

THE STORY OF SHELDRIK FOREST ...

Virtually unknown to the rest of the world, a 227-acre tract of old, high quality forest survived in southwestern New Hampshire nearly undisturbed since farmland abandonment in the 19th century. By the end of 1994, all that was about to change. The forest was at risk of development. However, thanks to the extraordinary grassroots support of neighbors, schoolchildren, conservation commissions, garden clubs, local businesses and concerned citizens from New Hampshire and beyond, Sheldrick Forest was saved.

From 1897 to 1994 this forest was owned by the Sheldrick family. Under their stewardship large sections of the forest had been left undisturbed for more than 150 years. Unfortunately, after the last member of the family passed away in 1994, the property was purchased in December of that year by a developer who intended to fully exploit its economic value — not just for timber, but also for the forest's rich gravel deposits and for residential development in one of the fastest-growing and most densely populated regions of New Hampshire.

Swift Corwin, a forester from Peterborough, was hired by the developer to identify and mark trees over 12 inches in diameter for harvesting. Swift was awed by the size, diversity, and age of the trees in Sheldrick Forest, which he described to the Boston Globe this way, "I think this is a jewel. As much a jewel as climbing to the top of Mount Monadnock." He discussed the

ecological importance of the forest with the developer who agreed to allow Swift to talk with Sweet Water Trust, a Boston-based foundation focused on protecting large tracts of forestland. Sweet Water Trust, in turn, directed Swift to The Nature Conservancy, which he approached in the spring of 1995 about possibly protecting the land.

In August, the developer agreed to sell the property for several hundred thousand dollars, but allowed a very narrow window of time to raise the needed funds. His plans to log the forest would go forward if payment in full was not quickly delivered by September of that year. An anonymous, last-minute donation enabled the Conservancy to secure an eleven-month contingency option.

The creation of Sheldrick Forest is a remarkable and classic example of grassroots conservation. It became a rallying point for land preservation in southern New Hampshire. A flurry of contributions and fundraising events — walks, bake sales, concerts, poetry readings, and raffles — showed incredible dedication to the cause. The Conservancy was able to raise the full purchase price by April 1996 — four months earlier than the deadline.



This project truly captured peoples' imaginations. The Nature Conservancy is proud of its effort to preserve this magnificent land for future generations to use and enjoy. This forest has become a living, thriving symbol of what a group of citizens can accomplish by working together.

NATURAL HISTORY

Sheldrick Forest is extraordinary. Woodlands of this age, size, and species diversity have disappeared from virtually all of southern New Hampshire. The preserve's rolling topography includes several eskers, a ravine forest, seeps and streams, adding to its wild character. Sheldrick Forest is part of a larger conservation landscape of unbroken

forest including the Forest Society's more than 1,000-acre Heald Tract. These large and unfragmented forests provide breeding habitat for interior forest nesting birds like wood thrushes, ovenbirds and scarlet tanagers, along with uplands, streams and wetlands for wide-ranging mammals like black bear and moose to find food, shelter and cover.

The forest has a broad diversity of tree species in a wide array of ages including hemlock, beech, black birch and red oak, as well as white pine — some over 200 years old. The topography has stories to reveal about the area's glacial history (try walking along the esker on the Laurel Ridge Trail). Stone walls, mountain laurel, streams, vernal pools and old lanes enrich the forest and provide further insights to the preserve's natural and man-made history.

Signs of wildlife, too, are perceptible to the observant visitor. Barred owls can often be heard (and sometimes spotted) nesting in the trees in early spring. In winter, look for tracks left behind by white-tailed deer, red fox, bobcat, black bear and fisher. Many bird species, such as pileated woodpecker, saw whet owl, ovenbird, scarlet tanager, wood thrush and a variety of songbirds call the forest home throughout the spring and summer.

