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Walking RI: Mingle with birds, beavers, milk and more at Exeter's Fisherville Brook refuge

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Hiking and outdoor safety tips
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Fisherville Brook NWR

Bug Points

- Fisherville Brook Nature Lab, 1400 Ellison Brook Rd at the intersection near Exeter Town Hall. Dave Cavanagh and Jim Spain, the Fisher Lab Director, will be on hand to offer guiding and to be right. Tel. 401-294-3338.
- Fishing, available at a lot at the trailhead.
- Dogs, but always
  - Off-leash, they're welcome.
  - Leashed, they're welcome.

EXETER — Are all dull and cold a shadowlap on our and about a barrer dear and a cowled one a mind man at the other are among the special feature at the Fisherville Brook Wildlife Refuge.

There are also a variety of birds to spot in a green, hilltop pasture and, if you're lucky, you may spot a moth, the early bird and autumn. (I am the birds here not the early.)

You also have several choices of trails.

One trail circles Upper Pond at the southern side of the 1,200-acre preserve managed by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island. It's perfect for families and first-time hikers.

Walking RI: Start your on the right foot with a hike at Cranston's Cutco Park Park.

Walking RI: The haunting legacy of Trinity's Fort Burton Woods

Water has lapped Upper Pond since at least 1900, when the 1900 map at left, by Frank Fisherville Brook, which was created by Frank Fisherville.

There's another loop trail on the northern side of the refuge that's a bit more challenging, meandering through tall grass, hardwood and pine groves and down the far bay.

Let out from the parking lot and stopped at a kiosk to check the map. I chose the other cobal trails, took a cellphone picture and chose the blue-blazed path headed north.

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Walking RI: Visit A Civil War story and remnants of a bygone RI railroad in Hopkinton

Walking RI: Southern National Wildlife Refuge harbors secret wind history

Walking RI: A great hike with great view

The wide trail rises and falls over small ridges and hollow tall white pine trees. At a junction, I turned left and headed toward the bay. Soon, I was along the edge of a white cedar swamp before returning to the blue-blazed trail.

A little further down the path, there's a rotting bench and a short side spur on the left to a flat-top where I've seen bluebirds pass by a local, and look down the slope at the small, L-shaped mill pond.

A muddy stream crosses Fisherville Brook at the southern side of the preserve. Beavers have built dams in places and had taken the cattails, John Paganini

Evidence of busy beavers at work

Beavers have gnawed many trees and created a small shallowedge over Fisherville Brook, which feeds the pond from the north. If you look down, you'll see the beaver activity that has blocked some of the water flow into the pond and created a large muddy area. Some of the trees that have died have the two pointed almost of the way through at the end of the bridge.

Trail mermaids periodically clear out the branches and and dams built by the beavers that sometimes flood the trails. The beavers are most active in the fall, when they construct dams to raise the water level before winter so they can get to their food storage under the ice.

Beaver have gnawed many through a tree at the opening to a wooden bridge, John Paganini

Hikers also report seeing or hearing otters, muskrats, fox, deer, wood frogs, spring peepers and snake. I was especially interested in the snake, which have long, skinny character-limiter bodies and few near water, where they dig burrows in the ground and feed on small mammals, birds, eggs, amphibians, frogs, fish and other small animals. But I didn't see on the trail.

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Walking RI: Family-friendly hiking at a former Girl Scout camp in Westerly

Walking RI: Looking for a great bird-watching spot? Try this Great Swamp in South Kingstown

On the far side of the bridge, the trail skirts the 20-pad-covered Upper Pond, with several pastures on a hillside on the right, and several trees too bulk with thick branches under pine trees at the shoreline.

A tape marks a side trail for a short walk up a hill on the right to a large, grassy field. A tape says it is second one a year in the fall to preserve the nests of grasses and birds that are sensitive to disturbance. The field is a mix of tall grass and grassland animals. Without regular mowing, the fields would revert to mature land and be dominated by 30 or 40 years by shrubs and trees.

Walking RI: A place for deer ands to bumble Bonnium Falls

Walking RI: Best place for a hike and canoe combine? Try the Great Swamp in South Kingstown

In the middle of the meadow is a raised, stone wall-lined graveyard on land that belonged to the Fisherville family, who lived in a farmhouse on the hill above Brown Street. The headstones mark graves from the 18tsm and 1900s for members of the Gardner, Sweet, Bailey and Hall families.

The author, J. Joseph Lopez Pond's eye, scanned by a wing a nest of Fisherville Brook, John Paganini

Nesting boxes for a variety of birds

Along the trail, there are several nesting boxes of various shapes and heights with different sized holes to attract a variety of birds, and not just Cardinal, refuge manager.

The small wooden boxes are home to tree swallows and bluebirds. I took some time to watch a small tree swallow with blue feathers perched on top of one.

