glacial erratic, rewilding cranberry bogs

# ADDITIONAL TRAILS



**Location:** In the area of West Long Pond and Mast Road  
**Parking:** On Mast and W. Long Pond Rd  
**Distance:** Over 5 miles of trails  
**Duration:** 2.5 hours  
**Activity Level:** Moderate  
**Features:** Pitch pine barrens & kettle ponds



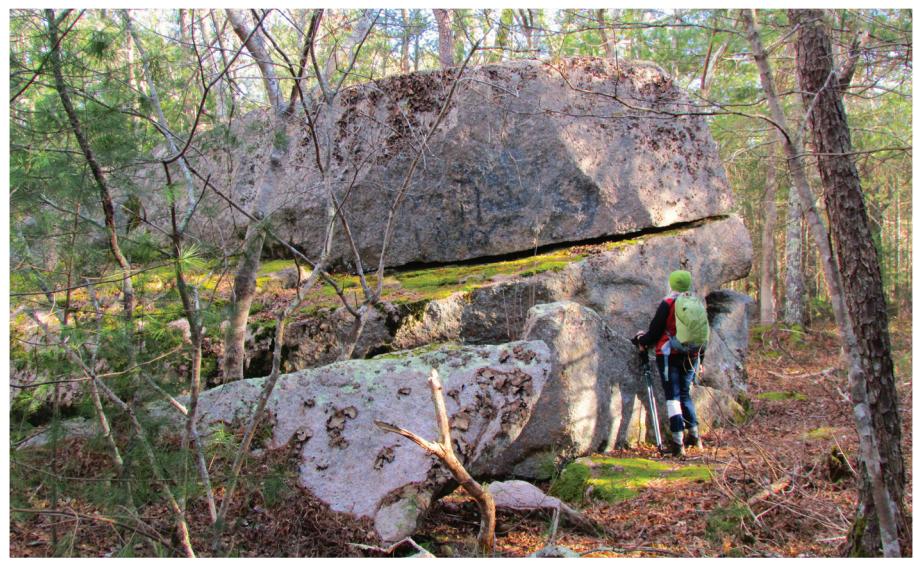
**Location:** Off Long Pond Road  
**Parking:** 675 Long Pond Road and off Ship Pond Road  
**Distance:** Over 3 miles of trails  
**Duration:** 1.5 hours  
**Activity Level:** Moderate  
**Features:** Rolling topography and large beech tree

**WILDLANDS TRUST**

FOR MORE INFO ON THE  
WILDLANDS TRUST, SCAN QR  
CODE TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE



# GLACIAL LANDFORMS IN THE PLYMOUTH AREA



Twenty thousand years ago, the land we live on now was under the leading edge of the last glacier of the last Ice Age. The land contours that emerged as the glacier melted down are relatively unchanged, but that is hard to appreciate, as most of it is now covered with forests and human built structures. If you know what to look for on the trails, you can begin to see the characteristic topography that formed as billions of tons of boulders, gravel and silt washed out of the melting ice.

The glaciers acted as gigantic bulldozers, pushing soil and rocks ahead of their advance; and as conveyor belts, plucking huge chunks out of the bedrock and carrying them along. The ice sheets originated far in the north, built up by thousands of years of pure white falling snow, but by the time they reached our neighborhood, the glaciers were speckled dark with this transported material, like dirty snowbanks.

People may think of a glacier as a towering wall of ice, as in The Game of Thrones, but when it advanced across

land, the leading edge was tongue shaped. Those towering walls of ice are in tidewater glaciers that empty straight into the ocean. When the climate changed, and the snow accumulation at the source became slower than the rate of melting at the terminus, the advance ceased. The ice didn't necessarily melt evenly: unimaginably huge chunks of ice persisted here and there - think icebergs on land.

