

# Waquoit Bay Reserve

Explore a variety of sites within the Reserve



## SELF-GUIDED TOUR

**WELCOME.** This guide takes you to some of **the trails and features** within the *Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve*. This Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation state park preserves valuable habitats within the towns of Mashpee and Falmouth on Cape Cod. Locales within the bay watershed provide a variety of natural areas to explore.

*Please remember to **carry-in, carry-out** all your belongings, including trash. Please leave no trace of your visit, and leave all that you find in its natural environment for all to enjoy. Please be aware of poison ivy and check for ticks after your walk. There are a number of small restaurants along route 28 with several good choices found three miles South at Mashpee Commons. We hope you enjoy this Upper Cape experience.*

### Waquoit Bay Reserve Visitor Center

149 Waquoit Highway (Rt.28) Falmouth, MA 02536

508-457-0495 Hours 10am—4pm

*Mondays through Fridays. ( Also Saturdays in July and August .) FREE.*

Your winter tour begins at the Visitor Center where you'll find water related exhibits, live creatures in the aquarium tank, maps, trail guides and rest rooms. The Children's Discovery Room has books, puppets and puzzles to enjoy. Outside, experience amazing views from the bluff, search for winter ducks on the Bay and contemplate the past as you tour the estate grounds and nature trail.

**Quashnet River Trail.** Enjoy a 2 mile loop along this restored waterway. Be aware that the flat, open fire road changes to a narrower, hilly path once you cross to the other side of the river. Dogs on leash are welcome. From the Visitor Center parking lot take a right onto Rt. 28 and head south for 1.5 miles. Turn left onto Martin Road and follow to the small parking area. Read the map and area history at the kiosk before hiking.





**South Cape Beach State Park** – This area includes a two mile stretch of beach on Nantucket Sound, salt marsh, sand dunes and a salt pond, bordered by pine/oak forest. Explore the Flat Pond Trail with boardwalks through fresh water wetlands and viewing platforms overlooking marsh and pond habitats. The area contains man-made channels and berms from past cranberry farming activities. Wildlife sightings include grouse, marsh hawks and coyote.

From the visitor center, take Route 28 south for 1.5 miles, take a right onto Red Brook Road (across from Martin Road). Follow for 2 miles to the stop sign and turn right onto Great Oak Road. Go 2 miles then turn left at the sign for beaches. In winter, follow the beach road to the end and park in the Mashpee Town lot.

**Sage Lot Pond Trail** starts on the right as you face the water and extends one mile to the bay. It starts as soft sand, turning to hard packed dirt after a short distance. **The Marsh**—Stop to view this salt water wetland from the wooden bridge. It is connected to Waquoit Bay by a series of channels. Swans and ducks often congregate in the salt pond when freshwater ponds freeze over in winter. How many do you count today?

Walk back along the road to access the **Flat Pond Trail**. You may notice the wooden markers in the marsh used by researchers studying climate change and sea level rise in this area.

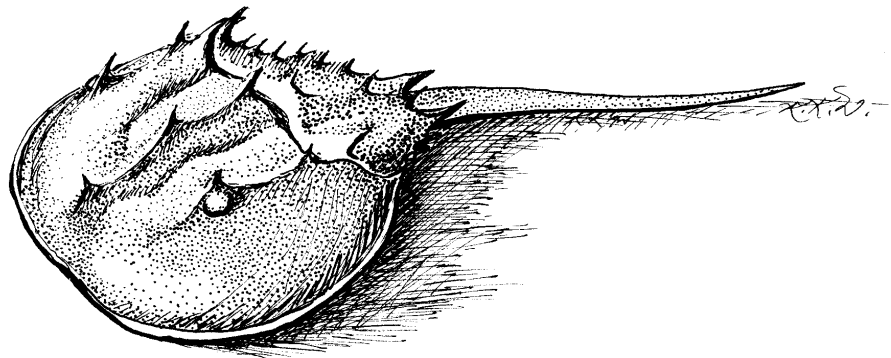
For more information visit [www.waquoitbayreserve.org](http://www.waquoitbayreserve.org)

**Please note-** There are no bathrooms or indoor facilities away from the Reserve Visitor Center. Bring binoculars, food and drinking water with you. Cell phone service can be limited.

### **The Beach**

Winter birds such as loons, mergansers, brant geese and eider ducks can often be seen in the waters off of South Cape Beach. Snowy owls may occasionally hunt in the dunes or perch in nearby trees. Martha's Vineyard can be seen across the sound. See if you can locate one of the water towers on the island.

Reserve scientists regularly measure this beach, collecting data on erosion and deposition. Winter storm waves can move tons of sand, causing damage to the parking area and changing the shoreline. In 2010, hundreds of submerged tree stumps were exposed, some of which dated back over 1,000 years. Researchers continue to study this area to understand how coastal areas are responding to climate change and sea level rise.



### **Horseshoe Crabs**

Shells from this unique marine animal can be found