

## Trail Descriptions (continued)

**Valley Rim Trail** (0.34 miles) - Starting at the end of the Tower Trail, the Valley Rim Trail winds upward on a dirt road along the Lawton Valley Rim. On the right is historical Lawton Valley, once owned by Julia Ward Howe and site of a grist mill. On the right 205 yards up, past the perimeter fence is the old Town Farm Cemetery. Further on the left is the "Mag Lab", a small building designed for the testing of magnetic systems. A cut-through to the Birchway Trail is available here. Continuing upward on the Valley Rim trail, an intersection with the end of the Birchway trail is found on the left. The Valley Rim trail continues to wind upward to the left and, following the edge of the woodland, ends at the Thomas C. Ligon Trail across from the Constitution building.

**Woodland Wander Trail** (0.36 miles) - From the 1630's to the 1950's, the woodland was cleared and farmed, stone walls bordering the many fields for livestock and planting. Developed for Raytheon in the early 1960's, portions of the land began its natural transition back to an "Emerging Forest". Important concepts to be learned on this trail are forest succession, propagation mechanisms, competitive selection, wildlife food value, historical and current uses of the trees and plants of the Emerging Forest.

Starting at an intersection near the top of the Tower Trail, The Woodland Wander Trail enters an Eastern Red Cedar forest. Typically first to appear on abandoned farms, red cedar seed cones ripen to pale blue berries high in fat, fiber, and carbohydrates. The berries are eaten by birds dispersing the seeds over a wide area. Native Americans used the bark for bedding and mats. Curving to the right, the trail gradually descends a hillside, softly carpeted by generations of Cedar needles. On the right, a Black Cherry tree can be seen. Its sprouts and seedlings are a food for rabbit and deer. Native Americans ground the fruit with animal fat to create pemmican, an important part of their winter diet. The bark yields a substance used as a sedative and as an ingredient in cough syrup. Continuing on the left, a good example of High Bush Blueberry can be seen just off the trail. Native Americans ate the berries of this shrub and made a tea with its leaves used to treat sore throats, poor appetites, urinary tract infections and diarrhea. Through an opening in an old stone wall, we come to an area abundant with fruit trees including pin cherry, wild black cherry, pear, and apple. The Common Apple is a European tree first brought to America by the Massachusetts Bay Colony and propagated throughout Massachusetts and Rhode Island by William Blackstone. The fruit was used primarily for apple-jack, an alcoholic beverage. The trail winds to the left in a hairpin curve down a series of stone steps. At the bottom of the curve is an old Stone-Lined Well dating back to the 1700's. To the right of the well is a Black Gum Tupelo. Pioneers used its particularly tough, hard-to-split wood to make wheel hubs. Continuing onward the trail passes back through an

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## Trail Descriptions (continued)

opening in the stone wall through seasonal wild garlic. The trail bends sharply to the right then descends gradually leftward. The forest opens, allowing seasonal Jewelweed ground cover on both sides of the trail to thrive. Jewelweed has a yellow flower in early summer, and its leaves, crushed in a poultice, are a Native American cure for poison Ivy. Ahead on the right, a series of hairy vines climb the trees. This vine is Poison Ivy. Most people are allergic to urushiol, the sticky yellow oil that is found in all parts of the plant and it remains toxic during its winter dormancy. Descending slowly, the trail turns sharply to the left at the site of a fallen Red Cedar. And a Red Maple tree is on the left. The red maple is an example of the tall, broad, canopied trees that will inhabit the climax forest, eventually replacing our young, emerging forest. In 1890, Rhode Island students named it our State Tree. Continuing on, Red Cedar are dominant along with a few High Bush Blueberry. Exiting the grove, a Sycamore Maple can be seen on the left. This European tree was brought to America long ago and is now common in the area. Though its fruit does not attract wildlife, its high tolerance to salt and air pollution make it a hearty planting for shade. Its bark is used in herbal medications as a wash for skin problems, sore eyes and wounds. Continuing onward, the trail ascends past an Arrowwood tree on the left. It produces small white flowers that ripen into bluish-black berries in late fall, lasting into winter. These berries are preferred by wildlife. Native Americans used its stems as arrow shafts and smoking pipes. The Gray Birch, on the left, is a pioneer species which often inhabits burned areas or an abandoned farms. It acts as a nurse tree, protecting the seeds of longer-lived trees that eventually shade it out. Birds and animals don't favor it as food. The trail continues past a patch of Ferns on the right and winds slowly upward passing a Pin Cherry on the left and emerges at an intersection with the Tower Trail. The Pin Cherry is also called "Bird Cherry" since it is a favorite with birds. The Pin Cherry is also commonly named "Fire Cherry" because of its value as a reforestation tree after a fire. Its seeds are heat tolerant and require high temperatures to germinate. Native Americans ate the fruit and used the bark for decorating baskets.



