

8. **Club moss:** Look at the ground around the trail marker to see this miniature version of a pine tree. Neither a pine nor a true moss, these plants are more closely related to ferns. This unusual plant is just one example of the unique life that our forest is helping to preserve.

9. **Sweet pepperbush:** This attractive member of the white alder family carries dense, slender spikes of white flowers that exude a perfumed fragrance. Sweet Pepperbush gets its name from the dried seedpods, which resemble peppercorns.

10. **Large-toothed aspen:** This tree can be recognized by its smooth, pale greenish-yellow bark and broad leaves with jagged edges. The flat leaves flutters easily in the breeze making the tree appear to shimmer.

11. **White pine plantation:** The forest was mostly cleared over 200 years ago, the wood used to fuel furnaces for smelting bog iron. From 1916 into the 1930's, the **Civilian Conservation Corps** created extensive pine plantations, such as the one to the right of the path. Some of these plantations have been destroyed by fire. Those that remain are managed for wood products.

12. **Gray birch:** This white barked tree with pointed triangular leaves grows best in open, sunny areas. That is why we find it growing near the water's edge. Its roots help to protect the shoreline against erosion.

13. In this area there are several **pitch pine** mixed amongst white pine. Their thick bark, which protects the tree during forest fires, is a distinctive feature of pitch pine. The round cones have thorns – watch out! Pine needles sometimes grow directly through the trunk, which is an adaptation for fast re-growth after a fire.

14. A number of wildflowers decorate the shoreline of this sandy-bottomed inlet. **Blue flag iris** is an early summer addition, followed by the pink-blossomed **water willow**. During high-water years, look for **yellow swamp loosestrife** and **rosy swamp milkweed**. The tall **broad-leaved cattails** produce flowers in the form of fuzzy spikes. Cattails are an important wildlife plant. **Muskrats** feel on the young shoots and the starchy roots, while birds use the fluffy flower material for building nests. You may notice some tall plants with purple flowers arranged in a spike. This is **purple loosestrife**, an invasive wildflower that thrives in wetlands. Unfortunately, this plant has few to no natural enemies and is crowding out our native wetland species such as cattail.



*Muskrat*

# East Head Reservoir Nature Trail Guide

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Myles Standish  
State Forest

## INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM



dcr

department of  
Conservation and Recreation



dcr

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## Welcome to the East Head Self-Guided Nature Trail!

This average difficulty hiking trail is 3.1 miles long and mostly flat. Hiking time is usually between 60 and 90 minutes. Blue triangle markers guide your way. This trail guide serves to make your hike both enjoyable and informative. Look for the numbered trail posts that correspond with the information in this brochure. Relax and enjoy yourself, but please remember...

- Fires are not allowed.
- No swimming in the reservoir.
- All dogs must be leashed and curbed.
- Please do not litter.
- Please do not pick flowers.
- Poison ivy is found along sections of the trail. It has shiny leaves in groups of three and can irritate the skin.

This is a **place born of fire and ice**, shaped by the human hand. The area's landscape was formed over 10,000 years ago when the last glaciers retreated, dropping their load of sand and stone. The sandy soil of these glacial deposits retains little rainwater and the vegetation is prone to forest fires during the summer dry spells. The natural forest community that is found throughout much of the forest, the pitch pine/scrub oak association or "pine barrens," is uniquely adapted to these conditions. As you hike this trail, keep in mind the complex history that has shaped this landscape and remember that, over time, it will continue to change.

1. Created in 1868, the waters of East Head Reservoir are not for drinking, but for use on some nearby **cranberry bogs**. Cranberry bogs must be irrigated throughout the growing season. In early autumn, water released from the reservoir is used to flood the bogs for harvesting.

2. The **high bush blueberries** found along the shoreline produce delicious berries that ripen in late July and early August. These bushes provide both shelter and nourishment for a variety of songbirds. The **catbird**, commonly sighted along this trail, feeds on the blueberries. Look for a small gray bird with a long tail and listen for its cat-like call. These birds will often hide among thorny tangles of **cat-briar** vines, which can be found up ahead growing along the left side of the trail. Cat-briar has heart-shaped leaves and vines that are well armed with sharp thorns.

3. Look for a tree that appears to be growing as a clump of four or more trunks. This is a **red maple**. It is the only species of maple that grows in quantity in the state forest. The original tree was cut down many years ago. Sprouts grew out from the stump and a few survived to become the multiple trunks we see today. Down the trail, there is a red maple with eight trunks!



**Sundew**

4. The road you just crossed is a **fire road**, designed to provide access to the huge brush breaker trucks used to fight forest fires. A closer look at the trees behind you reveals evidence of a recent fire that blackened the trunks. The Plymouth County area is one of the most dangerous areas for brush fires, due to the sandy soils that retain little water.

5. **Scrub oak**: This short oak species is found all around our state forest. These shrubs provide shelter and a supply of acorns for many forest animals. Often associated with the pitch pine, the scrub oak is adapted to survive forest fires.

6. This huge **white pine** tree would have been a perfect specimen in colonial times for use as a ship's mast. A 1688 decree ordered that all suitable pines of 24 inches or more in diameter be stamped with a broad arrow and designated for use as Royal Navy ship masts. Mast Road, bordering the state forest, got its name as a route for transporting mast trees to the coast.

7. Several interesting plants occupy this bog area. **Swamp azalea**, with its sweet smelling white flowers of June and July, is prevalent. **Pink-blossomed water willow** shoots are numerous throughout the bog. **White fringed orchis** can also be located along sections of the boardwalk. You may also find the **sundew**, a small insectivorous plant. The sundew grows very low to the ground (often on sphagnum moss) and has leaves with many tiny red spikes on them. Look for the sundew along the boardwalk and see if you can find any small insects trapped in its sticky spikes.