HOMMOCKS CONSERVATION AREA

This unique 7.6 acre parcel is comprised of three very diverse ecosystems:

Woodland paths that weave through maple, oak, sassafras, corkscrew willow and slippery elm trees, with tangles of fruit-bearing grape, poison ivy and Virginia creeper vines, loved by wintering birds.

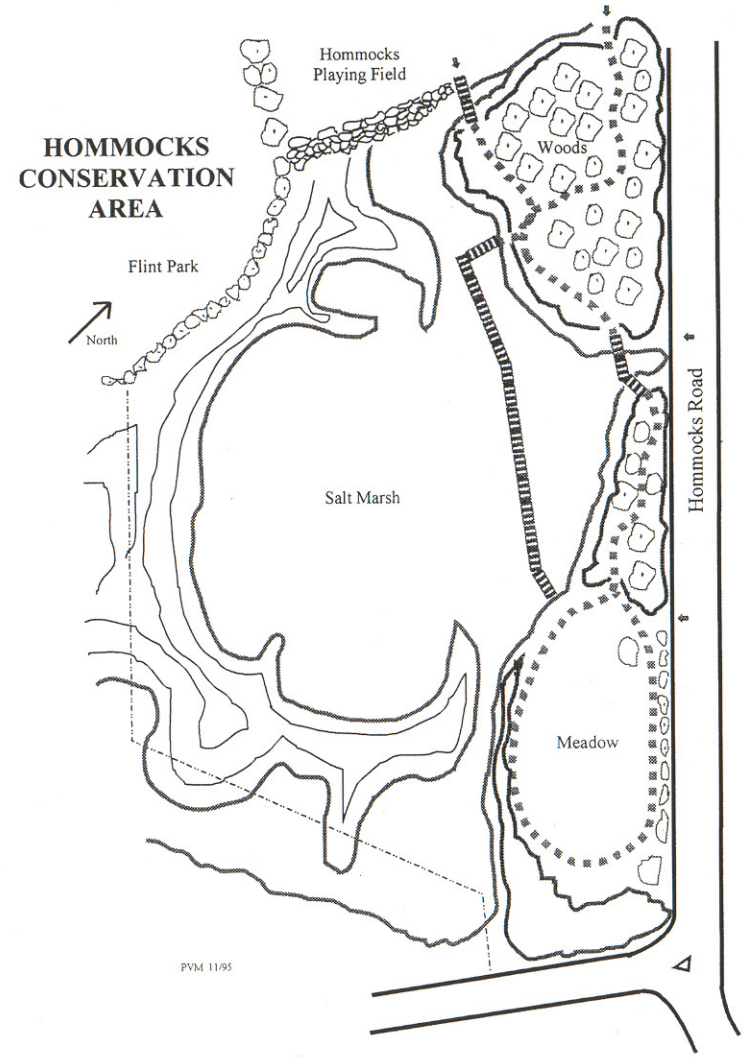
Meadow mowed for wildlife habitation - look closely for butterflies and insects searching for food from the many varieties of tall grasses and flowers, (milkweed, asters, clover, wild asparagus, mullein and St. Johnswort); also notice the variety of trees at its edges - crab apple, spruce, honey and black locust, shadbush, black cherry, white pine.

Salt marsh estuary has a raised boardwalk which winds over spartina and phragmites, home to marsh birds and animals. "Glasswort" or sea pickle and sea lavender border the marsh edges, where snowy and great egrets, green herons, bitterns, kingfishers and ducks often visit. Hawks, especially marlin and kestrels, may be seen in the area.

The marsh grasses are vital in the prevention of shore erosion by breaking the impact of wave action. The salt marsh, with its tremendous capacity to hold water (300,000 gallons are held in a one-foot deep acre of marsh), minimizes area flooding. Both factors protect surrounding property during a storm. The marsh is also a major nursery area, hiding snails, crabs and the nests of birds and other small animals dependent upon the decaying vegetation and microscopic animals for their growth.

History: On Sept. 23, 1661, John Richbell purchased three necks of land from the Indian Chiefs Wappaquewam and his brother Mahatahan for schillings, shirts, flint locks, hoes, hatchets and kettles. This purchase included the Hommocks, located in the middle or Great Neck, so named by sailors who sighted the grassy hillocks along the marshy shore. Early settlers harvested the salt grasses to feed livestock, thatch roofs and fill mattresses.

Ralph Burger, president of the Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company, owned the meadow land. Mrs. Burger, an ardent conservationist, promoted this open space for study and enjoyment by all, and Mr. Burger deeded 3.59 acres of meadow, upland and marsh to the Town's acres to expand the preserve to its present size. This marsh, known as Dirty Swamp in early years, extended beyond the Boston Post Road but now houses the Hommocks Middle School on part of the site.



Use/Facilities: Wildlife observation, walking, quiet place. No facilities. Visitors to salt marsh restricted to wooden boardwalks.

Location: The trails can be entered at either end or in the middle of the woodland area along the Hommocks Road, just past the Hommocks Middle School soccer fields. Paths are indicated by sets of wooden posts. Park on the Hommocks Road, between Eagle Knolls Road and Oak Lane.