

Diana’s Field

This lovely field provides an open space for family picnics and exploration, as well as a gathering place for many of the *NaturePlace* events.

Third Field

Third Field is an open area that was cleared by volunteers and is a good gathering place in the rocky uplands. Wildlife love the open habitat vegetation. If you are quiet, you may see a flock of turkeys grazing on the grasses.

Parker’s Perch

Experience the spectacular view of the rolling hills of Lyme from the highest point in the preserve. Parker’s Perch is a unique viewing platform that incorporates existing trees.

The Honey Hill Fault

The Honey Hill Fault zone runs through Banningwood. In recorded history, the Lyme segment of the Honey Hill Fault has been quiet, except for perhaps the minor rumblings known as Moodus noises.

Richards Cemetery

Access: Park along the road on Rte 82. The cemetery has three stones—Caroline Miller, died 1855, Olive Richards, died 1858, and Henry Richards, died 1851. Caroline was the wife of Prentiss Crosley, a former African/Native American slave who gained his freedom by serving 3 years in the Revolutionary War. Their daughter, Olive, married Henry Primas Richards, another former slave who gained his freedom in 1801 and became a farmer here. It is not known where Prentiss Crosley is buried.

Self-Guided Trail Walk for All Ages Quick Tips

Access: The Red Trail Loop starts at the Banningwood Preserve parking lot, Town Street, Lyme, CT.

Numbers and letters are posted throughout the preserve to identify the location on the tour. You can hike in any order you choose. This guide is a general overview designed to appeal to all ages.

Red Trail Loop is numbered.

Yellow (Brook) Trail Loop is lettered.

The **Red Trail Loop** is a delightful one mile walk that follows an old woods road to a bench by Roaring Brook, then travels through Diana’s Field before heading north for a moderate climb to the rocky upland ridges.

The **Yellow (Brook) Trail Loop** in the lowland is an easy 0.7 mile walk along the pristine Roaring Brook, offering the experience of a vibrant wetland habitat.(To parking lot and back with lower part of red trail is about 1.5 miles.)

- ◆ The preserve is open sunrise to sunset.
- ◆ Be considerate of other hikers and wildlife in the preserve. The preserve is home to many creatures. Leave it as you found it.
- ◆ Dogs are welcome! Keep them leashed or under close supervision. And please do not leave poop on the trail, just push it off to the side. Let it return to the earth.
- ◆ There is no hunting in Banningwood Preserve, but it is good practice to wear bright colors during hunting seasons.
- ◆ No motorized vehicles allowed.
- ◆ No fires allowed without permission from the Lyme Land Trust.

Many Thanks

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust is grateful for the continued support of its members. Thank you!

We are grateful to **The Rockfall Foundation** for their support in securing funding to commission an environmental inventory of Banningwood Preserve. This inventory allows us to provide specific and relevant educational content across a multitude of platforms, including sourcing much of the content in this Self-Guided Trail Walk brochure.

We would like to thank forest ecologist **Anthony Irving** and former CT State Geologist **Ralph Lewis** for all of their hard work in conducting and compiling a comprehensive inventory of the preserve. A copy of the Banningwood Inventory has been made public and is available on our website.

Want to learn more on the trail? Please see more interpretive trails on our website: lymelandtrust.org

Tag us in your photos
when you share your adventure!
#natureplaceLLCT

Facebook: [@lymelandtrust](https://www.facebook.com/lymelandtrust)
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To learn more about becoming a member of the Lyme Land Conservation Trust or to make your donation, please visit us at lymelandtrust.org or call 860-434-5051.

Report any problems or comments during your visit on the Trail Condition Form: lymelandtrust.org/trail-condition-form or email stewardship@lymelandtrust.org

Diagrams by Wendolyn Hill; Photos by Sue Cope, Wendolyn Hill and Anthony Irving; Layout by Lisa Reneson



For additional brochures, visit lymelandtrust.org.

TRAILS OF LYME

Banningwood Preserve

A Self-Guided Trail Walk for All Ages

What is NaturePlace?

Hosted in Banningwood Preserve, the Lyme Land Trust’s *NaturePlace*, is a series of educational experiences in the form of programs, events and workshops—inspired by Diana and Parker Lord, whose love of the natural environment began with childhood exploration. *NaturePlace* encompasses Diana’s Field and surrounding trails, all the way up to Parker’s Perch, and all the way down to Roaring Brook.

Banningwood Preserve

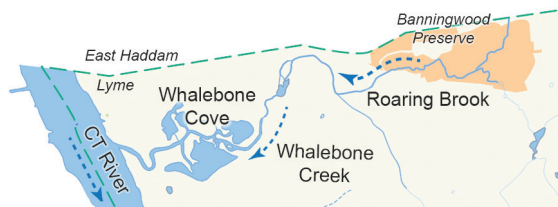
The Lyme Land Trust bought the 102-acre Banningwood Preserve from Diana and Parker Lord in 2013, with financial assistance from the CT DEEP Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. This property, in the Whalebone Creek Watershed, is significant for its ecological diversity, its fascinating geology, and its history. The transition between low wetlands and dry rocky uplands marks the fault zone where two ancient continents came together 300 million years ago.

