Hiking Trails in the Long Island Pine Barrens
The Long Island Pine Barrens Society

The Long Island Pine Barrens Society is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the study, appreciation, and protection of these unique woodlands. Founded in 1977, the Society has become one of Long Island's most effective champions of preserving natural resources through sound land use. Through its scientific research and public education programs, the Society has shaped public debate on the subject.

The Society is best known for leading the Pine Barrens Preservation Initiative - an ambitious, six-year legal and legislative campaign. The initiative led to the approval by the New York State Legislature of the Pine Barrens Protection Act and the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, which permanently preserved more than 50,000 acres of Pine Barrens and developed strict guidelines for environmentally-conscious development in another 50,000 acres.

Continuing into our fourth decade, the Society continues to promote sound management of publicly held Pine Barrens land.

Preserving a Natural Treasure

The gifts of nature, once lost, are gone forever. In the case of the Long Island Pine Barrens, the loss would be monumental. Formed by a unique set of geological conditions over the past 15,000 years, the Pine Barrens is one of the Northeast's greatest natural treasures. It is home to literally thousands of plant and animal species, many of them endangered or threatened.

Dry upland areas are dominated by the pitch pine that gives the region its name, though in many areas, black, scarlet, and white oak, share the tree canopy. Scrub and dwarf chestnut oaks dominate the shrub thicket, joined by a variety of interesting heath plants. From the forest floor springs a profusion of lichens and wildflowers.

The barrens also contains a diverse range of wetland communities, including marshes, heath bogs, red maple swamps, and rare Atlantic white cedar swamps. Wetland areas teem with unusual plants, including several insectivorous species and over a dozen of species of orchids.

Animals in the Pine Barrens include over 100 bird species, many of which are disappearing elsewhere in the region: an outstanding population of butterflies and moths, including the threatened buck moth; and such threatened or endangered vertebrates as the tiger salamander, eastern mud turtle, and northern harrier.
Protecting Our Drinking Water

Virtually all of Long Island's drinking water is drawn from a single system of underground reservoirs, known as aquifers. This dependence led the federal Environmental Protection Agency to designate our aquifer system as the nation's first "sole source aquifer," requiring special protection. The Pine Barrens represent the source of the greatest quantity of the purest drinking water on Long Island.

The threat to our water quality lies on the land above the aquifers. Any contaminants which the rainwater contacts will be carried with it, into our drinking water supply. Common contaminants include: household sewage; fertilizers and pesticides used on lawns, farms, and golf courses; solid waste, including toxic chemicals in landfills; industrial wastewater and chemical wastes from laboratories; pet waste and livestock manure.

The quality of our drinking water depends, therefore, on how Long Island's land is used. The more land used for homes, lawns, agriculture, business and industry, the greater the contamination of our aquifers.

Two hundred years ago, the Pine Barrens blanketed one-fourth of Long Island, assuring a plentiful supply of pure water. Today, most of that land has been developed, and our water supply has been diminished.
Know Before You Go

Health & Safety
- Wear the right shoes and socks. You want good support. Closed toe shoes and high socks pulled up over your pants provide you with the best tick protection.
- On Long Island, it’s especially important to check yourself for ticks after you hike. Remove any ticks with tweezers immediately. Be mindful, but not paranoid. A tick must be attached for 36 to 48 hours or more before infecting a host.
- Bring some water with you, to stay hydrated (ideally in a reusable bottle).

Following the Trail
Many of the trails described here are marked, or "blazed," to make them easy to follow. Blazes are usually painted on trees or posts; less often, you’ll find plastic or metal blazes fastened to trees.

If you lose your way, turn around and retrace your steps until you regain the trail markers. For more remote venues, it’s always wise to have your map or guide handy, too!

Maps
Trail maps are usually posted online, on the website of the agency that oversees/manages the park.

