

# The Trails

## USING THE PRESERVE

The Preserve is open to the public for passive recreation including hiking, cross-country skiing and bird watching. Access is off Macintosh Road just off Route 156. The northern section of the **Yellow Trail** over the Gahagan property is closed during November and December.

## PRESERVE FEATURES

The Preserve offers a rare diversity of habitats that run from river (**Red Trail**) to ridge top (**Yellow Trail**), incorporating diverse site conditions that account for a variety of site and vegetation complexes. Most wildlife species require a number of habitat types for their survival and the Pleasant Valley Preserve not only offers the opportunity to observe these, but preserves their natural functioning as well.

The foundation for this diversity is the underlying geology and the impact of the glacial ice sheet that covered the land under thousands of feet of ice before retreating 17,000 years ago. In the river valley great floods of glacial slurry deposited large amounts of sands and gravels. These rock-free soils became important farmlands, remnants of which can be seen in the abandoned fields running along the valley (**Orange Trail**). Another legacy of the glacier are the three bowl-shaped wetlands seen from the **Blue Trail**; these were formed when large chunks of glacial ice broke off and were buried under glacial soil. When the ice melted, depressions known as kettle holes were created which fill with water each winter from the rising water table. These wetlands or vernal pools are important nursery grounds for a variety of amphibians. As the Blue Trail rises, with the kettle holes on your right, you are walking on

an esker, a buildup of sand and gravel. These deposits were formed by meltwaters flowing within the glacier. The river valley also contains superb examples of shrub and forest floodplain wetlands. Most of these can not be seen as the trail network was routed away from these fragile habitats. As you ascend out of the valley at the north end of the **Yellow Trail**, the soils deposited by the glacial river abruptly give way to soils formed by the action of the glacier as it ground its way over the upland hills. The north-to-south glacial flow gouged, plucked and crushed the rock, moving it southwards and dropping it as a jumble of mineral soils ranging from fine-grained clays to large boulders.

These contemporary upland forests were mostly grazing lands through the 1800's. As fields reverted to woodlands, water availability was an important factor determining what tree species grew where. In lowlands, where water is most plentiful, ash, tulip, yellow birch and red maple are mixed in with red and white oak, American beech, hickories, black birch and sugar maple. In contrast, on south-facing drier ridge tops, the slope community gives way to a predominance of black, white and scrub oaks with some black birch and pignut hickory. In between, moisture and other conditions vary favoring different mixes of species. Pleasant Valley Preserve with its diversity of habitats and land forms is a superb example of the southern New England landscape and its farming history. It is a living record of Lyme's past.

*For additional maps visit [www.lymelandtrust.org](http://www.lymelandtrust.org). Report any problems during your visit on the Trail Condition Form: [www.lymelandtrust.org/trail-condition-form/](http://www.lymelandtrust.org/trail-condition-form/)*