Red Trail Loop

1 Blueberry Field: This meadow may have been pasture or a hayfield up to a century ago. The stone walls are a clue to an agricultural history. Do you see the clump of recently planted blueberry bushes? In the past, farming families relied on blueberries that grew wild in the meadows to supplement their diet.

As you hike through the preserve, the trail stays wide in many places. This is evidence of past farming or logging. These pathways are often referred to as “woods roads” or “farm roads.”

2 Roaring Brook flows through the preserve from east to west. Sometimes, after a heavy rain, it roars through! The protection of its watershed—the large area of land that drains water into the brook—has far-reaching effects. The water in Roaring Brook flows out to Whalebone Creek, then Whalebone Cove, the Connecticut River, and all the way to the Atlantic Ocean.



3 Kettle Holes: Do you see the large rounded holes in the forest here? Big chunks of ice, that had broken off as the last glacier receded, were surrounded by sand, silt and gravel deposited by the melting glacier. As the ice chunks eventually melted, depressions were left in their place.

4 You have reached the center of activity for *NaturePlace*: **Diana’s Field**, named after Diana Lord who once owned this land. Trees and shrubs were removed by Parker Lord to open this space. The field is flat because it is what is left of a thick, 20,000-year-old glacial lake deposit that once filled the entire Roaring Brook Valley. To the southwest of the field is a rare stand of Hemlocks that has been spared from the fatal curse of the invasive insect, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid; an infestation which wiped out many of Lyme’s majestic hemlock groves.



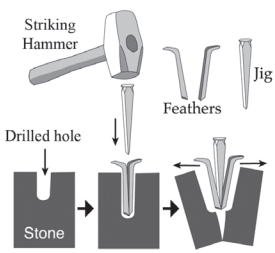
Eastern Hemlock

5 Banning Road: Do you see the two stonewalls running parallel to each other? These once outlined the path of the now abandoned Banning Road that travelled along the boundary of Lyme and East Haddam. Here, because of erosion and compaction over the years, it has become an intermittent stream bed. There is still a stretch of paved Banning Road in East Haddam. Banningwood Preserve was named after this road.

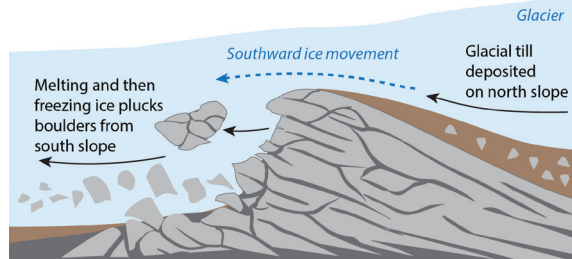
6 Stream in the Upland Forest: This headwater stream is one of several draining south into Roaring Brook from the upland forest. Its water follows a crevice in the rocky ridges, the path of least resistance. It provides a micro-habitat in the dry upland for water-loving plants and animals.

7 Farm Dump: Looking directly north into the neighboring property, you can see something that’s common in an abandoned agricultural area—a pile of scrap and junk. Even though this practice would not be allowed today, it was common practice to designate an area of your property to dispose of broken-down farm machinery and refuse.

8 Feather and Jig: Do you see the regular man-made grooves in the edges of the stone here? This is evidence of the “feather and jig method” of cutting stone commonly used in Lyme, starting in the 19th century. The “jig” is a steel wedge which is hammered between the “feathers”—two semicircular metal shims placed in a hand-drilled hole in the rock. A line of feathers and jigs, placed along the grain of the stone, split the rock evenly.



9 Third Field was created by a team of volunteers who cleared fallen logs and brush in 2018. The rock face here seems to almost leap out of the ground. The northerly shifting of the tectonic plate below has slowly wedged itself underneath, lifting up the southernmost portions of these rocks, giving it a tilted appearance. Additionally, the movement of glaciers, 20,000 years ago, from north to south over the top of this rock face has smoothed out the ground surface with glacial till (rocks and sediment) to the north, and oversteepened the southern slope by pulling out boulders as it moved to the south—a process called “glacial plucking.” Notice the abundance of “hard cover” nooks in the rocky outcrops here—perfect dens for small mammals like squirrels and chipmunks, and storm shelters for larger mammals like foxes and bobcats.

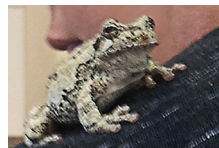


Glacial plucking

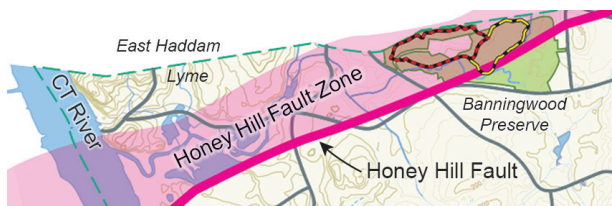
10 Welcome to Parker’s Perch! This ledge was Parker Lord’s favorite spot to sit and take in the view. In honor of Parker, we commissioned Hadlyme builder Block Design-Build to create a custom viewing platform unlike anything we’ve ever seen before. On a clear day you can see the haze above the Connecticut River far to the west. This is the highest elevation in the preserve, 230 feet above sea level. The dry growing conditions, thin soil and abundant sunshine are perfect for shrubby berry bushes including huckleberry and blueberry—excellent food sources for birds and wildlife.



