

The Nature
Conservancy



Rhode Island

Proposal of Website Material
Rhode Island Nature Conservancy

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Introduction

Tim Mooney, the Marketing and Communications Manager for the Rhode Island Nature Conservancy, visited our Advanced Writing for the Sciences class on February 26th, 2018. During this visit, he introduced a potential project, in which a group of students would generate a set of deliverables for the RI Nature Conservancy to be used on their newly renovated website. After his visit, we (Ava Mastrostefano, Ethan Jordan, Jacob Fies, and Zachary Wagner) came together as a group and began the process of figuring out what information we wanted to generate for the Conservancy and in what form we wanted it to take.

Objective

The goals of this project are to develop user friendly yet educational website material for four of the Nature Conservancy's Preserves. The four nature preserves visited were: Whitehead Nature Preserve, Aust Family Preserve at Lime Rock, Francis C. Carter Memorial Preserve, and the Pocasset Ridge Preserve. By providing the Nature Conservancy with updated photos, feedback and perspectives on these sites, we will equip the Nature Conservancy to stimulate public interest in exploring the ecological appeal of these unique sites in Rhode Island.

Approach

We approached this project keeping in mind the Nature Conservancy's mission of promoting the preservation and exploration of nature reserves throughout the United States and the world. In order to raise awareness and attract visitors to these sites, we visited four sites to document the types of experiences they each uniquely offer. With photos and personal experience, we have developed web content that is attractive to a diverse audience including those interested in ecological knowledge and the general hiker. Our hope is that this material will help bring more visitors to these sites and inspire people to be interested in environmental protection.

Eventually, after going through the process of figuring out what was possible and practical for us to do, we landed on generating site descriptions for four preserves located near the school. We then decided who would visit which preserve, with Ethan visiting Pocasset, Zach visiting Whitehead, Jacob visiting Carter, and Ava visiting the Aust Family Preserve at Lime Rock. Each approached visiting their site slightly

differently, but with the general focus on walking some trails, gathering information, and taking photos.

For each site we have provided a site description for the Rhode Island Nature Conservancy website. These descriptions were formatted based on the Washington Nature Conservancy website material, as the Rhode Island website will soon be remodelled in a similar fashion. We have also provided blog posts for each site, from which personal experiences can be referenced in a review-type fashion.

Analysis of Research and Interview

When considering what format our project should take, we consulted the Washington State Nature Conservancy website, as directed by Tim Mooney. This site is going to be the basis by which the new Rhode Island website will be built. We additionally did some research regarding the setup of the Washington Website, specifically the “Yellow Island” page, to gain some deeper insight into how our project should be formatted. When analyzing the site, the first thing we noticed was how concise and packed with information each sentence was. They used each and every sentence at their disposal and never settled for filler sentences. Additionally, we began to identify techniques they used while writing, as outlined by Montgomery in Chapter 19 of “The Chicago Guide to Communicating Science”. The two main techniques used were a strong introduction sentence or paragraph, and sticking with simple language. These two techniques helped to introduce the Preserve to the public, and keep them interested with simple, jargon free, writing. With this in mind we formatted our deliverables to match this style so that it would be as close to the final product as possible. Tim additionally confirmed our choices by stating that the use of simple language is the best approach, as it would keep from boring the reader. Tim also gave us the idea of writing our descriptions so that the sites would seem appealing to people of all physical ability, as well as interest level. He shared with us that the Nature Conservancy wants all people to be able to enjoy the preserves, not just those with a background in hiking and physical activities.

Deliverables

Site descriptions were written with research done during our preserve visits, as well as with information from the original Rhode Island Nature Conservancy website. With these two resources, we hoped to formulate site descriptions that were simultaneously interesting to read, jargon free, and enticed people to visit a preserve. The structure of the descriptions was modeled off of the Washington Nature Conservancy's sites, with an emphasis on the header, captivating introduction, and two to three detailed paragraphs. Additionally, our project went through a few different variations in accordance with reviews from both peers as well as from our professor. These reviews helped to focus the group in, and ensure that all of the deliverables would match style wise, and appear as one cohesive project.

