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WALK BOOK: SHELDRAKE RIVER
TRAILS: A CONSERVATION AREA
OF THE TOWN OF MAMARONECK
NEW YORK.

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WALK BOOK

SHELDRAKE RIVER TRAILS

A CONSERVATION AREA OF THE

TOWN

OF

MAMARONECK

NEW YORK

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WHAT ARE THE SHELDRAKE RIVER TRAILS?

The 23 acre woodland area described in this booklet is the central section of a 54 acre tract of natural woodland owned by the Town of Mamaroneck. The entire tract is being maintained as a conservation area to attract and hold native plants and animals and to provide for observation and study of plant-animal communities. The trails offer a wealth of beauty and interest for the artist and photographer as well as a place of enjoyment for all lovers of the out-of-doors.

The development of Sheldrake Trails, and of the Leatherstocking Trail which is being developed through the former Cross County Parkway lands, is being directed by a five member Conservation Advisory Committee appointed by the Town Board. This Committee has worked cooperatively with the Mamaroneck Board of Education to provide an outdoor classroom that will permit creative educational use while maintaining and preserving the woodland.

Clifford E. Emanuelson, Associate Director of the Pinchot Institute for Conservation Studies, has served as Conservation-Education Consultant to the Advisory Committee and the Board of Education. Mr. Emanuelson has had the assistance of Sheldon Levine and Harry A. Simon, science teachers appointed by the Board of Education, in studying the educational potential of the area and developing plans for class use of the trails.

The Conservation Advisory Committee and the Town Board welcome and encourage your use of these trails. But orderly development and maintenance of the natural features of this area require both cooperation and discipline on the part of the individuals and the groups that visit the Sheldrake Trails. By observing the few, simple rules for protection of the area that are found on page 35, you will help to preserve this unique woodland tract and make it possible for all residents of our community to enjoy its unspoiled natural beauty.

HOW TO USE THE WALK BOOK

The Sheldrake Trails are developed with guide stations, each of which is located by a lettered guide post. These stations are designated on the map in the center of this book.

The various trails in the area are described and the illustrations on the left hand margins will help to orient you to the features to be observed as you walk along these trails. The hope is to stimulate and encourage observation and research on the part of individuals and groups using the area. Therefore, there is a minimum of labeling.

Trails in the area are designated as follows:

Westside Stream and Chestnut Trails

Stations A to D See pages 4 through 9

Flood Plain of Sheldrake River

Stations D to C See pages 9 and 10

Geology Trail

Stations B to I See pages 11 through 14

Eastside Stream, Mill Dam and Old Farm Trails

Stations E to H See pages 25 through 32

Woodland Trail

Stations J to G See pages 21 through 24

Leatherstocking Trails

Stations D to F See pages 15 and 16

This walk booklet has been developed to be a general guide for the trails throughout the Sheldrake River Conservation Area. Additional scientific guides and field keys would be necessary for those wishing to go into depth regarding a specific identification of flora and fauna.

WESTSIDE STREAM AND CHESTNUT TRAIL

At this point you are under the large TULIP TREE (1).

Can you see the similarity of the TULIP TREE leaf (1). and the tulip flower?

Here you can see the large area map on the back of the main sign. Please orient yourself.

On your left as you enter the trail, you will observe a giant nesting and feeding tree trunk. For the sake of safety the top decaying branches must be removed. The main trunk will remain for years as a natural source of food and shelter for many of the creatures who make their homes here.

Listen for the water of the SHELDRAKE RIVER running over and through the rocks on your right.

Along the trail you will find both VIRGINIA CREEPER (2) and POISON IVY (3).

Examine both —
But leaves of three
Let them be!

You will be passing under a canopy of WITCH HAZEL (4).

Note the numerous witch's caps on the leaves.

Why does the plant grow this gall?

ORIENTATION AREA

To the left you will see log seats. A short quiet visit here may bring you pleasant sights and sounds.

A tall leaning BLACK OAK (5) is just above you at guide post B.

Near to it is a tall SWEETGUM (6) which is commonly called Red Gum.