VISITING SHELDRIK FOREST

There are over 3 miles of trails throughout Sheldrick Forest. This trail network is, in turn, connected to 6 miles of trails to the south on the Heald Tract (owned by a private family and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests) and an additional 2 miles of trail to Pratt Pond in Mason (within the Russell-Abbott State Forest). The Heald Tract and Pratt Pond — with ponds and wetlands — are a pleasant complement to the Sheldrick Forest's springs, streams, and brooks. The extensive trail network (11 miles in total) provides a number of options for visitors interested in studying nature or hiking.

DIRECTIONS

From Milford, drive west on Route 101 past Wilton center. Turn left onto Temple Road just beyond Gary's Harvest Restaurant (approx. 2.1 miles west of the junction with Route 31 South, or 1.1 miles east of the Temple town line). Travel 0.3 mile on Temple Road, bear left to cross a bridge, and then turn left onto Town Farm Road. Travel 0.7 mile to the preserve entrance. Parking is in a field to the left of the road.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

Please, for the protection of this area and its inhabitants, and for everyone's enjoyment:

- ◆ FOOT TRAVEL ONLY
- ◆ NO PETS
- ◆ PLEASE CARRY OUT ALL OF YOUR TRASH (AND EVEN SOME THAT THE LESS THOUGHTFUL HAVE LEFT BEHIND)
- ◆ NO REMOVAL OR DESTRUCTION OF PLANTS, WILDLIFE, OR MINERALS
- ◆ NO CAMPING OR OPEN FIRES
- ◆ NO HUNTING, TRAPPING, OR FISHING

WITH GRATITUDE ...

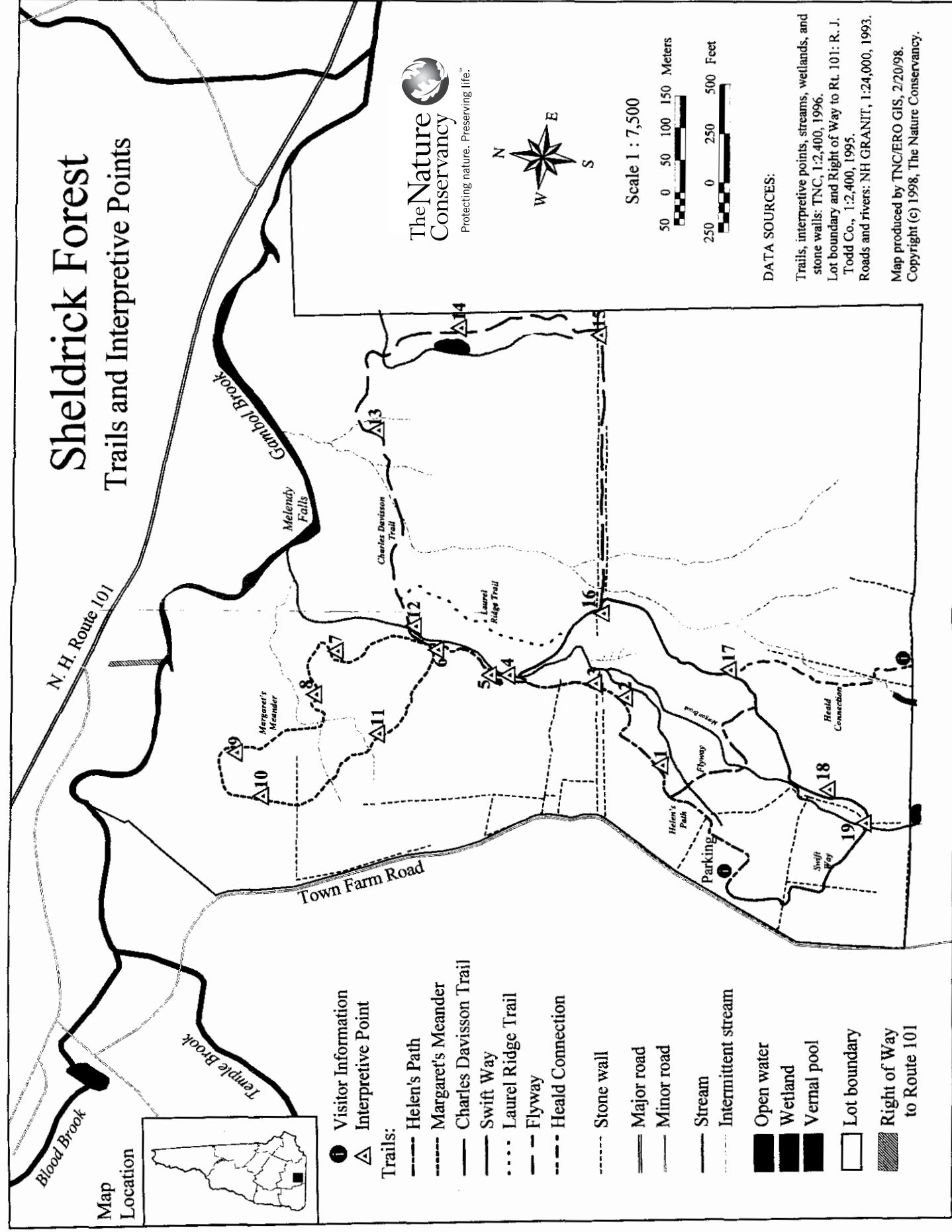
The Nature Conservancy is deeply grateful to the many supporters and volunteers who generously contributed to the purchase of the preserve and the creation of the trail system, kiosk, educational materials, and other visitor information.



