

Rocky Point Preserve

5.4 miles point to point—white blazes and blue discs

Why:

Anchoring the western end of the Paumanok Path is the vast Rocky Point Natural Resources Management Area, 5,249 acres administered by the Department of Environmental Conservation. Rolling terrain on the north end gives way to a mostly gentle tract of classic upland Pine Barrens, with a healthy dose of history thrown in. Here's a place where you can walk all day.

Directions:

The parking area for the preserve and the western terminus of the Paumanok Path lies on the south side of NY 25A in Rocky Point, 0.6 mile east of the junction with NY 25A and North Country/ County Road 20 and 0.4 mile west of Rocky Point– Yaphank Road/County Route 21. The turn is easy to miss; look for the D.E.C. sign up the driveway. The trail begins at the east end of the gravel lot.

For a point-to-point hike, leave one car at the Whiskey Road parking area where the Paumanok Path crosses. This lot is west of William Floyd Parkway and about a half mile west of Wood Lots Road.

To hike here you'll currently need a free, annual D.E.C. permit, and can be obtained by writing to or visiting NYSDEC, Division of Lands and Forests, 50 Circle Road SUNY-Stony Brook, Stony Brook, NY 11790-3409; or phone the license clerk at (631)444-0273.

Description:

Purchased by RCA in 1920 and dubbed "Radio Central," Rocky Point Preserve once housed a huge antenna field, the largest radio transmitting facility in the world. Concrete footings scattered throughout the property are the only reminders of the 400-foot towers that once dominated the landscape here. By the 1970s new technology made the transmitters obsolete, and RCA donated the tract, along with the David Sarnoff Preserve near Riverhead, to the State of New York, which "purchased" the land with a single dollar from a 1972 Environmental Quality Bond Act.

The trail heads southwest through the morainal sections, swings south through the kettlehole, then southeast toward Rocky Point Road (C.R. 21), a distance of 3 1/2 miles. The northern sections have rich enough soil to support a mixed hardwood forest of mostly oak, with hickory, sassafras, poplar, dogwood, birch and black cherry also common. The Harbor Hill Moraine, the last advance of the Ice Age that forms our North Shore bluffs and the North Fork, is much in evidence here in the undulating terrain, the numerous erratics, and a large kettlehole that straddles the Paumanok Path.

Farther south, a classic pine barren sprouts from sandier soil on mostly level ground. Pitch pine, scrub oak, tree oaks, blueberry, huckleberry, bearberry, bracken fern and sheep laurel predominate in these flatter areas. Approaching Whiskey Road, you'll see evidence of the 1995 wildfires that swept through Rocky Point Preserve and the pine barrens in Westhampton.

Just before the road, a yellow side trail entering from the right leads to a second parking area. East of Whiskey, the trail continues a mile and a half to a T-intersection with the Red Trail, also marked with D.E.C. discs (see following page).

Turn left at the junction and you'll complete a fine, ten-mile loop; turn right and you'll reach the parking area on Whiskey Road where you left the second car, four-tenths of a mile away. From here, if you wish, you can now follow the white blazes through the old Route 111 corridor, across Route 25 into the Pine Trail Preserve, and on to the Peconic headwaters—a total of twelve beautiful miles.

Options:

1) Following the white blazes of the Paumanok Path instead of ending at Whiskey Road adds additional mileage for the more adventurous. Limited parking is available on the road on the first four streets listed below (look for white blazes where the trail crosses them), and a designated parking area exists on the south side of NY 25 at the Pine Trail Preserve.

Continuing to...

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| ... Woodlots Road total mileage = | 6.16 |
| ... Raynor Road | 6.28 |
| ... Ridge Road | 6.60 |
| ... Randall Road | 7.43 |
| ... William Floyd Parkway | 7.63 |
| ... the Pine Trail at NY 25 | 8.46 |

2) The D.E.C.'s Red Trail leads from a junction with the Blue Trail near Whiskey Road and completes a 10-mile loop back to the NY 25A parking area. Because of cutbacks in staffing and funding, the D.E.C. has not been maintaining this route as of this writing. The red-disc blazes have faded, and the trail is overgrown. If you long for a wilderness experience and have good tracking skills, you may wish to attempt this loop. Otherwise, we recommend that you ask your state legislators to restore funds to the D.E.C. so that it can maintain trails the way it can and should.