The SWEETGUM is an excellent tree for ornamental planting ranking with the most beautiful of our eastern broad-leaf trees.

THE POND

As you move on, you come to the "old swimming hole" of bygone days. The geological features show the eroding force of water.

A trip here on a rainy day will tell the story better than words.

Is this a natural pool? What forces created it? How? Was it used by the farmer? What use is being made of it now? Can you find evidence along the bank of feeding or stalking? Are there homes in the bank?

Study the two streams which join here. How are they different?

This bridge will appear at times to be built for no purpose. A visit in the spring or during and after a rain will prove its worth.

Are the fish in the pool natural stock? From where did they come? What evidence of use do you find here now? Animals and birds?

Notice the water-eroded rock across the pond. How does the water wear away such hard rock? What happens to the material which is worn away?

A study of deposits of the small stream under the bridge and out into the pool may give some answers.

Note the tree growth among the rocks. Here on the rocks is a good place to visit and observe.

STUMP SCOUTING

As you move along up stream, you will lose sight of the stream and come to a fork in the trail at Station C. This letter is cut into a stump top.

Have you ever tried stump scouting?

Try to answer these questions.

How old was the tree when cut down?

Why was it cut?

Where is the center?

Why is the center of the tree not in the center of the stump?

What tools were used in cutting down the tree?

Was a hand or power saw used?

Was an ax used?

Was the woodsman experienced?

Was he right or left handed?

What kind of tree stump is it?

Jack in the pulpit

Along the left fork you will find many young saplings. This is a good area for identification as there are many varieties of trees. A tree key would work well here.

THE CHESTNUT STORY

On the right is an excellent example of the struggle to survive of the AMERICAN CHESTNUT (7). It is our best example of persistence. Notice the new shoots coming up from the living root system from which the trunk and crown were killed 50-60 years ago.

You will find here three stages — the dead and diseased sprout, the living sprout, and the new sprouts taking over and keeping the root system alive.

The will to live in all things is amazing.

Man is working to conquer the infection of this tree as it was at onetime our most valuable harvest tree.

What part did it play in the economic growth and development of our nation?

Was it used for railroad ties, telephone poles, home and barn timbers, boards and flooring, fence posts, etc? Why?

Living sprout

New sprouts coming up

8

FIRE AREA

As you move along, you will notice that many young trees have been burned and that new growth, predominantly SASSAFRAS (8), is covering the burn. Note that the shrub has four differently shaped leaves. Can you find the right and left hand mitten leaves on the same tree?

Please Help Prevent Forest Fires!

OPEN AREA

Once again you are on the bank of the SHELDRAKE RIVER. On the left as you face the river is an open area.

You may wish to walk up the old bridle trail to the upper end of the marsh. This trail is for your enjoyment and is open to Highland Avenue.

Looking across the river, note the variety of field plants which provide food and cover for wildlife. This is a good area for studying plant succession.

Going right at Station D, you will be walking downstream. Observe the several ferns along the trail. Note the tiny dark spore cases, or sporangia, grouped into fruiting dots on the underside.

There are several decaying trees also. Some of these standing trees have fungus growths. There is also evidence of feeding and nesting holes. How long does the process of decay take?

Examine the fallen log on your right. In death there are many evidences of new life, food, and shelter.

FLOOD PLAIN AREA

In this area the grapevines have taken over control. What is happening to the trees and shrubs? Should the vine be cut out or does the food that it provides make up for the damage it is causing the trees? How do the vines affect the growth of other plants?

Here you find many plants which need a good supply of water. This area will flood during severe and heavy rains.

At the bend in the river you can observe the undercutting of the root system of the trees on the opposite bank. What will eventually happen to these trees?

Liverwort

Among the large rocks of the old bridle trail is a whole new world of water plant life.

The pool downstream from the rocks with its sand bar creates a completely different environment.

Are these living environments independent?

Following the trail downstream you will return to Station C. From this point you will retrace your steps to Rockland Avenue.

Do stop along the trail and enjoy this area which is here for you.

