

# Crockett Cove Woods



A dense spruce and fir forest covers this 98-acre preserve on Deer Isle. On the island's north shore, along Eggemoggin Reach, the trees are mostly white pine mixed with oak and other hardwoods. Here, along the southwest shore, lichens and mosses thrive in the cool, moist air of this coastal fog forest. A wide variety of coniferous forest birds can also be seen here.

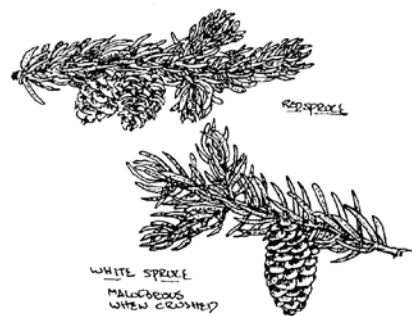
The preserve and its trails are maintained and managed by a local volunteer stewardship committee. In 1975, Crockett Cove Woods Preserve was donated to The Nature Conservancy by artist and builder Emily Muir of Stonington.

## Self-guiding Trail

Please look for the corresponding numbers along the trail.

Crockett Cove Woods is exposed to prevailing southwest winds that bring moisture from the ocean. Its trees hold onto the fog so characteristic of the Maine coast. Mosses cling in blanket-like layers to large granite boulders left by the departing glaciers. Old man's beard lichen hang delicately from the trees. This preserve is at its best on a wet day when the colors are more vibrant. Part of a more extensive trail system, the quarter-mile nature trail on the preserve winds through a forest and a small bog.

- 1 The struggle for existence is epitomized by the spruce tree growing in a cleft in the ledge. Following the trail, you will see that the forest is dynamic and that the environment changes through time and space.
- 2 On the right, a short loop trail marked by one red blaze rejoins the nature trail (marked by two red blazes). The loop trail begins further along, so continue straight ahead to follow the nature trail.
- 3 The top of the ledge is a squirrel's lunch table. Red squirrels open spruce cones to eat the small winged seeds. The black stripe on the red squirrel's side sometimes leads to confusion with the chipmunk, which is not found on Deer Isle. (As an island, Deer Isle lacks many species found on the mainland.) Other forest mammals on the island include snowshoe hare, white-tailed deer, weasel, red fox, deer mouse and masked shrew. Raccoons and striped skunks colonized the island after the Deer Isle-Sedgewick Bridge was built in 1939.
- 4 Red spruce (*Picea rubens*), with bright green foliage, is the dominant tree species here. It is favored by the cool temperatures and high rainfall found along the coast. A related species, white spruce (*P. glauca*), is distinguished by its bluish needles. Its pungent odor has earned it the name skunk spruce.
- 5 Here, past logging has permitted natural light to penetrate the forest, promoting growth of bracken fern (*Pteridium quilinum*) and blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*). Local flora is influenced by acid soils derived from the granite bedrock of the region. Bracken is an indicator of poor, acidic soil.



6 The cool, moist fog forest supports a great diversity of mosses and lichens. Take time to marvel at the variety of colors and textures carpeting the ground and covering rocks and trees. Mosses vary from light to dark green, while lichens often have a grayish cast. A moss is a simple green plant that reproduces via spores. A lichen is a symbiotic partnership between a fungus that provides support and absorbs nutrients and water and an alga that performs photosynthesis and thus provides food for the fungus. The dominant moss of the forest floor is Schreber's moss (*Pleurozium schreberi*), identified by its reddish "stem." The highly branched lichen is reindeer lichen (*Cladina rangiferina*). It is abundant in arctic tundra and is a major food for caribou there. Finally, the dense, dark green mat is toothed bazania, a liverwort. Liverworts are ancient relatives of mosses.

7 This tree fell during Hurricane Gloria in 1985. Note the shallow spreading roots adapted to thin post-glacial soils.

8 Red maple (*Acer rubrum*) tolerates poorly drained soils, but dies out in dense shade, so it occurs primarily in the early stages of forest succession. It has toothed three-lobed leaves with red stems and light undersides.

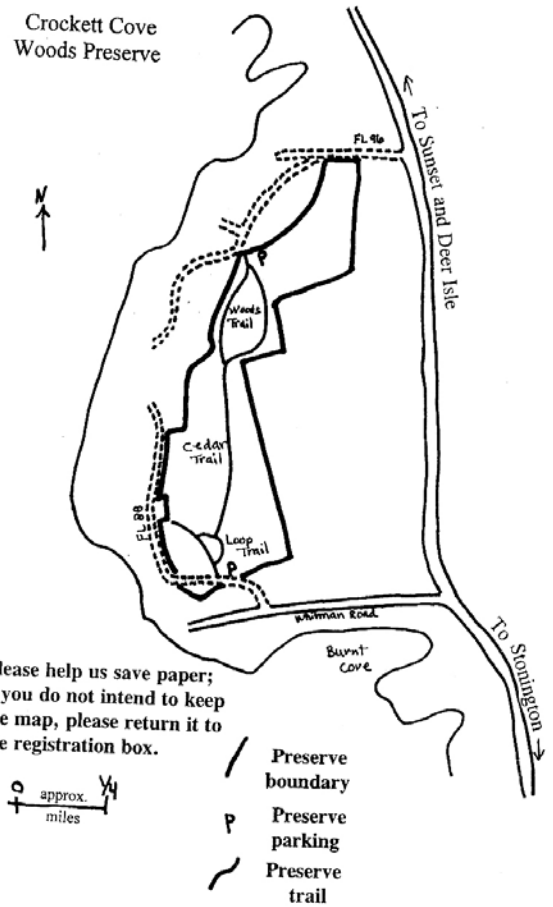
9 Striped maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*), also called moose-wood, is a shrub or tree of the forest understory. Look for red maple nearby. In the clearing ahead, probably created by past logging, the young spruces are competing for light and space. This competition will result in heavy mortality as they mature, naturally thinning the stand.

