

Hendrick Van Haelewyn donated the northern part of the Preserve (27.5 acres) to the Trust in 1988 in memory of his mother, Isabel Yardley Marble who initially acquired the property in 1920. Mr. Van Haelewyn, like his mother, wanted to provide open space lands for the general public to enjoy. The three Richards children gave the southern portion of the Preserve (17 acres) to the Trust in 1993 in memory of their mother, Mariana Richards. Although two separate acquisitions, the Land Trust treats both parcels as part of one dynamic interacting landscape.

The diverse terrain ranges from flat flood plains and swamps to moderate to steep slopes, cliffs and rocky crests. Rock formations include complex schists and fine-grained gneisses. Huckleberry Hills Brook, a prominent feature of the Preserve, flows from the north. The Brook appears to run continuously over the year. Fed by a drainage system which includes Kent Pond and Henderson Pond, Huckleberry Hills Brook ultimately drains into Rock Lake and Norwalk Reservoir. Approximately 75 percent of the land is covered by rich second-growth mixed hardwood forest. Much of the remaining wetlands is open swamp.

Throughout the Preserve a high degree of diversity in vegetation exists. Primarily red oak, white oak, black oak, tulip tree, yellow birch, black birch, beech, shagbark hickory, white ash, and sugar maple make up the forested sections. A very common understory shrub is maple-leaved viburnum and in some locations mountain laurel. Several species of ferns grow almost everywhere. The deeper reaches of swamp contain many specimens of black ash and red maple along with several shrub species including sweet pepperbush, red alder, winterberry, spicebush and high bush blueberry. Skunk cabbage, swamp saxifrage, water starwort, cinnamon fern and tearthumb are also very characteristic.

A major trailhead begins at the Abbott Lane entrance. A short way beyond the stone fence, a white blazed trail extends to the left or right in a circular loop.

the white trail runs through the northern part of the Preserve. This trail took its name after the late V.P. Wystrach. Wystrach, a trustee, played a key role in the original negotiations for the Van Haelewyn property. To the left, this trail descends through former pasture land (some 75 years ago), now covered by young stands of hardwoods. Reaching the bottom of the hill, a side trail (red blazes) crosses Huckleberry Hills Brook via a small foot bridge which leads to a small promontory overlooking a typical red maple swamp. Here a dedication plaque honoring Isabel Yardley Marble and Hendrick Van Haelewyn is located on a rock outcrop nearby. The plaque is offset by many large oaks, hickories and beech. On return to the footbridge one may pick up the white blazed trail again as it extends south to the flood plain of the brook. Eventually, the trail begins to climb to a very large rock outcrop providing a grand view of the deepest and most open part of the Preserve wetlands. From this point the trail goes uphill a bit more, entering dense thickets of mountain laurel (flowering most spectacularly in June) and eventually returns to the original starting point and the Abbott Lane entrance.

A blue blazed trail curves around the base of the large rock lookout and into the southern part of the Preserve reaching a small stream crossing over Huckleberry Hills Brook. Extending south along the eastern side of the brook this trail eventually, after recrossing to the west bank, reaches Cheese Spring Road at the southern end of the Preserve. Return blue blazed loops allow visitors to explore the prominent wooded knolls, characteristic of this part of the Preserve.

**Directions:** From Wilton Center go west on Ridgefield Road 2.3 miles to DeForest Road. Turn on DeForest Road and go 0.7 miles to DeForest Lane. Turn left on DeForest Lane and go 0.1 miles to Forest Lane. Turn left on Forest Lane and turn right on Abbott Lane. Continue to the cul-de-sac. Parking is allowed in this area and the trail access is on the east side of the cul-de-sac.

**Acreage:** ±44.5

**Parking:** Abbott Lane Entrance at cul-de-sac  
Old Driftway, limited

**Access:** Abbott Lane Entrance; and off Cheese Spring Road Entrance; from the Sackett Preserve

**Trails:** ±2 mile network

**Ownership:** Wilton Land Conservation Trust

