

From Buzzards Bay along the Herring River to Wing Pond and Bourne Farm, North Falmouth

Water is one of the main features of the 100 acres of linked conservation parcels belonging to the town and Salt Pond Areas Bird Sanctuaries, Inc., in North Falmouth between Route 28A and Buzzards Bay. Old Silver Beach faces Buzzards Bay at the mouth of the Herring River. Behind the beach in the marshes along the Herring River the water is salt, but not far upstream fresh groundwater seeps into the marsh and runs through the stream that is the herring run, creating extensive areas of freshwater marsh and rich wet woods. The gradation from salt water to fresh water creates a wide range of landscapes and habitats which attract and support a great diversity of plants and animals.

Wing Pond, bordering the town parcel, is fresh water. It is a haven for ducks, the spawning ground for Herring, and the traditional water source for the water-dependent business of cranberry cultivation. Entering the town land from Route 28A, you pass along the edge of private cultivated cranberry bogs beside Wing Pond; other private bogs flank the west side of Wing Pond.

Not all of the land here is wet, however, so another major feature of these parcels is woods. Both the town parcel and the portion of Bourne Farm west of the bike path are heavily wooded, with trees that are surprisingly large for the Cape. These woods are old enough that they are particularly attractive to birds like woodpeckers and owls that need or prefer big, old trees. Below the trees is a lush understory of shrubs like Swamp Azalea, Highbush Blueberry, and Sweet Pepperbush that flourish particularly well in damp woods. In June and July the Swamp Azalea blooms fragrantly, and the Sweet Pepperbush does the same in August.

The woods are threaded through with trails which lead across and around the strands of the small streams, and up and down a surprising number of hills. This area is much more rugged than you might think from the level surface of Route 28. The area is dotted with large boulders left by the melting of the ice sheet that created Cape Cod some 15,000 years ago.

At Bourne Farm you'll find open farm fields, stone walls, benches with a view of Crocker Pond, and on the west side of the stone underpass originally made for cows (it now crosses under the bike path), Holly trees, blooming Laurel bushes, and yet more trails. Salt Pond and the town (through the Land Bank) have gradually acquired these linked conservation parcels, creating a substantial area of open space here in North Falmouth. South on the bike path less than one-quarter mile is the 50 hilly acres of woodland at the Cardoza Farm Conservation Area.

All in all, from the beach through the saltmarsh, the streams, marshes and ponds, the woods, and the farm-scape, this area is not just one, but a series of treasures.

Parking for Old Silver Beach is on the west side of Quaker Road; it is by town beach sticker in the summer. You could put a kayak in the water here and paddle upstream. The Bourne Farm entrance is on Route 28A opposite Thomas Landers Rd. Half a mile to the north, a right-of-way leads to limited parking beside the private bog near the entrance gate. Both the Herring River parcel and Bourne Farm are accessible from the bike path. A trail map for these parcels may be downloaded and printed from The 300 Committee's website: www.300committee.org. There you will also find a nature calendar detailing the goings-on in the natural world, and 24 other trail maps for Falmouth.