

The Pine Barrens of Ronkonkoma

by

Lawrence G. Paul



A Guide for the Hiker
to the
Long Island Pine Barrens



A GUIDE OF THE *New York-New Jersey Trail Conference*

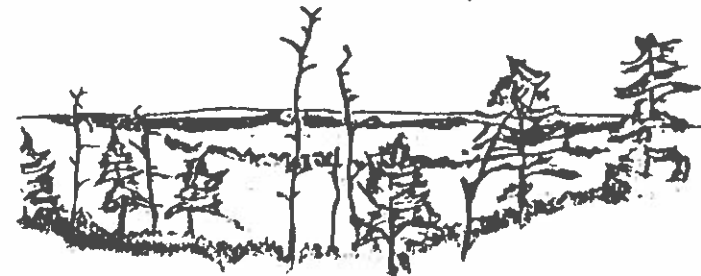
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The NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY TRAIL CONFERENCE is a federation of over 65 hiking and outdoor clubs, with 3,600 individual members working together to build and maintain trails and to promote conservation. The Conference was formed in 1920 to create a system of marked trails in the Harriman-Bear Mountain State Park area. It now maintains over 800 miles of foot trails in southern New York and northern New Jersey from the Connecticut border to the Delaware Water Gap, including the original section of the famous Appalachian Trail.

You are invited to share in this valuable work. MEMBERSHIP in the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is only \$10.00 a year and includes a subscription to the TRAIL WALKER, a bi-monthly newspaper full of hiking news. The Trail Conference also publishes other hiking guides and maps of the region.

Send your membership check to the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, Room 908, 232 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. For further information call (212) 696-6800.

cover sketch: Flanders Hill from the Riverhead Hills

All maps and illustrations by the author

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ABOUT THE BOOK:

The Pine Barrens of Ronkonkoma are a vast wild area of incalculable value and extraordinary beauty on Long Island. Hundreds of miles of existing trails and woods roads offer many opportunities in this major new hiking area. Because they are so mysterious and little-known, this guide to The Pine Barrens of Ronkonkoma was first published in 1983 to acquaint walkers with the wild core of this magnificent area of Long Island from the William Floyd Parkway in Brookhaven to Hampton Bays in Southampton.

In this new second edition, maps have been redrawn and updated to include all highways, parking areas, trails and woods roads, viewpoints, ponds, streams, wetlands, roadside telephones, public land boundaries and township lines. The text has been expanded and rewritten to simplify planning a trip, and the descriptions are laced with historical background and notes on the flora and fauna of the region. Illustrations have also been added.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Lawrence G. Paul has been an active member of the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference for over 15 years and now serves as its Trails Chairman for Long Island Trails. He was a maintainer on the Appalachian Trail as well as a hike leader and club representative for the Westchester Trails Association. Mr. Paul works closely with the Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference to develop and maintain hiking routes in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. He also works as a volunteer land steward and cartographer for the Long Island Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. Mr. Paul lectures frequently on the Pine Barrens and conducts regular walks for The Nature Conservancy and the Sierra Club.



VIII. IN CONCLUSION

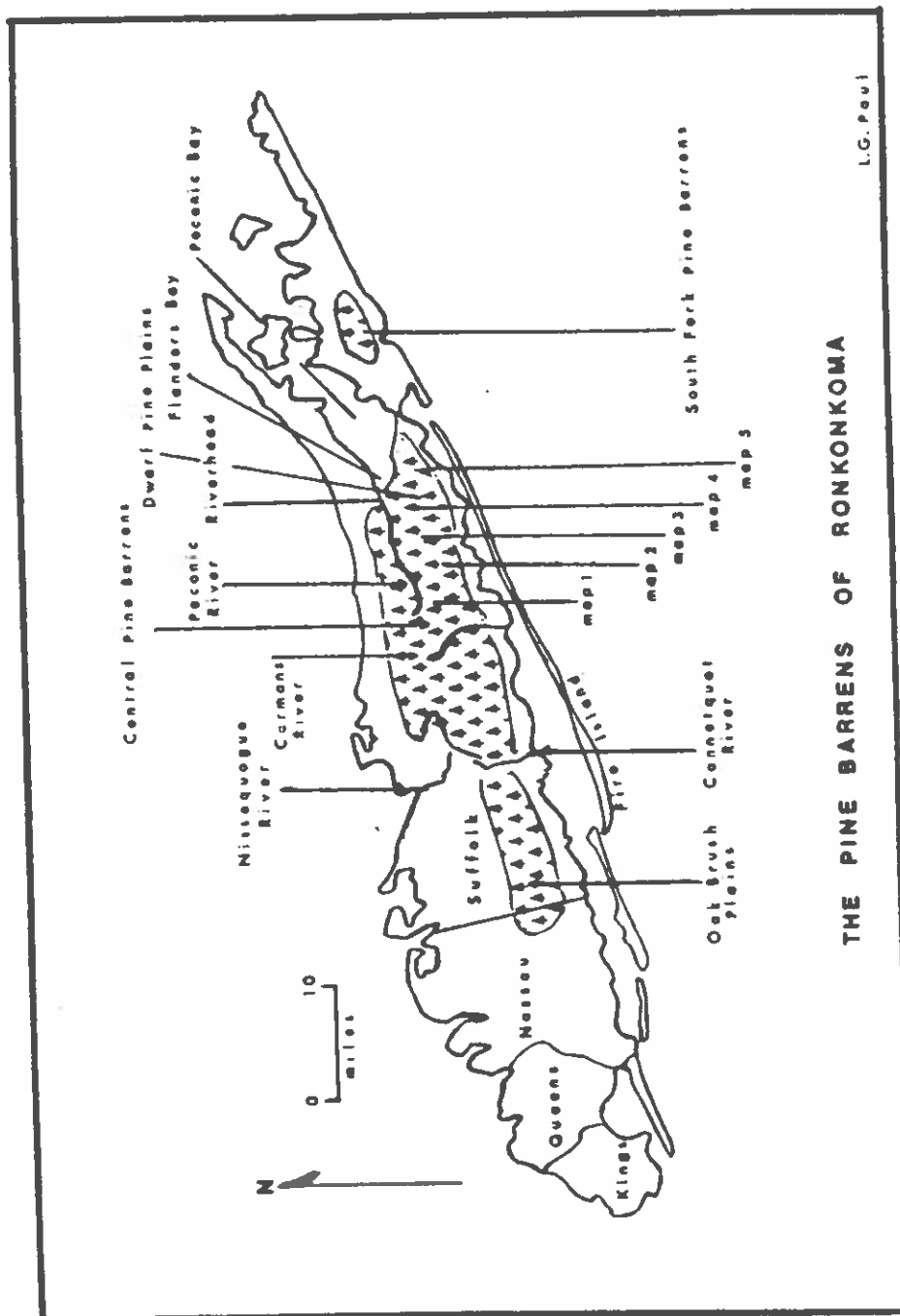
The Pine Barrens of Ronkonkoma is a region long neglected by and still largely unknown to the hiker and casual naturalist. It is unfortunately not unknown to the real estate developer and the off-road vehicle enthusiast. It is a region of tremendous biological diversity. It is our future supply of pure water. And it is here that we must look for the precious solitude and future passive recreational needs of Long Island. In the past six years a most serious effort has been mounted to save The Pines. If we are to continue this momentum, if we are to keep this valuable resource, we must continue to build a constituency sensitive to what is wild, rare, beautiful, and necessary to the survival of all life related to it. If we do not pursue this objective, The Pines will be lost. It is in that spirit that this guide is offered.

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in traversing Owl Pond, but this soon gives way to a forest more comfortably open. Upon reaching the route of the old phone line, extensive options are possible. The shortest route to Maple Swamp, via the present white trail from Owl Pond, is 2 1/2 miles.

In traversing these woods, be on the lookout for long, earthen mounds and for trees--usually old-growth oaks--which are severely crooked in appearance. Both mounds and "lopped" trees were used in earlier times as property boundary markers in the Pine Barrens. (Trees were "lopped" by anchoring bent saplings to the ground and letting them grow that way.) To this day some parts of the barrens are so remote from modern survey lines that these indicators are often useful in checking old deeds. The Pine Barrens of Brookhaven and Southampton are full of 100'x100' or smaller lots that people either purchased sight unseen or obtained through such gimmickry as premiums for newspaper or encyclopedia subscriptions. Often the cost of a survey to locate these tiny parcels is more than the value of the land itself. Worse still for the owners still paying taxes on them are the many "phantom" properties, or "unlocatables," bought from shady developers seventy or more years ago. Before 1919 proofs of ownership were not required when a developer presented a subdivision map to the County for recording. Ironically, these complications have worked to keep vast tracts of the Pine Barrens in their wild state.

MAPLE SWAMP:

As one enters this area, the forest character changes dramatically. Hardwood species dominate, with vines and shrubs more typical of the north shore woods. Lichens, indicators of clean, unpolluted air and the damp swamp microclimate, cover the trees. The beautiful, pale-green Usnea, or Old Man's Beard, rare on Long Island, survives on trees in a narrow band around the swamp. We found a great many highbush blueberries growing there, as well as the lovely Maystar (*Trientalis Americana*).

Maple Swamp is exactly that: a broad swamp containing a small pond surrounded by red maples. The area abounds in bird life. Maple swamps, of which this is one of the largest in our barrens, occur on old pine barrens bogs. In such cases reproductive wildfire has not occurred to keep out invading species such as the maple, which adapts readily to moist soil conditions. Like the kettleholes that spawned many of them, they lay as jewels scattered throughout the vast and brooding pine forest, bringing to the region not only biological diversity but a marvelous sense of completeness.

