



WELFLEET  
CONSERVATION  
TRUST

## Fox Island Marsh & Pilgrim Spring Woodlands Conservation Area

### Area Description:

This large swath of pitch pine and mixed oak forest land stretches from Baker Road off Paine Hollow Road to Pilgrim Spring Road and provides the only public pedestrian path between them. Each of the two trailhead parking lots provides access to trails which lead to marsh and harbor views. The jewel in the crown of these views is the splendid vista from Whale Bone Point of Fox Island Marsh and Blackfish Creek. The strategy of acquiring contiguous parcels from 1998-2008 has led to the largest public conservation property on the Outer Cape. The various linked trails allow the hiker to choose walks of many different distances and durations.

### Directions:

To Baker Rd Trailhead: From Rte 6: going South, turn right onto Way 112, then right onto Paine Hollow Rd.; going North, turn left onto Way 112, then bear a slight left onto Paine Hollow Rd. After approximately 0.3 miles turn right onto Baker Rd. The trailhead parking area is at the end of the dirt road extension of Baker Rd.

To Pilgrim Spring Rd Trailhead: From Rte 6: going South, turn right onto Pilgrim Spring Rd.; going

North, turn left onto Pilgrim Spring Rd. Follow this road for approximately 0.2 miles to the trailhead parking area on the left.

If one follows the paths from either trailhead, one encounters a dramatic meeting of two diverse habitats, the forest and the salt water marsh. The paths begin in a typical Outer Cape forest of Pitch Pine with an understory of Bear Oak and Black Oak. Grassy ground cover suggests that this land was once tilled, killing the delicate roots of Black Huckleberry and Lowbush Blueberry, which otherwise dominate when land was simply grazed by farm animals. The smaller the pines, the more recent the cultivation. The grassy ground cover is intermingled with Bearberry.

Keep your ears tuned and eyes sharp for various bird species that inhabit these woodlands: Great Horned Owl, Black Capped Chickadee and Downy Woodpecker, just to name a few. As the forest comes to the edge of the salt water marsh the trail margins burgeon with Black Huckleberry and Bayberry whose waxy gray berries were once used to make candles.

Lying between the high tide line at the foot of the wooded trail and the shores of Indian Neck across the marsh, this vibrant salt marsh provides a home for a wide variety of coastal life. Equally as important is its function as a food source and nursery for marine life. The marsh provides a protective buffer for upland properties. It also filters runoff to insure clean healthy coastal waters.

You will see Salt Meadow Grass (Salt Marsh Hay) which was once used for feeding grazing animals. Some cows were even fitted with snow-shoe like foot pads so they could walk the

spongy marsh surface and graze without sinking into the mud. This grass will generally be submerged by the tides during twice-monthly “spring” tides. In contrast, the Salt Marsh Cord grass, growing closer to tidal creeks, is covered over by the tides twice each day. This marsh grass can actively excrete sea salt and, on the hottest summer days, a coating of salt crystals can be seen on the flat blade of grass.

At the tip of the marsh trail, you reach the promontory of Whale Bone Point. This point, a nesting ground for the endangered Diamondback Terrapins, affords you a splendid view of Paine Hollow, Black Fish Creek, Old Wharf Point and Lieutenant’s Island.

**Please stay on the trails** to protect fragile plants in the area and to respect private properties.

**Total Length of Trails:** 1.75 miles

**Extent:** Forest: 68 acres; Marsh: 100 acres

The trails pass over parcels owned variously by the Town of Wellfleet and the Wellfleet Conservation Trust

Thanks to the Geiger family, Chachavadze family, Deborah Rinzler, Nils Miner and Ira Ziering for their cooperation as landowners.

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