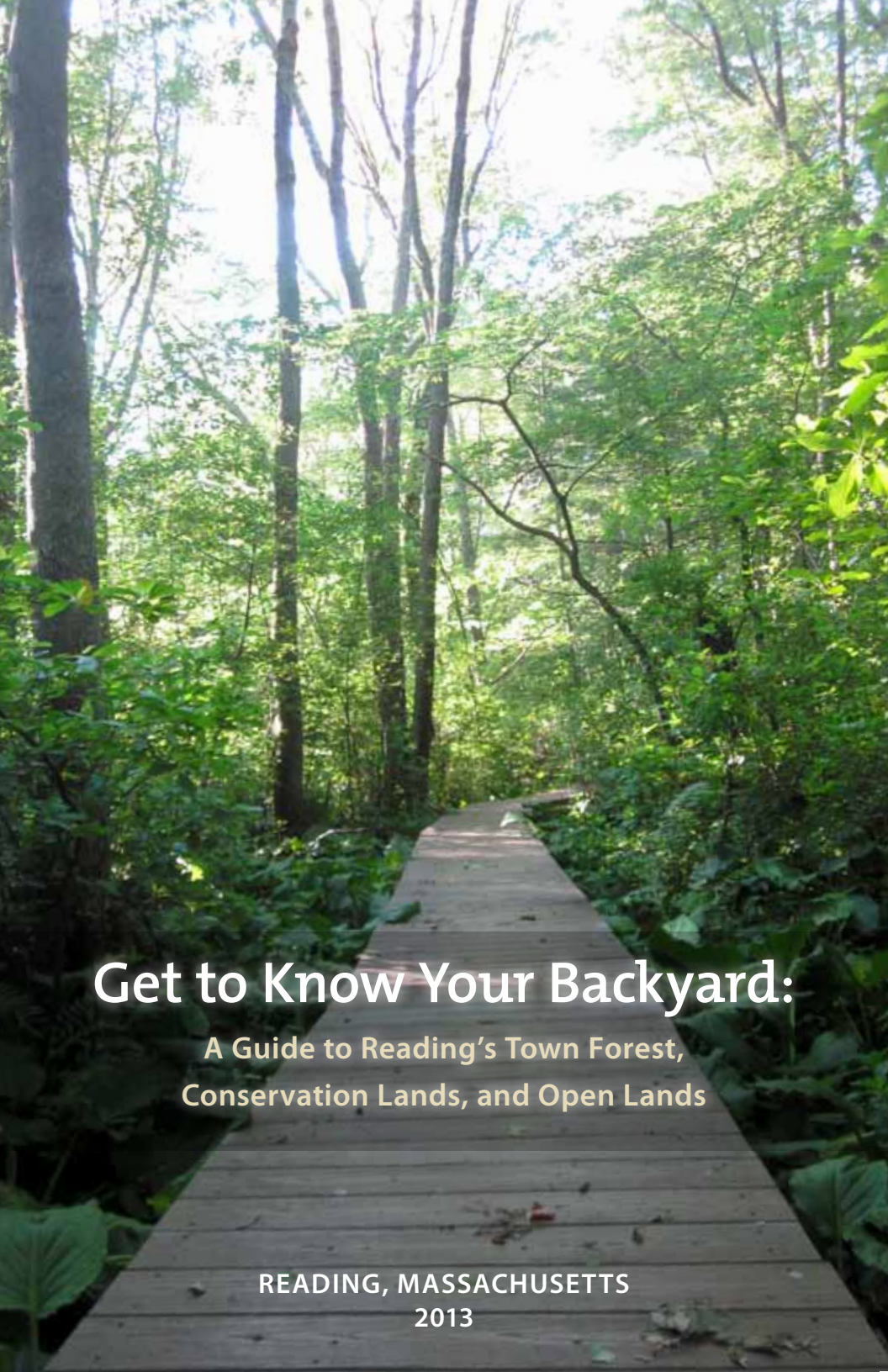




Get to Know Your Backyard:

A Guide to Reading's Town Forest,
Conservation Lands, and Open Lands

READING, MASSACHUSETTS
2013



Dear Nature Lovers,

It is with great honor that I present to you *Get to Know Your Backyard: A Guide to Reading's Town Forest, Conservation Lands, and Open Lands*.

When I began researching a topic for my Gold Award, I decided to focus primarily on animals and the environment. I was familiar with the Town Forest but wasn't aware of the other recreational opportunities available in our town. Despite growing up and living in Reading I had no idea that three rivers begin in our town or that Reading is the home to over twenty conservation areas, one of which you could kayak or canoe in!

With the help of the three groups that oversee these lands, Town Forest Committee, Conservation Commission, and Reading Open Land Trust, I quickly caught their contagious passion for land preservation, care, and education. I have learned a tremendous amount of exciting knowledge and was inspired to share what I have learned as part of my Gold Award.

Through this guide I hope to increase awareness of the importance of these natural ecosystems in order to maintain ecological balance and uphold land for recreational opportunities.

Please enjoy this guide and take a moment to explore your backyard and its hidden gems.

**Sincerely,
Grace**

*Town Forest
Cover: Kurchian Woods*

Table of Contents

Town Map	2
About Reading	3
TOWN FOREST	4
CONSERVATION LANDS	6
Bare Meadow	8
Biller	9
Evergreen Trail	10
Higgins	11
Kurchian Woods	12
Linnaea Thellin Bird Sanctuary	13
Maillet Morgan	14
Pinevale	15
Schneider Woods	16
Sledge Woods	17
Wetlands: Cedar Swamps, Conserva, DiCenzo, Moore Property, Querolo, Sheehan, Timberneck Swamp, Xavier	18
OPEN LANDS	20
Boyd Parcel, Currie Bird Sanctuary, Fairbanks Marsh, Nichols Wood Lot	
Wetlands: Fienemann Ice Pond, Goodale Marsh, Randall Road, Swamp Island	24
Additional Information	25
Adopt-A-Trail Program	Back Cover

