



## VIRTUAL GUIDED NATURE WALK

### SCOTT'S LANDING



Scott's Landing was obviously once a farm though its hay rake and other implements have now moved to the historical society. The shore was the site of a ferry landing dating back as far as 1792. Even before that, for almost three thousand years, the Native Americans had a series of encampments here. They called it a version of Eggemoggin, "Where the fish weirs are".

This preserve offers easy walking after a short initial section with some roots across the trail. Scott's Landing offers some of the Island's best butterfly watching and birding. Woodcock display here at dusk from early April well into May.



With its wide variety of habitats, Scott's Landing is richly endowed with plant and animal species. Before entering the trail, look away from the bridge, easterly across the small marsh with its own compliment of species. Fringing the edge of the parking area are many shrubs that are important sources of fruit for wildlife. Along the trails you will find alternate-leaved dogwood; hawthorn, called thorn-apple; Virginia roses; and wild-raisin, a shiny-leaved viburnum pictured here (below) with the day-flying moth called Spear-marked Black, very common in some summers.





In the taller bushes and trees you might see tiny warblers that always arrive here at the end of May. We have an annual festival called Wings, Waves, and Woods to welcome them. First to arrive are the Yellow-rumped Warblers that used to be called Myrtle Warblers because they love to eat the waxy berries of the myrtle or bayberry bushes. They are short distance migrants that only go as far south as our southern United States. Many of our warblers are long-distance migrants; they come from Latin America, having set their return “clocks” by day length. We may think we are having an early spring or late spring by what is happening in our garden or the flowering shrubs in our lawn or when we had the last snow storm, but these tiny travelers had to begin their journey north before they knew the latest weather reports. By mid-May our most common warbler will be the Black-throated Green Warbler. They have a yellow cheek patch and they sing a buzzy “I’m black throated green”. They are quite conspicuous in our spruce trees.





The many shrubs making almost a tunnel along this trail are an indication that the land was once cleared. Likewise, spreading branches completely encircling the trunks of the large spruces on either side of the trail tell you that formerly they grew in open pastures. Notice the litter of spruce cone scales at the base of those trees. Red squirrels throw down the cones and open them for the small seeds. The cones are quite slender, a diagnostic characteristic of white spruce.

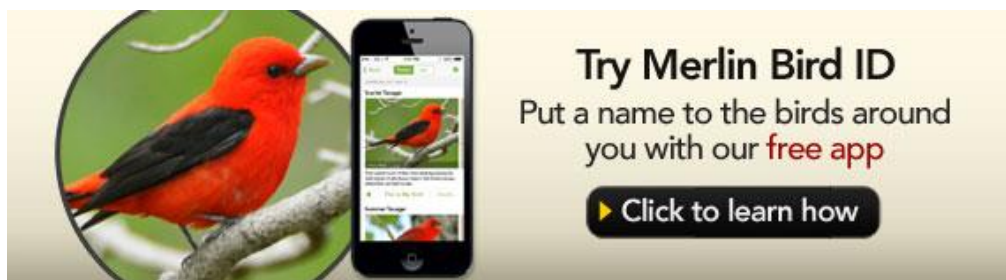




Speckled Alders (above) are common here; that tells you that the habitat is damp and the soil is poorly drained. Pictured above are the pollen-bearing catkins. Among the spring wild flowers is trout lily (below), uncommon on Deer Isle and an indicator of rich soil. Did the presence of these wildflowers encourage the Eatons and Scotts to farm right here?



In the bushes you are likely to hear Song Sparrows. They are short-distance migrants, and are among the first birds to come back here in spring. Blackbirds and Hermit Thrushes are also among these early arrivals. Catbirds sing often in this habitat, and you might hear the beautiful songs of thrushes in the early spring evenings. You may want to use your web browser to call up the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology site if you do not have a good bird app. See [www.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.birds.cornell.edu) or download their free app, see below.



Here you have the option to turn left to follow a trail to the 1807 store and ferry dock or to turn right and the trail leads to Old Ferry Road and the foundation remnants of the Scott farmstead. We will continue right for only some twenty yards and then go up the rise, bearing left.