1847 West Main Road  
Portsmouth, Rhode Island 02871  
Attention: Brenda Bibb  
Email: [webmaster@rewhc.org](mailto:webmaster@rewhc.org)  
<http://rewhc.org>

Form: RF006, V1.10 2/28/04



# Interpretive Trail System



## Objectives

- The objectives for our Interpretive Trail System are to:
- Promote employee environmental and historical awareness through interpretive trails providing controlled access to natural and historic areas,
  - Promote community involvement by inviting local organizations to help survey wildlife and enjoy our wild trails,
  - Promote employee fitness through lunchtime jogs and walks.

## Trail Descriptions

**Birchway Trail** (0.25 miles) - Starting from the Tower Trail, the Birchway Trail slopes steadily upward past many young birch trees. Continuing upward, the "Mag Lab", a small building designed for the testing of magnetic systems is seen on the right. A bypass to the Valley Rim Trail is available here. The Birchway Trail continues upward turning to the right and ends at an intersection with the Valley Rim Trail.

**Crabapple Trail** (0.14 miles) - Starting from the Thomas C. Ligon Trail in the Nimitz building parking lot, the Crabapple Trail slopes gracefully downward past a large crabapple tree where owl pellets have been found. Continuing downward, the Crabapple Trail ends at an intersection with the Tower Trail.

**Thomas C. Ligon Trail** (1.34 miles) - This trail is the main walking route for lunchtime fitness enthusiasts. It has a level surface suitable for walkers and joggers alike.

**Meadow Meander** (0.50 miles) - Starting from the Thomas C. Ligon Trail, the Meadow Meander follows the edge of the meadow to a loop in the far meadow and doubling back. In season, you walk amongst the wildflowers.

**Tower Trail** (0.23 miles) - Starting behind the Nimitz building by the water tower, the tower trail angles downward through areas rich with poison ivy and invasive Asian bittersweet. At the trail head is an Eastern White pine which once stood in vast forests reaching to the Mississippi. Further along, the Woodland Wander trail leads off to the right. Continuing along, the Tower Trail intersects with the Crabapple Trail on the left. Continuing onward, the trail continues to descend, intersecting with the other end of the Woodland Wander trail on the right. Continuing its descent, the Tower Trail intersects with the Birchway Trail on the left before terminating at the Valley Rim Trail.