GEOLOGY TRAIL

Leave on the Geology Trail from the orientation area through the granite boulders in back of the logs. At this point the pond is to the right. As you move along, look up over the marsh on a 30° or 2:00 o'clock angle. What is happening to the tops of these decaying trees? Who is feeding there? Who may be living there? Can you identify feeding and living areas?

Note the sharp incline on your left as you walk along. What indicators do you have as to the underground structure of the area?

Geology wall — The constructed wall here has specimens of local geological structure. The three prominent rocks on the crest of this retention wall are the three basic forms:

IGNEOUS (42) SEDIMENTARY (43)
and METAMORPHIC (44)

To the left of the trail there is an excellent example of chipping. Can you see how this chip would fill in its old position?

Turning left through granite pass note the joints—rock separations to the left—making a cliff here. What part have roots played in separating the joints? Pass the twin oaks 2 feet in diameter. What do you estimate the age of these trees to be? What are the ways of determining the age? What other stately trees do we have in this area? Would these make good lumber? Why? Can they be harvested? Has there been a harvest here in past years? What was the need? Farming? Lumber? What ornamental trees do we find here? How did they get here?

Note the old stone wall and man's recent creation about 12' high. Which was harder to build considering when each was built?

Turn to the right with the stone ledge to your right and the watery depression to your left. Is this depression natural? What is being done to drain it? Why?

Cross the small foot bridge and note the rock garden along the ledge of rock about 12' to 15' high. Why are the ferns predominant here? What kinds are there? What makes the size different?

Consider the man-made wall and this wall of nature's handiwork. Which took longer to build? How did natural forces make this come to be? Wind? Rain? Water? Rivers? Glaciers?

As you leave the rock and fern garden, you come into an area with a predominance of small trees. Were these planted by man or did they grow by natural seed growth? Are they root sprouts?

Is there a large parent tree near by? What is the color of the bark? How does it feel? What is the shape of the leaf? What do you notice about the leaf's margin and veins? Has the bud formed for next year's growth? These are all characteristics which you can remember to help you recognize your friends of the woods just as you do your human friends.

We now come to a T in the trail at guide post I. The left turn will take you on the Leather Stocking Trail along the north-west belt to Highland Road and beyond. Off this trail about 20' is an excellent example of a glacial erratic.

On the right turn you pass over a small stream that feeds our marsh to the right. On the left, note the expiring trees. What has caused this to happen?

Continuing on the open path will bring you to the stream trail along the Shel-drake River — Station D. Watch for the overhand knot tree.

You are now arriving at two bridges, a natural and a man-made one. Which do you prefer? Take your choice. Is the same material being used?

As you stand on the man-made bridge, what do you see? What is moving? Why was the bridge built here? What is happening to the bridge? Why? If there is water flowing, why does it make the sounds that it does? Are the stones across the stream in a natural formation? If not, why were they put where they are? What is the purpose of a check dam? Can you find a place where another one is needed?

Are there different shapes on the crowns of the different kinds of trees you see?

As you walk down the path, note the increased bird activity. Why? How many different ones do you see?

What do the yellow paint markings mean? Why are they marked so boldly on the trees? Don't guess. Look where the arrow is pointing. Did you find anything? Is this system important to you? Where is its source? How far away? Why so far?

Some of the trees are dead or dying. Why? Should we cut them down?

What is the vine doing to the big oak on your right? What does the vine produce? Should the vine be cut away?

Does the manhole covered system connect with the other system you found?

45

You now face a large sweetgum (47). Why has this one taken a different shape from the others you have seen in the woods? Why were the two (2) lower branches removed? What is the tree trying to do about it? What tools were used to remove the branches? Where is the center of the lower branch? How come?

46

The trail to the left is the Leather Stocking Trail to Winged Foot Drive. To the right into the woods you will find Marker F. Note the increase in the number of trees here. Why? This must have been a very productive farm field at one time.

Note the difference in barks?