Blog Posts were written from the point of view of each person who visited the individual sites, covering their experiences and thoughts as they progressed. Additionally, the posts cover how the individual documented their experience, and how what they observed will build into the description of the site.

Photographs taken on site are were used to provide visual documentation of our findings, as well as produce model headers for the sites. The pictures were often attractive features of the preserve that could be a draw for other hikers. This included living and non-living aspects of the preserves. Examples of these photographs can be found in the final pages of the document.

Site Description

An easily accessed boardwalk trail meandering over wetlands and through a lush wood, tucked behind a suburban park.

The Whitehead Nature preserve is 110 acres of pristine forested wetland nestled within Little Compton, Rhode Island, surrounding Bumblebee pond. The rare endemic plant life and variation of habitat supports over 60 species of birds in the spring and a myriad of other wildlife year-round. Wildflowers bloom around Bumblebee pond, attracting a wide variety of pollinators can be seen busily moving from plant to plant.

The Dunderly Brook Trail, entrance located within Little Compton's Veteran's Field Park, is a boardwalk trail winding through a wetland forested with black locust trees, opening to a pond surrounded by a flowering meadow. Deer, raccoons, and coyotes can be seen moving between the trees and shallow pools. The 3,000 feet of boardwalk followed by a half mile of grassy path by Bumblebee pond is perfect for those looking for a leisurely hike through the woods. Additionally, the Dunderly Brook Trail is wheelchair accessible, and has many benches that allow the hiker to sit back and relax amongst the trees and birdsong.

Blog Post

<https://zacharydwagner.weebly.com/minor-assignments/whitehead-nature-preserve>

The Whitehead Preserve in Little Compton, Rhode Island, was a beautiful, well maintained trail that wonderfully meandered through a forested wetland. The most difficult part of hiking the trail was finding it, as the Dunderly Brook Trail is located behind a tennis court in Veteran's Field Park. Walking up to the path, the boardwalk began right at the tree line, and offered a smooth transition from the cement in the park. The boardwalk was impressively built and maintained, with solid wood and a lip around the edges to prevent people with wheelchairs or strollers from falling off the side. In areas where the boardwalk traveled over water, this wooden lip became a chest-high wire fence, with a wood railing to support the hiker. Along the trail were numerous benches, where one could sit back and relax amongst the birdsong and frogs. A great surprise was a branch in the path that went over a pond, ending in a small, gazebo-like landing where one could sit for a while.

Blanche's Path, which began where Dunderly Brook Trail ended, is a grass path circling Bumblebee Pond. Because of the recent rain, and it being on a wetland, it was muddy in some areas, with hiking boots greatly recommended. Here there were many paired-off ducks swimming amongst the reeds, and if I stepped too close to the pond's edge, little fish would scatter and disturb the surface. The trees around the pond had begun to bud but were very early in the process. Most of the other plant life was still dormant, but I imagine that that field would bloom beautifully with wildflowers.

I was unfortunately not able to walk Hope's path, as the ground was far too muddy, as it had rained the day before. The path is well known for the flowers that grow along it, so I would like to visit again when I can see that. The mud, however, allowed me to see many animal tracks, such as raccoon, and fur that was most likely from a coyote.

Overall, even though I did not see much wildlife, the evidence for its presence and the high quality of the walk itself is enough for me to want to go back. The well-maintained boardwalk makes travel through such an environment possible for all, and the well-covered environment is aesthetically pleasing. For such a short hike, it offers plenty to see in terms of flora, fauna, and environmental variety, with the bonus of being walkable by anyone and everyone.

Site Description

Tucked away in the rural-suburbs of Lincoln, Rhode Island lies a quick escape into a natural New England landscape.

Just 15 minutes from Providence, the Aust Family Reserve offers a set of marked trails overlooking the scenic Manton Pond. Although it is located right off of Route 146, the Aust Family Preserve will make you feel like you are far away from the hustle and bustle of the city. It is the ideal location for a short and sweet nature walk ranging from 1-3 miles.