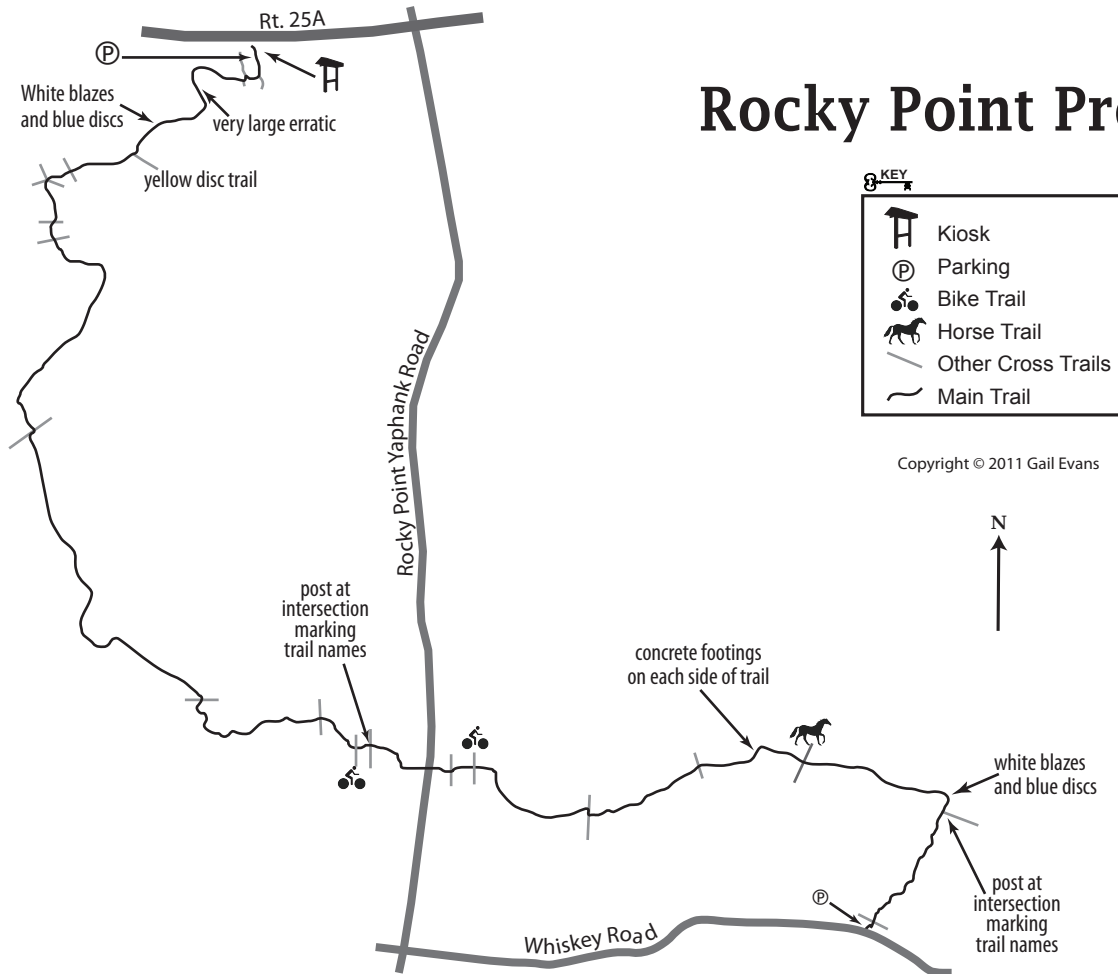
**Happy Hiking
from the
Long Island Pine
Barrens Society!**



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