The Nature Conservancy 
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

The Nature Conservancy is an international, non-profit conservation organization. Our mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Since establishing its first preserve here in 1961, The Nature Conservancy in New Hampshire has helped protect more than 280,000 acres of ecologically significant land and currently owns and manages 30 preserves across the state. For more information on Sheldrick Forest, The Nature Conservancy, or any of our preserves, please contact us:

The Nature Conservancy in New Hampshire
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HELEN'S PATH — 0.45 miles

This is the main trail into the heart of the preserve — the valley of large trees along Morgan Brook. The trail has one moderately steep section and drops a total of 150 feet in elevation.

Beginning at the kiosk, enter the forest near the northeast corner of the parking field. After passing through a stone wall, start a mild descent through a mixed hardwood-conifer forest to the junction with FLYWAY at 0.15 mile. Descend through a moderately steep section with large white pine, pass a forest glade (on the right), and cross an old stone-lined road at 0.25 mile. Continue straight and descend slightly, then cross another stone wall, enter the valley and its stand of large hemlock, pine, and oak trees at 0.35 mile. Pass the junction with SWIFT WAY and continue past a vernal pool and through the valley along the west side of Morgan Brook another 0.10 mile to connect with both MARGARET'S MEANDER and CHARLES DAVISSON TRAIL.

MARGARET'S MEANDER — 0.65 miles

This loop trail explores the carved glacial deposits in the northwest corner of the preserve. Following some undulating ridges of glacial deposits, it has three moderately steep areas changing elevations of 20 to 50 feet in a short stretch of trail.

The trail begins and ends at the junction of HELEN'S PATH and CHARLES DAVISSON TRAIL. If traveling counter clockwise, travel through a mixed hardwood-conifer forest scattered with large red oak and senescent white birch and at first follow an old logging road skirting the edge of a small hill. At 0.10 mile, begin a short climb up onto a steep ridge in a medium-aged forest above Gambol Brook and Route 101, follow the glacial ridge, and at 0.20 mile descend off the ridge to cross a small stream in a mature forest with beech. Meander through a valley with signs of past timber harvest before climbing onto another glacial ridge with large pine and passing above a steep slope of hemlock forest (to the north). Then turn southward at 0.35 mile, and level out on a glacial terrace with a young forest, cross through a stone wall at 0.40 mile, and begin bending back toward the trail's origin. Descend gradually, cross a small stream at 0.50 mile, and merge with an old woods road for the last stretch of the loop.

CHARLES DAVISSON TRAIL — 0.85 miles

This trail explores the large trees, mature forest, mountain laurel, and stone-lined road of the preserve's northeast corner. It travels mostly level terrain and has only gradual elevation changes.