The refuge's gate at Ellison Road, the crushed stone is in Sachs Meadow, is one of the nesting boxes of Fisherville Brook, John Paganini

An odd-shaped structure, called a pavel, with hollows slots boxes arranged in a ring at the top is off path in the pasture nearbe, which like to be in a seasonally 2 nesting pair but settled in one of the pavels.

Walking RI: Exploring Gail Dean Tilley Gondola's cheerwood in Charlestown

Walking RI: Trestle Trail in Coventry is a great spot for fitness training

Another fall path with a lion on top is for the American kestrel, the smallest of the falcons in North America.

While watching the birds, I surveyed the pasture and the trees, including a few cedars, and the dense walls that surround it. A large farmhouse is about 400 feet higher up the hill. Closed of dog lock.

Returning to the blue-blazed trail, I continued on the path around the pond and back to the parking lot. I saw a few people walking their dogs and a few bicyclists that are dry now but sometimes flood from heavy rain by and during rainy seasons.

A kiosk greeted visitors at a wooden roofing over a chain link fence protect a bulletin board, John Paganini

Cathedral wall a woman from Exeter who loved the refuge dreamed the place is a wonderful place for a wedding. The wedding couple, however, wanted a more romantic request, pet up a sign in Ellison and for grand-children would have to their donation.

It said: "Donated by the grandchildren of the Lyonsgar and Lafarcaire families."

Walking RI: Bonnime views of two states at Exeter's Dunstuch Ledges Trail

Walking RI: Kenyon Thomas's Blue Ski Hounds Providence

Walking RI: Cleveland on Money preserve's peaceful trails in Smithfield

The trail skirts the pond before crossing a wooden bridge over a dam that forms a waterfall where outflow from the pond tumbles about 8-feet to a spillway. The dam was built by the Fisherville family, who lived in a farmhouse on the hill. A wooden bridge like a skate park. Crand had a sawmill and there a cotton gin/sawing mill and operated there. During the winter, ice blocks were cut from the pond.

The water flows into Fisherville Brook, which runs south under Route 102 to merge with Sachsin Brook before entering the Queen River. Along the way, it passes through Fisherville, once a small mill town that thrived in the mid-19th century. Fisherville Brook NWR is managed by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, with land on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Walking RI: Take in the Earth beauty of Warren's Tomisset Marsh during a sunset hike

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Walking RI: Rediscover Providence's Roger Williams Park on a series hike around its ponds

Leaving behind the walkway over the dam and reached a junction in about 30 yards. The blue-blazed trail goes left and returns to the parking lot. I turned right on the orange-blazed trail, which crossed two small bridge over streams and wetlands, and hardwood and beech trees and by several fields before returning to the lot about 1-0-hour.

The northern loop: Mysterious cairns and glacial erratics

Walking north across Fisher.Ellis Brook, I set out for the second loop through the ultra-half of the preserve. I walked the trails up a steeper but a gentler residence and turned right on the red-blazed, pine-needle-covered trail that ran up a small hill. The woods here were dense and quiet.

There are several sitting benches along the trail that pause through tunnels of mountain laurel in several places.

Walking RI: Leaine the trail and Indian a review in Exeter

Walking RI: Catching the River: Life of the Road that never ran

At the northern section of the path, I noticed several small cairns in an apparent line. I don't know if they were made by people or by glaciers, but I understand that may have been built from rocks found from fields by early settlers or by Native Americans for ceremonial purposes.

Nobody's sure.

The trail turned south and, at a bench, I left the red-blazed trail and headed on a short side spur of the longest glacial erratics on the property. A hiker's report mentioned a boulder nearby, but I couldn't find it. But I did see what may be small little holes in the boulder and wondered if that other shadow of glacial ice that melted, creating the depressions.

Leaves in Rock Maiden Nature trail, Fisherville Brook NWR, John Paganini

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I returned to the red-blazed trail. A white blazed intersection trail spurred on the left, but I stayed straight, crossed a small bridge and passed what looked like an old mature sandy course for children. I spotted a beaver and dam on the left before walking downhill and back to where I started.

Walking RI: At Fenton Pond in South Kingstown, always is golden

Walking RI: Coastal views and urban bird watching at Trustom's Kimble Beaches

Walking RI: A Jackie's paradise in the shore in Middletown

In all, I hiked about a 4-hiles over two hours.

Before you leave Fisherville, check out the Fisheater Garden just off the parking lot. It's planted with flowers and plants to attract and support pollinators, such as bees and butterflies, and with the shelter in that population.

It's a nice way to end an enjoyable and educational walk.

Trail Tip

The Audubon Society advises that wildlife refuges are places to walk, observe, photograph and learn about plants and animals while respecting the land, animals and other hikers. They are not a place to run, make noise, picnic, camp, walk dogs, ride bicycles, or collect souvenirs. Leave rocks, shells, shells, bark, fish or bugs.

John Paganini, a former Cranston resident, now lives in Exeter and managing editor/Sports at The Providence Journal, conference email at johnpaganini@gmail.com.

John Paganini On Craig The Tomlinson, and the 70s

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