MAP SYMBOLS



Bird Watching



Picnicking



XC Skiing



Basketball Court



Playing Fields



Trail Access
Point



Fishing



Playgrounds



Trail Parking



Nature Study



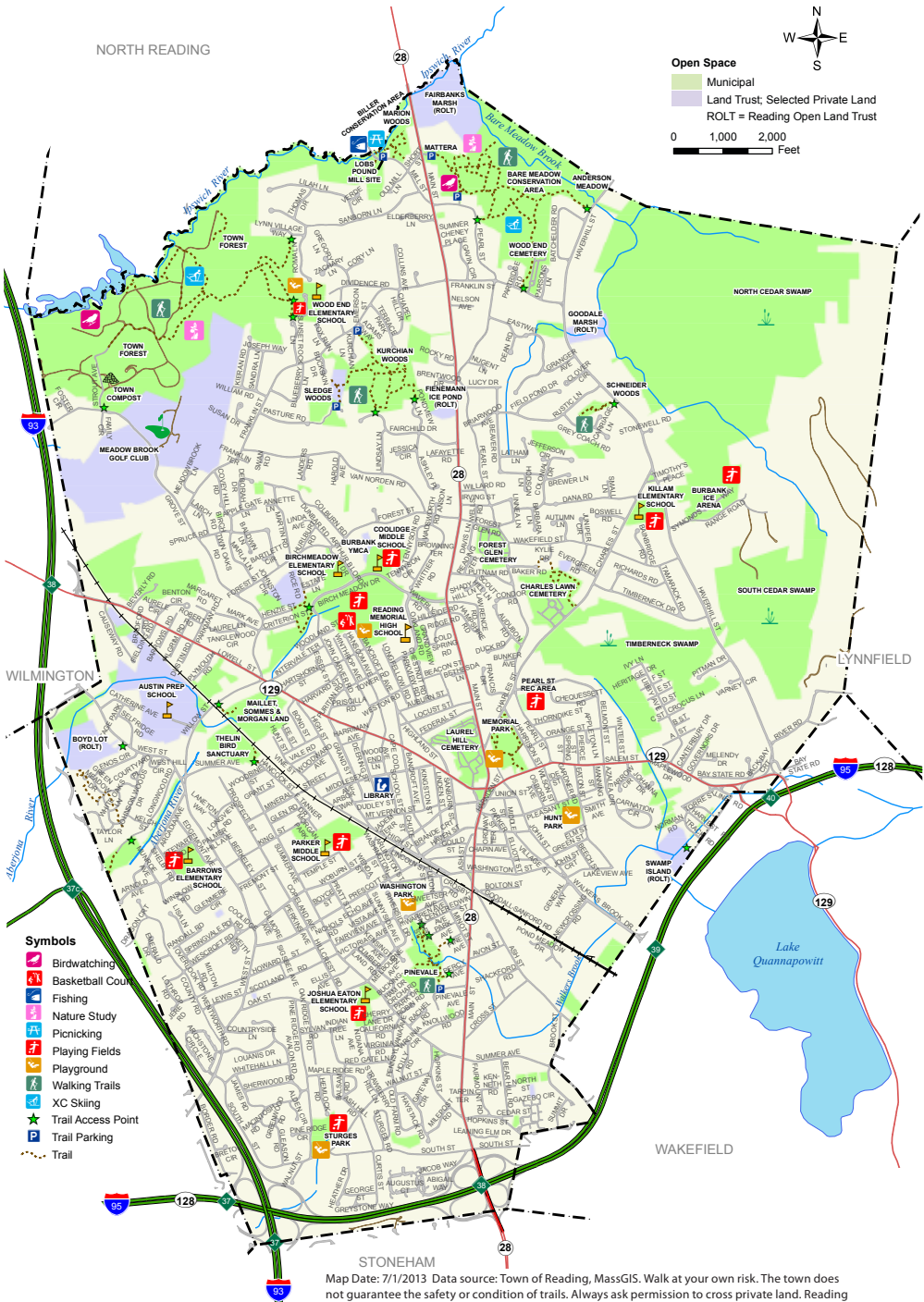
Walking Trails



Trail

What to Wear: In order to protect yourself from ticks, mosquitoes, and poison ivy, please wear light-colored pants tucked into socks and a long sleeve shirt, a hat, closed-toe shoes, insect repellent, and sunscreen lotion.

Town Map



Our town plays a vital environmental role due to its geographic location. Town groups and private groups have worked endlessly to bring the public as close to nature as possible without disturbing the ecosystem. As you explore the trails, please respect the natural land and its organisms to ensure a fulfilling experience for future hikers.

Wetlands

A wetland is a pool of standing water in the form of a swamp, marsh, or bog. Wetlands are important for wildlife habitats, storm water management, and watershed protection. They also control the flow of water in ecosystems, remove pollutants, and serve as a source of underground water for communities. In Reading, wetlands serve as the headwater for three of the areas main rivers: the Ipswich, Saugus, and Aberjona. Wetlands can also provide winter recreational opportunities such as snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

For more information please visit: <http://water.epa.gov/type/wetlands/index.cfm>

Vernal Pools

A vernal pool is a natural depression that temporarily fills with water. Due to its periodic drying, vernal pools do not support fish populations. Organisms that have evolved to vernal pools are called obligate species because they rely on the pools for various parts of their life cycle. Common obligate species are fairy shrimp, mole salamanders, and wood frogs which form a significant base of the food chain.

For more information please visit: http://www.vernalpool.org/vernal_1.htm

Ipswich River Greenway

The *Northern Area Greenway Task Force* is currently exploring the possibility of creating a greenway along the Ipswich River. This greenway would traverse the Town Forest, the Biller Conservation Area, the Mattera Conservation Area, and the Bare Meadow Conservation Area. The trail system would link several existing trails in these lands in addition to a proposed boardwalk along the Ipswich River. Furthermore, the Ipswich River Greenway project proposes putting accessible fishing piers in the Town Forest and at Lob's Pound Mill.

For more information please visit: <http://www.readingma.gov/IpswichRiverGreenway>

Town Forest

QUICK FACTS

Size: 290 acres

Location:

Northwestern part of town

Main Entrance:

