Glaciers and Granite

If you look at the Camden Hills along the western horizon, you can 'read' the mark of the glaciers' passage more than twelve thousand years ago. Scouring down from the North, a sheet of ice, perhaps nearly a mile deep, scraped and shaped the long, gentle northern slopes of the Camden Hills. Notice that the left-hand sides of those distant peaks tend to have shorter and more vertical planes. The massive ice sheet plucked the broken rock from these southerly "downstream" faces, leaving the asymmetrical profiles we see today.

We can read this same story writ smaller all over Deer Isle. The trail to Bailey Island ascends a gradual slope and then gives magical views of the shadowy lichen-covered south-facing cliffs which were shaped by the glaciers long ago. Wherever the surface of the granite is exposed, notice the pattern of cracks and fractures where the rock broke under the glacier's weight and from other stresses.

This network of fractures creates Deer Isle's freshwater reservoir, but a reservoir that is mostly filled with rock. In the network of cracks under Deer Isle is a finite network of fractures where the island does not sit on an absorbing sponge of porous soils. The shallow spreading walls tell us it was once farmed, and the roots of the wind-blown spruces are adapted to this granite-based habitat, the legacy of the glaciers. The island ecosystem is a lovely but fragile one.

People, Plants and Animals

At the Edge of the Sea

The land use history of the preserve can be read in the vegetation. Although the dark mossy forest feels primeval, it is less than a hundred years old. The stone walls tell us it was once farmed, and the groves of poplars and large lower branches on some big old spruce, tell us that these trees once flourished in the full sunshine of an open meadow.

The dominant tree species here in this maritime forest are white spruce, balsam fir, and red spruce. Scattered yellow and white birch, and red and striped maples also make up this coastal rain forest. The abundant moisture generated by condensation over the cold waters of the Gulf of Maine helps festoon the trees with the pale gray-green of Old Man's Beard and other lichens. Upland cranberry blankets the viewpoint knoll.

On Bailey Island, you can observe how the sea creatures live at different heights in the tide zone. Notice the dark haze of the band of blue-green algae in the splash zone just above high tide, which makes footing treacherous when it is damp.

As you are walking, you may hear a black-throated green warbler, or even a hermit thrush. On the northwest corner of the island, ospreys have maintained a nest for years. Please give the nest a wide berth when you walk around that end of the island. The birds will likely remind you, screaming if you come too close. Since 2002, bald eagles have occasionally nested along the shore - please respect any trail closures during their nesting season.

Please, do not take home natural objects, as what you remove may deprive some creature of its food or shelter. Respect the land, water and your fellow visitors to protect this natural resource for everyone.

As you walk the paths of the Barred Island Preserve, you join the Wabanaki people, who summered here several thousand years ago, and the Stinson family, who formed on this point a mere hundred or so years ago.

Frederick Law Olmsted, famed landscape architect of New York City's Central Park and one of the founding fathers of our national park system, summered nearby and owned Barred Island at the turn of the century. His grand-niece, Carolyn Olmsted, donated the island to The Nature Conservancy in 1969 for the enjoyment of the people and visitors of Deer Isle. Dr. Ralph Waldron, a botanist who established Goose Cove Lodge, laid out much of the trail system. The subsequent lodge owner George Pavloff gave, in memory of his wife Elli, 48 acres of maritime boreal forest, providing access by land to Barred Island. With your stewardship, future generations will continue to enjoy this wonderful place.
Barred Island Preserve

What is in a view? The panorama to the south of this overlook is unique both for its beauty and the fact that many of the islands in the view are in some way protected. Island Heritage Trust holds conservation easements on several of these islands. That means the owners have given up some of their rights to develop their island.

We all benefit; but stewardship generates expenses. Will you help us? Please consider sending a contribution to our Island Stewardship Fund. Thank you and enjoy your visit.

Preserve Guidelines

This land is a nature preserve set aside for low impact, nature-oriented activities. Please respect these guidelines for the benefit of our natural heritage.

- Day use only - no camping
- No pets
- No fires, no smoking
- Stay on trails or shoreline
- Respect private property of our neighbors
- Foot traffic only beyond the parking lot
- If the parking lot is full (8 vehicles), please return another time
- Please leave portable furniture, radios, and other recreational equipment at home
- Do not remove any natural objects (rocks, shells, etc.)
- Carry out all litter. Leave no trace
- Respect trail closures

Thank you for your cooperation!

The Barred Island Preserve is owned by:
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