

Trail Marker A

Welcome to the family friendly trail guide at Hallock State Park Preserve. There are 10 stops that take you through woods, past Hallock's pond and dune areas and down onto Long Island Sound's seashore. Observe nature as it rebounds and recovers in this man altered landscape.

Marker B

You can see to the right (north) Long Island Sound through this open dune spot. We are trying to restore this section by plantings native trees and shrubs and fencing it off so the land can recover. Look for red-tailed hawks and turkey vultures soaring overhead!

Marker C

To your left is an overview of beautiful Hallock Pond, named after the farm family who lived here for over 200 years. The freshwater pond is deep, and is called a "perched" pond because it sits upon a layer of clay. It never dries out even in summer droughts. Ducks, geese and other birds, turtles, frogs and fish inhabit this ecosystem. Sometimes you can see hundreds of swallows feeding on insects that swarm over the pond. Muskrats are seen here also.

Marker D

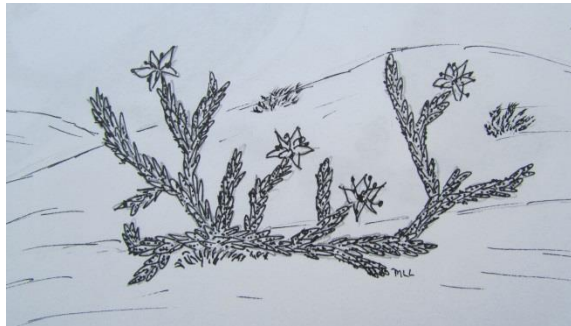
In these natural thickets are shrubs and trees such as bayberry, black cherry and red cedar. They provide nesting spots for birds such as prairie and yellow warblers, cedar waxwings and rufous-sided towhees, among others. Can you see or hear any?



Prairie warbler singing from bayberry

Marker E

At the top of this hill is a humble and important native plant called beach heather. It is a pioneer type plant, meaning it is one of the first plants to grow in open sandy, sunny areas. It helps trap blowing sand thus stabilizing the spot. It is a state protected wildflower and has yellow colored flowers by early June and can tolerate the hot, dry nutrient poor sand. Looking to the east is the tall spot called Jacob's Hill.



Beach heather growing in dunes

Marker F

At this magnificent overlook of Long Island Sound is coastal Connecticut, about 18 miles across. Look for seabirds such as common loons, long-tailed ducks and scoters or perhaps even a harbor seal! In the not too distant past you would see hundreds of dolphin swimming about. During the War of 1812 a small battle took place just west of these cliffs, and many years before that Native Americans would take their dug-out canoes over to Connecticut.

Marker G

This little grove of evergreen red cedar trees provides food and cover for birds. They are one of the first trees to grow in open areas, making them pioneers like the beach heather. The wood has an aromatic scent and the berries are a food source for birds such as cedar waxwings. The needles stay green all winter long providing color to the winter landscape. They are slow growing but are long lived small trees.

Marker H

The entire area you just walked through has been altered by man for centuries. First the forest was cut down and farmed, then a sand mining operation occurred leaving its scars on the land to this day. After that a nuclear power facility was planned but never built! Finally the State bought it and made a Park. Although you still find large cement structures from the sand mining days the land is slowly beginning to recover in many areas naturally, and sometimes with a little bit of man's help.

Marker I

You are now at the base of Jacob's Hill, the tallest point in the Preserve at about 140' above sea level! It stands as a sentinel of other cliffs that were dug out for their sand. These big hills were formed by massive ice sheets (glaciers) thousands of years ago, and the sands, clays, boulders and rocks that compose the cliffs were all pushed here from New England by glaciers. Before you turn to the left to the last stop you have already passed through 3 ecosystems—a young forest, a freshwater pond and a hilly, dune-like ecosystem, all unique in their own way with different plants, insects, animals and birds. Watch for red fox here!

Marker J

The Long Island Sound seashore is rocky and filled with stones and sand. It's very different from the pure smooth sandy beaches of the south shore of Long Island, and once again that is because of the glaciers. It is a beautiful but rough environment with icy winds in winter, constant salt spray, high storm tides, and intense heat in summer. Plants and animals have to be adapted for harsh conditions and they are. Shorebirds, such as the rare piping plover are camouflaged and match the color of the sand, while plants, such as sea rocket, have waxy coatings on their leaves to protect it from salt spray. This is now the 4th ecosystem you will have walked through today on this short nature hike!



We hope you have enjoyed your walk through Hallock State Park preserve and learned about and observed some of the wildlife that calls the park home.

You can return to the parking lot by heading up the gravel road to the top, or backtracking.



Sea rocket grows on the beach



Bank swallows can be seen on the beach and over the pond

HALLOCK STATE PARK PRESERVE TRAIL GUIDE



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