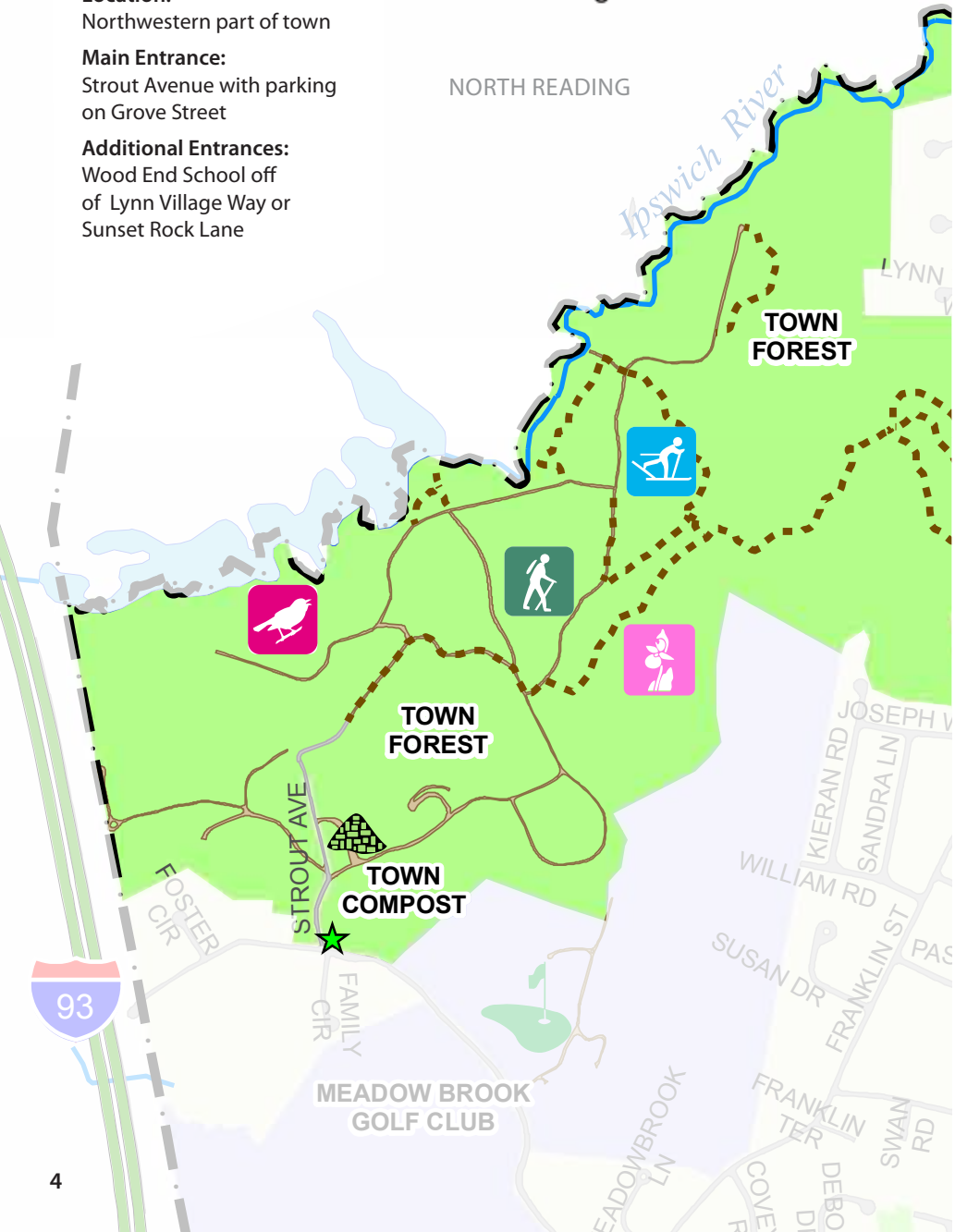
Strout Avenue with parking
on Grove Street

Additional Entrances:

Wood End School off
of Lynn Village Way or
Sunset Rock Lane



NORTH READING



Our Town Forest

This area of land is overseen by the Town Forest Committee whose primary function is the care, custody, and management of the land.

The Town Forest was created in April, 1930 when over 100,000 red and white pine, spruce, balsam, and scotch pine saplings were planted in rows by local Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H Club members, the Massachusetts Forestry Association, and other interested citizens. A circle of pine trees, 100 feet in diameter, were also planted to symbolize unity. This is now known as the *Old Council Ring*. Today, the "pine plantations" are mature forests over 80 years old.

There are many natural features of the Town Forest. Besides large pine trees, eskers, and blueberry bushes, you can find pink and white Lady's Slippers which like the acidic soil. The Forest is also the home to Great Horned Owls, Red Foxes, and deer. Because of the creation of the Town Forest we have preserved key habitats for numerous bird and mammal species from encroaching residential and industrial development.

The Town Forest offers one of the most extensive trail systems in Reading. Most of these trails are level and suitable for all levels of hikers. Some of the trails go through swampy muddy areas depending on the time of year so dress accordingly. The Ipswich River runs along the northern border of the forest separating Reading from North Reading. The land is great for hiking, bird watching, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. The forest also offers two camping sites which can only be used by local groups with a permit.

For further information:

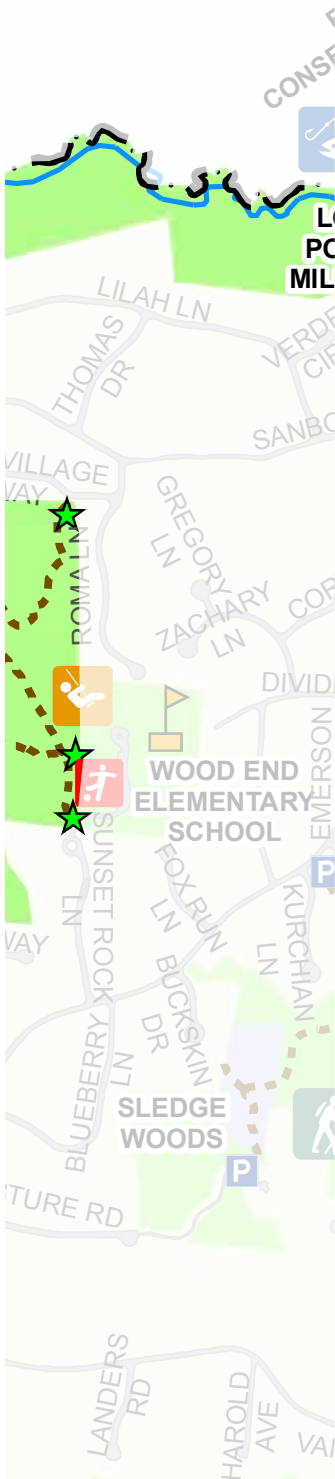
<http://www.readingma.gov/town-forest-committee>

Email: TownForest@ci.reading.ma.us

Phone: 781-942-9092

For a complete list of regulations please visit:

<http://www.readingma.gov/town-forest-committee/files/town-forest-rules>



Conservation Lands



Bare Meadow

Our Conservation Lands

Reading's Conservation Land currently includes 20 properties throughout the town comprising 900 acres. The land is managed by the Reading Conservation Commission. Please note only the most significant properties have been featured on the following pages.

This group was established with the primary function to develop natural resources and to protect watershed resources in Reading. The Commission works to acquire and maintain conservation land within the town for public enjoyment and resource protection.

Since Reading is the headwater of three major rivers in the northern Boston area the town has a significant environmental protection role, and it is the Conservation Commission's responsibility to protect the water supply from pollution and improper use.

In 1972, the Conservation Commission was given regulatory authority to administer the new Wetlands Protection Act of the Massachusetts General Laws. Over the years, the Commission's role in the administration of the Wetlands Protection Act has been further defined through regulations and policies issued by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Then in 1980 the Town Meeting adopted the Wetlands Protection Bylaw. The Commission subsequently promulgated the Reading Wetlands Protection Regulations under the Bylaw. From time to time, the Town Meeting has amended the Bylaw, and the Commission has amended the Regulations. The amendments serve to clarify the language, to make it consistent with recent changes in state laws and regulations, and to assure revenues from filing fees.