All the material that the ice carried was dumped in different ways. In some places, torrents of water flowed away from the terminus, carving sinuous "braided rivers" and depositing soils in flat outwash plains which spread out like an apron. In other places, debris dropped down out of the ice very randomly, in piles here and there. The larger boulders fell through the ice singly or in groups. These are "glacial erratics," which tend to be found on hill tops or in boulder fields, usually not in the outwash plains.

Here in Plymouth County and the surrounding areas, we can find examples

of these common glacial landforms: erratics, moraines, drumlins, eskers, kames, glacial lake drains, and knobs and kettles.

The most famous "glacial erratic" is Plymouth Rock, which is thought to have come from bedrock in Dedham. There are much, much larger erratics in this area; big as a house on the surface and buried to an unknown depth. Examples are Pulpit Rock on Clark's Island; in Cleft Rock Park off State Road in the Pine Hills; on Hio Hill in the Dixon Preserve on Old Sandwich Road; and in the Carter Beal Reservation just south of Great Herring Pond in Bourne. An excellent example of a group of erratics, called a "boulder belt," is behind the Foothills Preserve off Beaver Dam Road, under the high tension wires, up the hill to the west. "Moraines" are ridges of jumbled rocks and mixed till pushed into looping lines along the sides or in front of the lobe of ice. These can be relatively small, as along Moraine Street in Marshfield; medium sized, like the Sandwich Moraine in Carter Beal; or gigantic: think Long Island to Provincetown on Cape Cod.

"Drumlins" are mounds of land, often whale shaped, best viewed as islands

when they are in water, such as in Boston Harbor. They are on land, too, where they can look like half buried eggs, but they are hard to distinguish in a forest. If you stand at the base of Holmes Field near Atlantic Avenue, you can see Clark's Island, Saquish and the Gurnet, all with "heads" and "tails" suggesting a pod of whales swimming in the southeast direction of the ice flow.

"Eskers" are river beds that form under the glacier, paradoxically rising up rather than forming channels. As water ran out from under the glacier's base, or drained down through cracks, it carried gravel and rocks along to form long sinuous ridges. There would have been solid ice on both sides of this ridge, which rose higher and higher as debris fell down from the "ceiling" above the rushing stream. Today, if you find yourself on a steep sided snaking ridge flanked by ponds or bogs, that's an esker. We have a number of excellent and easily recognizable eskers in the Plymouth area: in the Duxbury Bogs between East and Mayflower Streets in Duxbury; in the O.W. Steward Preserve on Sylvia's Place in Kingston; in the Black Cat Preserve; and the Lout Pond Road segment of the Crawley Woodlands Preserve in Plymouth.