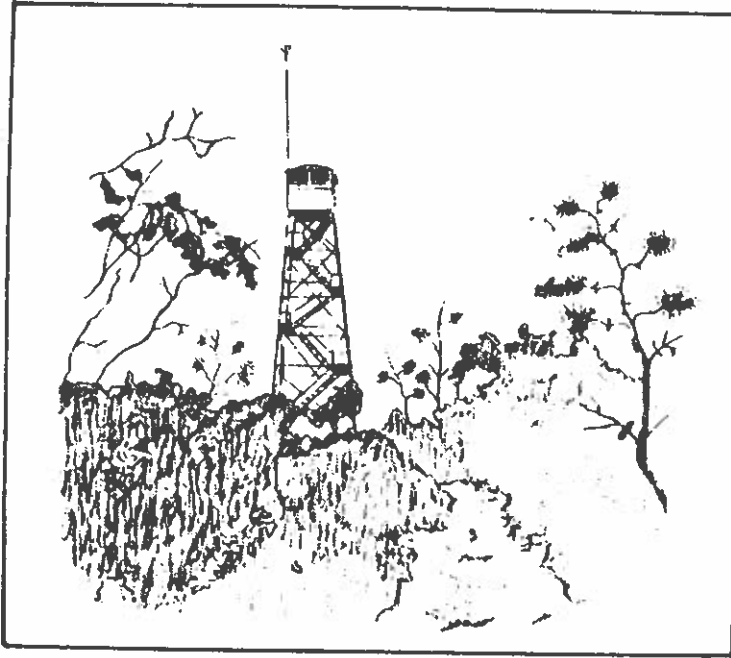


Fig. 4. Fire tower on Flanders Hill (circa 1951).

TRAILS TO MAPLE SWAMP:

We suggest three approaches. If parking near Sunrise Highway Exit 64, walk N under the high line to the first dirt road, diverging right. A direct trail to Maple Swamp, about 1 1/2 miles distant, leaves the left (N) side of this road a short distance in.

From the little memorial park on Route 24, it is possible to enter the area via a woods road directly opposite on the S side of the highway. But take care. This is private property, with houses nearby. Do not linger or create a disturbance in passing. From this approach a variety of woods roads and trails, the shortest 1 3/4 miles, lead to Maple Swamp.

The Spinny Road-Owl Pond approach, though not without difficulties, is probably the best for trips over the entire region. Spinny Road, tar surfaced at its beginning, soon turns to dirt and affords a good walking route via the high line to lookouts on Flanders Hill. The white paint blazes of the Pine Barrens Trail, heading E to Sears Pond, cross Spinny Road 3/4 mile S of Route 24. Or, by taking the woods road to Owl Pond, a hiker can intersect with the same trail heading W to Maple Swamp. Bear in mind that the white blazes indicate only a tentative route and may be changed once a permanent way is secured. One will encounter dense brush

THE PINE BARRENS OF RONKONKOMA

I. INTRODUCTION

Some 60,000 years ago on Long Island, a glacial advance created a central chain of hills known today as the Ronkonkoma Moraine. When the ice retreated about 15,000 years ago, great deltas of sand and gravel washed down from the moraine and thus prepared the environment for the Pine Barrens, or Pinelands, that exist here now.

The low, arctic tundra vegetation which followed the retreat of the glacier was soon replaced by boreal forests of jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*) and spruce (*Picea*). As the climate continued to warm, oaks became dominant, reaching their peak 5,000 years ago. The jack pine diminished rapidly when the pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*), which predominates today, entered about 8,000 years ago.

Pine barrens occur in only some twenty areas of the world, nearly all of them in the northeastern United States. Other notable examples are the million-acre New Jersey Pinelands, part of the Shawangunk mountain range and the Albany Pine Bush in New York, and portions of Cape Cod in Massachusetts. Pine barrens are a biota of unusual plants and animals, many of which occur rarely elsewhere. They survive in a harsh, desert-like environment, dominated by and dependent upon periodic wildfires to perpetuate their species.

Pine barrens, especially in New Jersey and on Long Island, form the protective cover and natural recharge system for vast reservoirs of pure fresh water lying just beneath the surface. Ideally, all pine barrens are rare and valuable enough for preservation. It may well be that the critical need for pure water will decide their fate.

On Long Island, pine barrens originally covered some 250,000 acres. Today, due mostly to the postwar housing and development boom, only about 80,000 acres and a few additional scattered parcels remain in a reasonably natural condition. Of the total, only about 30% is presently protected by federal, state, or county ownership. The remainder is still highly vulnerable to pressure for development. Yet even 80,000 acres (an area nearly as large as the entire Palisades Interstate Park system), the Long Island Pine Barrens remain second in size only to the huge New Jersey tract. The three major river drainage systems--the Connetquot, the Carman's, and the Peconic--are still essentially unspoiled. The hills, rising to 300 feet, afford magnificent panoramas extending to 20 or more miles. The prospect of gnarled and grotesque pines reaching in thousands to the four horizons is at once so wild and so melancholy as to approach the sublime. The blend of ponds, rivers, and hills in the central portion is perhaps more compactly arranged for the hiker's appreciation than any comparable area in the world.

The region described here begins east of Carman's River and the William Floyd Parkway, and ends roughly in the spearhead of land near Hampton Bays and Shinnecock Canal. It is a region characterized by the Peconic River drainage on the northwestern portion, with the Manorville Hills lifting to a 7-mile-long range just to the south and east. Another uplift, which we shall call here the Riverhead Hills, lies again to the southeast, immediately behind the Manorville group, and is separated from it by the Moriches-Riverhead Road. From these summits the moraine descends

abruptly to the glacial outwash and the Dwarf Pine Plains. Just beyond and to the east rises still a third range, including Flanders Hill and the long ridge slanting gradually to Hampton Bays.

The region is in a nearly continuous wild state, with relatively little visual interruption. We found the area already laced with hundreds of miles of old trails and woods roads. Few of these are marked in any way. The Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference is now attempting to blaze a basic layout of at least two major trails through the heart of the region described here. Present plans are for a Brookhaven Greenbelt from Smith Point near Fire Island to Shoreham on Long Island Sound, and for a Pine Barrens Trail, running SE to Bellows Pond near Flanders. Both will carry white blazes. The two trails, which will intersect in the Peconic River area (Map 1), will total some 60 miles.

We regret not having discussed outstanding areas, such as the Oak Brush Plains, Brookhaven State Park, and the 5,000-acre State Multiple Use Area at Rocky Point, but we have sought only to offer significant examples reasonably characteristic of the whole. The Carman's River drainage is at present best appreciated by canoe, putting in just below Upper Yaphank Lake. The Connetquot drainage (representative of both the central pine barrens and the last remnants of the Oak Brush Plains) is already adequately mapped and may be fully appreciated through excellent ranger-naturalist programs in Connetquot River State Park.

As we expand our knowledge, we hope to update our maps and to offer revised editions of this guide. To help us in this task, hikers are invited to participate by sending corrections and additions to:

New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
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graphic sheet, with azimuth bearing circles drafted in by the Department for use with the same ruler-type sighting alidade still in use on towers elsewhere in the State today. Beyond our windows spread a vast panorama of pine and oak and the blue of distant waters. I recall the long path of the high line, the occasional twisting thread of a sand road, the distant airfield at Westhampton--but little else of man visible. Then, early in the 1970s, the State extended Sunrise Highway through the hill to Hampton Bays. The tower, already gone most of ten years, joined five other Suffolk lookouts in oblivion. On 23 December, 1984, while remapping the area for this guide, I revisited the site. All the concrete footings of the old tower are gone, but the U.S. Coast and Geodetic triangulation monument, placed in 1933 and now crowded by pines 15 to 20 feet tall, is still there. The site itself is still marked on USGS and State planimetric maps as "Flanders Observatory."

ACCESS:

There are five primary points of access to the trails in this area. Long Island Expressway Exit 71 affords quick access to Flanders, about 8 miles distant via Route 24, with four parking sites on or near Route 24:

(1) A little memorial park on the N side of Route 24 about 1/2 mile E of Pleasure Drive, Flanders. Two cars may be parked on a side road here.

(2) On Spinny Road, 1/2 mile E of Pleasure Drive. Turn right (S) and park near woods roads leading to Owl Pond. (See Map 5.)

(3) A highway rest area with telephones on Route 24, 1 mile E of Spinny Road. A trail leads S to Sears Pond approximately 1,000' W of this point.

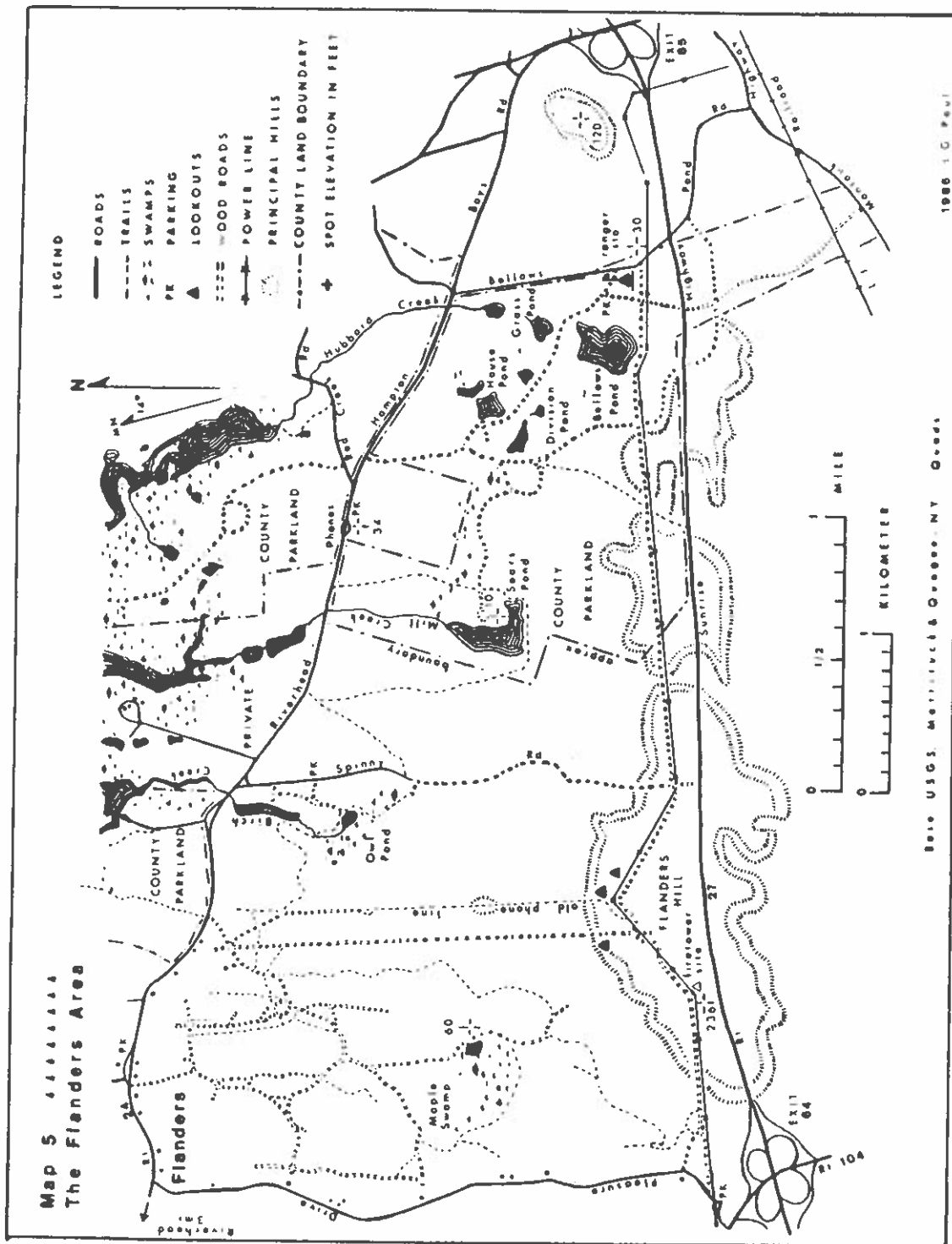
(4) At Sears-Bellows County Park. Entrance on Bellows Pond Road, 3/4 mile S of Route 24.