11 Old Stone Quarry: This is one of a handful of small quarries on the preserve. The rock here tends to separate into small flat slabs, ideal for stone walls. This stone was mined long ago for local use, leaving a block-shaped quarry hole which fills with water from rainfall. It has become an ideal habitat for amphibians, including tree frogs and salamanders.



12 Honey Hill Fault: Notice the face of the rock ledge where Parker’s Perch is located. This ridge is part of the Honey Hill fault zone, created 300 million years ago. It was formed when the micro-continent Avalonia was compressed between the American tectonic plate and the British Isles tectonic plate as they collided to form the supercontinent Pangea. In the fault zone, Avalonia wedged under the American plate and forced the bedrock up, to form the high rocky ledges in Banningwood. When Pangea broke up into the current five continents, Avalonia was pulled apart. Now, the Atlantic Ocean separates portions of Avalonia that were once joined—one part resides in Southeastern Connecticut and the other in the British Isles.



13 Folded Rock: Perhaps one of the most fascinating natural features in this preserve is this folded metamorphic bedrock formed during intense and powerful shifts in the Earth’s tectonic plates 300 million years ago. It is amazing that the rock experienced so much pressure and heat that it became pliable and was “folded” as tectonic plates shifted.



Yellow (Brook) Trail Loop

A Forested Floodplain Area. These wooded wetlands are regularly flooded by Roaring Brook during spring freshets (flooding from spring-melted ice and snow) and spring rains. It is great habitat for many species of wildlife. Water in the soil makes it a good growing environment for trees and other plants which provide food and shelter for animals. Keep your eyes peeled for dens among tree roots. Look for cavities hollowed out by woodpeckers seeking insect snacks in dead and dying trees. These cavities become ideal homes for mammals and birds, including the Barred Owl.

B Welcome to the Yellow Trail Foot Bridge—it’s been through a lot. A team of volunteers once rescued and repaired the bridge after major flooding carried it several hundred yards downstream. Now it is tied to nearby trees. Can you see skunk cabbage in this swamp area? If you crush the leaves, what do you smell? Skunk cabbage is water loving and is one of the first plants to make an appearance in early spring. It produces its own heat to melt the frozen ground.



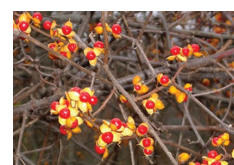
C Backwater Pools are created by the changing direction of Roaring Brook over thousands of years. As the river changed direction, these old streambeds became isolated from the fast moving brook. They are refilled by spring flooding and ground water. This makes them ideal habitat for amphibians to lay eggs because they are free of fish, which eat the eggs and tadpoles. In the early spring, the wood frogs are the first frogs to call. They sound like ducks quacking. They have beautifully camouflaged skin, and tend to go silent when “intruders” are near, so it is quite possible there are several in your immediate vicinity—even in the winter months. In the summer, they find plenty of insects to feast on here.



D Dome-like Hills: Adjacent to the wooded wetland areas are small hills of drier ground with rockier soils. These locations are ideal habitat for animals who need high and dry homes near water sources. In and around the water you may find turtles, frogs, and fish making their homes; but fisher cats, owls, and some snakes prefer upland areas.

E Point Bar: In this floodplain area along Roaring Brook, the ground is well-packed, and most likely dry. This is because you are standing on sand. Sand allows for greater drainage—no muck and no standing water. As streams flow around bends the water flows faster on the outside of the curve. On the inside of the curve, as here, the water moves more slowly. With less energy, sand is deposited as point bars. The sand has been washed up here from many flood events as Roaring Brook swells in the spring. Speaking of seasonal flooding, can you find evidence of high-water events by scanning the forest floor? Look for piles of branches and leaves tangled in bushes, mud lines on trees, broken lower branches and flattened foliage on the ground.

F Disturbed Wetland: What are some indicators of a wet area besides obvious water? Note the erosion on the old Banning Road that has made the trail uneven in places. Another giveaway is the densely packed invasive Japanese barberry bushes—barberry loves wet spots! Note the tall, tangled trees draped and weighed down by invasive grapevines and bittersweet. Barberry and other invasives grow in wet areas where there has been disturbance, such as abandoned farmland or timber cuts, which allow the sun-loving invasives a head start. Invasive plants are not native and degrade the habitat for wildlife by crowding out diverse and nutritious native plants. We are constantly working to control the invasive plants in the preserves.



Invasive Bittersweet



Invasive Japanese Barberry