Permits
Use of some New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) managed trails require a permit. These are free, good for three years, and can be obtained by filling out a form listed on the NYSDEC website. Or, you can call 631-444-0273.

All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)
ATVs chew up the sandy soils of Long Island and are prohibited on all public lands. Should you encounter illegal users in the Pine Barrens, do not confront the riders, but call 911 as soon as possible. ATV use is illegal and is considered an emergency call. You can also dial 1-877-BARRENS, which is routed directly to the Suffolk County Parks Police.
For all avid hikers and runners, the Paumanok Path is the perfect challenge. Spanning more than 125 miles from Rocky Point to Montauk Point, much of which transverse the Long Island Pine Barrens, the Paumanok Path provides travelers with an up close and personal view of Long Island’s environment and history. On the path, travelers will see pitch pines, glacial erratic, rolling hills, tidal marshes, cedar swamps, dunes, grasslands and countless species of wildlife and flora. The Paumanok Path has even greater significance due to its design drawing inspiration from the trips that Mountaukett Indian Stephen Talkhouse frequently made from East Hampton to Sag Harbor back in the 19th century.

If you intend to complete the whole 125 mile journey, however, be prepared. Only one person has completed the whole span and it took six days! You can always break it up, though.
If you haven't walked in the Pine Barrens and want an easy introduction, there's a perfect trail waiting for you in Manorville: El's Wampmissick Trail. Unfortunately, the Trail Center, owned by Suffolk County, is no longer open for use, but the trail behind it is open every day! The trail system here also connects with the Paumanok Path.

**Directions:** Take the LIE to Exit 70 and go north a quarter mile to the Center. The trail begins at the back door of the building. (11949 Captain Daniel Roe Hwy, Manorville, NY 11949)
We often think of much of the Pine Barrens as dry inland habitat, but in Flanders the pines march down to Flanders Bay in a spectacular fashion. This is an easy but very diverse walk.

**Directions:** Head east on NY 24 from Riverhead and look on the north side for Birch Creek Road, an unpaved, sandy dead end opposite Birch Creek Pond. The road is short, so if the sand seems too deep, pull off and walk down to the bay. This spot is also popular with kayakers who launch into the bay.

**Description:** You’ll see the Pine Barrens end at the high tide line where you may see Ospreys, Terns, Horseshoe Crabs and maybe more! The salt marshes beyond perform the vital functions of filtering pollutants, buffering the shore against storms, and providing nutrients and breeding habitat for many species.
Brookhaven Trail
4.0 miles to NY 25 (yellow blazes)
10.45 miles to Paumanok Path & Back (yellow blazes)

The Brookhaven Trail traverses beautiful upland pine-oak and oak-pine barrens and connects with the Paumanok Path for longer hikes. Brookhaven State Park also hosts a series of fine new loop trails.

**Directions:** Take William Floyd Parkway (CR-46) north to its end at NY-25A. Go east a short distance to the school entrance. Keep right, and park at the southwest corner of the lot. There are many marked trails here, mainly for the cross-country team at the high school. Walk on the west side and parallel to the ball field, and at the far side look for the yellow blazes of the Brookhaven Trail.

**Description:** Most of the Brookhaven Trail lies within the 2,300-acre Brookhaven State Park. The terrain is slightly rolling at the north end and flatter to the south. An easy 4-miler requires leaving a car on the north side of NY-25 in Ridge, just east of East Margin Road at a fence line where the trail emerges.

Starting from Shoreham-Wading River HS, you'll come to views of Burnt Hollow within a mile and a quarter. Brush fires years ago have left this depression with thicker understory vegetation. At 1.7 miles, cross the dirt Wading River Hollow Road, which now has red blazes, and at 2.4 miles Long Pond Road, with green blazes.

At 3.0 miles, you'll notice the green blazes again and a side path to a small pond. The trail continues on fairly flat ground to NY-25.