The shrubs here are a prime habitat for spring bird watching. In the fields you will find blueberries and flame-red wood lilies in summer. Here too you can find tunnels and nursery chambers in the grassroots made by the meadow vole, complete with haystack-like piles of grass cuttings. In winter the voles make tunnels in the snow which are laid bare in the spring.

After the Scotts bought the land from William Eaton, they farmed the area for almost 200 years. Hence the preserve has a wide variety of habitats. Biologists call it succession as old fields grow up to woodlands. If you want to keep the fields open for blueberries and rare wood lilies, you have to keep mowing. IHT is careful to mow the fields after the birds which nest on the ground have raised their young. Come back in mid-July to see the wood lilies but please do not pick them! They only make one stalk a year.

Scott's Landing is also a good spot for watching butterflies. (See also Mariners Park). In the middle of the day when the birds are quiet and bird watching is slow, the air is warm enough for the butterflies to fly and if it is not windy you can enjoy watching several butterfly species here. On a warm day in any month you might see Mourning Cloaks, black ones with a yellow edge, named for Victorian mourning tradition. Introduced Cabbage White butterflies are now our most common species, among the first and last of the season. As the name suggests they are the green caterpillars that are such a garden pest to members of the cabbage family. The adults are plain white and flutter on the summer air like Disney animations.



Plant and animal species are often synchronized. By noting the unfolding of new leaves and the flowering blooms, you know when to look for various birds and insects. Tiny pale blue butterflies are Azures. They will be seen when the blooms are on the shadbush, named for shad, an anadromous fish that used to run in great numbers up our rivers from the ocean in spring to lay their eggs in the fresh water. Later you will see wild cherries and then the old apple trees from the farm come into bloom and Parula warblers are likely. When the lilacs around the Island bloom, you will see Tiger Swallowtails on them. Our guided walks point out common species of plants and animals, but you will also want to check the [Species Almanac](#) for more possibilities.



The glacier left a ridge of rubble here, forming the moraine ridge down which the trail leads to the site of a past dock and store. The wild cherries, sumac, Virginia rose and other shrubs and young trees here are prime habitat for Chestnut-sided warblers and Common Yellowthroat. Come here in April at about 8 PM, just after sunset when the first stars come out, and you can watch the displays of Woodcock. The male birds make a funny electric sound, “pzeent, pzeent”, as they turn about on their display ground. They fly in spirals up in the air, showing off for the females, making a sweet whistling sound with their tail feathers before plummeting back to the ground with a liquid warble.



Maine Coast Heritage Trust helped buy this preserve, having determined that there was no land open to the public along the Reach. MCHT was one of the first land trusts in Maine and in the country. Peggy Rockefeller and Tom Cabot and their friends liked to sail along the coast of Maine and late in the 1960s they noticed that more and more cottages were being built. Shouldn't something be kept natural and open to the general public? Although wealthy people are sometimes criticized for looking out only for the view from their own front porch, it has always been the case that we owe much to their foresight and philanthropy. To this day some of our most dedicated land trust volunteers own their own view and walking paths and yet they are determined to make such opportunities available to all.

There are now land trusts in all our states. Maine Coast Heritage Trust acts like a big sister to IHT, giving advice and helping out; they are not competitors. MCHT owns several islands off Stonington which the public can visit. Land trusts are not state or national parks—they are groups of private citizens just like you. Through their generosity we can visit even if we are not members of the trusts. But wouldn't you like to become a member of Island Heritage Trust?

Follow the Moraine Ridge to the narrow trail leading to the right through the shrubs to the beach.





The trail leads through shrubs such as speckled alder, winterberry - our native holly pictured above - and bayberry, and passes the remains of a stone wall put here by a past farmer. The apple tree also accompanied the settlers here long ago.



Note the lines of small holes in the apple tree trunk (above) made by generations of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. Interestingly, they were not drilling for sap for themselves but the wells attract insects on which the sapsuckers will then dine. Members of the woodpecker family, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers can be distinguished from our other small woodpeckers - red, black and white - by their flash of yellow.



Just ahead is a fine interpretive sign at site of the archeological dig. When IHT acquired the property, archeologists came and ran a field school, scientifically examining the shell middens here. There had been signs that people were digging the area illegally. When that happens the information about our heritage is lost forever.

