



walk NAHANT

PART OF THE “GO LOCAL: NATURE IN NAHANT” PROJECT

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Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary
Johnson Elementary School
Nahant Garden Club
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Northeastern University, Marine
Science Center

AND THANKS TO:

John Benson
Diana Brandi
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M-H Design

the plants of nahant

AN OVERVIEW

When the English traveler William Wood came to Nahant in the 1630s, he saw "a necke of land ...well wooded with Oakes, Pines, and Cedars... well watered, having beside the fresh springs a great pond in the middle, before which is a spacious marsh..."

(Lewis and Newhall 1890:144).

The vegetation of the Lynn area (including Nahant) was further described in the 1840s by Alonzo Lewis: "The principal trees are white and pitch pine, white and red cedar, oak, walnut, maple, birch and hemlock....Many tons of sumac are annually gathered....blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, and cranberries are also common. The forests, fields, and meadows are rich in the abundance and variety of medicinal plants, and the town [i.e., the greater Lynn area] presents a fine field for the botanist."

(Lewis and Newhall 1890:78-79).*

By the late 1600s much of Nahant was stripped of its tree cover to make way for cattle pastures, and it wasn't until 1825 that Frederick Tudor (the "ice king") began "a lifelong campaign to plant trees on treeless Nahant," including "Balm of Gilead" (probably white poplar) and the great American elms along Nahant Road (Wilson [1928] 1977:61).

In the 19th and early 20th centuries Nahant saw the arrival of the "summer cottages" – planted with the popular ornamental shrubs and flowers of the day – and the wharves, trolleys, hotels, golf links, and amusement park facilities of a major summer resort town. World War II brought a military presence, and a Nike missile base was built at East Point, followed by a marine science center.

The great changes in the landscape of the smallest town in Massachusetts over the last four centuries are reflected in the plants that have lived here and can still

be seen in a variety of habitats – on the beaches, the coastal marshes, the rocky ledges, the interior wetlands, the roadsides, and in and about what remains of the old summer cottage properties. These plants have stories to tell:

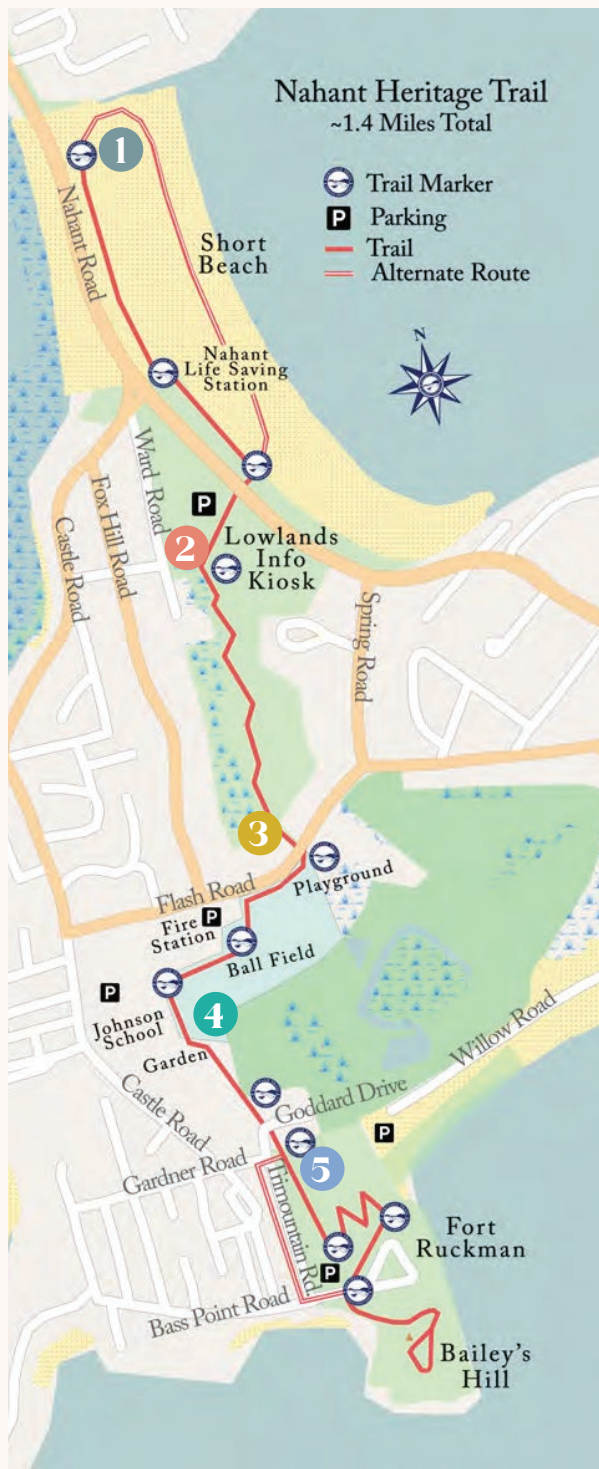
- (1) There is the ongoing contest between the native plants (such as the once economically important sumac) and the troublesome invasive species (oriental bittersweet, multiflora rose, Japanese knotweed, and phragmites).
- (2) There are the "well-behaved" non-natives (such as Queen-Anne's lace, chicory, and clovers of various kinds) that have become "naturalized" and blended in with our own native plants.
- (3) There are the plants that grow in special habitats (dusty miller, beach pea, mossy stonecrop, and seaside goldenrod on sandy and cobblestone beaches; sweet pepperbush, elderberry, and shadbush in the freshwater wetland areas; scarlet pimpernel, dyer's greenweed, and orange grass on rocky ledges).
- (4) The plants here may have something to tell us about climate change – are warmer soil temperatures in winter allowing the roots of the bittersweet and multiflora rose to get a head start and explode in numbers during the growing season?