The Aust Family Reserve offers nature walks along what was historically the Providence-Woonsocket Trolley Line. Along with the reserves rich history, it offers scenic pond views and towering trees, some tagged with the intricate design of Turkey tail fungus. The reserve is also an ideal location for bird watchers, as the sounds and sights of woodpeckers and black-and-white warblers surround that path's visitors. A beautiful picnic area overlooks the pond, making the Aust Family Reserve an ideal location for both avid nature enthusiasts, bird watchers, or a lunch-break retreat into the scenic woods of New England.

Blog Post

<https://avamastrostefano.weebly.com/blog/nature-convervancy-blog-post>

On one of the first nice days of the spring, I unfortunately had only a one hour gap between work at the Lincoln Animal Hospital and class at Roger Williams University. Thankfully, I had the awesome opportunity to visit the Aust Family Reserve during my break to finally appreciate the nature found in Rhode Island and spend some time outdoors. The preserve is conveniently located in Lincoln, Rhode Island, only a short drive out of Providence and a few minutes from my work in Lincoln. It was easy to find, and although there were only a few parking spots, it seemed like off-street parking was available.

The trails were marked with paint on trees and were pretty easy to follow. I followed the railway trail which connected to the pond loop. The railway trail was mostly covered by trees, and there were streams running along the trail. Although I visited before any real greenery returned for the season, there was still some interesting species to look at. Turkey tail fungus fanned out on tree bark, and the sound of woodpeckers filled the area. Towards the end of the railway trail, there was an abundance of bird species filling the area. The pond loop began to open up a little, with less congestion of trees, and eventually opened up to a patch of grass overlooking the pond. It was a great location to have a picnic or lay in the sun for a while. The pond was very serene, with a few ducks here and there. The trails made for a nice mix of forestry and open area.

The Aust Family Preserve was a perfect place for a quick escape into nature. It's location just outside providence and its fairly short trails made it an ideal place to spend my lunch break and enjoy the beautiful weather.

Site Description

With dense forests, lush grasslands, and miles of trails, the Carter Preserve is perfect for multi-mile hikes lasting the day, or short 20-minute strolls through woods.

With over 840 Acres of land and 9 distinct trails, the Carter Preserve has a wide variety of ecosystems to explore. Whether it be grassland, shrubland, coniferous forest, or hardwood forest, the preserve has something for everyone. While exploring the 35 acres of grassland, you will be able to hear the songs of various bird species, from the large Osprey to the tiny Grasshopper Sparrow. Venturing deeper into the forest, Black Birch and White Oak trees start to pop up on either side with various species of squirrels calling these trees home. For the animal lovers, a particular treat to see could include: White-tailed Deer, Wild Turkey, and even some Red-Tailed Hawks.

Enter from the King's Factory Road entrance for a walk along the Pawtucket River, with river access near the entrance. Use the entrance off Old Mill Road for quick access the grasslands or visit the old stone chimney off the Narragansett Loop. Finally, you could choose to park off Route 112 and visit the vernal pool right off the entrance, or a quicker walk up to the ice pond and historic dam. No matter what experiencing you are looking for, the Carter Preserve has something for everyone, and is a must visit for southern Rhode Island.

Blog Post

<https://jacobfies.weebly.com/blog-posts/carter-preserve-personal-experience>

When I first visited the Francis C. Carter Memorial Preserve in Charlestown Rhode Island on April 1st 2018, I was taken about by the sheer size of it. Charlestown just so happens to be a town I am very familiar with, and somewhere I used to visit every weekend throughout my childhood. But somehow I had completely overlooked this massive, and beautiful, preserve not 20 minutes from my grandmothers house.