Brookhaven State Park Loops
5.3 miles (green blazes) | 3.7 miles (red blazes)
1.7 miles (blue blazes)

Rescued from closure for budgetary reasons in 2010, Brookhaven State Park now boasts a new network of well-marked trails easy to access and sure to please everyone, from all-day hikers to casual walkers.

**Directions:** The entrance for the loops is on the east side of William Floyd Parkway, north of NY-25 and opposite Whiskey Road.

**Description:** A kiosk displaying a trail map lies inside the gated entrance to the park. Picnic tables are available. Those of you concerned about picking up ticks, should appreciate these wide paths.
Brookhaven State Park Loops Continued

**Description:** From the kiosk, the red loop heads northward, paralleling the parkway, then eastward and back to the start. The green trail extends 5.3 miles eastward along old Long Pond Road, then south and back. Each of these routes intersects with the Brookhaven Trail twice, offering many options for shortening or lengthening walks.

Finally, the blue trail, concurrent with the green much of the way, uses a north-south cutoff to form an easy, 1.7 mile trail from the entrance.
The Dwarf Pine Plains of Westhampton is one of only three other areas in the world where Dwarf Pines exist, the other two being found in the New Jersey Pine Barrens and Ulster County’s Shawangunk Mountains. Extremely poor soil and frequent wildfires combine to create a harsh environment, where pitch pines rarely grow taller than six feet. Generously interspersed with the pines are scrub oaks, the host plant for the endangered Buck Moth. In the hot summer months, buck moths seek protection from the threat of wildfires by burrowing into earthen cells in the forest floor. In the autumn, they come to the surface for their mating flight, laying eggs on a twig of scrub oak trees. In October, the moth emerges from underground resting places to live a few short days and seek mates. From late morning through early afternoon, these black-white-and-orange insects take to the skies in a sight not to be missed - and the pines are so accessible that you won't have to!

We suggest you try both shore loops, one an unblazed route on the west side of CR-31 and the other, an interpretive loop on the east side. The Dwarf Pine Plains is extremely hot in the summer, so go early or wait for cooler seasons.

**Directions:** Take Route 27 (Sunrise Highway) to Exit 63. At the southwest corner of the interchange, pull off immediately into an unpaved clearing just beyond the shoulder. Alternatively, parking is available across the road at a Suffolk County Water Authority building adjacent to the interpretive loop.

For the west-side loop, locate an unmarked trail at the south end of the dirt parking area and heading south parallel to CR-31. The path extends a quarter mile to the side yard of a small commercial building.

(If you wish, you can simply walk down the road to the building.) Turn right, and at the rear of the property, a wide, straight trail heading northwest lures hikers into the heart of the Dwarf Pines.

**Caution:** Should you visit the Dwarf Pine Plains in early summer, you’ll encounter the buck moth in its caterpillar stage. *Do not touch* the caterpillar. Its protective poisonous spines could make your trip much more memorable than you intended!
Dwarf Pine Plains
2.5-3 mile loop (unblazed) | 0.64 mile loop (blazed with signposts)
Dwarf Pine Plains Preserve

Hubbard County Park - Ghost Forest

Photo: Sandra Richard
Melding pine barrens, salt marshes, and considerable history, Hubbard presents a beautiful and gentle landscape for easy exploration.

**Directions:** From NY-27 Exit 65, go north about two miles on NY-24 to Red Creek Road. Park alongside Red Creek Road in one of the many pull-off spots and walk the 1/5 of a mile in to the Black Duck Lodge.

**Description:** Black Duck Lodge was built by the Hubbard family in 1838 and later was owned by financier E.F. Hutton. At present, there is no public access to the building. As you face the lodge, look to your left for a wide trail with a metal gate to bar vehicles. Walk down the trail to where it divides, and bear right. The understory is thin here, evidence of a former farm. Mill Creek appears to the west.

The trees end abruptly at a large salt marsh. This trail is often restricted in spring and early summer in deference to ospreys nesting nearby.

