

Crosbie Family Preserve

Acreage and Dates Purchased: Crosbie Preserve property- 39 acres purchased by Town in 2011
Appleton Field - 10 acres purchased by Town in 2003

Location and Parking:

- The Crosbie Preserve access-road entrance is located just east of 253 Clapp Road; this leads to a multi-car parking area directly adjacent to Appleton Field.
- The parking area is also next to the entrance to the Orange Trail (see trail map).
- There is also a 2-car parking area located near the access-road entrance on Clapp Road for those wishing to walk in, or, to access the Blue Trail.
- There is a gate across the access road.

History and Highlights:

The Orange trail is particularly beautiful, creating a large loop positioned between the upland and the South Swamp. A walk on the orange trail allows the walker to view the ecological transition from a mixed pine and hardwood forest to the wetlands. The contrast between the two types of woodlands is dramatic in all seasons. The South Swamp is notable for the many moss-covered rocks, tree stumps, and pools of water. These features make it clear that the South Swamp area was never suitable for farming and it retains a very primitive “feel”. The upland area was used for tree harvesting most recently. Old cart roads used for this purpose have been incorporated into the new trail system. Appleton Field is a large open area which has been leased by the Town to local farmers over recent years.

The Crosbie property is located on a glacial drumlin (mound) with Appleton Field located roughly in the center, which the South Swamp then encircles.

The upland area was used for tree harvesting most recently. Old cart roads used for this purpose have been incorporated into the new trail system. While many trees were harvested from the upland area, there are still many oaks, white pines, and American beech in the dry woodland. The South Swamp is mixed deciduous-coniferous with red maple, white pine, as well as, the occasional hemlock (in decline due to infestation). Appleton Field is a large open area which has been leased by the Town to local farmers for their use over recent years.

Watershed Details:

South Swamp forms the headwaters of three (3) sub-watersheds. To the northwest is Aaron Brook, that flows into Bound Brook. An unnamed tributary to Bound Brook itself emanates from the northeast corner of South Swamp and flows through the Higgins-MacAllister Preserve parallel to Booth Hill Road. First Herring Brook flows south out of South Swamp, crosses First Parish Road, and through the former Damon Pond; then through Tack Factory Pond to form Herring River in the North River Estuary.

Unique Features and Additional Details:

-Stone walls abound on this site and include a curious triangular arrangement of rock walls near trail intersection #2 (see trail map). A survey map of 1912 reveals many parcels of land adjacent to one another which fan out from the central upland into the South Swamp. As described previously, this land was not suitable for any particular usage, and the ownership – dating back many, many years – has mostly been left unclaimed.

-Two (2) red pine plantations can be observed which now contain many standing dead trees. This was an ambitious cultivation project undertaken at some time in the past, but the trees fell victim to an infestation of ‘red pine scale’. This was an insect transmitted to the US in 1939 at the New York World’s Fair.

-Rock piles were made by farmers clearing Appleton Field, and can be found on the west side of the site (as noted on the trail map).

-A magnificent Atlantic White Cedar can be seen at the edge of the swamp along the Orange Trail (noted by a trail marker); these are unusual and somewhat rare, as noted elsewhere. A Tupelo tree is also located nearby.

-A substantial grove of American Holly trees can be seen along the Blue Trail. While not unusual as trees go, it is interesting to see a large grove of this type.

-As noted on the trail map at the #10 junction (near the parking lot), one can find what had come to be known as “politician’s corner” because of the stumps located there (as in, ‘stump speech’).