From Sunrise Highway (Route 27) Exit 64, turn into Pleasure Drive and park on the concrete strip just S of the power line.

TRAILS NORTH OF THE HIGH LINE:

Despite the intrusion of Sunrise Highway, the vast area north of the Long Island Lighting Company power line is little changed since the fire tower was dismantled. Even a few poles from the old tower phone line are still there, standing weatherbeaten along a trail leading out to Route 24.

Although the area contains a large trail system, only two widely spaced routes--the dirt road beneath the high line and the tentative, meandering route of the Pine Barrens Greenbelt Trail--offer possibilities for extensive E-W travel. Ridgeline views are limited now to a few openings for trails just N of the high line. The upper end of the old phone line (see Map 5) has an excellent vista of Red Cedar Point, Flanders and Great Peconic Bays, and the hills up around Mattituck. A Land Capability Map prepared by the County Planning Department for the Maple Swamp-Birch Creek area does contain proposals for another E-W trail and a new lookout tower on Flanders Hill. But none of this can be accomplished unless the property first comes into the public domain. Given these considerations, we suggest two outstanding features, Maple Swamp and Sears Pond, as distinctive yet separate objectives for trips in the area. Reaching Sears Pond is a simple matter needing little discussion. (See Map 5.) Reaching Maple Swamp requires a bit more.



II. GENERAL INFORMATION

USING THE MAPS:

All trail maps in this guide are based directly on either the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) or NYS Dept. of Transportation (DOT) 7-1/2-minute series, and were drawn to the same scale. For the sake of continuity, they can be used in conjunction with a standard road map of Long Island. The maps were drawn to TRUE north, with a magnetic declination of 14 degrees as indicated. Keep this in mind when using a compass in the field. The compass will point in a direction 14 degrees WEST of true north, and for the greatest accuracy this allowance must be made when consulting the maps.

These single-color maps show trails and woods roads, elevations, viewpoints, ponds, watercourses, and parking spots. Other useful orientative information includes highway interchanges, power lines, gas stations, population centers and public telephones. The hiker should rely primarily on the maps, using the text mostly to enhance the experience of hiking in the Pine Barrens. Some walks have been described in detail; other areas offer so many options that they have been given a more general treatment. We hope that you will have the same free sense of exploration that we have enjoyed from the beginning.

Continued field work since this guide was first offered revealed several additional lookouts which, with the aid of up-to-date planimetric charts (DOT), afforded excellent opportunities for triangulation. We used a Silva Ranger-type 15 sighting compass. Taken in conjunction with aerial photographs, these measurements greatly improved horizontal control of the maps, and this edition makes possible a more complete rendition of all the trails. A few omissions still occur, and in some cases distances between intersections remain approximate. But given this and some rudimentary knowledge in the use of a compass, the hiker should have no difficulty in charting interesting trips.

TRAIL CONDITIONS:

There are two basic categories of route: trails and woods roads. The trails, narrow and winding through dense forest, follow pathways that are firm, yet resilient, over a hard-packed accumulation of loam and other forest matter lying upon the sandy sub-soil. The woods roads are more open to the sun, generally straighter in alignment, and more apt to be sandy, especially in areas disturbed by trail bike activity. As the porous soils are well drained, mud is seldom a problem, save in isolated swampy areas. Paint blazes will be found occasionally, but they are old and sporadic, save for the tentative routes of the Greenbelt Trails (white blazes). There is not yet a uniform system of marking. In many areas, such as large portions of the Manorville Hills, the forest understory is relatively sparse, permitting extensive bushwhacking by compass. Deer trails are also helpful in cross-country travel.

ON GETTING LOST:

Since the Long Island Expressway, Sunrise Highway, and Route 24 have all been extended in recent years, becoming lost in the Pine Barrens is no longer a serious problem. Even in the largest, most remote areas--where one may walk all day

VII. AREA #5: FLANDERS

without crossing a paved road or meeting another person, the hiker is never more than 2 miles from a well-travelled highway. In many cases, the landmarks indicated on the maps are clearly visible.

DRINKING WATER:

The hiker must carry an ample supply, especially in summer. The Pine Barrens--notwithstanding the underlying aquifer of pure water--are dry, and any existing ponds or streams are too close to human presence to be relied upon for safety.

FISHING IN THE PONDS:

Fishing is by New York State freshwater license only. Contact the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for details (phone: 516-751-7900). Zeek's Pond (Map 1) has a marked access point. The Peconic River is accessible at North Street (Map 1) and from Mill Road near Edwards Avenue, where there is a marked access. The Peconic may also be entered by canoe from Connecticut Avenue (Halsey Manor Road) next to an old railroad siding.

PERMITS:

Some Pine Barrens areas require a permit. They are as follows:

To hike the Navy Co-op Areas (see Maps 1, 2, and 3), contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife, NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation, SUNY, Bldg. 40, Stony Brook, NY 11794. Permit fee is \$2.00 per person; the permit is good from March 1 to October 31. The area is closed to hiking during the hunting season.

For the David Sarnoff State Pine Barrens Preserve (see Map 4), contact the Division of Lands and Forests, NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation, SUNY Bldg. 40, Stony Brook, NY 11794. A hiking permit will be issued free of charge, good generally for the same period mentioned above.

For Suffolk County Parklands (see Maps 3 and 5), particularly the developed ones at Sears Pond and Bellows Pond, the hiker is usually required to be a Suffolk County resident or guest of a resident. For further information, contact the Suffolk County Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Conservation, P.O. Box 144, Montauk Highway, West Sayville, NY 11796.

LONG ISLAND PINE BARRENS SOCIETY:

For those interested in the flora and fauna of this fascinating region and in its preservation, we recommend membership in the Long Island Pine Barrens Society. All members receive its newsletter, The Thicket, and a more formal publication, The Heath Hen. The latter is in booklet form, and of such depth and quality that one will wish to keep it for easy reference. Membership categories are Regular (\$6.00 per year) and Supporting (\$10.00 per year). Write to the Long Island Pine Barrens Society, P.O. Box 9, Smithtown, NY 11787.

This region, the easternmost, draws into close proximity all the outstanding features of the central Pine Barrens except the Dwarf Pine Plains. Only here and at the estuary of the Carman's River do the barrens extend to tidewater. Seven exquisite ponds, characteristic of the interior, form the headwaters of Birch Mill, and Hubbard Creeks. South of these ponds rises the long, pine-clad profile of the Ronkonkoma Moraine. Elevations range from sea level to 236 feet at the summit of Flanders Hill. Sears Pond, lined with cedar and pine and probably the most beautiful of all our Pine Barrens ponds, is, at ten feet above the sea, also our lowest.

Most of the great, 1,620-acre marsh north of Route 24 is presently protected in Hubbard County Park. Another 693 acres of County lands around Sears and Bellows ponds constitute roughly one-third of the region. The remainder is an enormous patchwork of private holdings--a veritable nightmare when one thinks of acquisition for a future preserve. Yet the 2,000-acre Maple Swamp-Birch Creek area, unique in scope and lying on the critical 208 Watershed Zone, must have a high priority for acquisition by the County or State--perhaps both--before it is destroyed.

The area was first settled about 1770. Until 1814 it was known as Acquabogue, then was renamed Flanders, after a region in Holland. Many of the early settlers were woodcutters, selling their product to markets in New York City and New London, Connecticut. All the wood was stacked on an island in Reeve's Bay before loading on schooners. Even after the great cordwood era ended (see Area #1), there was considerable demand for "dunnage wood," which was used in the holds of ships to protect cargo from injury. A terrible fire in the Flanders woods in 1908--the same year that great forest fires raged all over the northeast in the aftermath of years of wasteful logging--signaled the end of this industry.

With the arrival of the railroad in Riverhead in 1844 came the first summer visitors. Electricity came to Flanders in 1924, and a paved highway, Route 24, in 1931. By the turn of the century, much of the area had come into the hands of wealthy New York sportsmen and others impressed by the scenery and abundance of wild game. They built hunting and fishing "camps," the magnificent Black Duck Lodge of the Astors among them, and thus created the famous Flanders Club. A fox trapper, whom I met while mapping trails in these woods one winter, showed me a concrete dam across Birch Creek, built by the Flanders Club to improve the duck shooting on Owl Pond. The Club flourished for a time, then gradually the property was sold off. Suffolk County acquired most of the marsh in the early 1970s under the NYS Wetlands Acquisition Act. Only the central section, with its roads and lodges, remains active as Flanders Club property. This portion is held on a 25-year lease from the County, and trespassing is strictly forbidden.

