The Interpretive Trail (cont'd)

inundated by only the extreme tides and is dominated by a lower growing species called salt meadow hay (*Spartina patens*). The grasses of the high marsh comprise the real production factory of the salt marsh. As the new growth dies each season, the plant parts break down into particulate matter or detritus, the hub of the coastal food web, and the detritus and nutrients from the high marsh are released into the estuary with the passing tide. Also important are the salt pannes, or pools, in the marsh. The salt pannes provide habitat for fish stranded on the marsh at low tide, feeding and resting areas for waterfowl and important insect and invertebrate larval habitats.

9. Beech Bark Disease-

A healthy beech tree (*Fagus grandifolia*) has smooth gray bark, but most beech trees in Maine are affected by beech bark disease and display these characteristic cankers. Beech bark disease is caused by a relationship between the beech scale insect (*Cryptococcus fagisuga*) and a fungal pathogen (*Nectria coccinea*). The beech scale insect inserts a stylet (needle-like mouthpart) into the beech bark in search of sugars and other nutrients. These wound sites are then available for colonization by the Nectria fungus. The scale insect and fungal pathogen work in combination to kill patches of inner bark causing the cankers you see on these trees. Many beech trees die but others survive in spite of severe canker development. Fortunately, there appear to be beech trees that are resistant to the scale insect.

10. Glacial Erratic-

This giant boulder, called an erratic, was transported and deposited here by a glacier. During the last ice age a huge sheet of ice, several thousand feet thick, covered Canada and much of the northern U.S. The ice sheet spread and moved outward under its own weight, scouring the land underneath and collecting rock debris and pieces of bedrock along the way. As the ice sheet began to melt about 15,000 years ago it deposited the debris onto the landscape and left this giant boulder sitting here.

Enjoy Your Visit!

•Visitors are welcome to walk the preserve trails during daylight hours.

•Please respect our neighbors by remaining on SVCA property.

•Leave No Trace: please carry out what you carry in and do not take souvenirs.

•As hunting is permitted, both hunters and hikers should use extreme caution during the hunting season.

•Dogs should be under the control of their owners at all times.

•No fires, please.

Directions

From the South:

Follow Route 1 North from Wiscasset for 4.5 miles. Turn left onto Osprey Point Road and bear left onto Eagle Point Road. Follow to the cul-de-sac at the end and park.

From the North:

Follow Route 1 South. Turn right onto Osprey Point Road at the top of the hill just past the Sherman Lake Rest Area. Bear left onto Eagle Point Road. Follow to the cul-de sac at the end and park.

Join Us!

The Sheepscot Valley Conservation Association (SVCA) is a member-supported, non-profit land trust and advocacy group located in the picturesque Sheepscot River Valley. For over thirty five years, we have worked to protect the precious natural and historic resources of the Sheepscot River watershed.

We currently protect over 3,100 acres of land through purchases and conservation easements, monitor river water quality, present environmental education programs and provide GIS mapping services to non-profit environmental organizations and area towns.

❑ Member (*Any contribution earns membership)*
❑ Contributor *($40)*
❑ Supporter *($50)*
❑ Defender *($100)*

❑ My check is enclosed.
or charge to my: ❑ VISA ❑ MasterCard
Card # _____ *Exp.*_____
*Name on card*_____
Signature _____

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY: _____ ST: ____ ZIP: _____
EMAIL: _____

***Detach and mail to*: SVCA, 624 Sheepscot Road**
Newcastle, ME 04553
Or sign up online at www.sheepscot.org

All contributions are tax-deductible.

For more information, please contact the SVCA at 207 586-5616 or email svca@sheepscot.org

Marsh River Preserve

Newcastle, Maine

Sheepscot Valley Conservation Association

The Preserve Map and Interpretive Trail:

Welcome to the Marsh River Preserve! Enjoy your visit!