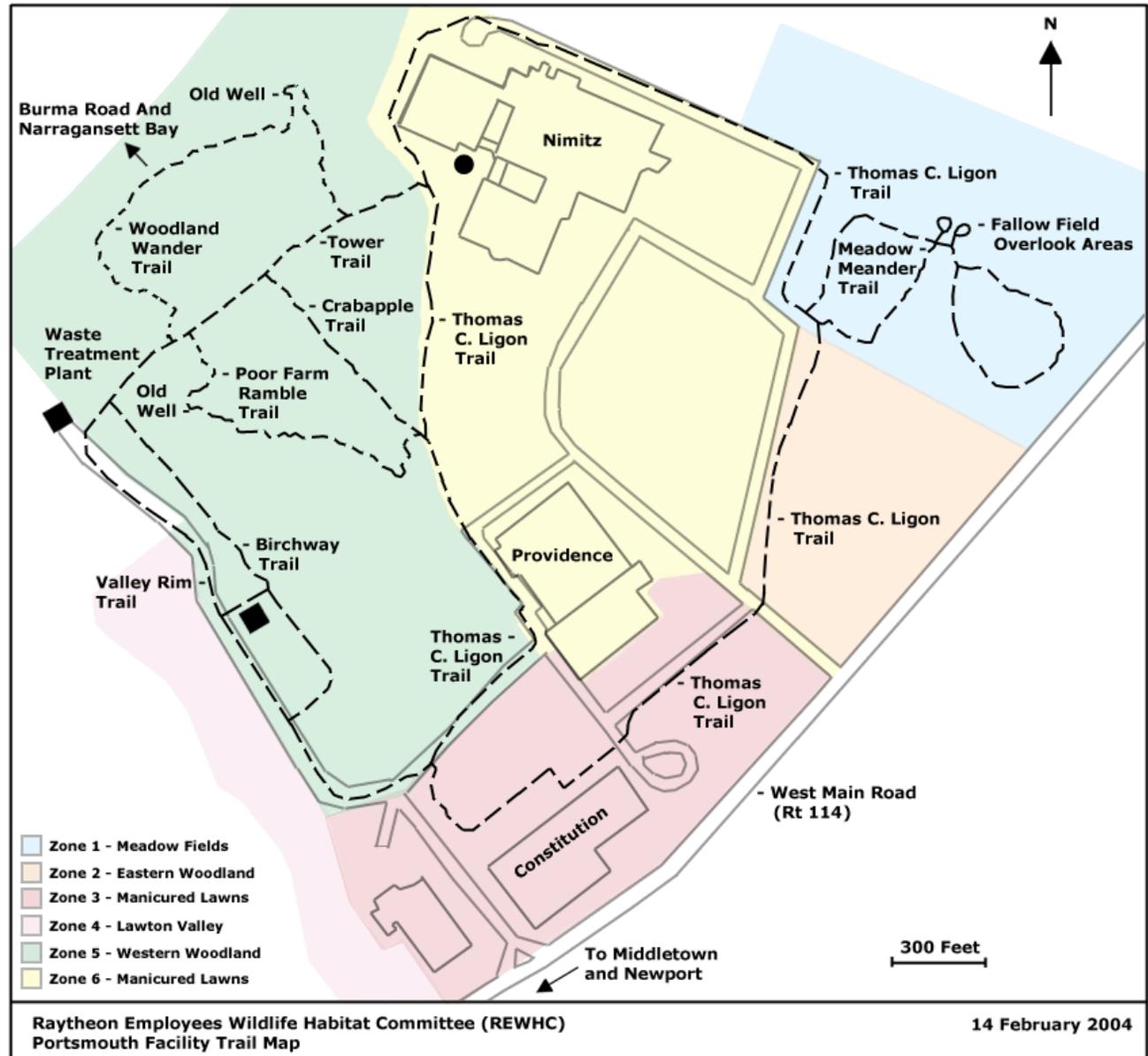
**Poor Farm Ramble** (0.24 miles) - Starting on the tower trail, east of the terminus of the Woodland Wander trail, the trail cuts through a stone wall and passes through the site of the Portsmouth Asylum, a Poor Farm run in the nineteenth century by the town. A well can be seen on the right, and the foundations of the many outbuildings dot the landscape, depressions in the ground where the coursing mud of a century of disuse, has all but covered its former presence. Buried somewhere here is the infamous "Portsmouth Dungeon", where inmates were punished on bread and water. Impressive "wolf" trees, including "Wild Black Cherry" and "Sycamore Maple," can be seen on the right along the trail as it slowly ascends to intersect with the Crabapple Trail near where it intersects with the Thomas C. Ligon Trail.

# Trail Map

There are presently about 3.4 miles of trails in the REWHC Portsmouth system.

### Notes:

- Please stay on the trails, leave only footsteps, and take only photographs.
- The site is divided into six zones based on wildlife habitat.



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