

Red Acre Woodland

Summary: A one-hour out-and-back tour through the southern section of the Captain Sargent Land into the largest of the Red Acre parcels passes through fields, forest and wetlands; over streams and along a ridge line by a glacial kettle hole. Moderate in difficulty with several steep sections; expect muddy and wet areas.

Trailhead Location: Pedestrian access to the Red Acre Woodland lies across from #109 Red Acre Road. The nearest off-road parking is at the Captain Sargent parking area, located on the north side of South Acton Road, just east of its junction with Tuttle Lane. The parking lot can accommodate several cars.

Access and parking for 1-2 cars are also available at the Red Acre Woodland sign near Tatler's Birches on the south side of South Acton Road, east of the Highway Barn.

History: John Bird purchased Red Acre Farm in 1870 from Mr. Noyes and the family used it as a summer home. Harriet Gertrude Bird was born at the farm three years later. She came into possession of the farm at the age of 29 after the death of her father (1902). At that time, the farm comprised 83 acres.

On May 8, 1903, she established the Red Acre Farm Hospital and Rest for Horses. Red Acre Farm was incorporated on Jan. 20, 1906. Miss Bird purchased a 10-acre hay lot immediately north of the farm in order to provide for her horses. Over the course of the next seven decades, over 6,000 horses were rescued. Many, especially in the early years, were in such misery that they were purchased for an average of \$3 a piece and mercifully killed. Others who could be rehabilitated were taken to the farm, given veterinary care, fresh pasture and time to heal.

Miss Bird and Red Acre Farm played an instrumental role during WWI in support of the Red Star Animal Relief, providing counsel and supplies to Army remount stations throughout the U.S. The 1930s saw the establishment of two free clinics for animals, one in Alliston, Mass. and one in Monrovia, Cal. After WWII, Miss Bird built 10 houses on her former hay lot and sold them at cost to returning veterans; one of whom was George Shultz, who later became Secretary of State under President Reagan. The area became known as Red Acre Village. During the 25 years beginning in the mid-1950s, other Red Acre land was home to the laboratories of Comparative Pathology and, later, Biochemistry. After the laboratories closed in 1980, the buildings became home to the Red Acre Hearing Dog Center, which trained and placed over 100 dogs with hearing-impaired individuals. After closing in 1993, the HDC property was leased, then sold, to the Kids-A-Lot childcare center.

In 1966, Red Acre Farm, Inc. purchased 167 acres between Red Acre and South Acton Roads from the Warren family for conservation purposes. On May 13, 2002, this land and all its other land in Stow and Maynard, totaling 204 acres, was sold by the now Red Acre Foundation to the Stow Conservation Trust. The Stow Conservation Commission was awarded Self-Help Grant money for the purchase of a permanent conservation restriction, which included a joint land use and management plan with the SCT. This purchase represents a key step in a long-term plan to link together the conservation land in Stow that is available for public use.

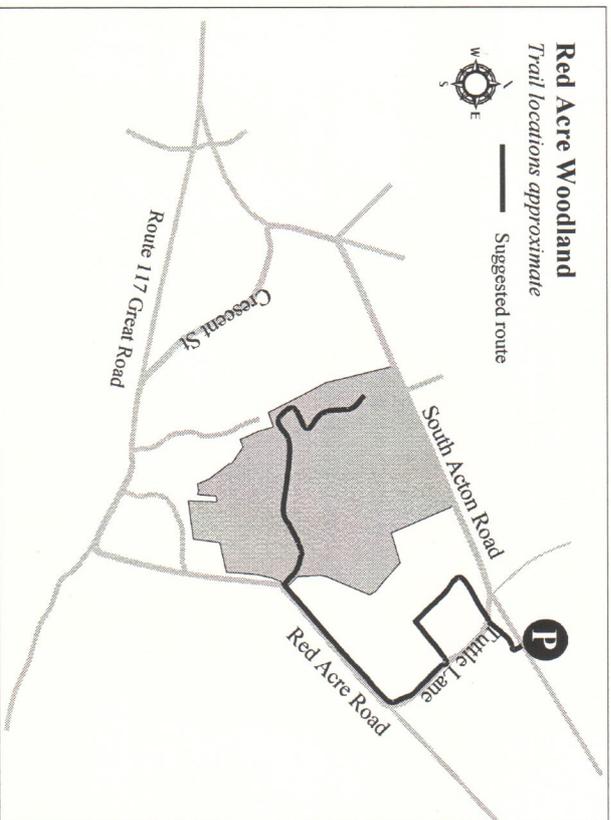
Nature to Look For: The property is covered by 75 acres of upland forest and 120 acres of forested wetlands and is identified by numerous organizations as a 'Core Habitat' for biodiversity and rare species.

Suggested Route: From the entrance to the Captain Sargent parking area, walk across South Acton Road. Pass through a small wooded area to the edge of a large field, and bear right to circle around the edge of the field, continuing to Tuttle Lane (paved).

Cross Tuttle Lane, bearing slightly to the right onto a grassy path leading through undergrowth to a large field. An abandoned foundation built of great blocks of granite lies to the left of the trail by the road. Bear right to circle this field. As the well-worn trail starts to curve back toward Tuttle Lane, turn right through a wooded strip and over a stone fence to a second field.

Turn right along the edge of this field. As the trail around the field begins to bear to the left, continue around the field and back to Tuttle Lane. Turn right along Tuttle Lane. At a T-junction with Red Acre Road, turn right and walk along Red Acre. Across from #109, turn right and briefly downhill past a metal gate, on a wide and level trail threading through a small wetland.

The trail rolls gently through a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees and undergrowth, with occasional muddy areas. Where a stream flows across the trail, well-placed logs provide a way across. Shortly after the stream, turn right onto the AT&T right of way, then immediately left onto a narrow trail. The path soon climbs up a moderate slope to a T-junction. Stop here and retrace your path, returning to the parking area on South Acton Road.



Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir.

Hyperion – John Keats (1795–1821)