

**Francis Carter Memorial Preserve  
The Nature Conservancy  
Charlestown, RI**



The Carter Preserve contains a grassland surrounded by early successional to late forest habitats.

**Introduction**

This site, which is owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy, can be accessed all year round, but requires walking 1/3 mile on a marked hiking trail from the parking lot to the managed area. It offers the opportunity to view two very different types of management for early successional habitat, both of which are adjacent to a 35 acre meadow that is maintained for grassland birds. In 2008, thin strips of forest along the meadow were clearcut to create a shrubby buffer between the forest and the meadow to provide habitat for shrubland birds. In 2015, a much larger clearcut was created south of the meadow.

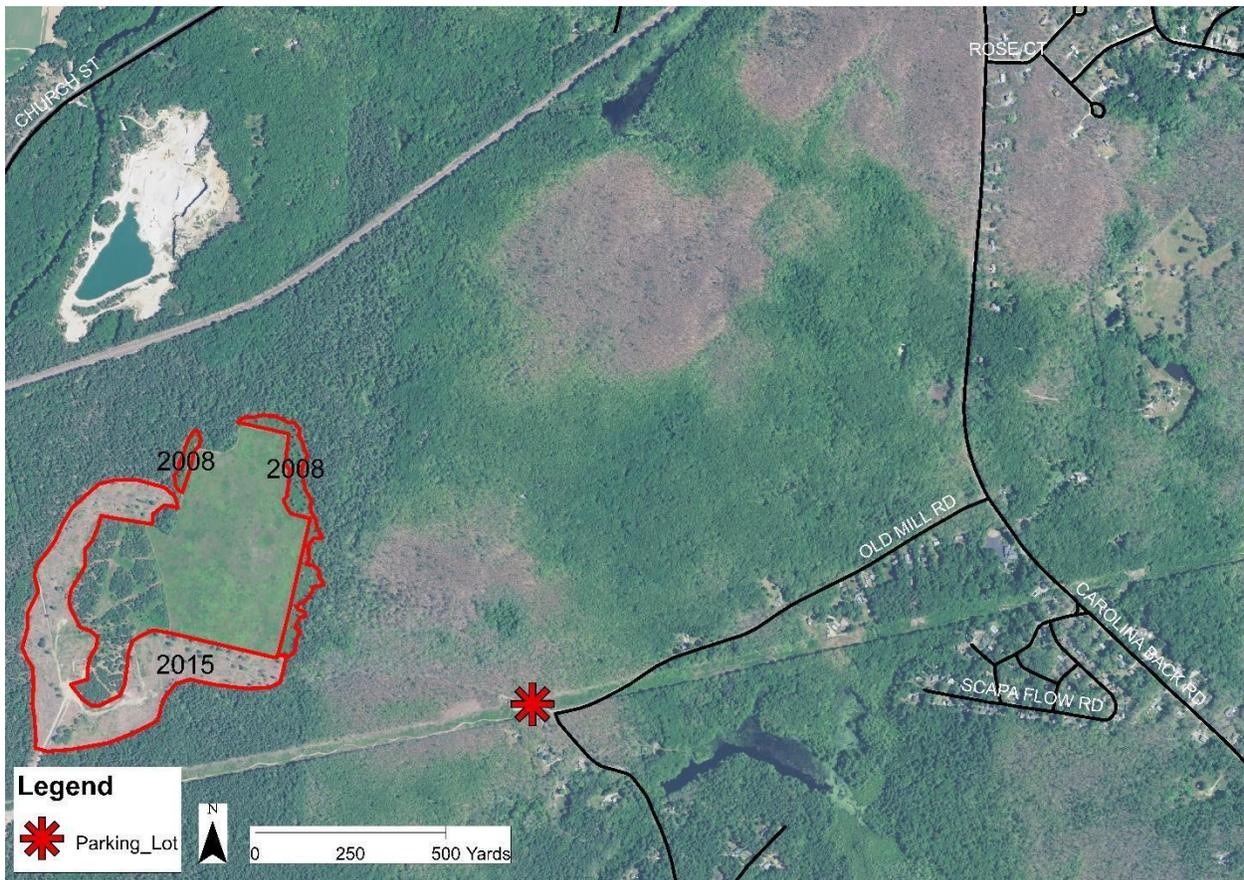
## Access

There are several trailheads for the Carter Preserve, including a sign-posted access road on Rt. 112 (Carolina Back Road) between Old Mill Road and Rose Court. The easiest approach to the clearcuts is from a parking lot on Old Mill Road. From Rt 112 drive west on Old Mill Road for 0.7 miles until the road turns sharply to the left. Turn right onto a dirt road (with a signpost for the preserve) which leads to a parking lot.

During hunting season, all visitors should wear fluorescent orange clothing (for RIDEM regulations about clothing during hunting season, see <http://www.eregulations.com/rhodeisland/hunting/general-information>).



From the parking lot, follow the walking trail 0.35 miles to the west until you reach the meadow. At this point you can turn right (north) to visit the long thin 2010 clearcut along the edge of the meadow, or continue straight to visit the more recent and larger 2015 clearcut south and west of the meadow. You can download a map of hiking trails at Carter Preserve [here](#).



### Description of Northeastern Cuts

These two areas were cut in 2008 and extend almost 1,000 yards on the east and north border of the meadow. The cuts are generally about 50 yards wide, with a total area of 6.5 acres. The objective was to create a band of shrubland between the meadow and the mature forest. The surrounding forest is dominated by pitchpine. Inside the clearcut, the height of the regenerating vegetation ranges is generally 8-16 feet (as of 2017), although in some areas in the southern portion it is 3-10 feet. The dominant species in the cuts are pitch pine, poplar and black cherry, but many other species are present, including arrowwood, bayberry, bear oak, big tooth aspen, black gum, black oak, blueberry, gray birch, holly, juniper, quaking aspen, sheep laurel, sweet fern and winged sumac. Some snag trees and mast trees were retained during the cut along with some slash.

Wildlife observed during a 2017 visit included: eastern bluebird, eastern phoebe, hairy woodpecker, eastern towhee, grasshopper sparrow, indigo bunting, red tailed hawk, eastern kingbird, meadowlark, kestrel, and common nighthawk.



The trail follows the periphery of the cut, providing easy viewing access of changes in its composition.



Mixed deciduous and coniferous regrowth abuts an older growth pitch pine forest.



Regrowth is staggered from South to North, resulting in a gradient of vegetation height and species composition.



Species composition varies, with some areas dominated by White Pine and Pitchpine.

### **Description of Southwest Cut (2017)**

This 34 acre cut was completed in 2015, so the regenerating vegetation is much lower. The forest surrounding the clearcut is dominated by pitch pine and eastern white pine. Inside the clearcut, the regenerating vegetation is 1-5 feet tall (as of 2017) and dominated by blueberry and black cherry. Other species include white pine, scrub oak and northern dewberry. A number of large mast trees and snags were retained for wildlife.



Residual stumps slash and snags as well as preserved mast trees are abundant in this cut.



Dead snag trees were retained to create habitat for cavity and bark nesting species.



Large slash elements were retained and are still readily observable due to the relatively young age of the cut.



Standing mast trees, primarily white oak, are present in abundance in the cut.



A low shrubby regrowth populates the site, consisting of berry producing species.

Photo credits: Ryan Healey