Smooth — Maples (45), Tulip (46) (when young)

Rough — Sweetgums (47), Ash (48)

47

F

48

M

**HAVE
YOU SEEN
OR
FOUND EVIDENCE
OF**

Gray Squirrel

Ring-necked Pheasant

Cottontail

Chipmunk

Skunk

Opossum

Muskrat

Raccoon

SHELDRAKE RIVER TRAILS

Robin

Blue Jay

Scarlet
Tanager

Catbird

HAVE
YOU SEEN
OR
HEARD

Bluebird

Chickadee

Mourning Dove

Flicker

WOODLAND WONDER TRAIL

Start to the right beyond the thicket and before the natural stone steps between the two young 1" to 1½" beeches. Station J marker will be on your right.

The young slender oak is a good example of understory growth.

The low bush with its small triangular leaf is a good food supply for _____?

How old do you estimate the large oaks to be in this area?

Note the greenish bark on the twigs and buds of the sassafras (35).

To the left, here we find the American Chestnut story. How long will the old stem last? There are no signs of the blight on the 1" shoot. Why?

As you walk down under the witch-hazel (36) and look to the left, you will see a brush pile. Why was the brush piled here? Did this low area serve some other purpose at one time? Did it have any connection with the old dam and pond?

Here you will find a good variety of young trees. Sweetgum (37), Maple (38), Sassafras (39), Birch (40). Can you feel the difference in the bark?

How was this low, wet area created? Is it natural or man-made?

There are second and third story apartments in the branches and crowns of the large trees. Are these for year-round use? Which of these two monarchs is the larger in circumference?

How can we find out? If you use your outstretched arms, look out for the reddish hairy vine on the beauty on the right. (Leaves of three, let them be.) Take a good look at the vine, leaf scars and buds. These can be seen the year-round.

Why must the young birches on your left grow tall and straight?

The mottled bark of the next giant of this woods on your right gives you an impression of sickness. Is it more sick than other trees in the area? But do not spell it that way or you will have one wrong on your spelling test.

Exploration around the base of this tree will only confirm your first thoughts of illness. Is there a relationship? How did the hole get here? What is happening here? For what can it be used? Is it being used now? What evidence do you find?

As you look upstairs, do you see any possibilities of other apartments?

What happened to the tree across the path? Do you see other nests? Why is late fall and winter the best time to discover homes in the woodlands?

As you come out of the valley, look up at the branch pattern of this beautiful oak. Doesn't the bark look firm and strong? Feel it. How does it feel to you?

To the right of the trail near the rocks is another big tree. Go and feel it. Does it feel the same? How does it look?

To the right at the bend in the trail is a large oak. Is it the same as the one with the beautiful shape? What is different?

This twin trunk tree on our left is a new one on this trail. Note the opposite branching and bark pattern. White Ash (41).

As you come to Station G, note the two rugged shaped trees in line on your right. How did they get here? What purpose did they serve? Are they producing food now?

As you explore with your eyes, what other trees were planted by man in this area? Why? How far from the main house were these trees planted? Can you find evidence to prove your deductions?

What is the value of the low seed producing plants here?

Why have the Locust moved in in this area?

To make a loop trip, turn to page 31 Station G and go right or left, whichever is your pleasure. If you turn right, continue reading from G. If you turn left, read backward from G.

EASTSIDE STREAM, MILL DAM AND OLD FARM TRAIL

WOODS THICKET

Starting at Station E which is to the right of the Rockland Avenue Bridge over the SHELDRAKE RIVER, you enter an area of dense growth of trees, shrubs, and briars.

in this immediate area you can find SWEETGUM (9), LOCUST (10), TULIP (11), WITCH-HAZEL (12), BIRCH (13), HICKORY (14), MAPLE (15), SASSAFRAS (16), WHITEOAK (17) and BEECH (18).

Note the differences in the bark of the trees. This is a good characteristic for identification when the leaves are off the trees.

Have you ever tried to pick up a handful of fallen leaves to discover from which trees they came?

As you move on, you will notice three large WHITE OAKS to the right. How old do you think they are? What would you estimate their height to be?

The WHITE OAK to the left of the trail has a reddish tentacled vine of POISON IVY growing up its trunk. The berries of the POISON IVY are the favorite food of bluebirds. At least 60 kinds of birds are reported to eat them. Does this give you a clue as to why stone walls and fence posts may be covered with POISON IVY? Where do you most often see a bluebird? Where do they nest?