## GLACIAL LANDFORMS IN THE PLYMOUTH AREA CONTINUED

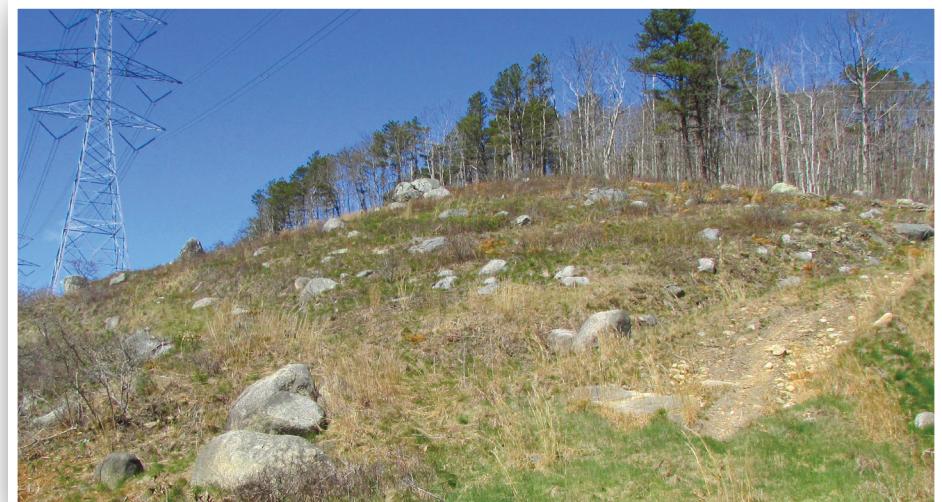
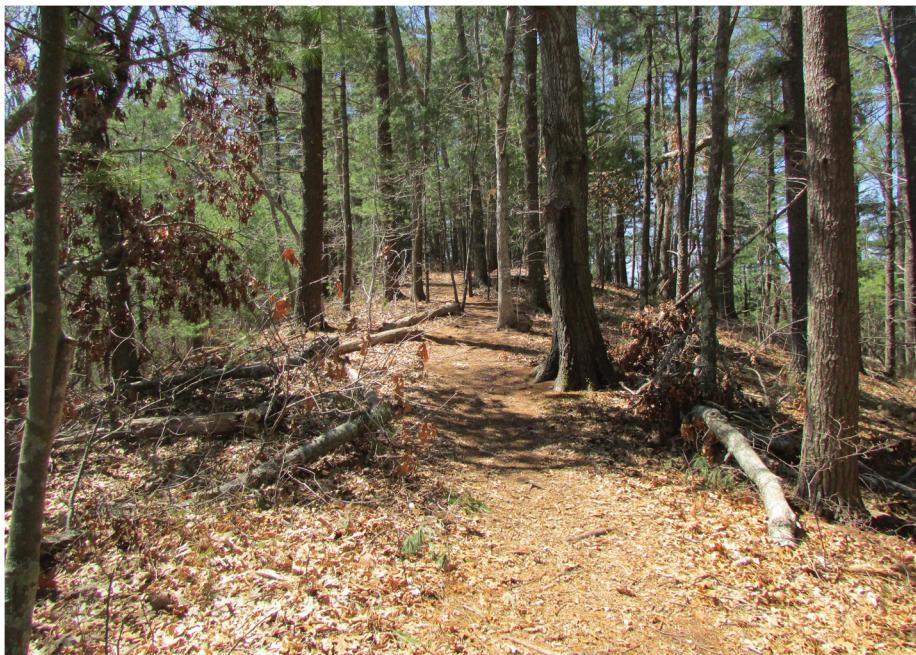
"Kames" are cone shaped hills, varying widely in size, and often hard to distinguish from random hills, especially when covered with trees. Kames are thought to have originated at the bottom of moulin; vertical cracks in the ice which expanded to form deep shafts through the full thickness of the glacier. These drained melt water from the top of the ice down to the underside in thunderous waterfalls. Rocks and gravel from within the glacier accumulated in a cone at the base of the spilling water.

Another theory about kames is that a depression on the surface of the ice filled with melt water and material, then, sinking lower and lower in the degrading ice, it all slumped into a cone shaped pile.

Some examples of what may be kames are Telegraph Hill, off Old Sandwich Road in Plymouth; and Captain's Hill in Duxbury, where the Myles Standish monument sits atop an enormous flattened cone. In the Muddy Pond Wilderness Area off Route

80 in Kingston, is a good example of a kame called "Highpoint."

As the ice melted that last time, starting about twenty thousand years ago, water seeking its level sometimes got caught behind dams formed by till or blocks of ice. When that kind of dam broke it was a sudden event, unlike most geological processes. It caused a catastrophic drainage, called a "glacial outburst." This torrent of water carried away all but the biggest rocks, leaving a linear jumble of boulders with rising land on each side. The very best example of this is Purgatory Chasm State Park in Sutton, central Massachusetts. There a huge glacial lake burst forth in an unbelievably violent and destructive way. We have here in Plymouth at least two examples of what may be glacial outburst drains, on a much smaller scale. One is near Horse Pond, by the Bourne line, along the western end of the Valley Road foot path (a narrow valley which was possibly formed by the drainage of an impoundment.)