In 1918, in the wake of widespread forest fires, the State Conservation Department erected a detection tower on Flanders Hill. A second tower stood 23 miles to the west, on Telescope (Bald) Hill near Selden. Mr. Ben Rogers of East Quogue was observer at Flanders and served until his death in 1927. I knew the tower in the early 1950s, when as a State fire warden I went up there to keep watch with observer William Snell of Aquebogue. The lookout cabin, a standard 6'x6' cubicle, stood on a 35' steel tower. We had our binoculars, a telephone, and a large early-model two-way radio. The map on the tower plane table was a USGS 15-minute topo-

below the surface. The sun beats down mercilessly on the barren floor. Reproductive wildfire, necessary to opening the serotinous (closed) cones of the little trees, should occur naturally every five to six years. The trees, even when consumed above ground, possess root crowns that send up new shoots soon afterward. In many cases, 90% of the biomass of each plant is beneath the ground. Some have survived dozens of fires.

Inhospitable in appearance, this bleak plain is home for numerous plants and animals found rarely elsewhere. Orangegrass, Iceland moss, the hermit thrush, whip-poor-wills, and prairie warblers are but a few. Three endangered species--the beautiful buck moth (*Hemileuca maia*), the marsh hawk (Northern harrier), and the pygmy trees themselves--are the primary elements that The Nature Conservancy is attempting to protect here. The Dwarf Pine Plains are fragile. Human development has devoured some portions and impacted on others, and overzealous fire suppression has brought reproduction to a standstill. But preservation of the Dwarf Pines alone will not be enough. This unique community is but the very end point of a continuum of vegetation throughout the entire Pine Barrens. It cannot be isolated and survive. The 4,000-acre preserve would provide a buffer. Even that buffer will ultimately require the support of a larger greenbelt leading from Hampton Bays on the east to Rocky Point on the west.

THE SUMMIT TRAIL:

About one mile W on the main trail from Old Westhampton Road, just before a woods road running N-S, one comes upon a narrow, unmarked trail diverging right (N). Do not miss it, for this dim little path was conceived by a master.

Almost immediately the views open up. There are four, as one follows the curious windings first N, then E, and finally W. The first is a panorama SW to Moriches Inlet, some 9 miles away and including more westerly a good look at Rock Hill and the Manorville group. The second is a general overview of the rapidly flattening plain to the S. The third is a 360-degree circle to the top of the range and E to Flanders Hill, 5 1/2 miles distant. All around the hiker unfold pine-clad ridges and ravines. Hundreds of upthrust dead and weathered snags provide a habitat for nesting species. Here the wilderness prevails. High above the ragged forest one may sight a soaring red-shouldered hawk.

The hiker now nears the white domes that mark the highest point of land. This is the radar station, served by a paved access from Speonk-Riverhead Road, erected as a navigational aid to aircraft approaching Kennedy Airport. A short distance below the domes and hidden from them is the fourth and highest lookout on this trail. It has a colossal view, undoubtedly the finest anywhere in the Pine Barrens. From it are visible all of the Dwarf Pine Plains and the barrier beach from Moriches nearly to Shinnecock Bay. To be here on a clear autumn day, with clouds massed overhead, with backlighting through the luminous wine-hued foliage of the oaks, to gaze far out upon that incredible flaring white mirror of the Atlantic, is to understand why the pinelands must be held forever wild.

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Eva, my wife, who has walked with me since the beginning. From early in 1980, when we set off with our packs, topographic maps, and compass to explore the region, her constant help and inspiration have never failed. Without it, preparation of the guide would never have been possible.

Since the beginning I have been deeply grateful to the following: The Long Island Chapter of The Nature Conservancy; Mr. Scott A. Sutcliffe, former TNC Director and now Assistant Director of the Cornell Ornithological Laboratory; Mr. Andrew Walker, present Director; and Mrs. Margo Myles, former Assistant Director and now Environmental Planner for the Town of Huntington Environmental Control Department; Messrs. John Turner, John Cryan, and Robert McGrath of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society; Mr. Steven Englebright, Director of the Museum of Long Island Natural Sciences, member of the Suffolk County Legislature, and Chairman of the Legislative Committee on Parks. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Region #1.

In preparation of this expanded second edition, I am deeply indebted to: Messrs. Gilbert Raynor and Sam Yeaton, naturalists, for their valuable first-hand accounts and the loan of 1903 USGS charts, now out of print; Mr. Ray Corwin and Miss Mindy Block of the L.I. Greenbelt Trail Conference for much of the historical material; Messrs. Ken Ettlinger and Greg Vita, also of the Greenbelt Conference, for tracings of aerial photographs and sketches depicting trails on the Riverhead Hills-Flanders area; Mr. Frank Turano, science teacher at Ward Melville High School and SUNY Stony Brook, for notes on vanished species; Mr. J. Lance Mallamo, Suffolk County Historical Trust Manager, for making available reports of sites on Carman's River; and Mr. Norman Soule, Director of the Cold Spring Harbor Fish Hatchery, who allowed me to examine copies of Annual Reports of the NYS Conservation Commission.

My thanks also to my friends at the NY/NJ Trail Conference--Don Derr, past president and now Second Vice President, who encouraged me to write the thing in the first place; JoAnn Dolan, past Executive Director and now Special Projects Coordinator; Madeline Dennis, present Executive Director; and members of the board, who encouraged and approved publication of a second edition.

Finally, my deepest appreciation goes to Tom Casey, who did (along with a hundred pressing items he does regularly for the L.I. Greenbelt Conference) one of the most difficult, and certainly the most important, task of all. He edited the text and, on his word processor, prepared the entire work for the printer.

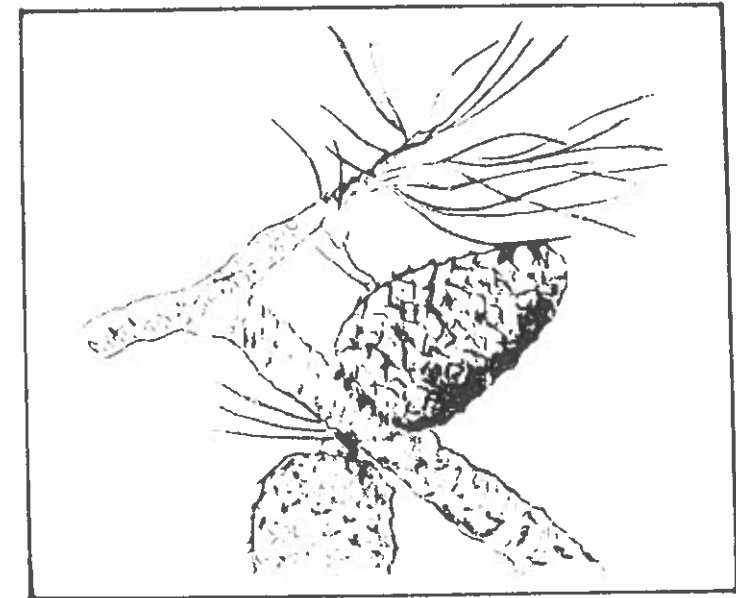
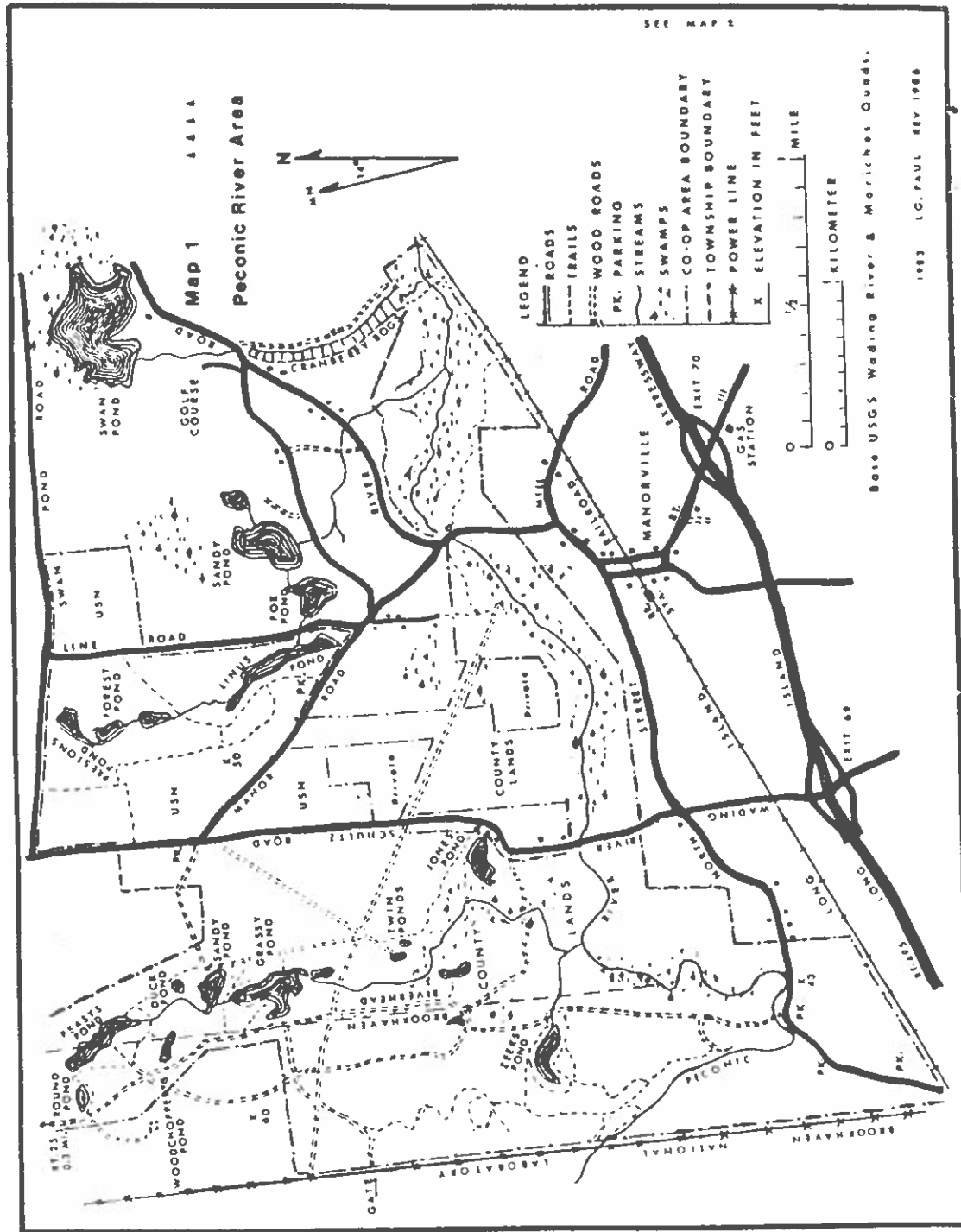