For further information:

<http://www.readingma.gov/conservation-division>

Email: ctirone@ci.reading.ma.us

Phone: 781-942-6616

For a complete list of the Conservation Land rules and regulations please visit:

<http://www.readingma.gov/conservation-commission>

Bare Meadow



QUICK FACTS

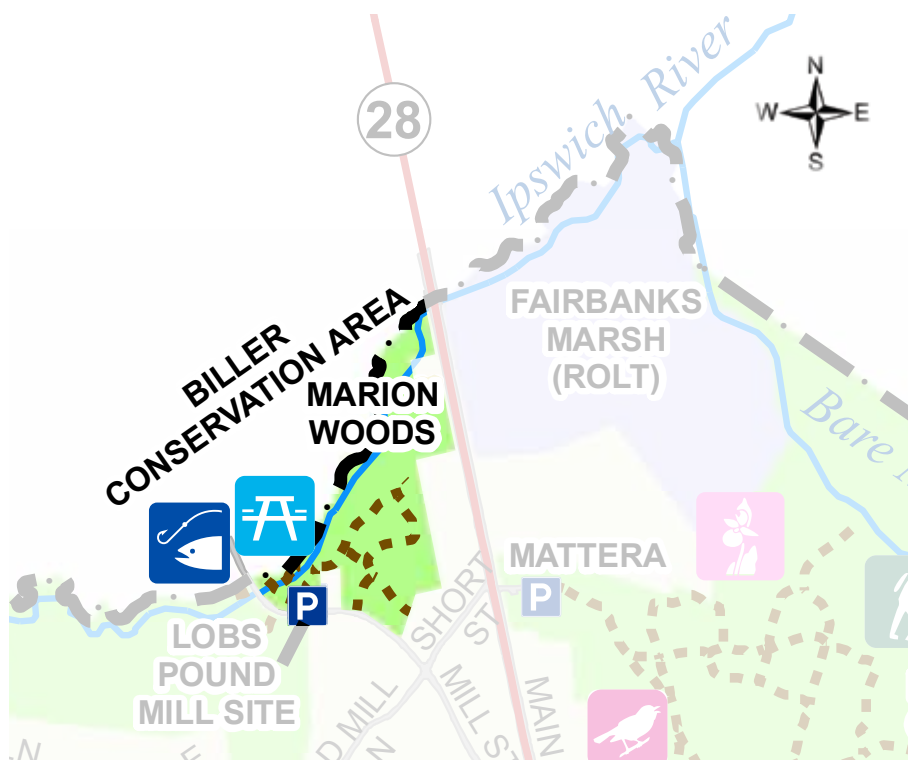
Size: 125 acres

Location:
Northeastern part of town

Entrances:
Pearl Street has parking for a few cars, Matterra Cabin on north Main Street has parking, walking entrances off of Franklin Street next to the cemetery or off Haverhill Street near Batchelder Road.

Bare Meadow was acquired by the town between 1972 and 1973. Historically, the land was once a large pasture with apple orchards. Many of the stone walls along the trails remain from when earlier farmers built them to separate their lands. The Bare Meadow Brook flows through the area and feeds into the Ipswich River. Many plant species and wildlife, especially birds, can be found here.

Bare Meadow is a prime location for recreational activities. An extensive trail system is great for hiking and can also be used for cross-country skiing in the winter. A new bird-watching platform allows for great observation. Also located on the property is the Matterra Cabin which provides an excellent facility that can be rented for public use by contacting recreation@ci.reading.ma.us.



The Biller conservation area consists of two different properties: Lob's Pound Mill and Marion Woods. You can find convenient parking off of Mill Street, near the town border and just before the Ipswich River.

Lobs Pound Mill is a historical site that was built before the 1700s. This site also has the added distinction of being the only site accessible by canoe. A trail leads to a fishing area at the water's edge. To the left you can see a retention wall left over from the water treatment plant built in 1898, and a small waterfall under the bridge. There are also picnic tables and a bench overlooking the pond.

In addition, trails can be found in the adjacent Marion Woods. The trails are all relatively short, but are nonetheless enjoyable to walk around in. There is a great deal of wildlife, including birds and squirrels within the woods.

QUICK FACTS

Size: 9 acres

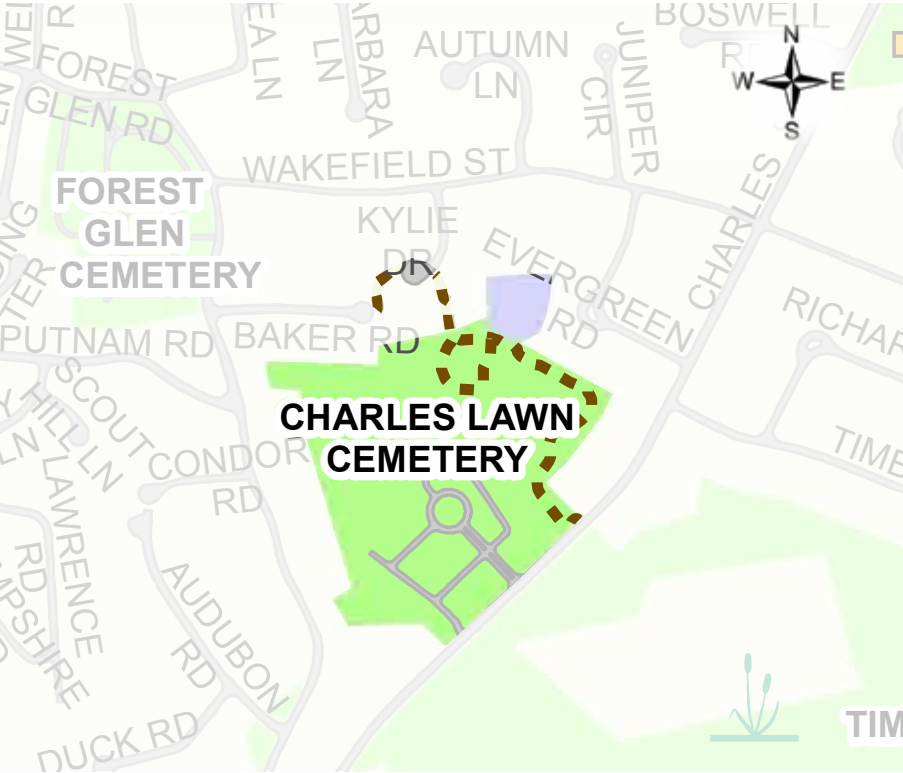
Lobs Pound Mill is 1 acre.

