

## Conservation Lands: Training Field Triangle

They say that some of us humans begin to look a bit like our canine partners over time. I don't think I look much like a sheltie, but I do share a few of her behavioral traits. For one—we are both very food motivated. So when Bob stopped by with his dog, Bertha, (I do see a bit of a physical resemblance there, incidentally) and suggested we take a picnic lunch and walk the Training Field Triangle property, my pup and I were in his truck in a flash.

This 38-acre parcel, bounded by Old Queen Anne, Training Field, and Old Comers Roads, was acquired by the Town of Chatham for conservation and recreational purposes 1972. The “triangle” contains one of Chatham's five state-certified vernal pools and a smaller kettle hole wetland. Since purchase, a trail has been created around the periphery of the property and has been maintained and improved over the years with the help of local Boy Scout troop and AmeriCorps volunteers under the oversight of the Conservation Commission. But for the most part, the property has been left for Mother Nature to nurture and care for; and that's part of its beauty.

As we pulled into the parking area on Old Comers Road, the dogs were frantic in expectation of a walk in the woods. They flew out of the truck, as Bob asked if I'd been here before. I hadn't, so he proceeded to tell me a little about it as we walked. “My favorite time here is the spring. There's a large vernal pool just over there, and the peepers make quite a chorus for days on end. The forest smells of fresh earth and the trailing arbutus - a wildflower that clings to the forest floor with waxy pink and white flowers. And because the parcel is relatively large, it provides habitat for a number of native animal and plant species. Deer traverse the property as they move between Lovers lake and Goose Pond, songbirds love it here, and I've heard that a redtail hawk makes its nest just on the other side of that knoll.”

As fallen leaves crunched beneath our feet, he continued, “in late summer, down around the wetlands, the Clethra is thick with fragrant white flowers and I've seen a spotted turtle there - kind of difficult to get down there because of the steep terrain - and the ticks!, so trust me, it's a special spot. But it's a great place to walk in the fall too. Fall colors are beautiful and make this place look quite different from what it's like in the spring. The air is crisp, scent of pine, and the woods are busy with squirrels stocking up for the winter to come.”

Although the trail is only about a mile long, traffic on the surrounding roads seemed far away. “Being a perimeter trail, it's nice to know we won't get lost,” noted Bob. “And we best stick to the trail since poison ivy abounds; although I have to admit, poison ivy is surely beautiful this time of year in crimson red and orange!” “And to boot, it's a native plant that produces white fruit that birds love, which attributes to its spread around the property, I would guess,” I added.

We walked on enjoying the quiet, then I took the opportunity to give Bob some history. “This was one of the first parcels purchased by the town for conservation purposes. Can you believe all this acreage for 195,000? When the town was purchasing it, some folks referred to it as the ‘Golden Triangle’. The term was meant in a derogatory way because those folks thought it was too much money - can you imagine? Now some of us like the term because it's a golden nugget of land, preserved forever.”

We came upon the small pox cemetery on the north side of the property--the area is bounded by a steel pipe fence. An interesting find on a conservation property. A few head stones from the mid-1700's remain. Conservation properties all have a story to tell. Bob said he heard that this land was used in revolutionary times as a training field for the troops, but hadn't found any written documentation.

The walk had taken us about 40 minutes at our leisurely pace. As we approached the trail end, Bob asked, "So what'd you think?"

"Well, I think this is a great place for walking, birdwatching, and ruminating. But what about PICNICKING? Bob, where's lunch?"

His ears drooped (just like Bertha's!) as he mumbled "Oh, right, how could I forget! Left it in the truck. Be right back." He and Bertha jogged up the trail. I found suitable log and sat down, wondering what treats Bob would bring us. As I checked myself and the dog for ticks, I noticed that we had the same color eyes.

For more information on Town conservation lands and to read the rules that govern them, go to [http://www.chatham-ma.gov/public\\_documents/chathamMA\\_conservation/ConservationRules](http://www.chatham-ma.gov/public_documents/chathamMA_conservation/ConservationRules)

This is the first of several articles pertaining to Town of Chatham Conservation properties and is provided to you by the Chatham Conservation Commission.