1. Witch Hazel-

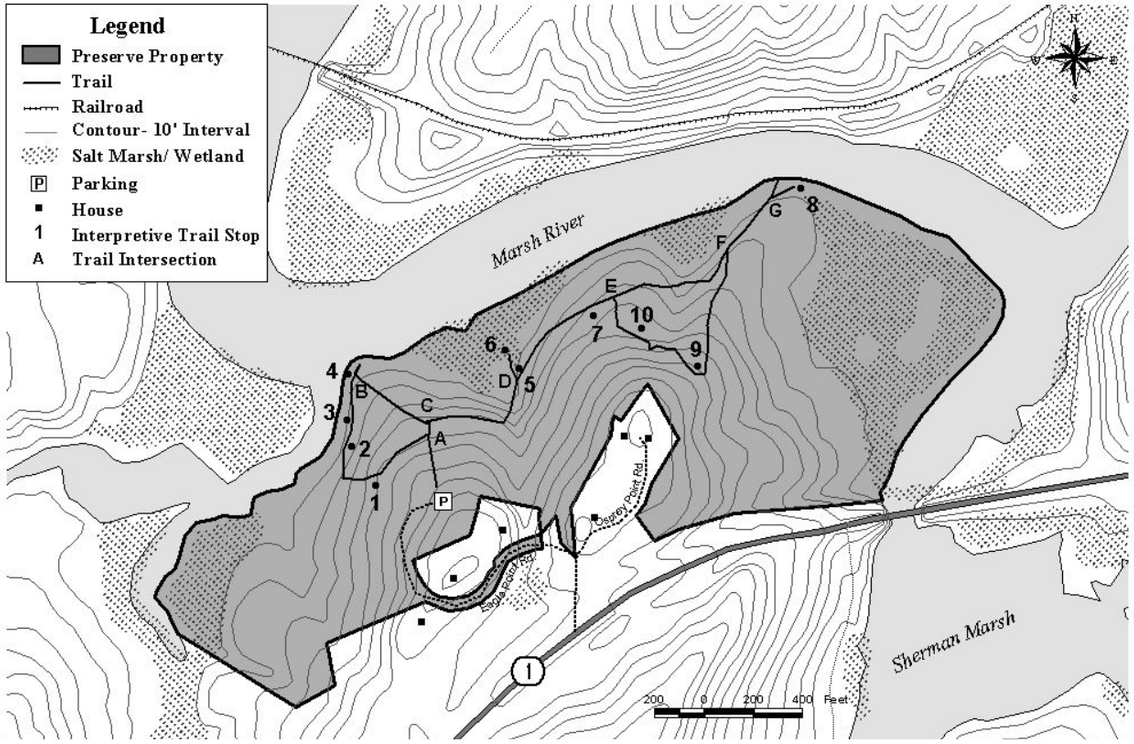
This small understory tree, called witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*), is common in the forests of the northeast. While most New England trees and shrubs bloom in the spring and summer, witch hazel blooms in fall and early winter. Its flowers are yellow, aromatic and ribbon-like. Its fruit ripen in summer and are dispersed up to 50 feet from the tree when its seed pods spring open. Witch hazel has many medicinal uses and is often used to reduce inflammation and as a skin toner.

2. Rock Pile-

Like much of the land in New England, this property was once farmed and cleared for pasture and crops. As farmers cleared the land they found that Maine's soil is very rocky. They removed the rocks from their fields by hand and collected them into stonewalls and also into piles like this one. The stonewalls and piles are now favored sites for squirrel and chipmunk caches.

3. Salt Marsh-

Salt marshes are one of the most important natural resources and most productive habitats on earth. They provide the majority of the particulate matter, the basis of the coastal food chain, to the surrounding estuary and they provide food and habitat to a variety of species. Two-thirds of our commercial fish, shellfish and bait species (including striped bass, bluefish, clams, lobster and sandworms) depend on salt marshes at some point in their lifecycle. In addition, we depend on marshes to protect upland areas from the erosive forces of waves and currents, to absorb rising waters and lessen the impact of floods and to help maintain water quality by filtering pollutants. Salt marshes also provide recreational resources and are popular sites for hunting, fishing, boating and bird watching.



4. Significant Habitat-

Salt marshes are not only important to coastal fish species, but are also extremely important to birds. Many bird species, most notably the shore birds, reside in the marsh year round or make planned stops in the marsh as they migrate. These areas provide reliable abundant high-energy food sources, such as horseshoe crab eggs or sea worms. This section of marsh has been identified by the Maine Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife as important wading bird and waterfowl habitat. Great blue herons, Northern harriers and several species of ducks are common species to spot here.

5. Wildlife Tree-

The holes in this hemlock tree are the handiwork of a pileated woodpecker. By listening, pileated woodpeckers hear which trees are infected with ants, their favorite dinner, and using their beak, they excavate these rough-hewn, rectangular holes. To withstand all the pounding, their brains are encased with air and their skulls are heavily fortified. Pileated woodpeckers also use their beak to tear apart decaying logs in search of beetle larvae, which they lap up with their sticky tongues. With their large size (16 to 19 inches tall), characteristic black body with white markings and bright red crest, pileated woodpeckers are easily identifiable, but their shy nature makes them difficult to spot.

6. Historic Marsh Uses-

Through history most of Maine's salt marshes have been utilized and transformed by humans. Native Americans harvested fish, shellfish, waterfowl and other natural resources and early European settlers relied on marshes for hay and for pasture. Marshes were altered with dikes, berms and ditches in an effort to control the water and to grow more hay. During the 19th century, people began viewing marshes less as a valuable resources and more as wastelands that were sources of disease and barriers to development. As a result, marshes were polluted, filled, drained and converted to agricultural or developable land. Many marshes in Maine, including this one, for example, show evidence of ditching, likely done in the 1930s in an unsuccessful attempt to control mosquito populations. Fortunately, we now know that salt marshes are valuable natural areas that should be protected.

7. Rattlesnake Plantain-

Between July and August, this small plant located along the trail edge has a single spike of dense, small white flowers that sit above a basal rosette of dark blue-green evergreen leaves with white veins. The plant was named for the pattern on its leaves, which looks vaguely like snakeskin. While rattlesnake plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*), a member of the Orchid family, is abundant in oak and conifer forests throughout the eastern U.S., it is less often noticed.

8. Salt Marsh Zones-

The salt marsh is divided into distinctly different zones caused by the tidal flooding, salinity and the resulting different vegetation types that thrive within each zone. The zones are seen here as different colored bands of green. The zone nearest the river channel, called the low marsh, is inundated by the tide twice each day and is dominated by a tall marsh grass, called cordgrass (*Spartina alternifolia*). The low marsh provides an important nursery area for our coastal fishery species. The next zone inland, called the high marsh, is (*continued on reverse)*