


Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) and the Ashland Town Forest Committee welcome you to this 575 acre nature reserve with over 6 miles of marked trails for the enjoyment of the public.

Habitat - The Ashland Town Forest/Cowassock Woods area has a natural “wealth” of granite outcroppings, upland and lowland swamp, vernal pools, and mixed hardwood forest. Flora include many ferns, jack-in-the-pulpit, Canada lily, blue flag iris, sweet pepperbush, spicebush, swamp azalea, black gum, highbush blueberry, virgin’s-bower, marsh marigold, lady’s slipper, starflower, Indian cucumber root, Indian pipes, birds foot violets, shin leaf, pipsissewa, partridge berry, nodding trillium and basswood. Two “stars” on the list are large whorled pogonia and American black currant, both considered relatively rare in Massachusetts.

A 1951 inventory of trees in the Town Forest included red and white oak on the drier sites, red maple on the moist sites, pine, oak, hickory, grey birch and black birch stands, hemlock and spruce. Fauna include deer, red fox, coyote, and a wide variety of birds including pileated wood-pecker, woodcock, wood thrush, red-tailed hawk, turkey vulture, and ruffed grouse. An inhabitant of special interest is the rare blue-spotted salamander.

History – The Ashland Town Forest was established in 1942 by the acquisition of 508 acres of land; 16 additional acres were transferred to the town at no cost. It was previously a hunt club associated with the riding clubs of the Salem End Road section of Framingham. When purchased, the forest was primarily hardwood, 20 to 25 years old. In the next 8 years, more than 40,000 trees were planted, most obtained at no cost from the State Nursery and planted by the Boy Scouts. Miles of road, now the basis of an extensive trail system, were cleared to provide better



access for fire equipment. Even so, in 1953 a fire lasting three days and four nights burned over 50 acres.

In November 1984, SVT acquired 7.54 acres of land off Salem End Road. In April 1992, the abutting 43.5 acres were purchased by SVT (16.6 in Framingham and 26.9 in Ashland). “Cowassock” means “the place of the pines”, and the area was the spring and summer campground of the Magunkook Indians. Brooks, forest, and fields met in ideal combination for fishing, hunting, nut gathering, and planting. Indian habitation is documented by anecdote, artifacts, and deeds transferring property to the first Colonists. There is a strong evidence of prehistoric habitation as well.

The Colonial history of the area is the stuff of legend – Rebecca Nurse, Sara Clayes, Mary Esty, and Edmund Towne fled the Salem witch hunt and established the Salem End settlement of Framingham in 1693. (Salem End Road follows an original seventeenth century Indian trail.) Legend has it that the now collapsed caves in the Town Forest just south of the water tower were the first refuge for the Towne families.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

We welcome you to enjoy the trails for walking, skiing, snowshoeing, nature study, photography, and other quiet activities. Please carry out everything you carry in.

In order to protect this natural area, the following are prohibited:

- Motorized vehicles
- Hunting or trapping
- Camping
- Bicycling in Cowassock Woods
- Fires
- Disposing of trash or yard waste
- Cutting or removing plants

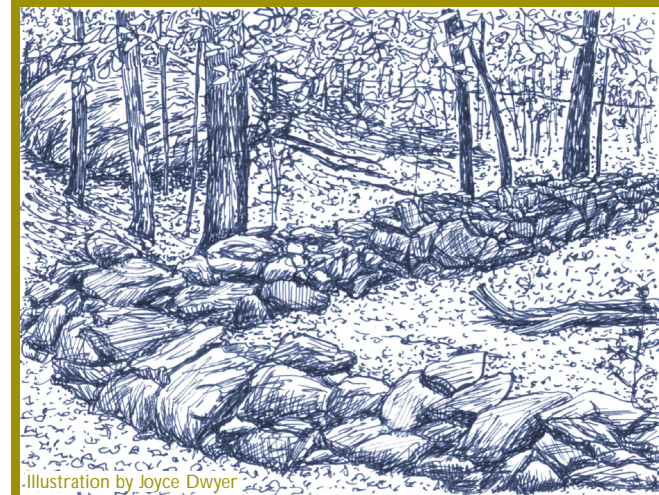


Illustration by Joyce Dwyer

ASHLAND TOWN FOREST & SUDBURY VALLEY TRUSTEES Cowassock Woods



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