OLD DAM SITE

The rocks over which you are climbing are granite. These "fire-made" rocks form the foundation of the earth's continents. There are many outcroppings in this area.

At the crest walk over and look down into the SHELDRAKE RIVER and to the opposite bank. You will see the remains of the old dam which once formed a farm or mill pond.

Was this a good location for a dam? Why? A study of the stream bed here will give you the answer.

AMERICAN SYCAMORE (19)

The mottled bark with brown, red, and green against a background of white is a result of inability to stretch to meet the expanding trunk.

BLACK OAK (20)

The black oak with its dark gray — almost black — bark provides a good contrast in bark structure.

Note the differences between the barks of the trees.

19

20

Plant succession

RETURN TO THE SOIL

As you pass the fallen tree which has been cut away to clear the trail, note the decay which is forming new top soil. This new top soil will nourish new life and is nature's own way of providing for survival.

What evidence of wildlife do you see?

You are now passing the upper end of the natural pool. Observe the rock formation of the opposite bank. Has water done all of this cutting away of the rock?

At this point you will cross over the old farm stone wall and enter a WITCH-HAZEL (21) thicket.

Notice the larger trees along the old wall. Here are excellent examples of living trees growing through the almost solid rock formation.

What is happening to the rocks?

As you move along, observe the green carpet of moss growing on the ground.

There is a good variety of young trees here all sticking their necks out for sunlight. This will make them tall and straight.

As you reach high ground, notice the rocks to your left. This is an excellent observation point. A quiet rest on the rocks should prove rewarding.

In front of you a MAPLE (22) is struggling to survive. Note the various holes in it. Should it be removed?

Can you see the FUNGUS growing on the ELM (23) tree near by across the stream? Why is the FUNGUS growing up on the tree?

Lichen through a lens

On the rocks on which you are standing or sitting an other link in the total environmental chain is at work. Can you find the LICHENS growing on the rocks? These gray-green plants do not have any true stems or leaves. They are tiny colonies of algae and fungi living together for mutual benefit. One cannot live without the other. We owe our present day soil to the pioneering action of LICHENS.

HABITATS

As you pass over the bridge over the dry run-off stream bed, notice the marshy area to your left.

The SKUNK CABBAGE will be the first to come up in the early spring even before the frost is out of the ground.

Notice the BRUSH PILES. We are not messy or poor "cleaner-uppers". The piles of brush are excellent cover for various small animals and birds which live in this area.

Here at the end of the bridge is a typical understory shrub found in wet woodlands. It is the SPICEBUSH whose leaves and trigs are aromatic.

Looking back over the bridge, notice the large open scar on the OAK. What caused it? What is the tree trying to do to cover the scar?

At Station F the left fork in the trail will take you out into the open area. Here you will find many field wildlife. Pheasants, as well as rabbits, have been seen.

24

25

26

Evergreen border plantings will help to improve this area. The RASPBERRY (24) GRAPE (25), and ELDERBERRY (26) habitats should be maintained.

As you move up the right fork of the trail, you will find **CHRISTMAS FERNS** (27) which are still green at Christmas-time. Each pinna is shaped like a Christmas stocking.

OLD FARM AREA

Note the green growth on the trees. This is not **MOSS** but an **ALGA** called **PROTOCOCCUS**. Compare the color of this growth before and after a rain. The **MOSS** growing on the ground here indicates wetness.

28

JEWELWEED (28) also grows here in abundance. If you hold a leaf under water, you will see why it has this name. In the late summer look for the orange flowers and seed pods which open at the slightest touch.

29

Can you find the old **APPLE** (29) orchard? In this area there are several old **APPLE** trees which give evidence of the location of the old homestead. **BLUE-BIRDS** frequently rest in such trees.

30

Why are fruit trees usually found on most old farm sites?

Where did the farmer get the stones for the old **STONE WALL**? Why did he build the wall?