Marion Woods is 8 acres

Location:
Northwestern part of town

Entrance:
Mill Street just before the town line

Evergreen Trail



QUICK FACTS

Size: 5 acres

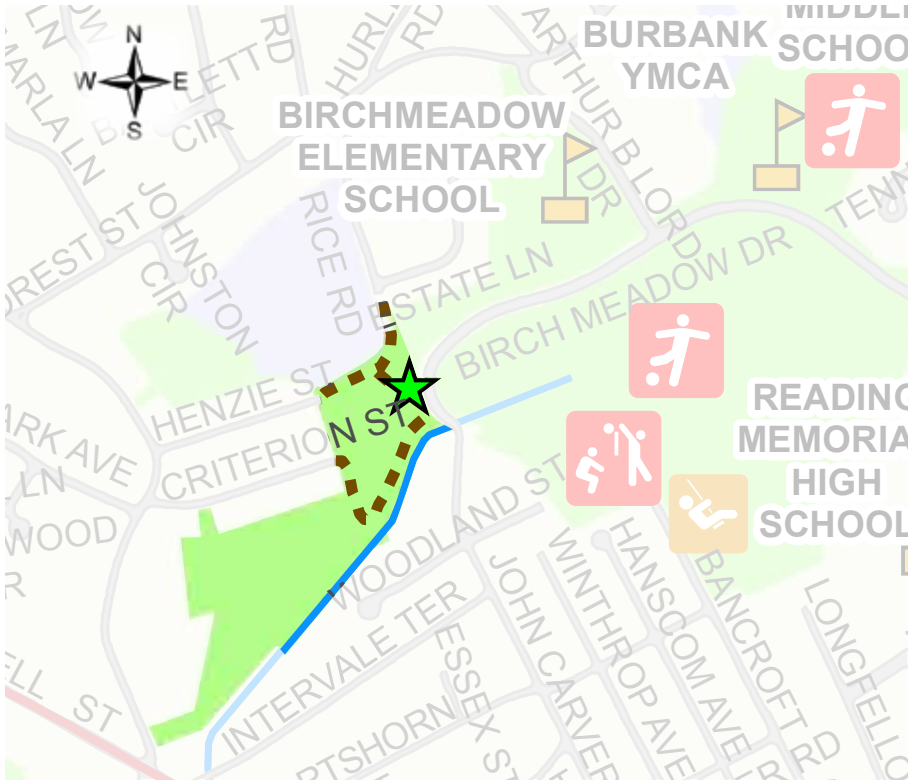
Location:
Central part of town

Entrance:
Kylie Drive and
Haverhill Street

The Evergreen Trail, also known as Kylie Drive, is a recent Eagle Scout project that connects the Kylie Drive neighborhood to Haverhill Street. A boardwalk from Kylie Drive allows the public to access the Reading Open Land Trust’s Currie Bird Sanctuary which is located behind the Charles Lawn Cemetery.

The trail circles through upland, passes the bird sanctuary, and then follows a drainage ditch alongside Charles Lawn Cemetery to Haverhill Street. The trail offers great opportunities for bird watching, nature walking, and snowshoeing in the winter.

Please note that the Evergreen Trail is not a conservation land, but simply a trail that connects conservation and open lands.



The Higgins property is located off of Birch Meadow Drive and stretches from Camp Rice Moody to a stream at the opposite end. A well-trodden path runs the length of the property and ends on Criterion Street next to the stream.

The stream is the site's most notable feature, as it has been widened and hand-lined with rocks. To the right of the path the land is covered by large vernal pools. There is a makeshift bridge available further down the street that will prevent you from getting your feet wet. Upon crossing the stream there is another trail that goes through tall pine and oak trees which populate the area from the vernal pools to the camp. The other part of the property consists of a predominantly oak and scattered pine tree forest.

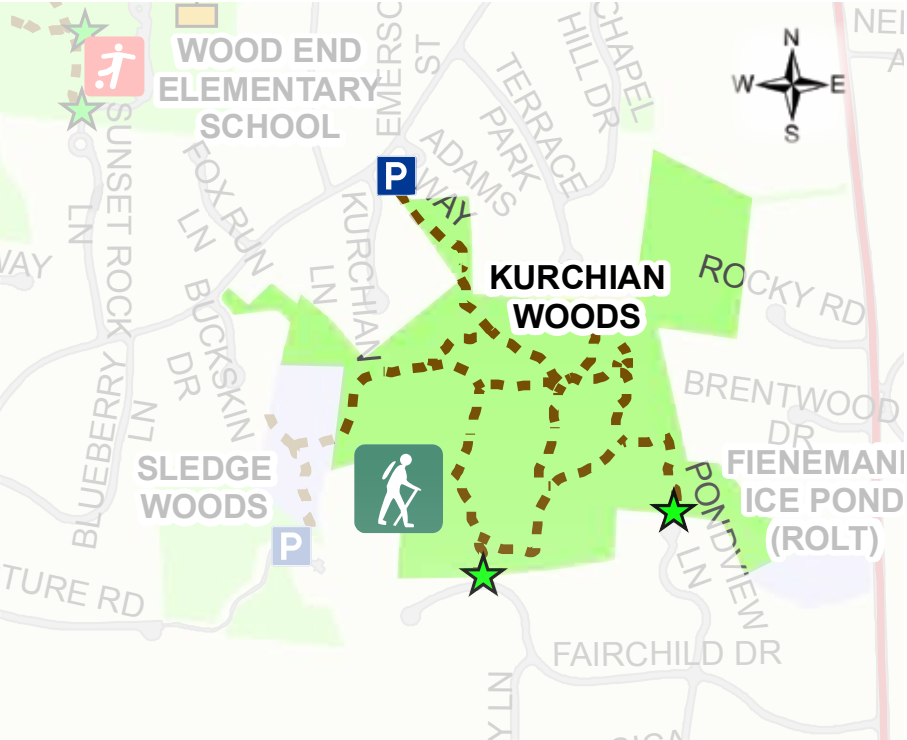
QUICK FACTS

Size: 9 acres

Location:
Central part of town

Entrance:
Birch Meadow
Drive across from
Castine field

Kurchian Woods



QUICK FACTS

Size: 44 acres

Location:
Northern part of town

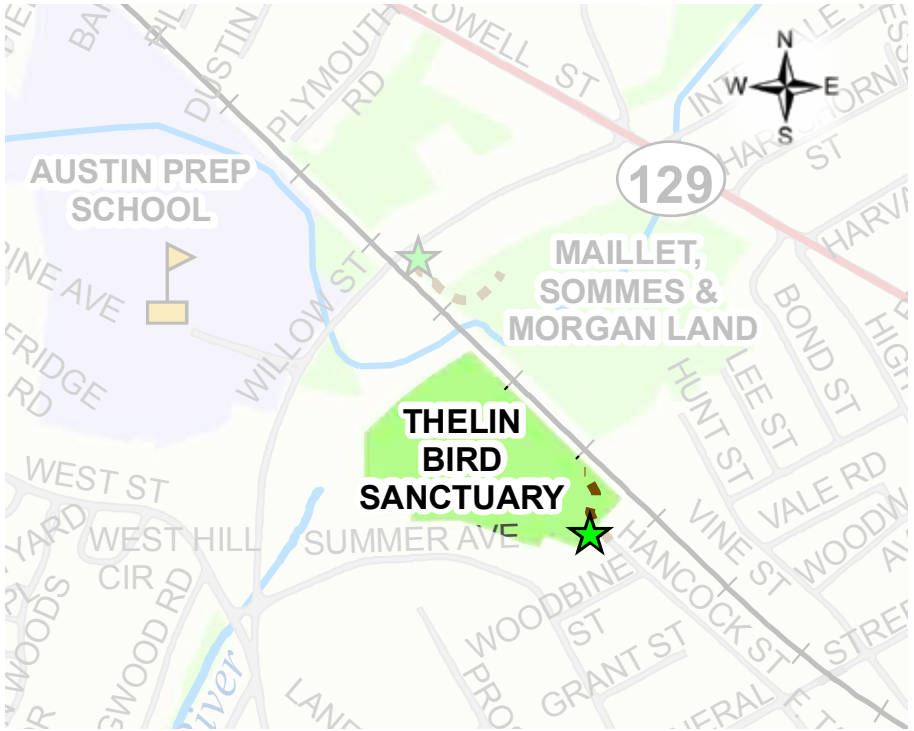
Entrances:
Franklin Street next to Kurchian Lane, at the end of Pondview Lane, and off of Fairchild Drive (sign is set back, before the last two houses at the dead end)

Kurchian Woods is a 44-acre site located between Franklin Street and Main Street.