10 The bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*) growing at your feet is a dwarf dogwood. White flowers followed by red berries grow on its four- to six-leaved stems.

11 This immense boulder is a glacial erratic. Originating elsewhere, it was deposited here by the glaciers about 12,000 years ago. Its face supports rock tripe (*Umbilicaria vellea*), a large, leafy lichen attached to the rock by a central umbilicus. Please do not climb on the boulders. Lichens are fragile and grow slowly.

12 Here, the short loop trail, marked by single red discs, wanders up behind the ledges and leads to other hiking trails. When you complete the nature trail, you can return here to follow an alternate route back to the parking lot.

13 The dead white birch on the left is festooned with old man's beard lichen (*Usnea sp.*). In front of the birch is a clump of cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*). Distinguished by its separate, plume-like fruiting body or sporangium, this fern is common in wet woodlands. To the right of the birch are two balsam firs (*Abies balsamea*).



14 The trail now follows an old logging road through a miniature bog forest. In the distant past, there was probably open water in this depression. Debris accumulated, and the forest slowly gained a foothold. Like the lichen-covered ledges, the bog is a fragile environment. A thick mat of peat moss (*Sphagnum spp.*) keeps the water cool and highly acidic. Lack of oxygen below the surface slows decay. Insectivorous plants, like pitcher plants, have evolved a means of supplementing their nitrogen intake in such nutrient-poor environments. The hair-lined pitcher traps insects, which are then digested by the plant.

**15** Several woody plants characteristic of bogs and wet woodlands are found here. The familiar speckled alder (*Alnus rugosa*) is identified by its broad, wavy-margined leaves. Near the beginning of the walkway are witherod, or wild raisins (*Viburnum cassinoides*), shrubs with dark, shiny leaves. Its berries are good wildlife food and its long branches, used for weaving baskets, were also used for the proverbial school switch. On both sides of the trail are two members of the holly family. The grey barked winterberry (*Ilex vertecillata*) has toothed leaves, while the mountain holly (*Nemopanthus mucronata*) has broader smooth-margined leaves.

**16** Beware of poison ivy here, with its three shiny, untoothed leaves. It is uncommon on Deer Isle. Behind it are the spreading leaves of skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*), a relative of jack-in-the-pulpit. Look carefully in the moss along the boardwalk for the tiny reddish leaves of the round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*). It has sticky hairs on the leaves that trap insects that it then digests. You may also see the vine-like stems of small cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccus*).

**17** You may hear a variety of birds of the spruce forest: the nasal “yank-yank” of the red-breasted nuthatch, the high-pitched calls of tiny kinglets, the varied songs of warblers, the scolding of black-capped and boreal chickadees, and the hoarse croak of the raven. On the rock is a large cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*) intertwined with reindeer lichen. This spot is too shady for the cranberry to flower and bear fruit. To the right of the low stump is a clump of staghorn or bayonette lichen (*Cladonia gracilis*).

**18** The prominent dark green tufts in the paler sphagnum moss are hair-capped moss (*Plytricum sp.*) named for its upright spore capsules.

Here the trail leaves the preserve. Please retrace your steps, remembering the loop trail. Other hiking trails can be reached from the loop trail.

**Hiking trails:** The yellow trail goes to the north end of the preserve and connects to a loop trail, marked in orange. The hike is more than a mile and crosses varied terrain, including mixed forests, cedar forests, spruce stands, wet areas, a stream crossing and an old logging road.

## Preserve Guidelines

Please help us protect this fragile natural area by respecting the following guidelines:

- Foot traffic only.
- Stay on trails and boardwalk and respect the private property across the road and beyond the trails.
- No collecting of rocks, plants or animals.
- No pets.
- Carry out all litter.
- No fires, smoking or camping.
- Day use only—preserve closes at sunset.

## Directions

From Route 1, take Route 15 down the Deer Isle peninsula. Turn right towards Sunset in Deer Isle Village. About three miles past the Sunset Post Office, turn right on Whitman Road. Turn right onto Fire Lane 88. The preserve entrance is marked by a small sign and registration box. From Stonington, travel about two miles west on the Shore Road. Turn left on Whitman Road, just after Airport Road.