31

An excellent opportunity to observe **POISON IVY** (30) and **VIRGINIA CREEPER** (31) together is found here at the stone wall crossing. These two are often confused during identification. **NEW YORK**

FERN (32) is growing out of the protected hole in between the rocks. Look carefully at the fern and you will find the fruiting dots or SORI.

At Station G you are in the approximate center of the orchard.

The RASPBERRY (33) patch to your right has grown quite large and provides food for the birds and wildlife of the area. Such thorny thickets make excellent breeding areas as well. Please help to preserve such areas. This is a nature preserve.

You are now standing in the middle of what was once an old colonial farm area. Look up to the crowns of the stately old ELMS (34).

The four ELMS pinpoint the old foundation of the home on your left. Why are two of the ELMS dead? How serious is the ELM disease? What is man doing about it?

You are now passing through a LOCUST (35) grove.

You are now at Station H and are coming out on Rockland Avenue once again.

You may return to the beginning by going right along Rockland Avenue to where you started or you may retrace your steps along the trail.

Do stop along the trail and enjoy this area which is here for you.

False Solomon's Seal

Solomon's Seal

Conservation Pledge

I give my pledge
as an American to save
and faithfully to defend from
waste the natural resources of
my country—its soil and
minerals. Its forests, waters,
and wildlife.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

A MESSAGE FROM THE CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE TOWN OF MAMARONECK:

Man has not been kind to his natural heritage. He has stripped the hillside of its cover, ruined the air with smog and poisoned the land and its animals by indiscriminate use of pesticides. He has drained and filled swamps so that shrimp and oysters are dying and migratory birds fail for want of a nesting place. He is fast creating an environment for himself whose bleakness and ugliness will rob his life of much that is worthwhile or beautiful.

In his message to Congress in February 1966, President Johnson proclaimed a creed to preserve our natural heritage which outlined the rights of our people—and their duty to respect these rights.

“The right to clean water
and the duty not to pollute it.”

“The right to clean air
and the duty not to befoul it.”

“The right to surroundings reasonably free from man-
made ugliness
and the duty not to blight.”

“The right of easy access to places of beauty and tran-
quillity where every family can find recreation and
refreshment
and the duty to preserve such places clean and
unspoiled.”

“The right to enjoy plants and animals in their natural
habitat
and the duty not to eliminate them from the
face of the earth.”

You can add fullness to your own life and to that of those around you by respecting this creed. By imparting its tenets to others, you can add dimension to the conservation movement. Lastly, by insisting that your local, state and national representatives take cognizance of your desire for the preservation of natural beauty, you can do much to insure the ultimate success of the program.

Despite all of our wealth and knowledge, we cannot create a red-wood forest, a wild river, a salt-marsh or a gleaming seashore. But we can keep those we have!

The Conservation Advisory Committee welcomes the assistance of local organizations and individuals — youth groups, service clubs or any conservation-oriented body — in projects for the development and improvement of the Sheldrake River Trails. It is expected that such projects will be under the direction of the Committee and the Conservation Consultant and that volunteers will work under the supervision of the Ranger-Custodian employed by the Town to safeguard and preserve the natural life in the area.

Rules for the use of Sheldrake River Trails

1. The area is open daily from dawn to dusk only.
2. Visitors should remain on the trails. Walking through the undergrowth will disturb or even injure wild inhabitants and plants.
3. Visitors are requested not to litter the trails. Picnics and fires are not allowed in the area. Smokers are urged to be *sure* they do not cause any small fires through carelessness.
4. Visitors are cautioned not to dig plants, to cut or break plants or trees, or to disturb any living thing in the area. Hunting or fishing are strictly forbidden.
5. Dumping in any section of the Sheldrake River Trails is a violation of the rules and is subject to a fine.

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C.C.-L.C. noting

Additional copies of this booklet may be secured for use by local organizations and residents from the

Conservation Advisory Committee
Town of Mamaroneck
158 West Boston Post Road
Mamaroneck, New York.

A donation of 25 cents per copy will assist in revising and reprinting the booklet as the Sheldrake River Trails are extended and developed.

DO NOT CIRCULATE

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