

## Donald Whelden Preserve

Conservation land comes in all sizes, shapes and styles: large or small, hilly or flat, inland or waterfront, tree-covered or open. Each individual piece of open space has its own value and provides its own pleasures. The Donald Whelden Preserve is a small, flat, wooded parcel that runs from Davisville Road to Green Pond. It makes a lovely island of trees and shore in this heavily developed East Falmouth neighborhood. Although it is only 11 acres the Whelden Preserve seems much larger due to the meandering paths, thick trees that shut out the sounds of modern Falmouth, and the long strip of Green Pond visible when you finally reach the shoreline.

The shore is a good place to look for wintering ducks from fall through spring: unless Green Pond is frozen solid you can almost always see small flocks of Buffleheads, Black Ducks, or Red-breasted Mergansers foraging, or resting in the shallow coves along the shore of the pond. In spring and summer Ospreys sometimes hunt here; it is a treat to watch them plunging into the water after fish so close at hand. Southerly winds sweep up the pond, but in northeasterly weather the trees provide protection and the birds are often quite close to shore.

Although this piece of land is wooded today the fact that it was farm not long ago is attested to by the young, small trees, and the occasional piece of farm equipment. The land was apparently cleared for farming; trees may have also been cut for firewood. But the solid understory of Black Huckleberry, Wintergreen, and Low-bush Blueberry makes it clear that most of this area was not tilled. The northern two-thirds and all of the section near the pond was probably used for hay or grazing, because plowing destroys the Wintergreen, Huckleberry, and Blueberry. These plants seem very tough—they can survive fire and mowing or grazing, but they cannot withstand plowing. The land close to the road (including the lots that aren't in the preserve) and the southern third of the preserve may have been plowed; this area was likely farmed into this century. One of the reasons that it may have continued in existence as a farm is the soil. The soil here is relatively rich; it may have included a layer of wind-blown glacial silt on top of the sand and gravel of the outwash plain. That silt would hold water a bit better than the sand, and would make for better growing conditions. The flat, slightly richer soil of Davisville was attractive farm land for much of Falmouth's farming history. It presents us today with some evidence of that history as well as an island of natural vegetation perfect for a short walk or a contemplative stroll to the pond.

The Whelden Preserve is 1/4 mile south on Davisville Road from the stoplight at Route 28. Park in the small lot on the west side of the road opposite Rosa Lane. The trail begins in the northwest corner of the parking area and runs west toward Green Pond close to the nearby driveway, between two rows of planted spruce trees.

A trail map of this site and 24 other open space parcels with trails may be found, along with much other information about open space in Falmouth, on The 300 Committee's website at: [www.300committee.org](http://www.300committee.org).