Step out onto the beach. When those ancient members of the encampment whose artifacts were uncovered in the dig lived here, the high tide mark was substantially farther out. The water level has risen substantially since then.





Look to your left at the prominent rock outcrop. You may have also already seen White Rock Point if you walked out on Moraine Ridge or followed the trail to the site of the 1807 Dock and store. The rock is Ellsworth Schist, a layered metamorphic rock forming the bedrock of northwestern Deer Isle. Now walk along the beach pausing where the fresh water from the marsh drains into the salt water of the Reach.





Behind the beach is a marsh – a wetland with non-woody vegetation. Because we hear spring peepers and wood frogs calling from it, we know that it is not salty. The tall grass-like plants are mainly rushes and sedges, the latter identified by their triangular stems (think Sedge-Wedge and Rush-Round). In snow or on the beach sand or in the vegetation you may see game trails (see photo above) where deer, fox, or other animals regularly come to drink at the freshwater draining from the marsh or just venture onto the beach.

Note the composition of the beach here. Derived from Ellsworth schist, the flat grey pebbles are almost like so many coins. Among the stones along the upper edge of the beach you may find seaside plantain and seaside goldenrod, salt-tolerant species of familiar wildflowers. In the intertidal zone you can find knotted wrack (below), the rockweed species that is more common in sheltered waters. (See also Causeway and Reach Beaches).



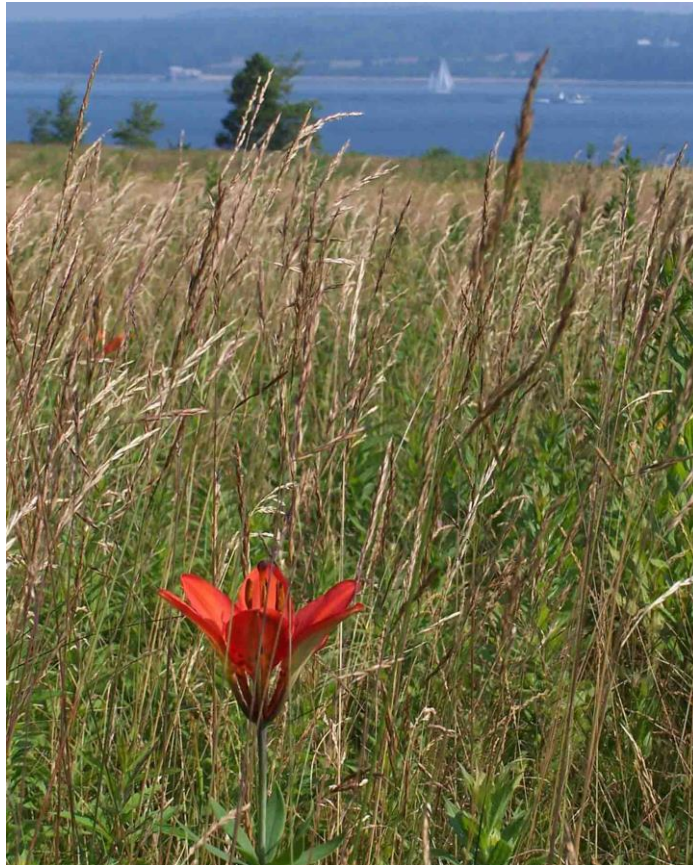


Overhead you may see an Osprey or Bald Eagle. Both nest on or near Carney Island on the other side of Causeway Beach. Common waterbirds include Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, and in winter Common Loon and Eider ducks.



At the far end of the beach is a boulder that is clearly not like anything around it. A closer look reveals that there is no pink in this granite so we know it is not part of the Stonington

formation. Could it be a glacial erratic from across the Reach? It looks just like the bedrock of Sedgwick—Sedgwick granite. The Reach, by the way, takes its name from the fact that sailors can navigate the passage in either direction, coming or going, with the sail on a reach, i.e. out across the beam of the vessel.



