

# The Stony Creek Partnership, Washburn Preserve & Weil Property

On the waterfront part of this preserve, the landscape and topography have been indelibly defined by 19th century quarrying operations and subsequent construction of the shoreline trolley line. The hole where granite was wrested from the ground has filled with water and now forms a hidden pond. Some of the interlaced trails cross over helter-skelter piles of jagged rock rubble, and two of the flat trails that border the salt marsh are the remains respectively of a quarry railroad bed and the trolley line. Now, nature is reclaiming these past works of man. Drought-tolerant black birch and pitch pines have found footholds among the higher rubble and diverse salt marsh plants flourish in and along the old rail beds. Red foxes are frequently seen here, probably finding excellent den sites among the loose rocks.

In 1963, this property was bought by Albert Lincoln Washburn, a professor of arctic geology at Yale University and a member of the 1935 Winter U.S. Olympic Team. For years, Stony Creek residents had enjoyed walking the property, so when Washburn decided to sell it in 1976, "Creekers" prevailed upon him, successfully, instead to donate 18.5 acres to the Branford Land Trust. The donation came about with assistance of The Nature Conservancy.

In 1992, the preserve was expanded to the north and the west when an abutting 20 acre property came up for foreclosure. Alarmed at the prospect of intensive development, neighbors formed the Stony Creek Limited Partnership, which bought the property at foreclosure. To recoup costs, an existing house and one four acre house lot were sold, while the remaining 9 acres were donated to the Branford Land Trust. A field that had been cleared by the previous owner for a horse corral is kept open to provide botanical diversity as well as habitat for the eastern bluebird. Look for this sensationally beautiful species in the spring, when they might be setting up house in nesting boxes maintained by the Branford Land Trust.

As if all this weren't enough, the main trail continues east across the salt marsh to an enchanting rocky knoll that is part of the preserve. The trail then crosses Jarvis Creek to a 17 acre natural area owned by Yale University Peabody Museum.



Photo by Branford Land Trust

## Directions and Parking:

From the center of Stony Creek (the beach and the church), take Thimble Island Road south about 1/2 mile to the second entrance to Wallace Road. Park on Thimble Islands Road; walk onto Wallace Road, but immediately bear right onto a paved private road. After a few hundred yards, follow the first driveway on the left and you will immediately come to the trail entrance on the right.

## Permitted/Prohibited Activities:

Properties are open during daylight hours plus one hour before and after. Stay on the trails and please carry out everything you carry in. Hunting or the use of BB guns and air rifles is prohibited. No open fires or camping. Motorized vehicles are strictly prohibited and violators will be prosecuted. Follow the classic counsel to leave a place or trail better than you found it.



Photo by Branford Land Trust

## Easy Hike

The three trail systems in Stony Creek are great hikes combined or done individually. The Branford Trail connects them and can also be continued on.

**Total Trails Length:** approx. 3.46 miles

**Red Trails:** 1.15 miles

**White Trail:** 0.34 miles

**Blue Trails:** 0.80 miles

**The Branford Trail:** 1.06 miles

**Unblazed Trail:** 0.10 miles



## For more information about this walk contact:

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