

# Bates Lane / West End Complex

**Location:** Between the Scituate-Cohasset Town Boundary and Thomas Clapp Road. Bates Lane (gravel roadway) is in the center of the site.

**Parking:** A small parking lot can be found at the Mt. Hope Improvement Society at the corner of Cedar Street and Thomas Clapp Road. A small amount of parking can also be found along Bates Lane until the parking lot on the northeast side of Bates Lane is completed (estimated for early 2020).

**Size:** Over 335 acres.

**History:** In 1831, this area had little to no forest cover and was primarily used for agriculture. The present forest (coniferous, deciduous, and mixed) differs from previous land uses that were bounded by rock walls, or stone fences.

From the mid-1850s to the mid-1900s, farming declined, and many pastures reverted to eastern white pine forests, as pines grow well in former pasture areas in full sunlight. In 1910, a market for eastern white pine grew, and many of the old-field white pines were cut for lumber. Some of these century-old white pines persist today on the Bates Lane Conservation Area. After the clearing of old-field white pines, the hardwoods (deciduous trees) are able to sprout from stumps and roots in full sunlight, creating a hardwood succession in 1915 - 1930.

The Maxwell Conservation Trust began acquiring land in Scituate's West End in the early 2000s. The acquisitions by the Trust enabled the Town to fund the purchases on a more favorable time frame. All of the Trust's land was eventually transferred to the Town for conservation; Community Preservation Act funds were used for the various purchases.

In 2018, a new trail was cut from the Higgins-MacAllister parcel on Holly Crest Road, allowing access from Booth Hill Road. A bridge spanning a stream is necessary to access the major upland portion of the Higgins-MacAllister Preserve from that direction. However, Higgins-MacAllister is also accessible from the Carl Pipes Memorial Trail, as shown on the maps.

## Description / Unique Features:

**Trails:** Multiple and varied, including a connector to the Higgins-MacAllister Preserve.

**Maxwell Trail:** The longest trail and the most varied, with some steep slopes. It passes by an overlook at Teepee Rock, crosses over a bridge in a boulder-and-water-filled swale, and meanders beneath a canopy of eastern hemlocks. It follows around a corner of fine-grained igneous rock, past a stone wall made from angular stones, and through a mature eastern white pine forest.

**Certified Vernal Pools:** One of the highlights of the West End Complex is the number of vernal pools, which are seasonal pools of water that support distinctive flora and fauna including wood frogs, spring peepers, salamanders, fairy shrimp, fingernail clams, and dragonfly, damselfly and caddisfly larvae. There are at least five vernal pools on the property, and another five just outside the West End complex.

**Gravel Pit:** Bates Lane was used to access a former gravel pit (known as Luther's Pit), which is also accessible from the Litchfield Trail. This is a good place to observe a successional forest and wetlands, since the former excavation was deeper than the water table.

**Teepee Rock:** A principal destination spot--a 430 million year old Avalon granite outcrop that overlooks a lowland mixed forest.

**Glacial Erratic:** A huge boulder, deposited during the Wisconsin Glaciation, is located along the Carl Pipes Trail.

**Geology:** Elevations in the Bates Lane area are the highest within the West End, due to the glacier-formed drumlin that rises above the surrounding wetlands.

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The eastern white pine forests dominated by white pine understories are important for American robins, cottontail rabbits, gray foxes, mourning doves, northern bobwhite, pine grosbeaks, porcupines, red crossbills, ruffed grouse, and turkeys.

A stand of eastern hemlock is also present near the bridge on the northeast side of the West End complex.

The overpopulation of deer, browsing shrubs and herbaceous species, are creating a less diverse woodland. They leave white pine, birch, and invasive Japanese barberry. A high diversity of species creates ecological resilience. The current trend is to a lower species diversity.