Northern Harriers can be seen cruising low over the field here to catch the meadow voles. Red fox and coyotes both hunt here as well. Many of our common meadow wild flowers such as Oxeye daisy and the hawkweeds are native to Europe and the British Isles. We refer to them as naturalized when they grow wild without adverse impact. When plants like Garden Valerian and Asiatic Bittersweet become aggressive and displace native species, they are termed invasive. Our native wood lilies grow between this path and Old Ferry Road.





Along the wall are white spruce(above), with cones that are longer than wide and their new needles have a bluish cast. (Red spruce cones are smaller and rounder. The needles of the so-called red spruce are distinctly green; red is the more common spruce species here on Deer Isle.) Sometimes called skunk spruce, white spruce can give off the smell of cat urine. Note in some of the trees the bushy growths of what is called Witches' Broom. A variety of organisms can cause the infected plant to respond with this growth. Dwarf mistletoe is often the infecting agent on our coastal white spruce.

Also along the wall you will find a variety of fern species, including sensitive, cinnamon, and interrupted ferns. They are all to some degree indicators of wet soil.



Sensitive fern (above) a small fern with a separate fruiting stalk that looks like a stick of BB shot is one of the first to be frosted in the fall.



Cinnamon fiddleheads (above) emerging in spring look as if they have been dusted with a rather furry cinnamon and sugar and traces of this fuzz remain on the stems most of the summer.



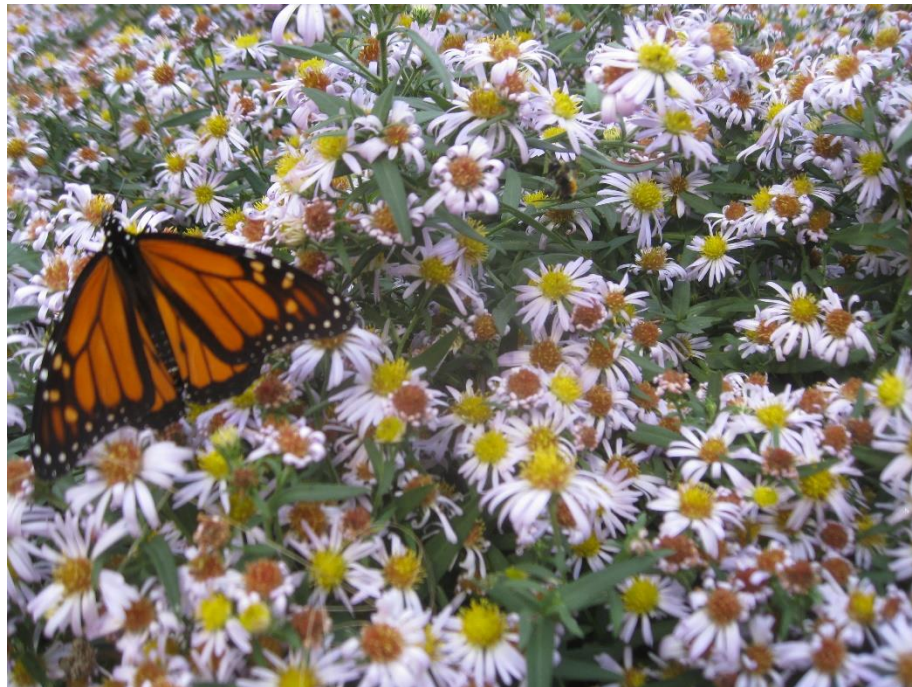


The cinnamon fern (above) fruiting stalks are red-brown single spires. Interrupted ferns are almost the twin of cinnamon ferns - similar in both size and shape - but their leafy fronds are interrupted along their length with pendant knots of fruiting bodies. See below.





In winter you will probably find tracks of red fox, red squirrel, snowshoe hare, and white-tailed deer. Just as tundra caribou and reindeer are famous for scraping through the snow to eat the lichen popularly known as reindeer moss, just so here you can see by their tracks and droppings that our deer are eating what they find among the blueberries and meadow grasses in winter.



The open fields of this preserve are good places at summer's end to find several species of goldenrods and asters as well as butterflies. See the Nature Species Almanac. Notice that this Monarch lacks the fine black line on the lower wing that the look-alike Viceroy butterflies



have. With Monarchs getting scarce, you need to check your identification for this once common beloved butterfly.