The trails in Kurchian Woods travel through dense forest and large fern populations. The 380-foot boardwalk at the Franklin Street entrance crosses over a lush swamp and leads to several hiking trails. A shorter boardwalk can also be found at the Pondview Lane entrance. The trails in Kurchian Woods are clearly marked and generally level except for a few steep hills. The long, wide clearing which cuts through Kurchian Woods is due to the Tenneco gas line.

Both the flora and fauna in this area are quite diverse and great for observation as animal tracks are a frequent sight. In addition, rock walls from earlier farming days crisscross the land and a forgotten plow can be found along a trail.

Linnaea Thellin Bird Sanctuary



This bird sanctuary was named after a Reading naturalist, Linnaea Thellin. The 12-acre site is located in the western part of the town between the railroad tracks and Hancock Street. At the end of Hancock Street there is an entrance noted by a carved sign and several parking spaces.

An Eagle Scout has restored the stairway leading down into the sanctuary and the existing trail. Additionally, several wildlife observation points along the path have been created. These small lookout spots are perfect for bird enthusiasts or hikers who simply wish to observe the area's array of wildflowers.

Off of the path the land is mostly wetlands and travel is not recommended.

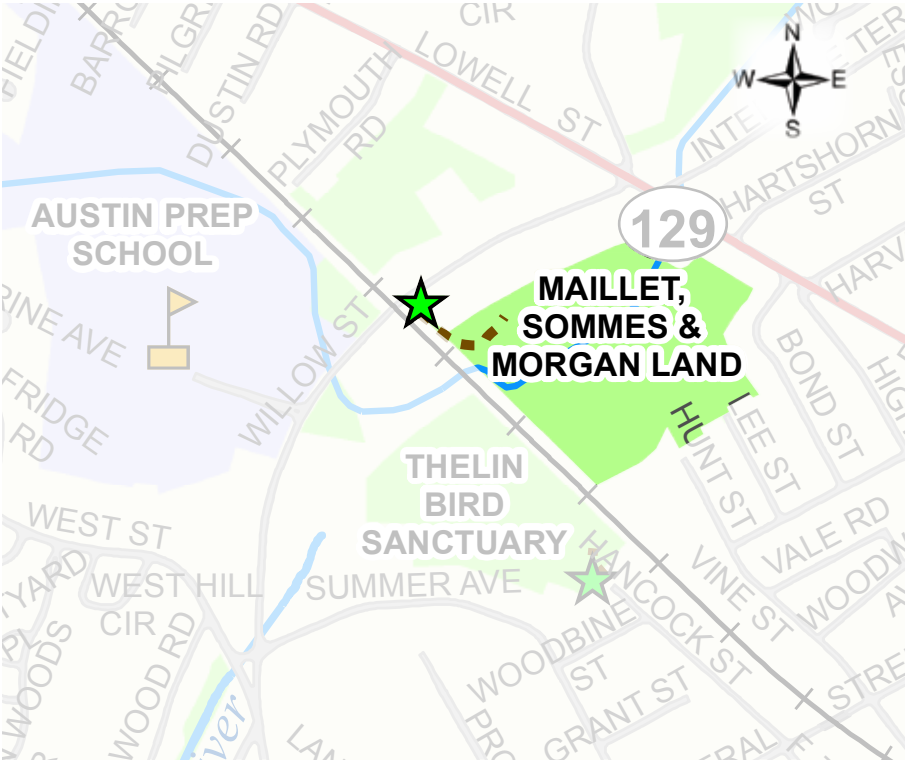
QUICK FACTS

Size: 12 acres

Location:
Western part of town

Entrance:
At the end of Hancock Street

Maillet Morgan



QUICK FACTS

Size: 18 acres

Location:
Western part of town

Entrance:
On Willow Street near
the tracks

Maillet Morgan is an 18-acre area located to the northeast of the railroad tracks between Willow Street and Vine Street. An entrance is located on Willow Street, near the train tracks, but no parking is available.

Although the perimeter of the land is dry forest, most of the area within is low-lying and wet, bordering a marshy quality. Due to its wet nature, Maillet Morgan is home to many species of plants, as well as a wide range of birds and small mammals.

There are no blazed trails, but a network of “tunnels” are cut through a large cluster of tall bamboo-like plants.



Pinevale is a great place for a walk through the woods, and harbors an extensive trail system despite its small size. There are several parking spaces right in front of the entrance sign.

Pinevale is a level oak and pine forest distinctly divided into three parts by two streams. Fortunately, bridges built by Eagle Scouts provide hikers access to the entire conservation area. Near the streams, the land takes on a wetland aspect, but between the streams the forest thins out to open clearings.

Overall, this is an ideal site for nature walkers to explore.