Continue to an isolated grove of trees fronting on Flanders Bay. Prickly pear cactus grows on either side of the trail. At low tide, notice the stumps of the "Ghost Forest," the remnants of Atlantic White Cedars that lived when sea levels were lower and the shoreline was farther out into Flanders Bay. Horseshoe crabs live here.
West to east, Manorville Hills offers the longest expanse of roadless land on Long Island. Long abused by off-road vehicles, the rolling hills of the Ronkonkoma Moraine are badly eroded in many places, but recent efforts at better management are helping to reclaim the pinelands here. Complete with excellent parking, this park provides access to new, separate loop trails for hikers, mountain bikers and horse riders.

**Directions:** From LIE Exit 70, go south to a marked left turn at Hot Water Street. Continue across the road to the parking area. From Sunrise Highway (NY-27) eastbound, go north from Exit 62 on CR-11 to the county park sign and parking lot.

**Description:** The well-marked yellow hiking trail heads through a flat, shady tract partly lined with thick stands of ferns. Beyond a dense stand of white pine, the trail reaches three orange blazes, marking the beginning of the loop trail. Pick a direction. Traveling clockwise, you'll reach a lovely glacial kettlehole (about 2.5 mile round trip from the parking area). Beyond, the trail travels up and down the convoluted Manorville Hills, deposited as part of the Ronkonkoma Moraine by the receding glaciers of the last Ice Age.
The Peconic River passes through Manorville, and so does the Paumanok Path hiking trail. Taking a round-trip walk of under three miles here will reveal much to you about the Pine Barrens.

**Directions:** From Exit 70 of the LIE, go north past the Trails Information Center to a T-intersection. Turn right, cross the LIRR tracks, and turn right again at the next T-intersection. Shortly after, bear left onto David Terry Road/Wading River Manor Road. In about half a mile, you’ll reach a small bridge over the Peconic River and a sign marking the border of Riverhead and Southampton towns. Park here and look for the white-blazed trail on the west side, just north of the river.

**Description:** At first, you'll walk a narrow corridor between the Peconic and private property, but after crossing a small footbridge you’ll find yourself in an expanse of Pine Barrens with an interesting recent history. Notice that the trail is shady and lined with typical vegetation: sweet pepperbush near water, then pitch pines and berry bushes in the drier areas.

Not far down the trail, however, the canopy thins out and the understory growth increases. You’ve reached the edge of what was a moderately hot brush fire back in 1993.

Before reaching your turn-around point at Schultz Road, you’ll pass an old kettlehole pond, which has slowly and naturally filled-in over the years, but still harbors ferns in the lower areas.

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**Paumanok Path:**
**Wading River-Manor Rd. to Schultz Rd.**
5.2 miles out and back (white blazes)
Although Long Island’s Pine Barrens are famous for their ability to withstand fires, they are not immune to other forces of nature. Along a fairly pristine section of the Paumanok Path hiking trail, you'll find evidence of the last Ice Age as you traverse the rolling hills of the Ronkonkoma Moraine.

**Directions:** Just north of Exit 64 on Sunrise Highway (NY-27), turn right off CR-104 onto Pleasure Drive. A short distance ahead, where the road takes a sharp left turn, park on the wide shoulder on your right. You’ll find the white blazes of the trail, heading east into the woods, at an opening in a guard rail ahead of you.

For a one-way hike, a buddy system with two cars works well here. Park one at the end of the hike at NY-24 and Spinney Road, where there is a closed, gated road on the south side of the highway near Birch Creek Road. This wide parking area is a safe place to leave a car. Drive the other car southeast onto NY-24 to NY-27, and get on 27 heading west. Take the next exit, 64, onto CR-104. Follow the rest of the instructions from the paragraph above.

**Description:** After a level start, the trail soon climbs a low hill of the Moraine and then descends to cross a power line right-of-way within a half mile. Returning to the woods, you'll pass through classic pine-oak barrens with an understory of heath plants.

