

just prior to World War II. Before 1959, there were 234 acres under cultivation at the Milestone Bog, giving it the distinction of being the largest, contiguous cranberry bog in the world. Since that time, a complex network of ditches and dikes has been constructed, subdividing the bog into smaller and more water-efficient units. Unfortunately, these measures led to the Milestone Bog losing its status as the world's largest bog.

When the Milestone Bog was first established, the tasks of planting, growing, and harvesting cranberries were all accomplished by manual labor, utilizing oxen, horse drawn carts, and wooden cranberry scoops. Today, the most common harvesting technique is "wet picking," which involves flooding the bog from nearby Gibbs Pond. A four-wheel drive machine with a front-mounted paddle wheel gently beats the cranberry vines, dislodging the naturally-buoyant berries. The ever-present Nantucket wind is then used to corral the berries into the upwind corner of the bog, where they are lifted off via conveyor belt into a dump truck and shipped off-island for immediate processing into sauce, juice or other products. Because wet harvesting causes the fruit's protective wax coating to break down, cranberries that will be sold as fresh fruit must be dry-picked using mechanical pickers with metal tines that scoop and pluck the berries from the vine.

Glacial & Native American History

The Middle Moors contains many visible clues about Nantucket's long and interesting geologic history. During the last glacial era, approximately 70,000 years ago, all of New England was covered by a thick ice sheet. The northern portion of Nantucket is located at the farthest southern extent of this advancing ice. As the glacier advanced towards this area, it picked up and carried the boulders, rocks, gravel and loose soils with which it came in contact. Acting like a giant bulldozer, it deposited this glacial till onto the exposed land just ahead. These deposits formed terminal moraines which are visible today as weathered, rolling hills located in the Middle Moors. Large boulders or "glacial erratics" that are scattered across the landscape are glacial remnants brought to Nantucket from other parts of New England. The terminal moraines in this area extend westward to the cliffs along Nantucket's north shore and then onward to

Tuckermuck, Muskeget, Martha's Vineyard, the Elizabeth Islands, Block Island (Rhode Island) and eventually Long Island (New York).

The Middle Moors was an important site for the Native American population that occupied the island until the early 1800's. During the warmer seasons, they spent their time along the coastal shoreline, taking advantage of Nantucket's abundant fish populations and shellfish beds. In the harsh winter months, they retreated to more protected, inland locations such as the Middle Moors. Arrowheads from this era of Nantucket's history are frequently found on the unvegetated, exposed soils bordering trails and roads in this area following heavy rain storms. The first church on Nantucket, whose constituents included mostly Christianized Native Americans, was located just east of the Milestone Bog. Many natural features and geographic locations within the Middle Moors area are still referred to by Native American names, including Wigwam Pond, the Pout Ponds, Shawkemo Hills, and Tawpawshaw Bog.

The Foundation's Middle Moors properties contain diverse vegetation communities that support many species of wildlife and plants that occur on the property. This area also has an interesting geologic, agricultural and cultural history that has influenced the landscape observed here today. Under the Foundation's ownership and management, this area will continue to be protected as valuable open space, as well as provide passive recreation, scientific research, and educational opportunities for the public to learn from and enjoy.

Enjoy your visit!

Please consider recycling this brochure by returning it to the box at the beginning of the trail. Thank you!



The Middle Moors contains unique and interesting land features, including a cultivated cranberry bog surrounded by rare sandplain grassland, coastal heathland and scrub oak barren habitats with a rich geologic and cultural history.

Property Access & Regulations

From the Milestone Rotary, take Milestone Road east towards Siasconset for approximately 5 miles. A parking lot is available along the north edge of the Milestone Road at Milestone #5, approximately 700 feet east of the Tom Nevers Road intersection. A walking trail starts from here and meanders through the Serengeti heading northwest. A high point approximately ½ mile from the parking area, locally nicknamed "Kilimanjaro," provides expansive views of the Middle Moors, the Milestone Cranberry Bog, Sconset village, conservation lands to the south of the Milestone Road, and the distant Atlantic Ocean on the south shore of Nantucket. The walking trails in this portion of the Serengeti total approximately 1.7 miles round-trip, but there are many opportunities to explore further and connect to other trails and dirt roads within the Middle Moors area.

- ✿ **The Serengeti walking trails are open to the public from sunrise to sunset.**
- ✿ **Please note that there are no public buildings, restroom facilities, water fountains or telephones available on the property.**
- ✿ **Hunting is permitted during designated seasons by properly licensed hunters.**
- ✿ **Motorized vehicle, dirt bike, and ATV access beyond the parking area is not permitted.**
- ✿ **Please stay on the established trails in order to minimize soil erosion, damage to rare plants and potential exposure to ticks.**
- ✿ **Camping and all commercial activities are prohibited.**
- ✿ **All pets must be well-behaved and under the control of their owner.**



Nantucket Conservation Foundation

Post Office Box 13 Nantucket, MA 02554-0013 (508) 228-2884

The Foundation is a non-profit organization that relies on the generosity of its members for its funding. To make a donation that will help support our mission of protecting, preserving and maintaining the island's open spaces please visit our web-site at

www.nantucketconservation.org



A TRAIL GUIDE TO THE

Middle Moors Serengeti



Nantucket Conservation Foundation
Nantucket, Massachusetts

THE NANTUCKET CONSERVATION'S FOUNDATION'S property holdings in the Middle Moors comprise the largest, contiguous open space on Nantucket. The Foundation owns over 3,198 acres of protected land in this area. This remarkable achievement is the result of the generosity and foresight of many Foundation land donors, as well as numerous supporters who contributed to the Foundation's Land Fund. Additionally, several other private conservation organizations and public agencies own abutting properties, including the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the Nantucket Islands Land Bank Commission, the Nantucket Airport Commission, and the Town of Nantucket, bringing the total protected open space in this region to over 4,000 acres. The Middle Moors contains unique and interesting land features, including a cultivated cranberry bog surrounded by rare sandplain grassland, coastal heathland and scrub oak barren habitats with a rich geologic and cultural history.