Follow the field edge and stone wall. At the foot of the meadow on your right, toward the bridge, the shrubby wetland of winterberry and speckled alder usually supports several pairs of nesting woodcock. The field and its edges form a patchy habitat that is ideal for woodcock. They use the openings for display and feed by probing for worms in the soft earth of the swamp. Like many other members of the sandpiper family, one male probably mates with several females which then nest alone.

From this spot you can see several species of hardwoods. Two old Yellow Birch (below) are still surviving on the Reach side of the trail. When they were young trees, the Scott family farmed here.



Alone on the Ferry Road side of the trail stands a Red Oak (below), the predominant oak of the Island, often used in ship building.





Do not turn onto the Moraine Ridge trail, but continue, passing the red oak, to the signpost which points in one direction to the farmstead by Old Ferry Road. Follow the trail in the other direction to an alley of poplars.



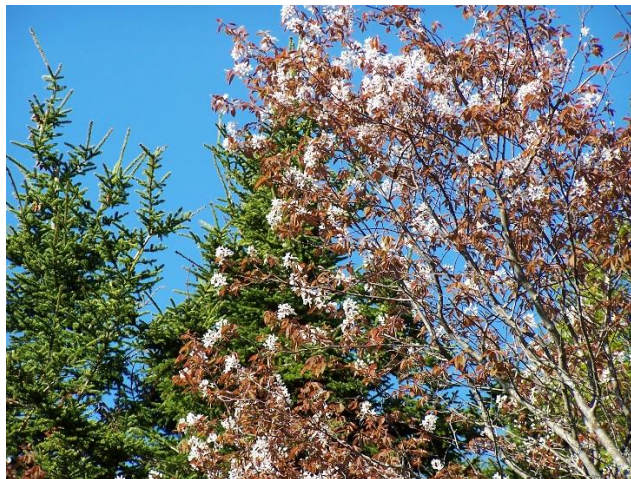
Follow the path through the line of aspens, locally known as poplars or popple. This is a remnant of the portion of Old Ferry Road that formerly led from the farmstead to the 1807



store and dock and now joins the preserve's loop trail. The poplar (big-toothed aspen) trees tell us that this land was once more open than it is today. Notice that there are few poplar seedlings in the understory. Poplars are not tolerant of shade and will be replaced in time by oak and spruce growing up beneath them. The poplars here seem quite similar to one another - it is quite likely that they are all natural clones. Groves of clones can cover a very large area, perhaps more than a mile.



What look like paint spots on the tree trunks here are lichens. There are often as many as thirty different kinds of lichens growing on our trees. You may have noticed that the aspens have the more obvious bark lichens and it is principally the spruces which have hanging thread-like lichens, the old man's beard. Parula warblers use the beard lichens to make their nests. Parulas are not quite as cooperative about letting you see them as are the Black-throated Green warblers you see in the spruces. The Parulas return a little later in the spring and often can be seen in the wild cherries and blooming shadbush (below).



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Perhaps more than any other preserve, a visit to Scott's Landing takes the visitor back in time and gives one thoughts about our possible future. Looking back, Scott's Landing takes its name from the Scott family who for years tended the ferry crossing the Reach. The ferry landing photograph from the historical society archives shows what is now the Inn at Ferry Landing, the white house at the right.



The little ferry could hold four cars and was skillfully towed across the Reach (by the boat you see at the left of the photograph) until the point where the ferry glided smoothly up to the loading ramp. There are still rock remnants of the wharf, which lies beyond the Scott's Landing Preserve.

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On your return to the parking lot, take a moment to enjoy the vistas framed by the stone sculpture.



The sculptor visited Crotch Island, the source of the granite for the sculpture at the parking lot here at Scott's Landing. The site-specific work is titled *Deer Isle Project* and is part of the Schoodic International Sculpture Symposium. Funded through grants and contributions, the works in the communities in Eastern Maine form a growing Downeast Sculpture Tour. In his artist statement Atilla Rath Geber of Caen, France, says he intended for this work to reflect the natural elements and respect for the surroundings.

We hope you have enjoyed your outing.



# ISLAND HERITAGE TRUST

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