The trail traverses a dry kettlehole, a bowl-shaped remnant of the Ice Age, and then some denser vegetation near wetlands. After a left turn onto a wider road, 1.5 miles from the start, you'll find Maple Swamp on your left. This kettlehole isn't dry. Maple Swamp's bottom dips bellow the water table, which is thus visible as the surface of the pond.

Just beyond the swamp, the trail takes a sharp right turn onto more rolling terrain, and soon you'll notice many dead oak trees, from a significant brush fire many years ago. Grasses now thrive under the thin canopy, and pitch pines are slowly reasserting themselves.

After crossing three fire roads on undulating terrain, at about 2.7 miles into the walk, the trail reaches a ridge where the land visibly falls off to the east into the Birch Creek-Owl Pond drainage.

The route reaches a junction with a yellow-blazed side trail that runs along the west side of Birch Creek Pond 0.4 mile to NY-24, a quick exit if you need one. However, we suggest staying on the white trail as it briefly heads south, with Birch Creek barely visible on your left. You'll cross a small earthen dam and immediately turn right through wetlands.
Paumanok Path (Pleasure Dr. to Spinney Rd.) Continued

**Description:** At 3.25 miles, you'll find a fine view of peaceful Owl Pond. A few yards to the left of the viewpoint, an old concrete duck blind sunk into the soil is mostly filled with water and harbors frogs in warmer weather.

At the pondside clearing, you'll spot the yellow blazes of another side trail. This one offers a flat, easy walk with a little more than half a mile out to a parking area at Spinney Road and NY-24.

Options: (1) From Owl Pond, you may continue following the white blazes of the Paumanok Path, first southward and then eastward to the closed Spinney Road and then turn north on Spinney to the parking area. Avoid this route in hot weather! Total mileage about 4.5. (2) Continuing across Spinney instead of turning onto it will take you farther east on the Paumanok Path, again on rolling terrain, past Sears, Division, House and Grass Ponds, ultimately northward to NY-24. Total mileage is 6.3.
Enjoy a flat, easy section of the Paumanok Path. Land once destined for an extension of CR-111 now forms a corridor of preserved land that links the huge Rocky Point Preserve to the Peconic Ponds region. This walk offers a fine introduction to the interior of the Pine Barrens, including two beautiful ponds, without ever getting too far from civilization.

**Directions:** From the junction of NY-25 and William Floyd Parkway in Ridge, drive east on NY-25 1/6 of a mile to a dirt parking area on your right. The trail begins at a sign identifying Suffolk County's Pine Trail Preserve.

**Description:** For the first half mile or so, you'll be within sight of subdivisions off to your left and cross several dirt fire roads. In this area, fires are suppressed quickly, so tree oaks have been able to outnumber the more fire-resistant pitch pines. In most parts of the Pine Barrens, water percolates quickly through the porous soil, but here there's more silt from ancient beds of the Peconic.

After a left turn under the power line, keep a sharp eye out for a right a hundred yards later. You'll now enter an area that endured a very hot brushfire in the mid-1980s, and the effects may still be visible. Don't be surprised if you startle a wild turkey here.

At 1.6 miles from the start, you'll reach a junction with the yellow-blazed Brookhaven Trail. Take the right fork, and continue following the white blazes. Beyond a north-south fire road, the trail dips slightly into wetlands where in early summer you'll find pink sheep laurel and fragrant swamp azalea. You'll cross a branch of the Peconic River on a narrow footbridge and come to Sandy and Grassy Ponds, part of the Peconic Headwaters, which contain the largest concentration of endangered species in New York State.
Anchoring the western end of the Paumanok Path is the vast Rocky Point Natural Resources Management Area - 5,249 acres administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Rolling terrain on the north end gives way to a mostly gentle track of classic upland Pine Barrens.

