

Wildflowers of Rockland Preserve



Red Trillium

Directions to the Wildflower Preserve

From the Renee's Way Parking lot follow the road to Old Crooked Hill Road staying on the Red Trail and cross the road. Continue on the Red Trail to the intersection at Rockland Junction. Turn left following the trail down Crooked Hill Road. Pass a large glacial erratic on the right, cross the stream and take the next left. The Wildflower Preserve begins here.

The complete hike to the wildflower preserve covers about 2 miles and takes 2-3 hours. Be prepared for some steep rocky terrain.

What to look for when visiting Rockland's Wildflower Preserve

Baneberry, Red (2)** White (2)***	Marsh Marigold (1, 5)* Mullein (3)* Partridge Berry (3)***
Blood Root (2)* Blue Cohosh (2)**	Pasture Rose (3) Perfoliate Bellwort (2)* Pipsissewa (1, 4)***
Buttercup, kidney leaved (2)*	Round Leaf Ragwort (3)**
Cinquefoil (3)* Columbine (3)* Dandelion (3)* Dewberry (2)* Dwarf Ginseng (2)* Early Saxifrage (2,3)* False Solomon Seal (2, 3)*	Skunk Cabbage (1, 4)* Solomon Seal (2, 3)* Spotted Wintergreen (3)*** Star Flower (2)** Star Grass (3) Strawberry (3)* Trillium, Red (2, 4) Pink (2, 4) Trout Lily (5)* (Adder's Tongue)
Ferns; Christmas (all) Cinnamon (4) Maidenhair (2, 5) Rattlesnake (2) Rock Polypody (2, 3) Sensitive (2) Broad Beech (2) Ebony Spleenwort (3) Fringed Polygala (1)** (Gaywings) False Hellebore (1,5)* False Lily-of-the-valley, (2, 3)** Hepatica (2, 4)* Indian Cucumber Root (2)* Indian Pipes (1)** Jack-the-Pulpit (2)**	Violets; Common blue (3)* Downy yellow (2)* Early wood (3)** Marsh Violet (5)* Sweet white (3)* Wild Geranium (2)** Wild Oats (4) Wild Sarsaparilla (2)** Winterberry (3)*** Wood Anemone (2)*

Numbers indicate region of trail where flowers can be found.
*=early season; **=mid season;
***=late season

About Rockland

In December 1997 the citizens of Madison voted to purchase a 649-acre tract of land in North Madison then known as Braemore. Located in North Madison, west of Route 79 and just south of the Madison/Durham border, Rockland Preserve is an area of rounded, rocky hills, steep gray cliffs, ledges, and lovely wooded areas. Long abandoned ancient roads offer easy access for the walker and hiker. Old Crooked Hill Road, Poole Road and Dead Hill Road tell stories of travel by foot and by horse and wagon of the residents of long ago.

The centerpiece of the property is an area known as Coan Pond. Until 2002 it was a fen, much like a bog with black, damp soil, thick grasses and shrubs. Then a beaver arrived, a dam and a lodge were built, and once more Coan Pond was a pond.

Directions to Rockland Preserve

Go North from Madison center on Rt. 79 (Durham Rd.) for 6.2 miles to the traffic circle. Continue through the traffic circle, following Rt. 79 North for another 3.8 miles. Turn left (west) on Dorset Ln. Follow Dorset for .7 mile. Turn right on Devonshire Ln. Follow Devonshire for .6 mile. Turn right on Renee's Way. The parking area is at the end of Renee's Way.