Fig. 3. Serotinous cones.

noted in his "Travels in New England and New York," 1804. The northwest corner of this mysterious land is reached by the main trail described above. Those interested in the larger southwest quadrant should take Sunrise Highway (Route 27) to Exit 63. Go S on County Road 31 for about 3/4 mile. An old tar road leads W (right) from this point, just NW of the Suffolk County Airport, 3/4 mile to ample parking on a site impacted by military bombing during the second war. A variety of old roads and trails diverge from this point.

The southwest quadrant is also the only portion of the Pine Barrens directly accessible by railroad, as there is still good passenger service to Westhampton station. From here follow a trail W a short distance along the N side of the tracks. A good trail then heads due N about 2 miles, crossing one road to the parking area noted above. Here as elsewhere on the Dwarf Pine region, navigation is easy without a map, as landmarks often remain visible over the tiny trees. A number of glacial ravines also characterize this area, giving it less of a plains-like appearance.

Even among existing pine barrens, these pygmy trees are of rare intrigue. They occur in only two other areas of the world: three plains sites totalling some 12,400 acres of the New Jersey Pine Barrens, and a 5,000 acre portion of the Shawangunk mountain range near Lake Awosting in New York. Where the tree-sized pitch pine frequently attains a height of sixty feet, the dwarf pitch rarely grows over six, and is usually lower and more scraggly in appearance. Conditions here are more severe than anywhere else on the entire Pine Barrens. The sandy soil is coarse, porous, poor in nutrients, and highly acidic, with some pH readings of 3.2 in places. The water table is unusually deep, lying as much as 40 feet or more

many years. By 1975 there were 34 rectangular and eighteen rhomboidal antenna fields on the property. Late that year changing economics and satellite technology made the station obsolete, and it was closed.

Today the vast areas cleared for antenna fields are returning to natural forest. Surplus RCA material, such as radio towers, masts, and cable, have been salvaged and largely removed. One building, possibly to serve as a forest ranger station, and a storehouse will remain. There are numerous trails, firelanes, and woods roads. Low hills afford excellent views of the surrounding pinelands and of Riverhead hamlet. It is an outstanding tract of land--a key unit for a larger future Pine Barrens preserve. There may be changes in the parking arrangements and trail layout, but the traditional forms of forest recreation will continue. Off-road vehicle use is strictly prohibited, and entry to the tract is by permit from the DEC. (See the section on permits.)

THE MAIN TRAIL:

South and west of the Sarnoff Preserve is a path labeled on Map 4 as "the main trail." It is one of the few remaining pieces of a wide firebreak that once banded a huge chunk of land extending south nearly to Westhampton. The main trail links the Dwarf Pine Plains on the east with the high lookouts to the west. With another route leading N to Wildwood Lake (the Old Westhampton Road), it affords access to these from all the parking areas in the region.

Two good trails head east from Speonk-Riverhead Road, the more northerly of the two called, historically, "the middle line." Both are linked with the main trail by paths leading north. Also heading east from the Speonk-Riverhead Road, opposite the entrance to Suffolk Community College, is a hard-surfaced Federal Aviation Administration road. It climbs about 3/4 mile to a summit radar station described below. About 1/2 mile up the tar road, a sand road crosses. A car may be left here. Heading S on the sand road, the hiker will come to the main trail in about 1/2 mile.

If starting south from Wildwood Lake, the hiker should look for an old concrete-block building after crossing the tar road to the Hamptons Golf Course. This point is marked as a tiny black box on Map 4. The trail forks here; the westerly one, Old Westhampton Road, leads to the main trail in the direction of the lookouts; the easterly fork, heading south, connects with the main trail at a point near the Dwarf Pine Plains.

Aside from its value as a through route, the main trail is attractive in its own right. As the hiker strikes west on it, rising gently toward the hills, the transition from the plains to the tall pine forest is dramatic. Underfoot here, as throughout the barrens, lies a luxurious carpet of wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*) and the beautiful bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*). There is nothing here to remind one of suburban Long Island, but much to suggest the character of a boreal wilderness.

THE DWARF PINE PLAINS:

The Long Island dwarf pines today cover fewer than 2,000 acres, considerably less than the "spot of ground about three miles in diameter" that Timothy Dwight

III. AREA #1: THE PECONIC RIVER HEADWATERS

Although the 19-mile-long Peconic River rises beyond the restricted area of Brookhaven National Laboratory (barely 3 miles E of the source of Carman's River), a significant portion of the upper watershed is open to the hiker. This is probably the greatest concentration of wild, pure freshwater ponds anywhere on Long Island--some 27 in all. Many are accessible by trail. Owned primarily by the U.S. Navy, Brookhaven National Laboratory, and Suffolk County, the land is managed under a cooperative agreement with the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and, probably by the date of publication, The Nature Conservancy as well. Any question concerning use of these county lands may be addressed to The Nature Conservancy, Long Island Chapter, at (516) 367-3225. At present a permit is required to hike here at all times. (See p. 4.)

It is an area rich in history. Many woods routes of today could well have been old Indian or game trails; in more recent times others were constructed for fire suppression. Between these extremes lies the era of logging roads. So many of these existed in the eighteenth century that, as the makers gave little thought to the idea of road signs, overland travel on Long Island in those days must have been a nightmare. A glance at the 1903 USGS topographic quadrangle (Figure 1) will give some idea of the maze of old roads that have become today's trails.

Just prior to the Civil War, Suffolk was a major New York State county in wood production. Some 160 years ago, 100,000 cords were cut and shipped annually, largely to supply the fuelwood needs of New York City as well as voracious brick kilns on the Hudson River at Haverstraw, Newburgh, and elsewhere. Tremendous loads were shipped by schooner across Long Island Sound, and by railroad, which was built to Riverhead in 1844. Mr. Gilbert Raynor of Manorville told me that his grandfather had logged off much of the surrounding area and had literally sent whole trainloads to the city market. The wood here was mostly oak and chestnut, as most of the Atlantic white cedar, highly prized for shingles and lumber, had been consumed during Colonial times. This vast opening of the forest canopy, together with widespread fires caused by railroad locomotives, contributed directly to the dominance of the pitch pine, which requires for its survival both sunlight and fire. Though of a lower commercial value, even it was used--for the manufacture of charcoal to fuel the ironworks of Solomon Townsend at George Pond (Peconic Lake) until 1811. There is evidence that some of the ore used was nodules of bog iron found along the Peconic River (David Newton, L.I. Forum, Nov., 1981).

In the eastern portion of the area lie cranberry bogs. These were begun in the 1870s when Cape Codders were brought in to supplement the failing mill industry. By the late 1920s, Long Island was the third major producer of cranberries in the nation. This industry failed because of a lack of processing plants, a destructive outbreak of the fireworm in 1936, and finally the cranberry scare in the fall of 1959, when the weed-killer amino triazole was found to cause cancer in laboratory mice. The earliest USGS quadrangles, 1903, indicate seven bogs. Traces of at least three remain today; of these, the Woodhull Bog, at Swezy Pond near Riverhead, was closed in 1965, and the Davis Bog, on River Road, in 1974. The former is now a County Environmental Preserve. These places, while not yet contiguous to major trail systems, are served by a few short trails beginning on Rt. 63 and River Road, respectively, and make interesting visits. (See Maps 1 and 3.) The botanist will find these wet successional areas of great interest, as they contain

VI. AREA #4; THE RIVERHEAD HILLS AND DWARF PINE PLAINS

This area, about 10 square miles in size, is the "crown jewel" of the major Pine Barrens regions. An area of great diversity, it is dominated in the northeast by the David Sarnoff State Pine Barrens Preserve; in the southeast by the northwest quadrant of the Dwarf Pine Plains; and in the west by the crest of the Riverhead Hills, with its colossal views.

The 1,646 acres at the heart of this extraordinary country has been in the ownership of Local 282, the Teamster's Pension Fund. Although the future of this property is still uncertain, the grandiose plans for development detailed in the first edition of our guide now appear unlikely. Town zoning changes, increased public awareness, and the creation of a County Pine Barrens Commission have all led to controls that could considerably limit the impact of any future development.

By far the greatest hope for the region lies in a 1983 agreement between The Nature Conservancy and Suffolk County to create here a Dwarf Pine Barrens Preserve. The preserve, a total of about 4,000 acres, would include both the northwest and southwest quadrants of the Dwarf Pine Plains as well as considerable tree-size forest to the west and north, well up into the hills, to act as a buffer. Thus far some 600-plus acres have been acquired, both by donation and tax default. The Nature Conservancy will embark on a greatly-accelerated acquisition program in 1986.

ACCESS:

There are four main points of access to the trails of this area. Three are on the Speonk-Riverhead Road and one is at Wildwood Lake.

