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RACEBROOK TRACT

Orange
&
Woodbridge, CT

The Racebrook Tract encompasses 210 acres in Orange and 181 acres in Woodbridge. The Tract was purchased from two farmers, Asa Alling and Sylvester Colburn, by the New Haven Water Company early in the 20th century. The stone walls which crisscross the Tract are the original farm fences.

The two circuitous trails both start in Orange and cross over into Woodbridge. The longer trail is just over 2.5 miles. These relatively level trails generally pass through mixed hardwoods but parts of the white, purple, and red trails pass through impressive stands of white pines planted in 1909. These are a reminder that the area was originally planted in several varieties of evergreens. Timber harvests were conducted periodically by the Regional Water Authority and firewood

permits were issued. As a result the forest is delightfully open. Just off the parking lot there is a handicapped-accessible board walk through some of the interesting wetlands. The management of this forest was put under the direction of the Yale School of Forestry early in the 20th century and continued until the early 1950's when water company foresters took over. This was one of the first professionally managed forests in the country.

Because of its large size and its proximity to open space all the way to the Maltby Lakes this is a marvelous wildlife area. The varied habitats: streambeds, forests, wetlands, meadows, and brush make this attractive to a variety of animals and songbirds. Many species of reptiles and amphibians find the habitat to their liking and even avian predators such as the Great-horned Owl can occasionally be seen.



Photograph by Ed Tucker, Orange Conservation Commission

The Ox Shed was built and used during the construction of the Wepawaug Tunnel, parallel to the white blazed trail, built in the early 1900's between the Wepawaug Reservoir on Route 34 and the Maltby Lakes to combine the runoff from the two watersheds. It is not in use at present. The Ox Shed was originally used as a paymaster's shed for teams hauling to and from the tunnel construction. Later it was used to shelter oxen, mules, and horses.

Directions and Parking:

The Racebrook Tract parking area is located just off Racebrook Road (Route 114) in Orange just north of Derby Avenue (Route 34). Route 34 can be accessed via the Wilbur Cross Parkway.

Permitted Activities:

Permitted activities include hiking, cross country skiing, bicycling, horse back riding, and fishing in Race Brook and Colburn Brook. Special rules for the latter two activities are posted at the Ox Shed near the trail entrance. Dogs must be leashed. Please bag and remove any dog waste.

For more information about this location, contact:

Town of Orange
Conservation Commission
(203) 891-2122, ext. 768
Town of Woodbridge
Conservation Commission
(203) 389-3400
www.woodbridgect.org

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