

The Ashland Town Forest Committee and Sudbury Valley Trustees welcome you to this 575 acre nature reserve with over 6 miles of marked trails for the enjoyment of the public. All we ask is your considerate use of this fragile natural resource.

Location and Access

The Ashland Town Forest/Cowassock Woods are bounded in Ashland on the south by Winter Street, on the west by Oak Street, on the north by Oregon Road, and in Framingham on the north by Salem End Road, on the east by the United Church of Christ Conference Center on Badger Road. Marked trail access is between #886 and #890 Salem End Road in Framingham and from Oregon Road and Winter Street in Ashland.

Trails

Most trails are level or of moderate grade. Sturdy footwear is recommended. In the spring be prepared for wet trails.

You will find two types of trail markers. The Bay Circuit portion of the trail system is marked by white rectangles painted on trees (the AMC marking system). Colored markers identify the rest of the trail system.

Habitat

The Ashland Town Forest / Cowassock Woods area has a natural “wealth” of granite outcroppings, upland and lowland swamp, vernal pools, mixed hardwood forest, several open pit quarries, and a former high-bush blueberry farm now overgrown with saplings.

Flora include many ferns, jack-in-the-pulpit, Canada lily, blue flag iris, sweet pepperbush, spicebush, swamp azalea, black gum, highbush blueberry, virgin’s-bower, marsh marigold, lady’s-slipper, starflower, Indian cucumber root, Indian pipes, birds foot violets, shunleaf, pipsissewa, partridge berry, nodding trillium, and basswood. Two “stars” on the list are large whorled pogonia and American black currant, both considered relatively rare in Massachusetts.

An inventory of trees in the Town Forest included red and white oak on the drier sites, red maple on the moist sites, natural pine, oak, hickory, grey birch, and black birch stands, and planted white pine, hemlock, red pine, and white spruce.

These trees are the “air filters” for this corner of Ashland and

Framingham.

Fauna include deer, red fox, coyote, and a wide variety of birds including pileated wood-pecker, woodcock, wood thrush, red-tailed hawk, turkey vulture, and ruffed grouse. An inhabitant of special interest is the rare blue-spotted salamander.

History - Ashland Town Forest

The Ashland Town Forest was established in 1942 by the acquisition of 508 acres of land; 16 additional acres were transferred to the town at no cost. It was previously a hunt club associated with the riding clubs of the Salem End Road section of Framingham. When purchased, the forest was primarily hardwood, 20 to 25 years old. In the next 8 years, more than 40,000 trees were planted, most obtained at no cost from the State Nursery and planted by the Boy Scouts.

Miles of road, now the basis of an extensive trail system, were cleared to provide better access for fire equipment. Even so, in 1953 a fire lasting three days and four nights burned over 50 acres.

History - Cowassock Woods

In November 1984, Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) acquired 7.54 acres of land off Salem End Road. In April 1992, the abutting 43.5 acres were purchased (16.6 in Framingham and 26.9 in Ashland).

“Cowassock” means “the place of pines”, and the area was the spring and summer campground of the Magunkook Indians. Brooks, forest, and fields met in ideal combination for fishing, hunting, nut gathering, and planting. Indian habitation is documented by anecdote, artifacts, and deeds transferring property to the first Colonists. There is strong evidence of prehistoric habitation as well.

The Colonial history of the area is the stuff of legend. The families of the Towne children — Rebecca Nurse, Sara Clayes, Mary Esty, and Edmund Towne — fled the Salem witch hunt and established the Salem End settlement of Framingham in 1693. (Salem End Road follows an original seventeenth century Indian trail.) Legend has it that the now-collapsed caves in the Town Forest, just south of the water tower were the first refuge for the Towne families.

Ashland Open Space and Town Forest Committees

The aim of the Open Space and Town Forest Committees of Ashland is to preserve and develop areas within the town which will provide opportunities for its residents to enjoy the natural environment. The Open Space Committee strives to acquire parcels of land to save wildlife habitats and to create areas for nature appreciation. The Town Forest Committee’s primary purposes are the protection and preservation of the forest in its natural woodland state and the maintenance and further development of its extensive trail system. Both groups, with their many volunteers, work cooperatively to achieve these goals.

Sudbury Valley Trustees

Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) is a nonprofit private land trust corporation that owns more than 1,400 acres and has helped preserve several thousand more in the Concord, Assabet, and Sudbury River basins. Founded in 1953, SVT uses land protection, advocacy, public stewardship, and public education to preserve the landscape and its natural resources. SVT is supported by private grants and donations from over 2,600 members.

Link on the Bay Circuit

One of the trails through the Town Forest forms a portion of the evolving Bay Circuit trail. The goal of the Bay Circuit Alliance is to enhance public access to parklands and open space by creating a semi-circular 200-mile trail system around Boston from Plum Island on the North Shore to Kingston Bay on the South Shore. The 8-mile portion of the trail through Ashland was blazed in 1992 by the Ashland Open Space Committee. For more information contact the Bay Circuit Alliance (508) 470-1982.



Ashland Town Forest & Cowassock Woods Trail Map

Do:
Enjoy the land quietly during daylight hours;
Observe the plants, birds, animals;
Share this map with a friend.

Please:

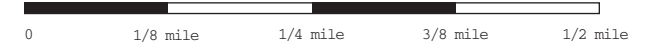
- No littering — carry out your trash;
- NO MOTOR VEHICLES of any kind (motor bikes, snowmobiles, ATVs, etc.);
- No hunting, trapping, cutting or removing of trees or plants;
- No fires or camping.

Please volunteer

Enthusiastic people in Ashland and Framingham regularly volunteer to clear trails and assist in the longer term duties of stewardship. These woods are intended for passive recreational and educational use only. While walking and skiing trails are the primary goal, suggestions for further light use are welcome. If you are interested in helping with any aspect of preserving this public resource, please contact:

- Ashland Town Forest Committee and Ashland Open Space Committee representatives at (508) 881-0101.
- Sudbury Valley Trustees (Cowassock Woods), P.O. Box 7, Wayland, MA 01778, (508) 443-6300.

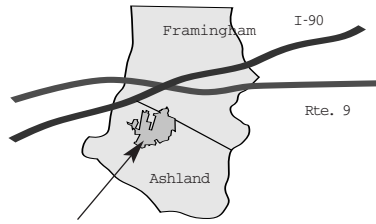
Ashland Town Forest/Cowassock Woods Trail Map



Produced as a cooperative project by:

- Ashland Town Forest Committee and Ashland Open Space Committee (508) 881-0101
- Sudbury Valley Trustees (508) 443-6300

Location



Ashland Town Forest & Cowassock Woods
(Sudbury Valley Trustees)

Legend

Trails	Total Miles
White	2.18 miles
Blue	.57 miles
Yellow	1.13 miles
Red	1.72 miles
Green	.51 miles

	Swamp
	Stream
	Unmarked Trails, Roads (please respect private land)
	Road
	Bridge
	Water Tower
	Boston Edison Power Line
	Parking