From the Long Island Expressway (Exit 71), take Route 24 east (as in preceding section) about 4 miles to Suffolk County Route 51 (Center Drive). Turn right on Route 51. Go about 2 miles to County Route 63. For Wildwood Lake make a sharp left on Route 63, go 1/4 mile and make a right turn for the narrow tar road down the east side of the lake. For the Speonk-Riverhead Road continue directly on Route 51 for about 1 mile, then make a left turn onto the Speonk-Riverhead Road.

From Sunrise Highway (Route 27), use Exit 61. Take County Route 51 (Moriches-Riverhead Road) NE about 5 miles to the Speonk-Riverhead Road, or about 6 miles to County Route 63. For Wildwood Lake continue as above.

THE DAVID SARNOFF STATE PINE BARRENS PRESERVE:

The DEC parking area at the southeast corner of lovely Wildwood Lake (at the end of the road) is a good trailhead for trips over the entire Riverhead Hills region, the State lands immediately to the E of Wildwood Lake in particular. These DEC lands, along with a 5,200-acre tract at Rocky Point, were donated to the State in 1978 by the Radio Corporation of America (RCA). The 2,056-acre Riverhead property has an outstanding history in the area of radio communications. (See area #3.) A number of brilliant scientists conducted continuous experimentation, greatly refining the process of short wave technology. Guglielmo Marconi himself reportedly was involved with the work here during the 1920s. The Riverhead receiving station became an integral part of the commercial international wireless system for

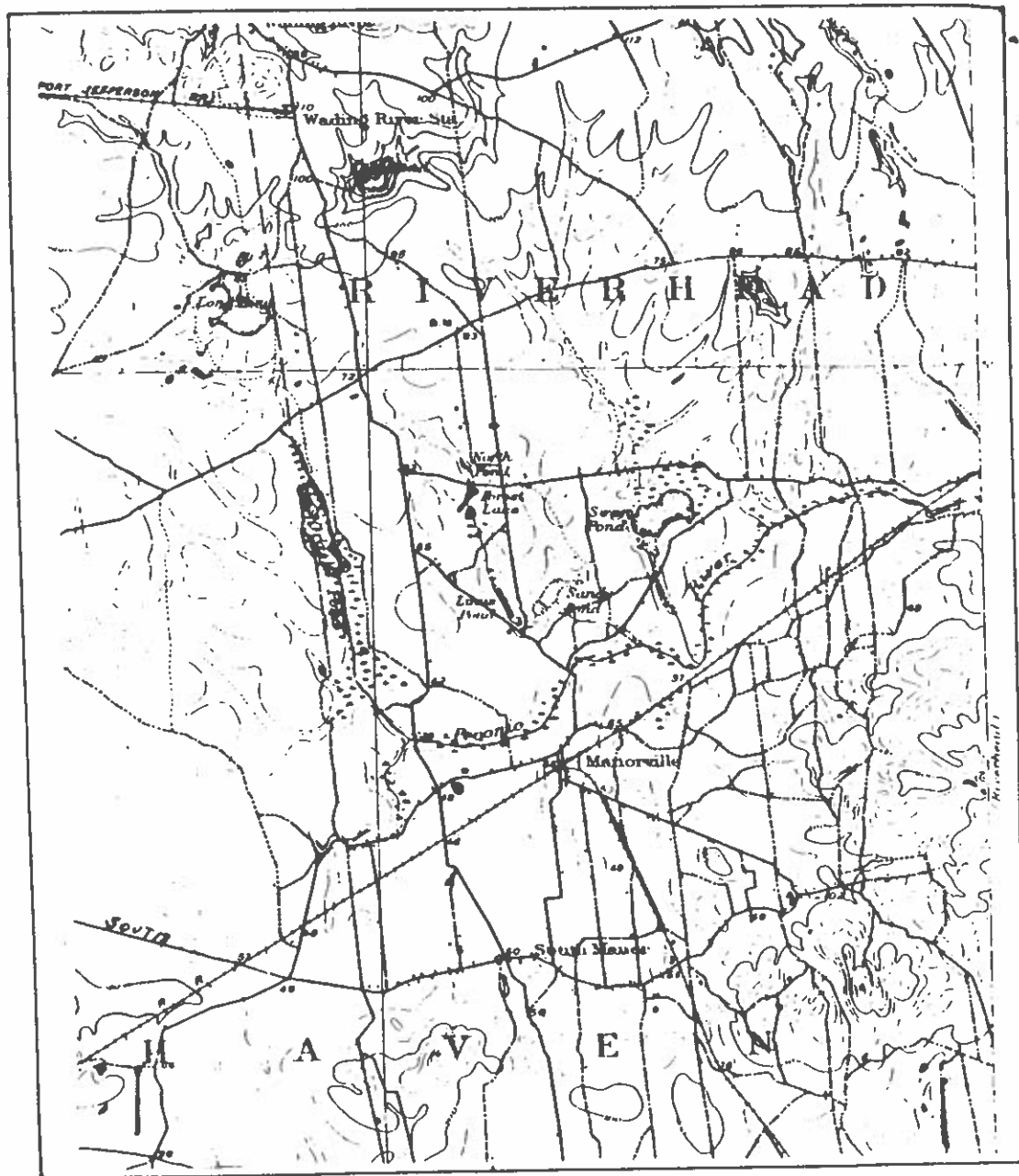
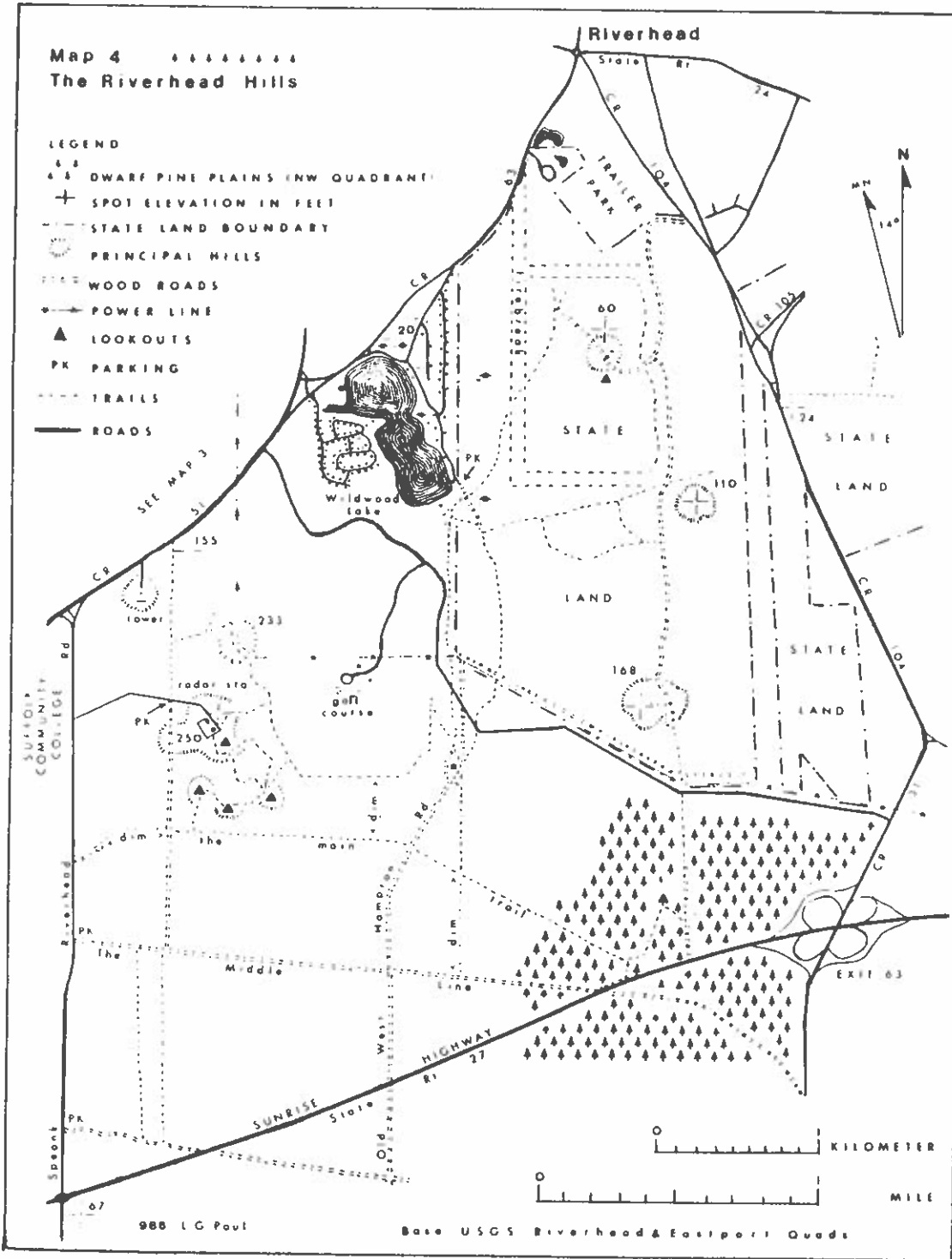


Fig. 1. 1903 USGS quadrangle showing logging roads in the Peconic Headwaters/Manorville Hills area.

Map 4
The Riverhead Hills

LEGEND

- ▲ DWARF PINE PLAINS (NW QUADRANT)
- + SPOT ELEVATION IN FEET
- STATE LAND BOUNDARY
- PRINCIPAL HILLS
- WOOD ROADS
- POWER LINE
- ▲ LOOKOUTS
- PK PARKING
- TRAILS
- ROADS



most orchids of the Pine Barrens and all of our pitcher plants, sundews, and other carnivorous species.

But it was the western portion of the area that saw the greatest human activity. At the outset of World War I, the Federal Government took the Dittmeir Farm (formerly of F.Y. Campbell) to establish Camp Upton. After the war most of the buildings were sold off, but the remaining barracks were used to house the crews of the Civilian Conservation Corps that followed.