Without knowing exactly which entrance I had arrived at at the time, although there were more than enough posted signs telling me this, I simply grabbed a map went off on my way. The loop I ended up taking consisted of the Grassland Loop, Grassland Connector, and Narragansett Loop trails. This gave me a good look at all the different kinds of ecosystems present within the preserve, and really gave me a good idea at what it had to offer visitors. When I went to visit the preserve, New England was in the middle of experiencing four intense storms back to back. Even with that in mind, the trails were in pristine condition. Throughout my hike I think I only ran into two or three down trees, and even these were of no issue and could easily be stepped over.

The loop I walked took about 45 minutes to an hour to complete, at a nice stroll, and was not overly physically tasking. That being said, I am more than confident that no matter what activity level you are looking for, you can find it at the Carter Preserve. While the trails that delve deeper into the woods can become more of a "hiking" experience, those that run along the grasslands as well as run parallel to the Pawtucket River are much more level and easy for people of all ages. I personally feel that this ability to have various hiking experiences, is something that the Carter Preserve facilitates very well. With a multitude of different trails to explore with at least four different ecosystems, there is always something new to find or experience when going to the preserve.

Site Description

A series of well managed and winding trails that leads through 500 acres of lush woods and swampy marshlands.

Numerous fast running streams run through various portions of the park, one of which is crossed by a stone bridge which sits adjacent to the remains of an old saw mill. Numerous large rock formations of varying size lay scattered throughout the preserve and offer impressive elevated views of the forest. The largest rock formation in the preserve is high rock, a massive rocky ridge that rises as much as 50 feet above the surrounding ground and offers a panoramic tree top level view of the surrounding landscape and a very productive spot for bird watchers. A huge variety of plant life grows within the preserve and large variety of birds can be seen in year-round.

The primary entrance to the trail is located off of 2910 Main Road, Tiverton, RI, a sign at the intersection of Main Road and Nannaquaket Road in Tiverton. The preserve features over 3.5 miles of trails. The trails are all marked by colored tags on trees to allow hikers to gain reference of their location and there are detailed maps at the trailheads as well.

Blog Post

<http://www.ethantjordan.com/blog/pocasset-blog-post>

I visited the Pocasset Ridge preserve on March 28th, the preserve was massive to the point that I wouldn't have been able to cover the entire set of trails and see all that the preserve had to offer in a single day. It had been raining the few days previous so the ground throughout the preserve was very muddy. A large sign sat right next to the entrance to the first trail. The sign contained a full map of all the trails which were color coded as well as pointing out landmarks and points of interest. I took a picture of the map on my phone to use for future reference in the preserve. This is something that I recommend, even though the trees along each trail has markers to tell you which trail you're on there's some that aren't and even with the markers it can still be confusing. The trails were wide and well maintained apart from a small fallen tree or two that blocked a few trails, but they were small and low enough that one could easily vault over them.

After having gotten a good ways into the preserve, at which point the ground was become very marshy, I came across a large rocky ridge that gradually rose out of the forest floor and dropped off on the other side. The top of this rocky ridge offers an impressive view of the forest floor, but it is absolutely dwarfed by the comparatively gigantic and appropriately named high rock. High rock is a gigantic monolith of stone that rises as much as 50 feet from the ground in the southern portion of the preserve. The southern side of the rock is the shortest and has a low enough incline that it is easy to climb up and get to the top. The top of the rock offers a very impressive treetop view of the surrounding landscape.

During my time in the park I was only able cover a small portion of the many trails that sprawl throughout the preserve. I would highly recommend the preserve to anyone who is looking to spend some time in the outdoors. Most of the trails have a very level elevation and would be great for anyone who wants to go jogging in the preserve but there are areas with drastic shifts in elevation. While I didn't see much in terms of birds while there I would imagine that high rock would be an excellent perch for bird watchers to take advantage of. Ultimately I think the preserve is great for hiking and has a lot to offer in neat sightseeing locations.

Photo Glossary

Full photo library can be found at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/krcrh09csb02vjh/AAAKB9Ahgc0d-x5I0Uk7EXREa?dl=0>

Aust Family at Lime Rock:

Francis C. Carter Memorial Preserve:

Pocasset Ridge Preserve:

Whitehead Preserve: