

## Welcome to Thorne Head

The Preserve is open free of charge to the public from dawn to dusk. Help us protect what you have come to enjoy. Natural areas are delicate; foot traffic only, no camping, fires, or motorized vehicles. Leave only footprints. Please respect boundary signs. Dogs permitted on leash. Please pick up after your pet and remove all waste from the preserve. Enjoy your visit!

## Ecology of Thorne Head

As you enjoy Thorne Head's spectacular waterfront and forest, look for 6 natural features that support a wide variety of flora and fauna on the Preserve. Stop, look and listen at each one to discover more than 100 plant species and the birds they attract. Deer, fox, raccoon, and mink are visitors as well.

### 1. Fresh Water Marsh

Just north of the main gate, this habitat supports migrating birds, feeding ducks, and is home to aquatic amphibians.

### 2. Mixed Woods

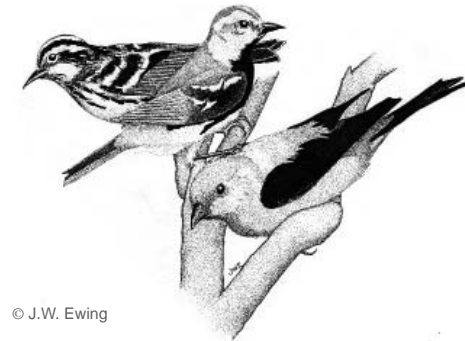
Old white pine, hemlock, oak and maple trees shelter migrating warblers and nesting birds requiring unbroken large tracts for protection. Owls hoot from woodland perches. Bald eagles frequent tall trees at the water's edge.

### 3. Vernal Pools

Spring peepers, wood frogs and spotted salamanders lay eggs in pools that disappear in late spring. Vernal pools aid survival of species that would be fish food in permanent ponds.

### 4. Tidal Wetlands

One of the most productive ecosystems in the world, wetlands are a habitat for many types of wildlife including waterfowl and wading birds. Thorne Head wetlands are home to two endangered plant species that thrive in diurnal inundations, parker's pipewort and estuary bur-marigold. Wild rice attracts thousands of migrating ducks in late summer and fall. Fish fry seek protection in the wetlands.



### 5. Riparian Areas

Land adjacent to water ways is used by 85% of Maine's vertebrates. Amphibians populate the North Creek Outlet, a stream that can be viewed from the wooden foot bridge shown on the map. Bald eagles may be seen here.



### 6. Kennebec Estuary

An estuary is the area of a river system affected by marine tides. The Kennebec estuary is part of a world-class fishery. It is known for nine anadromous species; those inhabiting the river for part or all of their lives, including striped bass, and short nosed sturgeon, an endangered species. Sturgeon may be recognized by bony external shields along its flank and back. You may see these fish breach in the fast flowing currents.

Conservation land is significant for ecological, economic, wildlife, and recreational purposes. Forested river banks prevent oxygen-depleting run-off that lowers water quality. Estuaries have important economic value as nursery grounds for 2/3 of the nation's commercial fish and shellfish.

## Preserve History

Thorne Head has been at the center of watershed activity since the Abenaki Indians traded along the river's highway and gathered wild rice along its shores.

**1640** Indians deeded land to the first European settlers; one of the most important exports was great white pine logs, mast stock destined for the King's navy. Thorne Head was logged into the twentieth century. The Preserve became pasture land marked by the old stone walls you see.

**1751** Michael Thornton, first resident to locate on Thorne Head.

**1752** Old Country Road (present day High St.) is extended through Thorne Head to the first licensed Kennebec River Ferry, probably a rowed gundalow about 20 feet long. You follow the original road past the fresh water marsh.

**1883** Ne'er do well sailors hide out on Thorne Head. Murderer's Cave may be visited today to recall the unfortunate killing of a Bath constable during a downtown robbery attempt. The culprit was captured and hanged.

**1993** IF&W Critical Habitat Survey maps Thorne Head as high value habitat. Bath Comprehensive Plan notes this special area.

**1998** KELT raises funds to create a preserve for wildlife and recreation.

**2000** Thorne Head Preserve opens.