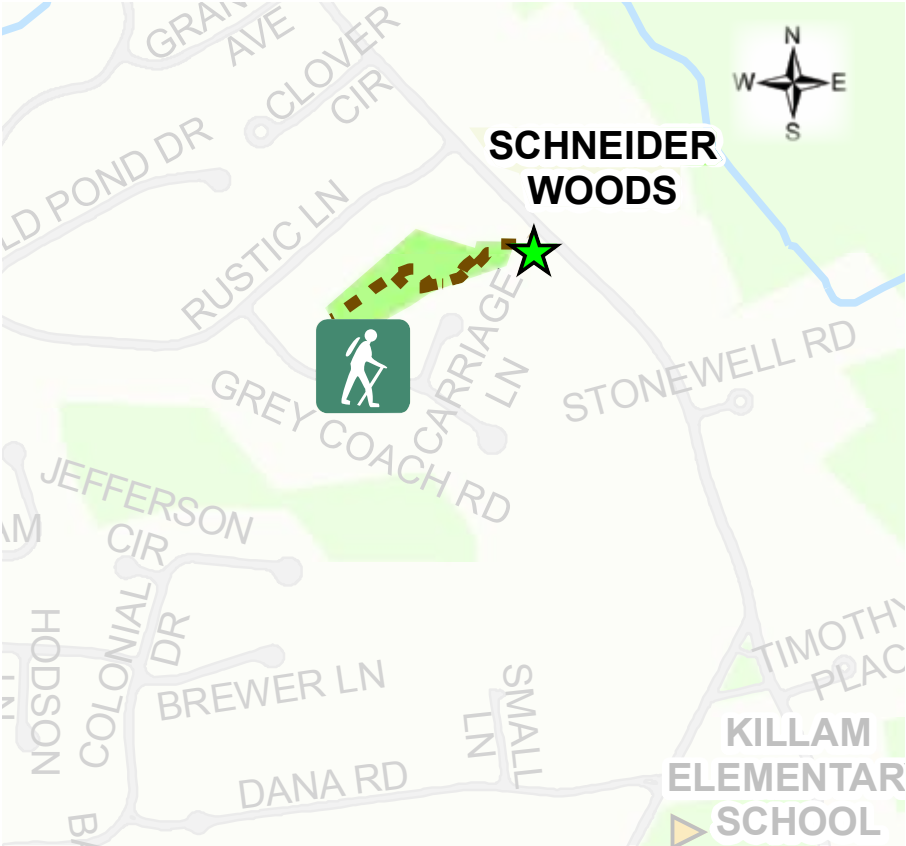
QUICK FACTS

Size: 17 acres

Location:
Southern part of town

Entrance:
Off of Pinevale Avenue
(a dead-end street)

Schneider Woods



QUICK FACTS

Size: 3 acres

Location:
Northeastern part of town

Main Entrance:
Haverhill Street near Rustic Lane

Schneider Woods was acquired in 1969. The area may be small, but is suitable for a short hike.

The entrance is located right on Haverhill Street, but the sign is set behind an opening between the guardrails. There is a short boardwalk that leads you under a canopy of trees. After crossing the walkway, a rock wall can be seen forming the boarder between Schneider Woods and private property.

An interesting part of this site is the swamp on the left side after entering which is filled with different forms of plant life. This is also a great place for bird watching.

Sledge Woods



Upon entering Sledge Woods, a newly blazed trail leads into the Reading Open Land Trust's parcel know as the Nichols Wood Lot. While there is only one small trail here, it is a pretty site to explore.

Notable features include a footbridge across a brook running through the middle of the site and a vernal pool that protrudes in from the south. A large part of Sledge Woods is wetland habitat which is relatively untouched. If you do choose to explore this beautiful area, please take care not to damage the natural vegetation. A bridge recently built by the Trail Committee connects the trail from Nichols Wood Lot to Kurchian Woods.

QUICK FACTS

Size: 10 acres

Location:
Northwestern part of town

Main Entrance:
At the end of Pasture Road onto a dirt road

Conservation Land: Wetlands

North and South Cedar Swamps

The North and South Cedar Swamps are located on the eastern side of Haverhill Street. The Northern Swamp is the larger of the two having an area of 420 acres compared to the 121 acres in the southern swamp. There is little recreational value to the land as the swamps are entirely wetland and have no trails, but the area is an important source of groundwater retention for the town as well as a large headwater for the Ipswich River. The swamp is broken by small patches of grass, where pine saplings may be found growing. Throughout the swamp, large pine and elm trees can be found, along with plentiful amounts of skunk cabbage, poison ivy, and poison sumac.

Conserva

Located between Grey Coach Lane and Dana Road, this beautiful 10-acre area has no direct access or trails. If you wish to explore this area be aware that it can be very wet. There is an upland region of white pines, and a wetland area full of sphagnum moss and blueberry bushes.

DiCenzo

One of the three conservation areas located off of Willow Street, the 6-acre DiCenzo property is a small site across the railroad tracks from the Austin Preparatory School. DiCenzo consists mostly of dense vegetation and any attempts to access this area will result in damage to the flora and fauna.

Moore Property

This recently acquired piece of land is located off of Van Norden Road. It was donated by the Mackenzie-Moore family to the town of Reading in 1997. The area was targeted by the town for preservation, and it is hoped that

Cedar Swamp

Reading is home to numerous wetlands and vernal pools which are crucial to the health of humans, flora, and fauna alike. The areas listed are accessible wetlands suitable only for winter recreational activities such as snowshoeing or cross-country skiing.

additional parcels will be added to it in the future. The property is mainly wetland and offers no public access.

Querolo

The 4-acre Querolo site, located where Haverhill Street meets Franklin Street, is for the most part an impassable marsh. There are no trails, and it is wet year round with only clumps of tall, dry grass rising out of its muddy base. While not an ideal recreation spot, the Querolo area, like the Cedar Swamps, serves an important purpose in retaining water for the town.

Sheehan

The Sheehan conservation area, which is located on the right side of West Street, is a fairly inaccessible plot of swamp land with no trails. The entire area is wet, and the major vegetation is tall grass and ferns. The trees in the area are predominantly maple and elm.

Timberneck Swamp

The 103-acre Timberneck Swamp encompasses most of the area between Charles, Haverhill, Timberneck, and Salem Streets. It is a wet, swampy region, and for that reason is devoid of trails. The wetland area consists mainly of red maples. The Timberneck Swamp serves as Reading's main area for the retention of runoff, and is also one of the largest headwaters of the Saugus River.

Xavier

The Xavier property is located in the western part of town, near the Wilmington border. A branch of the Aberjona River runs through the property making walking tricky. A planned trail will connect Xavier, through the Boyd Lot, to the Johnson Woods development.





Our Open Lands

Reading Open Land currently includes ten properties comprised of more than 70 acres. The land is managed by the Reading Open Land Trust. Please note only the most significant properties have been featured on the pages that follow.

The Reading Open Land Trust was founded by a group of private citizens who passionately believed that the protection of our natural resources must be a concern for all citizens and not solely dependent on government action and tax revenue. The Trust is a nonprofit society dedicated to acquiring land in the town of Reading and preserving it in its natural state. It encourages passive recreation and education in the scientific fields of ecology, conservation, and land use planning.

The purpose of the Trust is to preserve land in its natural state: wetlands, open lands, and lands of historical significance. Wetlands are crucial for flood prevention and to recharge ground water aquifers while maintaining the quality of our water supply. The wetlands in Reading serve as the headwaters of the area's three main rivers: the Ipswich, Saugus, and Aberjona. Therefore, environmental actions in Reading impact the quality of water for the flora, fauna, and humans in the Northern Boston area.



Goodale Marsh



Goodale Marsh



Photo credit, top right: Patricia Lloyd

Many of the lands owned by the Reading Open Land Trust are parcels. Together these lands aid in linking other town-owned parcels providing greater access and better recreational opportunities for the public. The condition of the trails vary depending on the time of year.

The Trust is a publicly supported, nonprofit, 501(c) (3) charitable corporation, and is dependent on the support of all citizens concerned with the conservation and preservation of our natural resources.

Please send questions to:
Reading Open Land Trust
P.O. Box 15
Reading, MA 01867

For further information:
www.rolt.org

Boyd Parcel

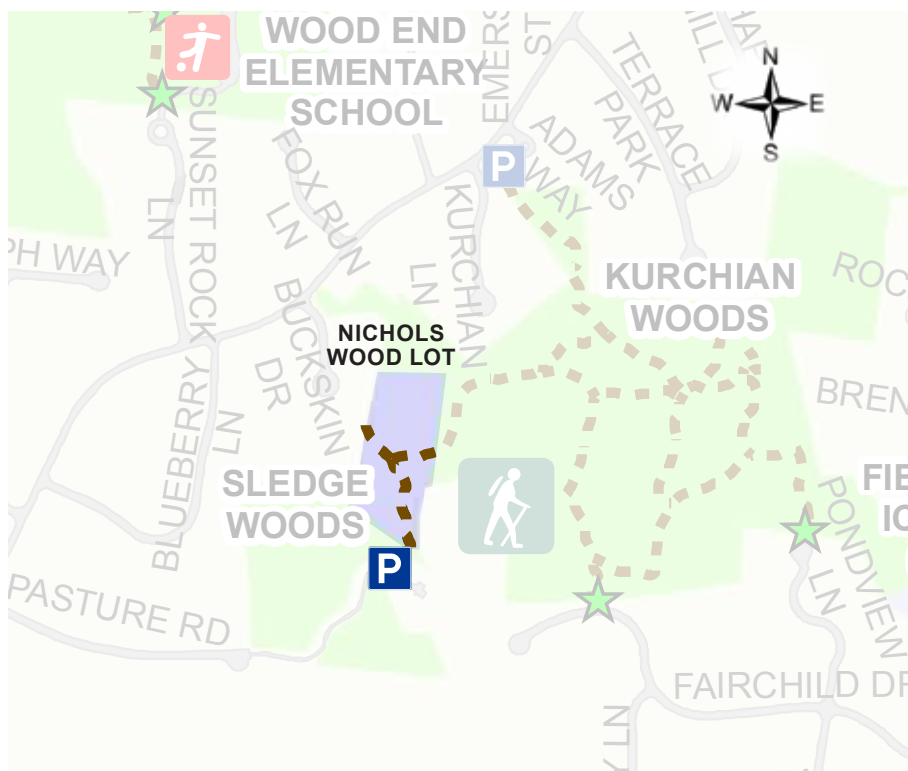
A large parcel off West Street containing nearly 18 acres on the western edge of town was donated by Gordon and Philip Boyd. The parcel is home to a dense forest, lady slippers, deer, and various amphibians. In addition, the Aberjona, one of the main rivers in the region, flows through the Boyd Parcel. Although the site is not easily accessible at this time, the Trust is exploring options for a trail and boardwalk development on this parcel.

Currie Bird Sanctuary

A parcel off Evergreen Road containing an acre of land is a highly regarded bird sanctuary donated in memory of Cyril Currie. A recent Eagle Scout project developed the Evergreen Trail connecting the Kylie Drive neighborhood to Haverhill Street. A boardwalk from Kylie Drive allows the public access to the once secluded Bird Sanctuary behind the Charles Lawn Cemetery.

Fairbanks Marsh

Four parcels fronting on the Ipswich River in Bare Meadow containing 32-acres are dedicated as Fairbanks Marsh. Two of the parcels were donated by the Fairbanks heirs, one by Hazel Malcolm, and the fourth was purchased by the Trust. The marsh was once a cranberry bog, and cranberries can still be found there today. Even though the site is mostly wet, it provides a wildlife corridor and watershed protection for the Ipswich River along with the Mattera Cabin and Bare Meadow site. Additionally, the area is a good place for cross-country skiing or snowshoeing in the winter. Fairbanks Marsh can be reached via a small clearing on the eastern side of Main Street just before the North Reading line.



Nichols Wood Lot

The Nichols Wood Lot was donated by Ben Nichols, one of the Trust's original members. The land is a keystone parcel, linking Sledge Woods to Kurchian Woods (both pieces of land belong to the Town). This provides a protected wildlife corridor and trail opportunities. The Trail Committee recently built a bridge connecting a trail from Sledge Woods to Kurchian Woods. Nichols Wood Lot can be accessed at the end of Pasture Road off of a dirt road leading to private property. There are two parking spaces on the left at the trail entrance.

QUICK FACTS

Size: 5 acres

Location:
Northwestern part of town

Entrance:
End of Pasture Road

Open Lands: Wetlands

The following accessible wetlands are only suitable for winter recreational activities like snowshoeing or cross-country skiing. Please note we have only listed the most significant wetlands.

Fienemann Ice Pond

The parcel, Fienemann Ice Pond is located on the west side of Main Street in northern Reading and comprises two acres. This site was Reading's original ice pond and was used for ice harvesting. In 1994 it was dedicated in the memory of the Trust's first president, Henry Fienemann. On the site there is an old dam that was used to regulate the water level in the pond. The land serves as a wildlife habitat and provides storm water management.

Goodale Marsh

A parcel on Haverhill Street containing seven acres provides Haverhill Street access to the North Cedar Swamp. The marsh was dedicated in appreciation of a monetary gift from the late Esther Goodale which was used to purchase the property. Goodale Marsh is wet most of the year, but snowshoeing is possible in winter.

Randall Road

Two small parcels on Randall Road, located between West Street and Rt. 93 in the southwest part of town, containing 1,800 square feet are an unrestricted gift from Arthur Thompson.

Swamp Island

Two parcels containing 10 acres are located on the Wakefield-Reading town line. The larger portion was donated by the American Patriot Group Company. The second, and smaller adjacent piece, was tax title land transferred to the Trust by Reading Town Meeting action.

For additional maps:

Additional maps for the Town Forest, Bare Meadow, Pinevale, Kurchian Woods, and Biller can be found at: <http://www.readingma.gov/TrailMapLibrary>

Further readings about Reading, MA:

Appalachian Mountain Club: Massachusetts Trail Guide, 8th edition,
compiled and edited by Charles W. G. Smith

At Wood End: Reading, Massachusetts 1644-1994, Reading 350th Book
Committee

A Year in the Forest, Jack Cairl

Vintages of Reading History, prepared by Reading's Historical Committee

Concerning the Past, Volume 1, Horace G. Wadlin

Adopt-A-Trail Program

The Town's Trails Committee has organized the Adopt-A-Trail program to give individuals and/or groups the opportunity to explore and maintain the lands of Reading.

Interested adopters may choose from a list of available trails in conservation lands around Reading. Adopters are responsible for clearing small obstacles, picking up trash, reporting trail erosion or hazards to the Trails Committee, and suggesting trail improvements. No experience is needed and training is provided.

The program asks for a one year commitment, a visit to the trail(s) at least four times a year, and communication with the Trails Committee after each visit at ReadingTrails@ci.reading.ma.us.

Learn more by going to:

www.Readingma.gov/AdoptATrailProgram

A Special Thank You: This guide would not have been possible without the generous support of the Town Forest Committee, the Conservation Commission, the Trails Committee, and the Reading Open Land Trust. Also, big thanks to our printer Minuteman Press.