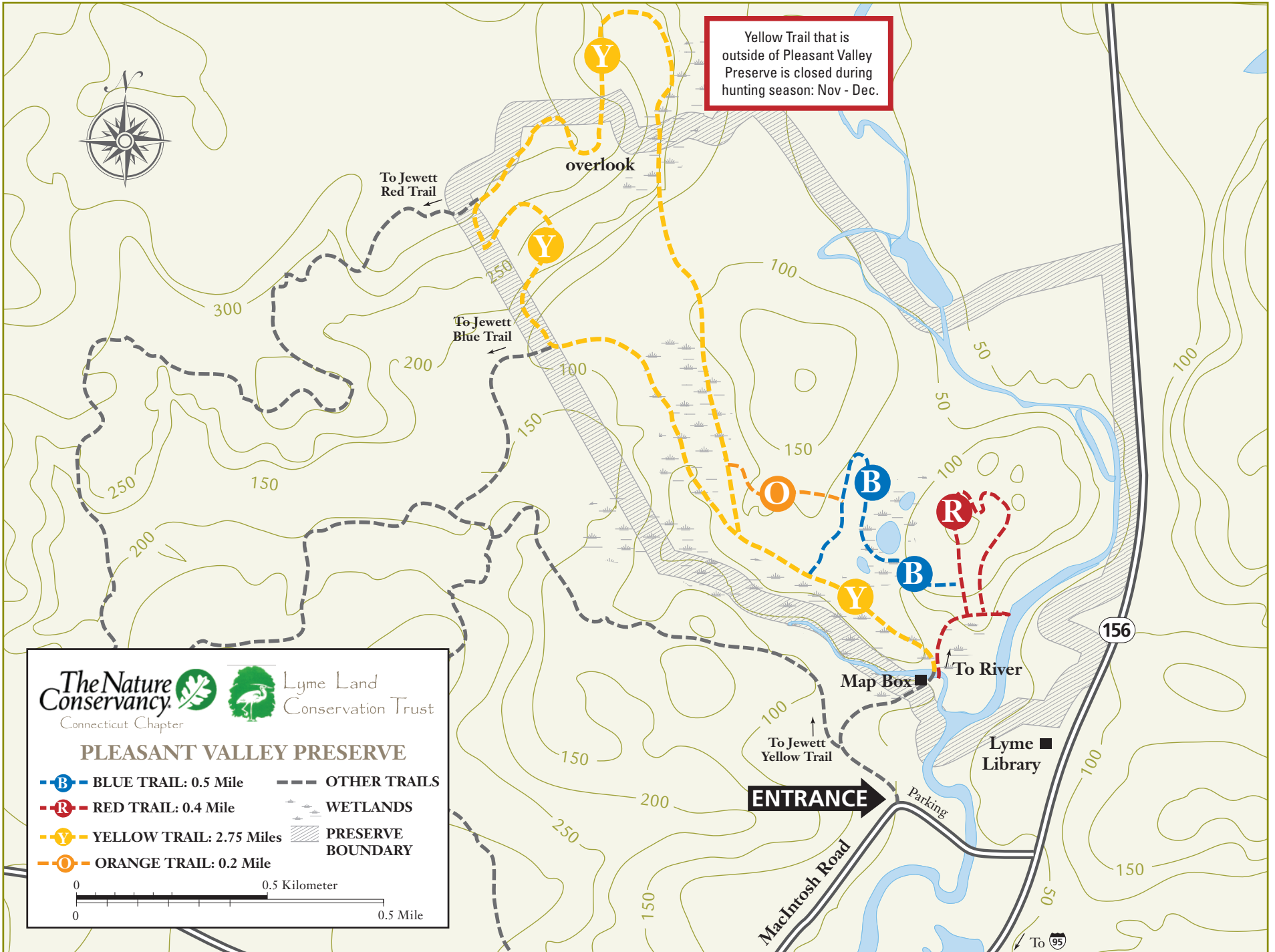
## TRAILS OF LYME Pleasant Valley Preserve



Thomas W. Nason, *The Brook*. Florence Griswold Museum; Lyme Historical Society

In the winter of 1992 Catherine and Elizabeth Fehrer donated 235 acres to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) for the Pleasant Valley Preserve. It was named after the area made famous by Lyme impressionist painters including the sisters' father, Oscar Fehrer. The Preserve includes 3,500 feet along both sides of the Eightmile River and abuts a 105 acre conservation easement donated by Fritz and Alva Gahagan to TNC increasing the land protected along the Eightmile River.

Managed by Lyme Land Conservation Trust for The Nature Conservancy, Connecticut Chapter. For more information see [www.lymelandtrust.org](http://www.lymelandtrust.org) or [www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org).



**The Nature Conservancy**  
Connecticut Chapter

**Lyme Land Conservation Trust**

**PLEASANT VALLEY PRESERVE**

- B— BLUE TRAIL: 0.5 Mile
- R— RED TRAIL: 0.4 Mile
- Y— YELLOW TRAIL: 2.75 Miles
- O— ORANGE TRAIL: 0.2 Mile
- OTHER TRAILS
- WETLANDS
- PRESERVE BOUNDARY