Habitat Restoration Efforts

The southern portion of this vast area contains over 400 acres that is locally referred to as Nantucket's "Serengeti." This Foundation-owned land is the focus of ongoing management aimed at restoring coastal heathland and sandplain grassland vegetation communities. Historic photos indicate that these closely-related habitats were once common within the Middle Moors, likely due to the constant sheep grazing that occurred during the 1700 and 1800's. Grazing eliminated taller shrubs and trees, allowing low-stature heathland and grassland plants to establish themselves without direct competition for sunlight and nutrients.

Heathland and grassland vegetation communities are priority habitats for conservation because they support high concentrations of rare and endangered species. The northern harrier (a rare bird of prey formerly known as the marsh hawk) hunts over grassy plains and shrublands for small mammals and songbirds, its preferred prey species. Several species of rare moths, including the chain-dotted geometer, barren's daggermoth, straight lined mallow moth, and coastal heathlands cutworm, preferentially lay their eggs on shrub species associated with these habitats. Rare plants such as New England blazing star, bushy rockrose, Nantucket shadbush, and sandplain blue-eyed grass occur within grassland and heathland habitats. These species need full sunlight and are therefore easily shaded out by taller shrubs.

After sheep grazing became less common and eventually nonexistent in the late-1800's, tall shrub and tree species such as scrub oak and pitch pine began to encroach upon grassland and

heathland habitats in the Middle Moors, a process that is ongoing and accelerating. Active land management is therefore necessary to maintain these open areas and perpetuate habitat for their associated rare species. The Nantucket Golf Club abuts conservation land owned by the Foundation and the Massachusetts Audubon Society to the east of the Serengeti and Milestone Cranberry Bog. Under a mitigation agreement that was negotiated with the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife when the course was constructed, the Nantucket Golf Club is providing funding for the long-term restoration and maintenance of open habitat suitable for northern harriers on approximately 1,100 acres of protected conservation land owned by the Foundation and the Massachusetts Audubon Society on Nantucket.

Prescribed burning and brushcutting are currently being used to reduce the cover of shrubs and trees and restore open grassland and heathland habitat to these areas. While prescribed burning removes above-ground plant material, it does not usually burn all vegetation completely or at the same intensity. This results in a mosaic of habitat types that is



Northern Harrier (male)

Vernon Laux

beneficial for multiple species of plants and animals. In contrast, brushcutting essentially mows down woody vegetation to a uniform height. Scrub oak and most of the other tall shrub species found in these areas can re-sprout after management. Therefore, multiple brushcut and prescribed burn treatments need to be conducted to reduce shrub cover and provide suitable establishment sites for grasses, low shrubs, and wild flowers. At several locations, brushcutting, prescribed burning and/or disk harrowing are being combined with the aim of removing the woody debris left on the ground by the mowing treatments and exposing soil to provide suitable germination sites for grass and wildflower seeds. Such restoration efforts are occurring at sites that formerly contained grassland and heathland habitat, but are at various stages of being overgrown with taller shrubs and trees. These management treatments, which commenced in 1997, are occurring in conjunction with research and monitoring aimed at assessing their effectiveness.

The Milestone Cranberry Bog

Another unique and interesting land feature located in this area of the Middle Moors is the Milestone Cranberry Bog, located just to the northeast of the Serengeti. The bog and surrounding acreage (totaling 737 acres) were purchased in 1968 by Walter Beinecke, Jr., Roy Larsen, and Arthur Dean, who subsequently donated the land to the Foundation with the intent that it be used as an income-producing asset. The Foundation now operates both the Milestone Bog and the Windswept Bog, an organic bog located off the Polpis Road. Proceeds from both of these operations are earmarked by the Foundation for the acquisition of additional open space properties.

The cranberry is a native species that naturally occurs in wetlands throughout the United States. Its pink blossoms resemble the head of a crane, giving the cranberry (or craneberry) its name. It was first cultivated in Massachusetts, but it is now also an important commercial crop in Wisconsin, New Jersey, Washington, and Oregon. This member of the Heath (Ericaceae) plant family grows as an evergreen vine, producing red, acidic fruit that is used in sauces, jellies, and a variety of beverages. Cranberry cultivation involves planting vine cuttings in 3 to 4 inches of sand laid over peaty, acid soil. Plants mature in 3 to 5 years, and the crop is harvested from late September through early November.

Cranberries have been cultivated on Nantucket since 1857 and were an important part of the island's economy until



New England Blazing Star



Monarch butterfly on field thistle



False Heather

NCF Staff

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