One end of the trail is at the junction of HELEN'S PATH and MARGARET'S MEANDER. From this point, follow an old woods road through a mixed forest dominated by hemlock and mountain laurel, and turn right to cross Morgan Brook. Continue along the old woods road, and begin a gradual climb to the junction with LAUREL RIDGE TRAIL at 0.05 mile. Continue a gradual climb, cross a stream at 0.15 mile, and continue along the old woods road and stream a short distance before cutting right. Climb a bit more, travel along the edge of a terrace above Gambol Brook and Route 101, and enter a stand of large oak, pine, and hemlock at 0.30 mile. Then turn south, cross a small stream, and travel through a mature forest which can be observed in contrast to the young forest (harvested c. 1985) on the abutting property to the east. Turn west at 0.60 mile and travel along the old Holt Road -- lined with stone walls and mountain laurel, and punctuated with stone culverts. The trail's other end intersects in a hemlock stand with SWIFT WAY.

SWIFT WAY — 0.60 miles

This trail provides an alternative and more gradually sloping avenue into or out of the heart of the preserve. It goes through an old pine grove and a young pine flat and crosses Morgan Brook on an old stone bridge.

One end of the trail begins along HELEN'S PATH in the valley of large hemlock trees. From here, cross Morgan Brook and head southeast, following an old woods road along the base of a slope. Follow a moderate uphill grade to the junction with LAUREL RIDGE TRAIL at just under 0.10 mile. Continue gradually uphill through a young hemlock grove to arrive at the old stone-lined road and the junction with CHARLES DAVISSON TRAIL at just over 0.10 mile. Continue diagonally across the road to climb gradually and moderately uphill through an open old pine grove. At 0.25 mile, HEALD CONNECTION turns off to the left, and, at 0.30 mile FLYWAY turns off to the right. As the trail levels off, enter a young pine forest and cross Morgan Brook via an old stone bridge at 0.40 mile, leaving the forest to enter the preserve's southernmost field at 0.50 mile. Head northward across this field and down a wide grassy avenue back to the parking field.

LAUREL RIDGE TRAIL — 0.20 miles

This trail follows a ridge line above and to the east of Morgan Brook and offers nice views down into the valley of Morgan Brook. Both ends of the trail have a brief moderate climb or descent to get up onto or off of the ridge, but the ascent is more gradual from the north.

One end of this trail leaves CHARLES DAVISSON TRAIL just after it crosses Morgan Brook. From there it begins a moderate climb through a mixed forest with a mountain laurel understory. The trail reaches the ridge line at 0.10 mile and offers views down into the Morgan Brook valley as it follows the ridge southward descending to an intersection with the SWIFT WAY.

FLYWAY — 0.15 miles

This short trail provides access to the upper reaches of the Morgan Brook valley and provides a direct route to SWIFT WAY and HEALD CONNECTION. The trail navigates some moderate elevation changes.

One end of the trail begins at HELEN'S PATH. From here, descend gradually down into the valley, cross Morgan Brook at the mid-point of the trail, and begin a steady uphill climb to the pine grove above Morgan Brook. End at SWIFT WAY.

HEALD CONNECTION — 0.90 miles

This trail connects the Sheldrick Forest and its trail network with that of the Heald Tract. The trail is fairly level, sloping gently down toward the south.

Begin from SWIFT WAY and head south through an open young pine forest. Cross a small intermittent stream and a stone wall. Cross another stone wall at 0.20 miles; this is the southern boundary of the Sheldrick Forest Preserve, and there is a trail register here for visitor sign in and preserve maps for both the Sheldrick Forest and Heald Tract. Continue south 0.70 miles to The Rocks just east of Castor Pond on CASTOR POND TRAIL of the Heald Tract.

PLEASE NOTE: For your guidance, the trail directional signs throughout the preserve use a diamond (◆) to show the quickest route back to the preserve entrance and parking lot.