Rockland Preserve

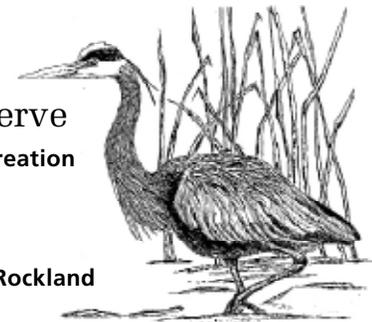
Madison Beach & Recreation

8 Campus Drive

Madison, CT 06443

www.madisonct.org/Rockland

203-245-5623





Hepatica



Wood Anemone



Perfoliate Bellwort



Bloodroot



Yellow Violet

Discovering Wildflowers at Rockland

In early April, 2004 Merritt Cleaver and I were hiking the Orange Trail in Rockland Preserve. We were walking up the slope from the Charcoal site. As we walked along the old wall beside the trail I saw a single blue bloom of **Hepatica**. I stopped and photographed it and we moved on.

The small blue flower lingered in my consciousness but I did not return to the Orange Trail again until May, 2005 thinking I might see the hepatica again. I passed the glacial erratic and crossed the stream looking for signs of spring. As I turned onto the Orange trail from Crooked Hill Road a flash of brilliant pink caught my eye and I knelt down to find a colony of **Fringed Polygala**, or gay wings, clustered around an old stump.

To say I was excited is an understatement. Fringed Polygala has always been a favorite of mine. I remember vividly a group of them that grow at the intersection of Summer Hill Road and County Road in North Madison. I don't recall seeing them anywhere else in Madison until my happy discovery at the beginning of the Orange Trail.

I wondered if there are Fringed Polygala, what else might there be? With a heightened sensitivity to wildflowers I continued my walk. **Yellow Violets**, several varieties of **Blue Violets**, **Early Saxifrage**, **Trillium**, **Bloodroot**, **Solomon's Seal**, **Perfoliate Bellwort**, and the list kept growing. I found the Orange Trail encompassed at least five distinct ecological niches from swamp to sunny hillside. Each niche has its own unique collection of wildflowers.

The more I walked, the more excited I became by the treasure being revealed to me. Right there in the Rockland Preserve was a unique area containing a wide variety of New England wildflowers.

Throughout the spring and summer I continued to visit the area weekly, recording and photographing as I went. I found two colonies of **Wild Columbine**. There were several **Mullein** plants seeming out of place in the woodland. In addition to flowering plants I noted fungi and ferns.

I discovered two colonies of **Maidenhair Ferns**. In another area I found so many **Ebony Spleenwort** ferns I was tempted call it Spleenwort Alley. I was particularly pleased to find one **Rattlesnake Fern**—a fern I knew only from pictures.

Spring and summer faded into fall and winter and I spent my time with Marilyn Dwelley's *Wildflowers of New England* and the website of the

Connecticut Botanical Society confirming my discoveries and planning my wildflower forays for the spring and summer of 2007.

I began conversations with members of the Rockland Preserve Committee encouraging them to establish a wildflower preserve. We planned a hike to the area in late April, 2007. The highlight of that trip was the discovery of a lone Pink Trillium—a less common variant of the Red Trillium. Throughout the spring and summer I continued my regular visits photographing and making notes. Over time the concept of a wildflower preserve grew. The Rockland Preserve Committee enthusiastically endorsed my plan and work was begun on a trail guide. Two walks were scheduled for late April and mid-May.

In Rockland Preserve the frozen ground awaited the warm winds of spring. The skunk cabbage and I waited also.

Warner Lord

February, 2008



Fringed Polygala



Columbine



Pink Trillium



Maidenhair Fern

Section One

Section One begins at the turn-off from Crooked Hill Road. It is marked by a sign announcing the Rockland Wildflower Preserve. The sign features the **Red Trillium**, the logo for the trail. The beginning of the trail is significant as it marks the location of a colony of **Fringed Polygala**. The colony is located to the left of the trail near an old stump. Not only does it mark the beginning of the trail but it marks the first indication that the area is unique in Rockland Preserve. The discovery of the Polygala in the spring of 2006 led to the discovery of a myriad of wildflowers. This portion of the trail follows an old road that ultimately leads to a charcoal burning site. To the left as you walk lies a swampy area that is home to **Skunk Cabbage**, **False Hellebore**, and **Marsh Marigolds**. Section One ends at point where the trail turns right toward the Silent Cliffs.