The early 1930s were dry years on Long Island, and the C.C.C. boys were kept busy. The 1932 Annual Report of the State Conservation Dept. notes that a fire-lookout tower was erected at Upton, bringing the total on Long Island to five. The 1938 report has a photograph of a regulation steel fire tower near Yaphank (Upton?), but the one I recall there in the early 1950s was of wood construction. Mr. Raynor, a meteorologist, said this was removed by 1970 and a building erected in its place. Other Department reports indicate that in 1934 four C.C.C. camps were established at Upton, one for fish and wildlife management and three for fire protection, reforestation, and stand improvement. In 1935 C.C.C.s planted 2,903,200 trees, largely red and white pine. Mr. Raynor told me that most of the red was later destroyed by the pine looper moth. He recalled days at Brookhaven Lab when the loopers were so thick they seemed like a fog. In 1939 another C.C.C. camp was established at Sag Harbor to clear blowdown from the 1938 hurricane, and the Blue Mountain, N.Y., camp was transferred to Upton. With the outbreak of the Second War, Upton again saw troops.

Today this property, 5,265 acres and still nearly 80% forested, is home to the Brookhaven National Laboratory. Another 1,000 acres, contiguous on the east, was sold to Suffolk County by the Grace family (of Grace Steamship Lines), who had used it as a game preserve and had a hunting cabin on Zeek's Pond. The hamlet of Manorville appears little changed in the past 100 years. The divisional rail line to Sag Harbor (trains were broken in half at Manorville) was closed in 1949, but trains still pass through on the line to Riverhead, and "The Maples," a country inn that Gilbert Raynor's grandfather had owned and operated while also serving as station agent, still offers the hiker refreshment.

ACCESS:

Exit 69 Long Island Expressway (Route 495) to Wading River (Schultz Road and North Street.

Designated parking areas are indicated on Map 1. They may be found on North Street, on Schultz Road at Manor Road, and on Manor Road just NW of Line Road. We suggest leaving the car on North Street and entering the area via a wide woods road approximately 1 mile W of Wading River Road. This entrance is at a bridge across the Peconic, with a gauging station of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). From here, unbroken hikes of 6 or more miles are possible. Two good woods roads lead north, with trails leading east to pond overlooks.

PEASY'S POND:

An excellent objective is the north end of Peasy's Pond, which has at its back a nice view of beautiful little Round Pond. If making the approach via Sandy and

Duck Ponds, note the crossing of Peasy's Pond outlet. This was the road to Ridge in earlier days, and Mr. Raynor told me his father referred to it as "the going over place." This was a term used freely to denote a river crossing or ford. One finds it in the early history of Carman's River also. When I was last to Peasy's Pond, the "going over place" consisted of a crude log bridge.

On returning, the hiker may explore a fine network of forest trails just east of the restricted boundary of Brookhaven National Laboratory. Many of these trails are marked with faded white and yellow blazes and may be confusing for a time. As a general rule, one returning this way over fire roads from Round Pond will come to a power line marking the restricted laboratory boundary. Just E of a chain link gate across the power line right-of-way, the yellow and white blazed trail will be found heading S. If this is followed in a SE direction (making left turns at all the intersections), the hiker will come out along the N side of Zeek's Pond, and will then soon reach the woods road leading S to the bridge at North Street.

Many other variations are possible. Explore and appreciate. Please respect the land and all posted boundaries, and leave it cleaner than you found it.

trail, it diverges right (NW) and is marked for part of its length by faint orange blazes.

THE RETURN TO ROUTE 24:

In returning from Bald Hill, the hiker may fashion a beautiful loop by first heading W off the summit, then NE on a dim but easily followed old trail crossed with a number of fallen logs. Ignore a newer parallel trail, which was cut illegally, just E of it. The old trail is about 1/2 mile long, and years of use by our own groups have made the route more distinct. It leads into an entire system of trails and woods roads (the old route from the gas sphere) heading northeasterly toward the first pond noted above. It also traverses an oak-burn dating prior to the 1980 fire. The observant hiker will note how the forest has literally resprouted from its original root crowns. It is also well worth a short extra side trip to the two lookouts immediately N of Bald Hill. An excellent view is obtained of the lush pine reproduction advancing from that direction. These are two good examples of the resiliency of the barrens to the effects of periodic fire.

ALTERNATE ROUTES:

Note that two other parking areas (both on the Brookhaven-Southampton Town Line, one at the telephones on Route 24 and the other near the Suffolk County Water Authority on C.R. 51) are indicated on the map. These make possible shorter walks and easier access to Bald Hill and the interior lookouts.

Explore and appreciate. Please help leave the area cleaner than you found it.



Fig. 2. Observations from Bald Hill toward Flanders Bay.

fires in Long Island history raged from the SE corner of Smithtown across all of Brookhaven to the Southampton line.

BALD HILL FROM ROUTE 24:

The second approach to Bald Hill is some 3 miles E of Exit 71, beginning under the Long Island Lighting Company high tension line where it crosses Route 24. This 7-mile loop crosses terrain more gentle than the route from Topping's Path. Start S along the high line right-of-way. Almost immediately a trail heads W, at times nearly coming out on Route 24. Approaching the first kettlehole pond, this trail joins two others leading both south and west.

Reflect for a moment on the origin of this place. This kettlehole, like others in the area, is a product of the same glacier that formed the nearby hills. As the great ice sheet retreated, it left isolated blocks behind, lodged in the face of the earth. The eventual melting of these blocks formed depressions. If a depression was deep enough, a surface expression of the aquifer occurred, and a pond formed. There are dozens of them all over Long Island, isolated without inlet or outlet.

Follow a route which traverses closely the S edge of the pond, gradually climbing away from it until a short distance further a wider trail strikes due S into the hills. Follow this for about 1.3 miles to a hilly cross-trail running on a NE-SW axis. Turn right (SW) and follow along the ridge, crossing two more sand roads to a woods road that climbs steeply to the summit of Bald Hill, marked by three USGS concrete monuments. A parallel and more scenic alternative to the ridge trail may be found after the first sand road crossing. A less frequently used

IV. AREA #2: THE MANORVILLE HILLS (WEST PORTION)

The names Manorville and the Manor Line are derived from the Second Patent of St. George's Manor, which was granted to Col. William "Tangier" Smith in 1697 by King William and Queen Mary. The patent was an immense triangle of land, stretching west from Riverhead hamlet and including all of Fire Island as well. Topping's Path, the dirt road that separates this section from the hills described in the following chapter, is named for one Capt. Thomas Topping. In 1662 Capt. Topping acquired a tract of Pine Barrens land here from the Shinnecock Indians. The trustees of the Town of Southampton later claimed his deed was not valid. In 1666 Governor Richard Nicolls settled the dispute. Capt. Topping was allowed his choice of lots within the tract, with other compensation, and the Topping's Path Purchase became part of Southampton Township.

The Manorville group of hills generally comprise that part of the Ronkonkoma Moraine running from the uplift just west of Rock Hill to Bald Hill on the east. Elevations run to 300 feet above sea level. It remains largely a wild region, heavily forested in pine and oak clinging to steep, sandy gullies and hillsides. There are few ponds and no streams. Huge glacial boulders (erratics) are common.

In the area covered by Map 2, the U.S. Navy owns the summit of Rock Hill, where it maintains a radar tower. The Navy also owns lands on both sides of Topping's Path (NE corner of map), which are managed by the State DEC under the same cooperative agreement as that outlined in Area #1. This means that the same hiking permit applies here also. The remainder, which is most of the area, is privately held, so hikers will encounter some restrictions. On the SW side of Rock Hill is a large golf course.

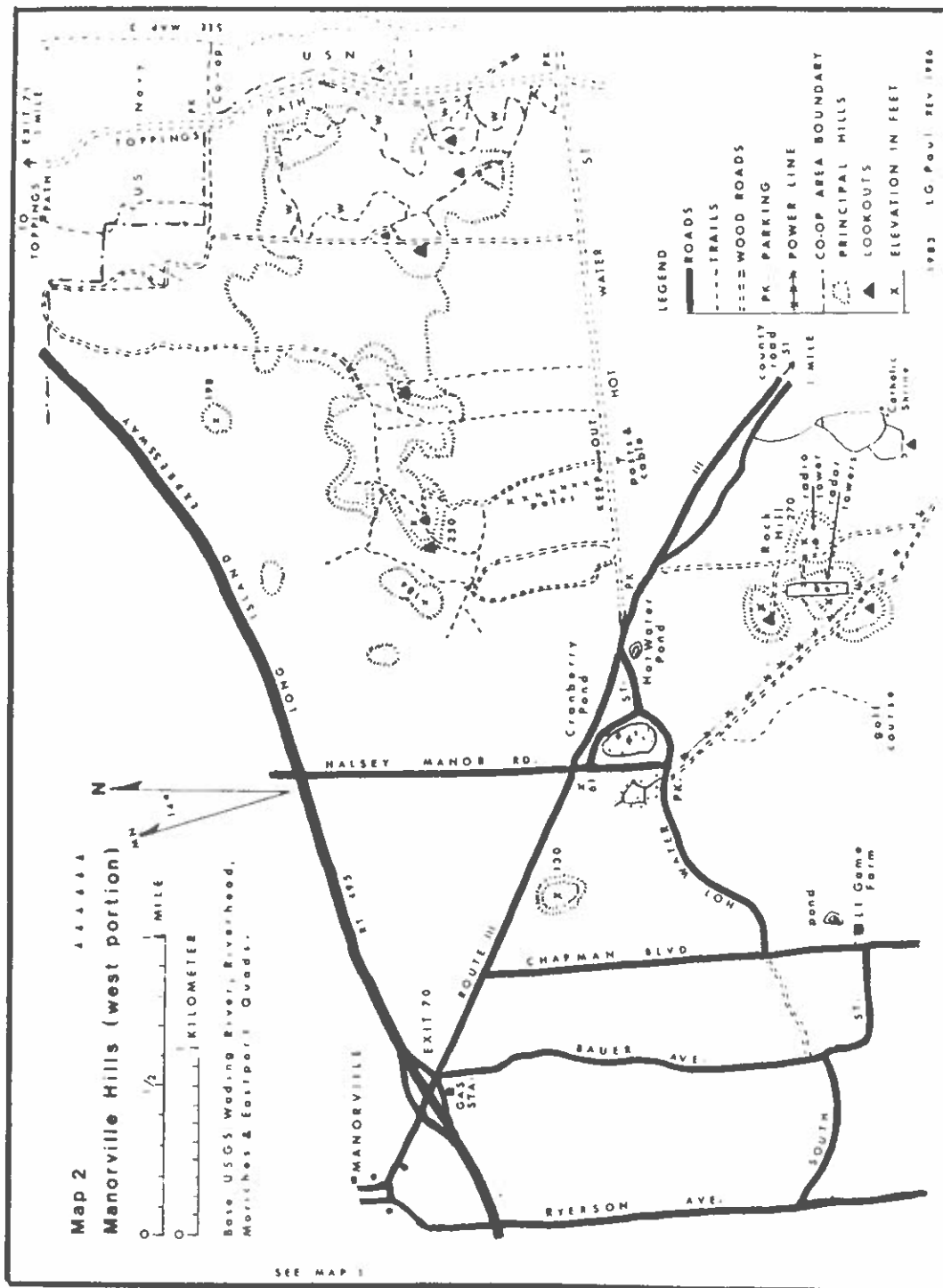
White-tailed deer are ever present, some of them quite large. A 220-pound buck was taken here in the fall of 1985. In our travels across these hills, we have also noted the dens of red fox, a yellow-billed cuckoo, and a ring-necked snake. While the last documented killing of the timber rattlesnake occurred around 1914 on the Ronkonkoma branch of the Long Island Railroad, eleven species of non-poisonous snake are still present in the Long Island Pine Barrens. Chief among these is the Eastern hognose (*Heterodon platyrhinos*), some of which grow to nearly three feet in length. Its diet is principally the little Fowler's toad (*Bufo woodhousei fowleri*), which is common throughout the pines. It is interesting to add that bobcats and wolves also once roamed the Long Island wilderness. Beaver were exterminated in the 1700s, with the last bear seen about 1748. Moose and elk were reported here until the time of the Civil War.

