



GREENWICH LAND TRUST

Notes from the Field: Westfall Preserve

In 1989, Elinor Patterson Baker donated 51 acres of open space to Greenwich Land Trust, known as the Westfall Preserve, permanently establishing a large greenway with the town's neighboring 300-acre Babcock Preserve.



This beautiful Preserve is open to the public during daylight hours for hiking, walking, cross-country skiing, nature study, and horseback riding on designated trails.

Originally, the site was cleared for agriculture during the eighteenth century. The historic stone walls that meander through the Preserve were constructed to separate a patchwork of pasture lands from orchards and plowed fields. As agriculture declined in the mid-nineteenth century, the land reverted back to forest with an understory of shrubs and wildflowers.

Today, the open space is now home to an extensive network of pathways, many of them based on wild animal trails, bordered by a wide variety of vegetation including ferns, mountain laurel, and many different types of oak.

Deer, coyotes, cottontail rabbits, goldfinches, wood frogs, salamanders, and garter snakes can be found in the preserve, along with



several endangered or locally rare species including river otter, hooded warblers, pink lady's slipper and great horned owls.

The Westfall Preserve extends across areas of steep slopes with rock formations as well as some low-lying wetlands and streams. These wetlands, including a red maple swamp, are valuable spaces for migrating animals to feed and rest during their journeys due to earlier spring thawing.

The periodic flooding of areas such as these is important for maintaining a healthy ecosystem in all areas of the Preserve, and creates a unique and beneficial habitat for the

amphibians and reptiles living there. The diverse collection of native plants at the Westfall Preserve have served as founding populations for GLT's Seed-to-Seed Initiative, a project that aims to restore locally adapted plants to the Greenwich landscape.

The Land Trust's current stewardship of the Westfall Preserve mostly consists of improving existing trails. During the summer, the GLT Youth Corps will focus on removing invasive species throughout the site.