Blue Violet

Section Two

This section starts where the Orange Trail begins a loop that eventually returns to Section One. As this section begins, a vernal pool can be seen to the left and a wooded area at the base of rising land with a low cliff to the right. The trail skirts the edge of the vernal pool and the wooded area turning right to climb past the Silent Cliffs on the left; ending at the top of the cliff. At one point it joins a section of the Guilford Trail system. The area to the right at the beginning of this section near the low cliffs is home to colony of **Maidenhair Ferns** and scattered **Hepatica**.

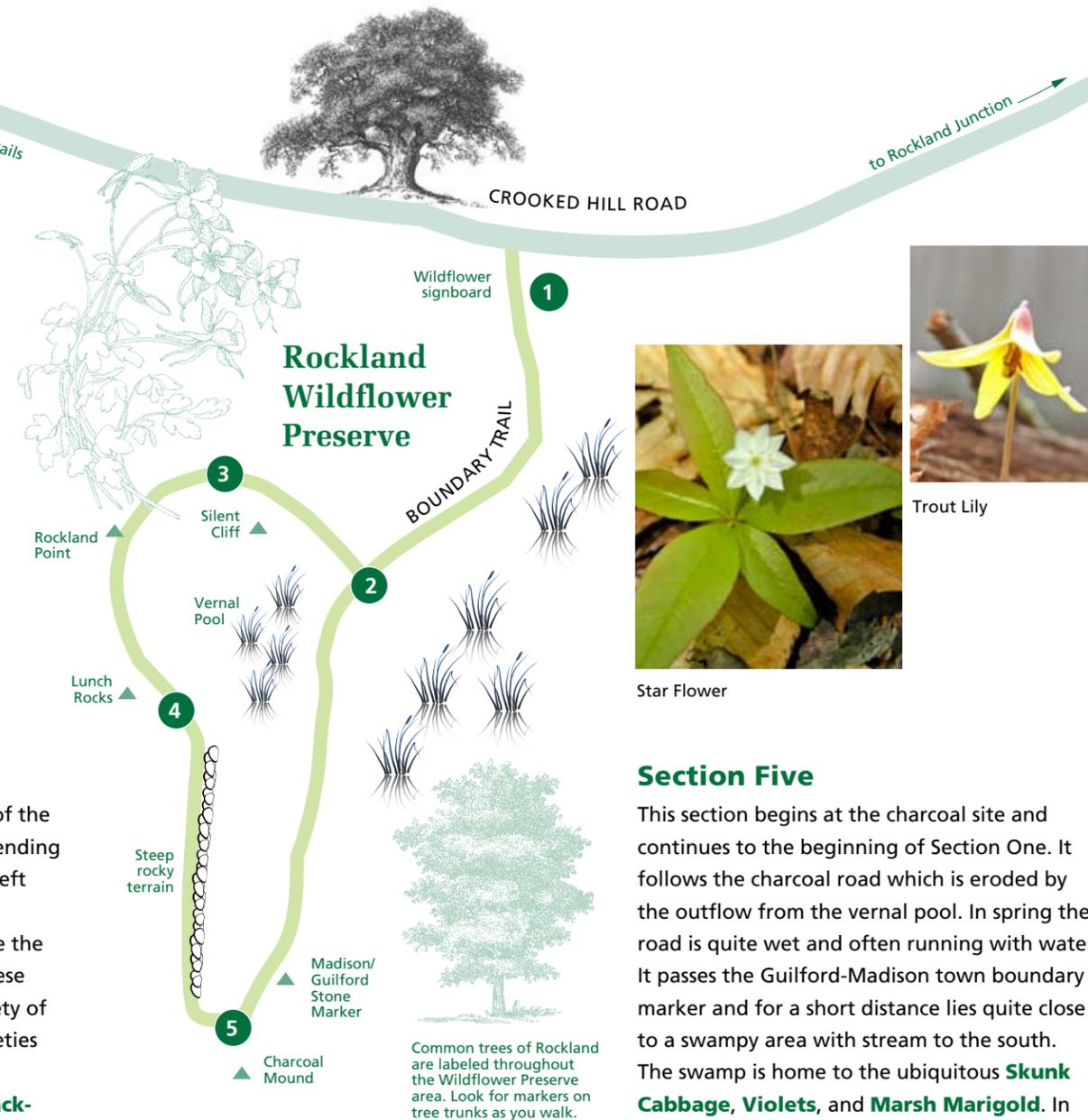
Here also is found a single **Rattlesnake Fern** visible in early June. **Wild geranium** and assorted **Violets** can also be found. Leaving the vernal pool, the trail rises at the foot of the Silent Cliffs. At the base of the cliffs to the left lies a jumble of rocks. Among these are **Blood Root**, **Red Trillium**, and close to the trail a group of **Yellow Violets**. Near the top of this section on the left is a group of **Perfoliate Bellwort**. Watch carefully on the right of the trail for the **Hepatica** that blooms in April—the first to bloom in the spring in company with the **Skunk Cabbage**. This section ends as the trail turns left and climbs sharply to the top of Silent Cliffs.