**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 miles east of the junction with NY-25A and North Country/CR-20 and 0.4 mile west of Rocky Point-Yaphank Road/CR-21. The turn is easy to miss; look for the DEC sign up the driveway. To hike here you'll need a free DEC hiking permit.

**Description:** Purchased by the RCA in 1920, 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.

The trail heads southwest through the morainal sections, swings south through the kettlehole, then southeast toward Rocky Point Road (CR-21), a distance of 3.5 miles. 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 DEC discs.

Turn left at the junction and you'll complete a pleasant, ten-mile loop; turn right and you'll reach the parking area on Whiskey Road where you left the second car, 4/10 of a mile away.
Directly south of Riverhead lie some of Long Island’s most important tracts of protected open space, including the 2,324-acre David A. Sarnoff Preserve, administered by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Sarnoff Preserve has been in state hands since 1978, when RCA donated it to the public along with the Rocky Point Preserve.

**Directions:** Drop a car at Field 1 at Suffolk Community College - Riverhead. Go north on CR-51 to a right onto CR-63, then quarter turn at the Riverhead traffic circle. From the traffic circle in Riverhead, go south on 104 to the parking area. Access to David Sarnoff and other DEC lands requires a free hiking permit.

**Description:** From the kiosk in the parking lot, walk west a bit and locate a sign for the DEC’s white trail. The trail passes a junction with a yellow side loop of about 0.9 miles which heads south, turns around a glacial kettlehole pond, and returns north to the main trail. This short walk is a fine excursion in itself.

The Paumanok Path continues west and northwest through dense patches of scrub oak occasionally opening into viewpoints north and east. At 4.1 miles, Wildwood Lake appears below and to the right. In less than a quarter mile, the trail crosses the paved road into Hampton Hills golf course. The Hampton Hills tract was one of the first major purchases of open space in the Pine Barrens. This section ends at Speonk-Riverhead Road, across from, where parking is available at Field 1.
A walk in beautiful Quogue Wildlife Refuge is a short course in Pine Barrens ecology. You'll see wetlands, creeks, ponds, tall lowland pitch pines and dwarf pines, all on a pristine parcel that includes a wonderful nature center and an old ice house, complete with interpretive signs. The refuge, founded in 1934, is open every day; the Nature Center is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11 AM to 4 PM.

**Directions:** From NY-27, exit 64 S and head south on Route 104. Go 2 miles and turn right onto Old Country Road. Go 0.7 miles, entrance to the Refuge is on the right.

**Description:** Begin by checking out the ice house exhibit at the left side of the parking lot. In the age before electric refrigeration, men with horse-drawn sleds would harvest foot-thick blocks of ice, pack it in hay, and store it in ice houses.

At the start of the trail, wetlands and Old Ice Pond will be on your left. Continue north a short distance to an intersection in the trail. For a 0.8 mile loop around the pond, turn left here. The trail crosses Quantuck Creek on a narrow bridge.

At the next intersection, continue straight ahead to the fence line at the refuge's western boundary, then left to follow the pond shore back to the Nature Center. Along the way, a short boardwalk winds through another pretty wetland.

For a 1.4 mile loop, go straight instead of turning at the first intersection. You'll reach another junction where a left turn will take you across an earthen dam at North Pond, where another fine viewpoint awaits.

Photos of/by Quogue Wildlife Refuge
Quogue Wildlife Refuge
Trails range from 0.8 to 3.1 miles
The Long Island Pine Barrens Society is an environmental education and advocacy organization focusing on protecting drinking water and preserving open space, especially in Long Island's Pine Barrens.

Please visit our website at www.pinebarrens.org for more information about recreation in the Pine Barrens.

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Tag us in your hiking photos!

The Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference is an excellent source for information on additional hiking locations in and out of the Pine Barrens, maps and more! Visit: www.ligreenbelt.org

Happy Hiking from the Long Island Pine Barrens Society!