In the 1890s a dedicated Nahant public school teacher, Florence Johnson, oversaw the creation with her students of a remarkable pressed-plant collection that is now housed in the Nahant Public Library. Many of the specimens are of species not seen in Nahant today (some may have been collected elsewhere), but many others can still be found here. What does this tell us about continuity and change, and about the fragility, resilience, and adaptability of nature over the years?

(*Full citations for the sources given here may be found in the Nahant Open Space and Recreation Plan 2006.)



walking the heritage trail...



The description included begins at the north end of Short Beach and traverses 1.4 miles south to Bailey's Hill through five Trail Sections. Parking is available at the Short Beach lot off Ward Road; Playing Fields lot off Flash Road; Bailey's Hill lot at Trimountain and Bass Point Roads. A permit may be required at certain times of year.

- 1 SHORT BEACH | 0.4 mi. Begin at the Trail Marker at Little Nahant Playground. Follow the sidewalk past the Life Saving Station and Castle Road. Cross Nahant Rd at the crosswalk to the parking lot Trail Kiosk.**

Note | To walk a loop from the parking lot, walk north on the beach itself and follow the above to return.

Midway along the Beach is the historic Nahant Life Saving Station, built in 1898, transferred to the United States Coast Guard in 1915, and deeded back to the Town in 2001.

Short Beach is a splendid barrier beach. The dunes support a stunning mix of wild flowers including Beach Pea, Sea Rocket, and Wild Radish. The Milkweed attracts Monarch Butterflies, and Bayberry attracts flocks of Tree Swallows. Thousands of migrating shorebirds depend on this beach from July through October. Look for terns and dainty Bonaparte's Gulls during the warmer months.

- 2 LOWLANDS | 0.3 mi. Begin at the Trail Kiosk at Short Beach parking lot. A few yards along the Trail, choose either side of the fork to merge back onto the main trail. Follow to Flash Road and cross to the Trail Marker.**

From 1905 through 1930, the Nahant and Lynn Street Railway ran on a wooden trestle through what is now the parking lot. Over the years this area has hosted sporting events, military exercises, and circuses - complete with elephants.

The diverse wetland and woodland habitat attracts many birds during spring and fall migration. Yellow Warblers, Robins, Goldfinches, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Grackles nest here. Warm sunny days bring Monarch and Red Admiral butterflies.

- 3 PLAYING FIELDS | 0.2 mi. Enter the Flash Road Playground. Follow the Trail Markers to the rear of the Fire Station, along the border of the parking lot to the ball field, and between the two rows of trees to the Trail Marker behind the Johnson School.**

This area was part of Fort Ruckman, active during the two World Wars. South of the playground were a mess hall, an infirmary and movie theater! The Nahant Fire Station was once a military fire house. The ball fields were once Parade Grounds. Canada Geese, Brant and Snow Geese forage in winter and Tree and Barn Swallows fly in search of insects in summer.

- 4 COMMUNITY GARDEN & BIRCH WOODS | 0.2 mi.** From the Trail Marker behind the Johnson School follow the line of trees to the Community Garden and through the birch woods. Wooden steps lead up a short slope to Goddard Drive and the base of the Fort Ruckman Bunkers.

The wooden steps follow the former World War II wooden plank walkway to the Fort Ruckman barracks located along Goddard Drive. Listen for the very vocal House Wrens.