Section Three

This section follows the rising and falling of the land along the top of the cliff on the left ending as the trail drops down and turns sharply left leaving the red blazed Guilford Trail.

Here the trail passes open areas where the sun filters through and areas of shade. These changes in habitat are home to large variety of wildflowers including **Mullein**, many varieties of **Violet**, **Saxifrage**, **Wild Columbine**, **Yellow Star Grass**, **Solomon's Seal**, **Blackberry**, **Checkerberry**, **Wild Geranium** or **Cranesbill**, and at least one **Dandelion**! Each week in spring brings new pleasures. Here too about the **Ebony Spleenwort Fern**—the queen of ferns—as well the more common **Christmas Fern**.

This section shares the path with a Red Trail maintained by the Guilford Land Trust. At the point where the Wildflower Trail diverges from the Guilford Trail section Three ends and the next section begins.



Section Four

At the beginning of this section can be found a group of **Wild Oats** that bloom in early spring. The trail drops quickly as it re-enters Madison and follows an old stone wall down toward the charcoal site. With the wall on the left, watch carefully for **Hepatica**, **Early Saxifrage**, the **Wood Violet**, and **Ebony Spleenwort Fern**. As the trail winds downward the environment changes from rocky, sunlit hillside to shady woods where few wildflowers grow. A **Pipsisewa** plant may be seen but little else.

This section ends at the bottom of the slope in the broad, flat location of a former charcoal burning area. The soil here is very black with bits of charcoal visible.

Section Five

This section begins at the charcoal site and continues to the beginning of Section One. It follows the charcoal road which is eroded by the outflow from the vernal pool. In spring the road is quite wet and often running with water. It passes the Guilford-Madison town boundary marker and for a short distance lies quite close to a swampy area with stream to the south. The swamp is home to the ubiquitous **Skunk Cabbage**, **Violets**, and **Marsh Marigold**. In early spring **Trout Lily**, or **Adder's Tongue**, is prolific along the road.

After passing the swamp another charcoal site can be found to the right a short distance into the wooded area. The road rises slowly until the vernal pool can be seen on the left. Keep your eyes opened for **Pink Trillium**, a rare variation of the **Red Trillium**.

To leave the Wildflower Preserve follow the road back to the sign at the beginning of the trail and retrace your steps to the Renee's Way parking lot.

Following the trail ensures that you will see a variety of wildflowers. However, if you leave the trail proper and investigate the surrounding area you may find a host of other flowers.