ACCESS:

Long Island Expressway to Exit 70, then SE on Eastport-Manor Road (Rt. 111). Also L.I.E. to Exit 71, then S on Topping's Path.

TRAIL TO ROCK HILL:

The W portion of the map is best explored by using Rock Hill as an objective. Turn W off Route 111 on Hot Water (Hill) Street. Cross the S end of Halsey Manor Road. We found a good place to park a short distance beyond, opposite a new subdivision, where a low power line cuts SE into the woods. Trails, mostly leading



Scarcely less interesting for its longevity is a site near the geographical center of the region. Here in 1833 the Hunter's Garden Association was formed by people who simply liked to cook game outdoors. Today the same association numbers about 125 men, who go to Hunter's Garden for the same purpose as did their predecessors--merely to feast, every spring and every fall. Today the fare is eel chowder, hardtack, and coffee, prepared in great iron cauldrons. Venison, the original meal, is not as plentiful as it was then.

Government lands in this section include county parkland running S from the Peconic River to County Road 51, the Navy Co-op area on both sides of Topping's Path, and Cranberry Bog County Preserve. Combined, the first two form a roughly-shaped "U," with private lands in between. They converge in the area of Bald Hill, a good objective for trips from either direction. Bald Hill, elevation 295 feet, is today something of a misnomer. Thirty-five years ago when, as a State forest fire warden, I used it as a vantage point between existing lookout towers, this summit and its immediate hills were more nearly bald than they are now. The pines were sparser and lower. Yet, even with subsequent growth, the hiker will still find some excellent views. Eastward, some 8 miles or more away, Flanders Bay and the great Peconic spread like a vast blue lake. Southward lie Speonk, Eastport, the barrier beach from Moriches Inlet to Westhampton, and the mighty Atlantic. Northward lie vignettes of distant farms in the vicinity of Wading River and Baiting Hollow. And always, in each direction, stretches the vast and brooding pine-oak forest.

BALD HILL FROM TOPPING'S PATH:

Of the two primary approaches to Bald Hill, the one from Topping's Path is the longer, making possible a loop of 9 or more miles over rugged pine-covered hills. The N end of Topping's Path is found at Exit 71 of the Long Island Expressway, next to "Calverton Hills," a recent subdivision. It begins as a tar road but soon turns to dirt and sand. (See Area #2.) A short distance S of the end of the paved section, a woods road heads E. For nearly 2 miles the woods road follows the boundary of Navy lands, bearing SE in a series of right angle turns. From it diverge a number of other woods roads and trails. The hiker should study the map carefully for many possible variations of routes, some with outstanding viewpoints. Bear in mind that the course to Bald Hill is constantly SE; on reaching intersections, choose the trails accordingly. Approaching Bald Hill, watch for a chubby water tank and a tall radio mast. These form the nearest landmarks and stand on a lower hill just NW of Bald Hill summit. The country here is wild and savage in appearance, with shaggy hills and ridges rising everywhere in a confused upheaval. A severe forest fire that burned a long swath here in the spring of 1980 opened many lookouts and added to the haunting melancholy of this tangled land. Yet it is magnificent, especially when considering the unique ecology of the barrens.

Periodic fires are vital to the regeneration of pitch pines, which require heat to open their serotinous (closed) cones. As early as the November following the fire in the spring of 1980, we noted an abundance of seedlings sprouting from the blackened forest floor. Continual suppression of fires would allow oaks and other tangled hardwood species to invade and become dominant. Furthermore, the twig and needle litter on the forest floor would accumulate to such a depth that, when the inevitable fire did occur, it would be a conflagration destroying virtually everything in its path. This did happen in May, 1862, when one of the worst

some 25 miles W, marks the area of Hauppauge and the easternmost remnants of the Oak Brush Plains. Continuing N, the trail soon joins a woods road (turn right), which in turn runs northward to the Long Island Expressway. At this point the woods road turns S, then briefly E, and finally S, coming out on Hot Water Street only 3/4 mile E of the second of the two trails noted above.

THE WHITE-BLAZED TRAIL SYSTEM:

Along this latter section of woods road, about 1 mile N of Hot Water Street, a whole system of beautiful forest trails diverge E, marked largely with white paint blazes. When linked to another trail running NW-SE, it forms a rough circle of nearly 4 miles and crosses many hills, their ravines draped with a lush pine forest, probably the finest on Long Island. Upon reaching the southeasternmost summit, the hiker will find a view across the coastal plain to the ocean.

Varied outlooks such as this are frequent in these hills. Steven Englebright, in his article, "Long Island's Secret Wilderness," in The Conservationist, Jan.-Feb. 1980, wrote of one:

"... from atop an abandoned wooden firetower in Manorville, one is startled, even shocked, to look south across the heart of a vast lush forest of pines and oaks which stretch without visual interruption toward the distant Atlantic Ocean. This is the Pine Barrens. Except for the wind, it is quiet here. From this lofty position it is easy to imagine the scenic magnificence that was once all of coastal New York, and to contemplate whether this last remaining vestige of it will always remain essentially unspoiled."

Explore and appreciate. Please respect all posted land.

V. AREA #3: THE MANORVILLE HILLS (EAST PORTION)

As they approach Riverhead, the hills become increasingly more rugged and higher in elevation. The region is characterized by the Peconic River just to the north, boulder-strewn hills to the west, numerous interior lookouts, and several kettlehole ponds north and east. Even farther east lies Cedar Swamp, with its sphagnum bogs, varied species of plants, and one of the last remaining stands of Atlantic white cedar in the barrens.

It is a vast region--some 6,400 acres unbroken by paved highways, when taken with the hills adjacent to the west. Larger than Fahnestock State Park in Putnam County, it is the last remaining wild land of any substantial size on Long Island. Hence its tremendous value to the pure watershed alone. Nowhere else on the Pine Barrens may a hiker enjoy such a variety of features in a single trip.

We have extended our map to include the nearest portion of the Peconic. Canoeists on the river can mark a portage at the dam of the Townsend Ironworks. (See Area #1.) Another "portage" is reached some two miles farther downstream at a small gas holder, or sphere. This was where the old trail to Bald Hill started, in the days before Route 24 was extended from Riverhead to the Expressway. Mr. Sam Yeaton, a prominent Long Island naturalist, told me that he often went in that way. Mr. Gilbert Raynor, his friend and also an excellent naturalist, said the route, a logging road, was so good that he once drove a conventional automobile all the way across from Hot Water Street to the gas sphere. This is still the primary NE-SW route across the area, though as more and more fire suppression roads were added its original alignment became confused. The tentative white blazes of the Pine Barrens Trail now link long portions of it.

The only unfortunate aspect is that the whole region is beset with heavy ATV and trail bike use. The resulting erosion is critically evident on many trails, particularly the steeper ones. This situation became so bad on Long Island in 1985 that Suffolk County and the Towns of Southampton, Brookhaven, Smithtown, Islip, and Babylon all enacted strict new regulations to control off-road vehicles. This has helped greatly, but enforcement in remote areas is difficult, and the problem persists. Vehicle registration is coming, as is user education and, if the public demands it, strict enforcement and more frequent patrols. It is a good idea to inform the State or County that you will be hiking in this area, and to obtain a permit for that purpose. (See section on permits.) We have found much less trail bike activity during the colder months. Saturdays also are better than Sundays for avoiding them.

Two items of history will be of interest to hikers planning trips here. In 1919 the Radio Corporation of America purchased lands immediately E and S of Wildwood Lake (see Area #4), and that summer Messrs. Harold H. Beverage and P.S. Carter began laying out several miles of experimental ground wire antennas along the Moriches-Riverhead Road. They were later joined by Messrs. Chester Rice and Edward Kellogg in living in a tent beside Wildwood Lake, and together nearly revolutionized the earlier theoretical knowledge of long distance radio reception. By 1921 a system of copper wires strung on poles, presumably along the ridge just N of the road (see ridge trail, Bald Hill from Route 24), extended 9 miles to the SW. By taking advantage of the directional properties of this system, the station established by these men successfully received radio messages from Europe.