- 5 FORT RUCKMAN & BAILEY'S HILL | 0.3 mi.** From the intersection of Gardner and Trimountain Roads, follow the gravel road to the top of Fort Ruckman to the Trail Marker on the left. (Before continuing, explore the spectacular overlooks to the south and to the northeast.)

Proceed down the steep switchback trail to Bailey's Hill Park and follow the Trail Markers to Bailey's

Hill. Ascend the hill on the asphalt path. For a less demanding hike, return to Trimountain Road and walk to the Bailey's Hill Park entrance on the left. From Bailey's Hill Park, look back to the switchback trail for remains of Gun Number 2 of the underground fortification, Battery Gardner. The flat green of the park housed soldiers in tents, then a rifle range. Bailey's Hill itself was used for surveillance and weaponry in the two World Wars and as a Nike missile site in 1955. Currently, the green is much loved as a park highlighted by the lovely Sears Pavilion Gazebo. The wooded hillsides attract birds and butterflies and the shoreline is active with terns and shorebirds in summer and a variety of waterfowl in winter.

End at the top of Bailey's Hill | ~1.4 Miles Total
Nahant Open Space Committee | June, 2012
More information on our website | www.nahant.org/heritagetrail

johnson school playground & gardens...

(A) Mountain Garden

Sweet Fern, Heather, Day Lilies,
Dogwood, Viburnum, Clover

(C) Blueberry Hill

Blueberries, Bluestem, Maiden Hair,
Gray Birch, Witch Hazel, Sea Oats,
Raspberries

(E) Roadside Garden

Bugbane, Choke Cherry, Phlox, Lady's
Mantle, Pennsylvania Sage Grass,
Painted Daisy, Solomon Seal,
Primrose, New Jersey Tea, Privet

(B) Woodland Shade Garden

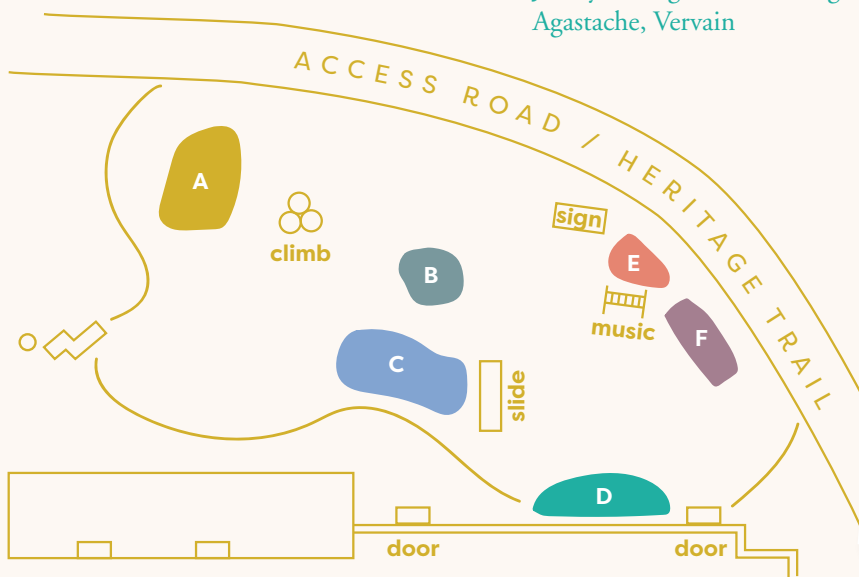
Black Cohosh, Bugbane, Royal Fern,
Foam Flower, Trillium, Wild Ginger

(D) Pollinator's Garden

Cone Flower, Butterfly Bush, Hyssop,
Black Eyed Susan, Hollyhock,
Caryopteris, Coral Ball, Maiden Hair,
Joe Pye, Oregano, Plum Bago,
Agastache, Vervain

(F) Roadside Garden

Astilbe, Bugbane, Blue Stem Grass,
Baptisia, Lavender, Spirea, Lupine
Campanella, Phlox, Papyrus Bush,
Lavender Catmint, Yarrow, Choke
Cherry Tree, Verbena, Liatris





nahant thicket



Furbush Road, Nahant MA

Trails open daily dawn to dusk

At just four acres, Nahant Thicket is among Mass Audubon's smallest wildlife sanctuaries. Yet, it's an inviting spot for hundreds of migrating songbirds such as warblers, vireos, and thrushes passing through each year.