A second example is at Foothills Preserve. There is a huge boulder perched up on the sand bank at the back of the bogs. Behind that boulder is a cleft in the land filled with a jumble of good sized rocks. Both of these local examples are best appreciated when the leaves are down.

Lastly, a well known glacial landform in our area is the "knob and kettle." The kettle part is a deep rounded bowl in the earth, which may be dry, may have a vernal pool in springtime, or which may have water year round. This depends on if the bowl intersects with the water table in the area. Plymouth has hundreds of these kettles of widely varying size and depth, easily recognizable to any hiker. These were formed by enormous blocks of ice, the "land icebergs." "Knob" refers to the mounds often associated with the bowls. One theory is that the icebergs shed debris falling on or accumulating around them. The best example of this is the huge kettle in the western end of Carter Beal which is circled with a necklace of enormous boulders. But kettles can be on a flat plain, too, an example of which is Round Pond in Duxbury, which is also helpful for visualization because there are no big trees nearby. Little Pond in Morton Park and Billington Sea illustrate the variation in size and shape of kettle ponds. For a good work-out, hike the knob and kettle terrain in the Crawley Woodlands

Preserve on Billington Street, the Beaver Dam Conservation Area on Beaver Dam Road, or Black Cat Preserve on Black Cat Road in Plymouth.

Perhaps the most famous kettle pond is Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts. Henry David Thoreau mentions a native folk tale about a large mound of soil suddenly collapsing, forming a huge bowl filled with water. This event could have been actually witnessed by the ancient people over 12,000 years ago: a long buried gigantic mass of decomposing ice, covered with insulating debris, finally collapsing hundreds of years after the surrounding ice had disappeared.

One of the highest hills in Plymouth, Pinnacle Hill, defies categorization. It is in the Cortelli Preserve off Rocky Pond Road, also accessible through the Town Forest trail past the Little and Great South Ponds. The trail to the top rises abruptly about two hundred feet, narrow and snaky in a series of steps, to a giant cone. Could this represent a kame and the esker leading away from it to the southeast? Or is it random?

It is fun to speculate about this and other dramatic examples of how the glaciers shaped the land under our feet and all around us.

## TRAIL NOTES

# ADDITIONAL TRAIL RESOURCES

## WILDLANDS TRUST

Walking trails in Bridgewater, Brockton, Duxbury, Halifax, Kingston, Marshfield, Pembroke, Plymouth, Rochester and Wareham.

<https://wildlandstrust.org/>

## MASS AUDUBON

Hundreds of trails to explore at more than 60 Mass Audubon wildlife sanctuaries across the state. All trails are open to the public.

<https://www.massaudubon.org/>

## THE TRUSTEES

The nation's first preservation and conservation organization, with 120 natural and cultural sites that welcome millions of visitors every year.

<https://thetrustees.org/>

## SOUTHEASTERN MASSACHUSETTS PINE BARRENS ALLIANCE

Coastal Pine Barrens Nature and Climate Research Center located at the Center Hill Preserve, Plymouth. Open to the public.

[sempba@pinebarrensalliance.org](mailto:sempba@pinebarrensalliance.org) 774-773-9982

<https://pinebarrensalliance.org/>

## NORTHEAST WILDERNESS TRUST

Muddy Pond Wilderness Preserve, Kingston

Hiking trails within the 322-acre preserve.

[newildernesstrust.org/muddypond](http://newildernesstrust.org/muddypond)

## THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Hiking trails within 8 preserves in Massachusetts.

[www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/massachusetts/](http://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/massachusetts/)

## MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

DCR oversees more than 450,000 acres throughout Massachusetts, containing hundreds of miles of hiking trails. Download trail maps, find accessible hiking and a link to Coast Guide Online to locate 1,900 beaches, trails and other public access sites.

[www.mass.gov/guides/guide-to-recreation-in-state-parks#/trails](http://www.mass.gov/guides/guide-to-recreation-in-state-parks#/trails)