A short, quarter-mile trail winds through "the Thicket"—a tiny patch of red maple swamp, brushy tangles, and a traversing stream.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Loons, grebes, ducks, and seabirds often occur in variety and abundance during the winter at the shore across the street from the sanctuary.
- Migrant birds are at their most diverse in May, September, and October.
- Butterflies can be seen during summer and fall.



nahant public library

STORY WALK

In 2018, Nahant Public Library added a Story Walk to the library park at 15 Pleasant Street, as part of a grant-funded initiative to bring STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) to preschoolers and their families. A Story Walk is designed as an interactive way to read the pages of a book while taking a stroll, and the library staff tries to choose interactive stories that promote learning.

The Story Walk begins on the southwest side of the park, nearest Pleasant Street and the rear of the library building. The nine pages then proceed around the edges of the playground. The walking distance is about 250 feet, and is flat and easily accessible, with parking alongside the park or behind town hall. Feel free to bring a picnic or spend time with your family on the playground, which is geared for young children, or visit the library, a National Registered landmark.

The park property was historically the site of Nahant's first school and library (1819) and its first town hall (1868). Today, the property supports native trees, herbs and grasses on the periphery intermingled with nonnative plantings. Still, keep your eyes out for small flowers in the lawn (including cinquefoil and violets) and forsythia bushes blooming in springtime, and the colorful leaves of the Norway maples in the fall.

Crows, grackles, robins, sparrows, and mourning doves are common in the area, along with an occasional Cooper's hawk looking for prey. Squirrels enjoy the beech trees and white mulberry at the library. In the evening, skunks frequent the area, a long-eared owl has been heard hooting, and even a coyote has been spotted.

The Story Walks, like the natural surroundings, change each spring, summer and fall, so be sure to visit throughout the year!



east point

Welcome to East Point, Nahant, home to a rocky shore intertidal ecosystem, dynamic environmental research, and public nature space. To the left of the Marine Science Center (NUMSC) entrance is Canoe Beach (#1 on the Map and Audio Tour), with Castle Rock visible along the left shoreline. The tide pools here host seaweed, shellfish, sea urchins, and soft-bodied tunicates. Gulls, terns, and ducks are common here.

East Point has experienced dynamic land use change in the last century. In the early 1900s, much of the vegetation and private estate land here was replaced by military installations. By the 1940's, East Point featured two gun batteries, a military barracks, and a detection system for underwater craft. Northeastern University purchased the decommissioned property in 1967 and it now hosts research and teaching labs, the Ocean Genome Legacy, and an active dive facility (#2 and #3). NUMSC borders Town of Nahant public land and Lodge Park, featured in stops #6 and #7.

Past the south-facing seawall, the path to Great Ledge (#4) features Boston skyline views across Broad Sound and native plants such as beach pea, seaside goldenrod, and Virginia rose. Eider ducks, cormorants and gulls are common here, and purple sandpipers favor the rocky shoals. A small weather station at Cunner Ledge (#5) collects long-term temperature, humidity, wind direction and speed data. The oldest rocks visible here are 500 million year old limestone and mudstone layers, deposited onto what was a shallow sea floor. The iron-rich rock here is known as gabbro, and its existence in the region contributed to the siting of the Saugus Iron Works in colonial times.



Next, make your way up the hill to Lodge Park. In 1871, Henry Cabot Lodge, a Harvard-trained attorney, built an estate here for himself and his wife, Anne Davis. He would later serve as a state senator. Part of their estate is now owned by the Town of Nahant and became Lodge Park in 1988 (#6), in honor of Lodge's grandson, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., U.S. Senator and ambassador to the United Nations and Vietnam. The meadow just beyond the memorial and formal lawn (#7) features clover, tansy, Queen Anne's lace, aster, and milkweed. Meadow voles inhabit this meadow while tree and barn swallows hunt here for insects. Fall brings white-throated and Savannah sparrows. In winter, snow buntings, horned larks, and Lapland longspurs make their home in this windswept environment.

The fruit-bearing plants which grow in Lodge Park, including Virginia creeper, crab apple, and staghorn sumac, attract and shelter even more species of birds, including robins, goldfinches, and cedar waxwings. Snow buntings, snowy owls, warblers, thrushes, and flycatchers are present during their annual migration, as are Monarch butterflies in summer. East Point (#8 and #9) offers great ocean views; sunfish, harbor seals, and minke whales are occasionally spotted here. From October to May, rafts of waterfowl typically include scoters, eiders, greater scaup and common goldeneye.



For a self-guided streamable audio tour detailing East Point's cultural and natural history, scan this QR Code or visit www.audiotour.me to install the UniGuide app and search for 'Marine.' Locate audio stops (9 signs, starting at Canoe Beach, labeled in the app and on the map). **RUN TIME:** 21 minutes

Tour developed by NUMSC with input from the Nahant Historical Society, Nahant SWIM Inc., Gerry Butler and Linda Pivacek.