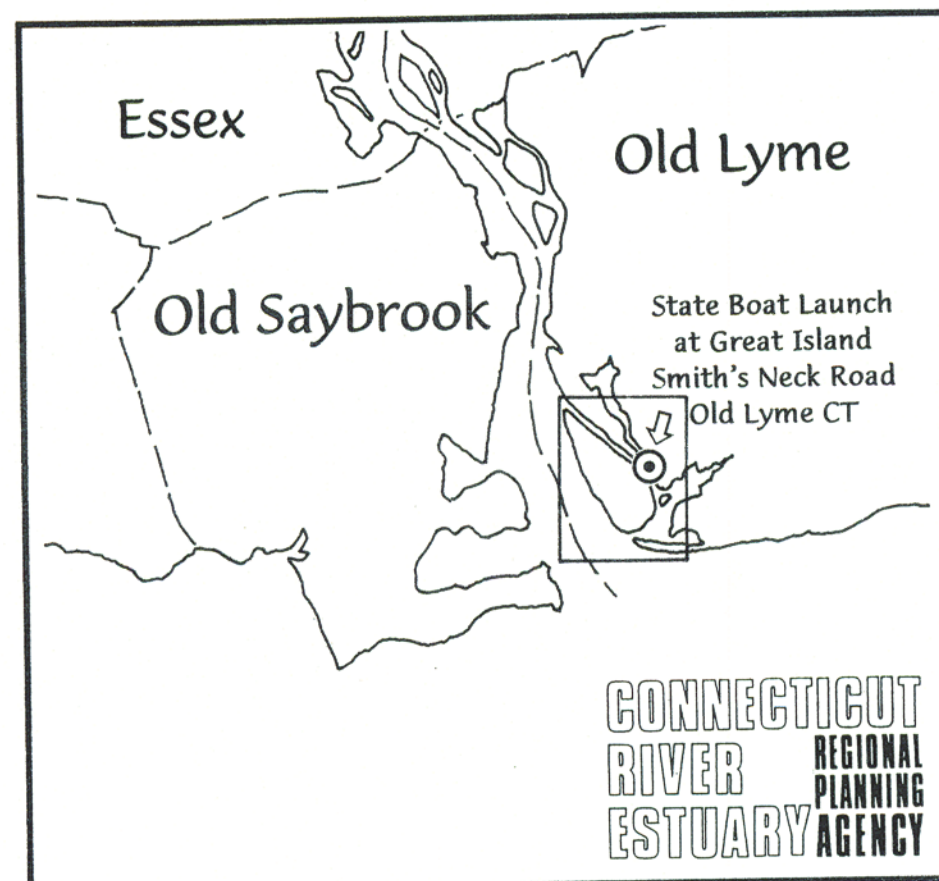


Diamondback Terrapin



Directions from the East

I-95 West to Exit 70, Old Lyme. Straight through traffic light at end of ramp onto Halls Road. Follow Halls Road approximately ¾ miles to second traffic light at Route 154. Left at traffic light onto Route 154 South for approximately 2 miles to Smith's Neck Road. Turn right onto Smith's Neck Road at State Boat Launch sign. Follow Smith's Neck Road for approximately ¾ of a mile to the boat launch.

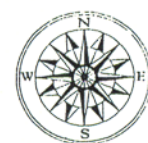
Directions from the West

I-95 East to Exit 70, Old Lyme. Right at traffic light at end of ramp onto Route 154 South for approximately 1 ¾ miles to Smith's Neck Road. Turn right onto Smith's Neck Road at State Boat Launch sign. Follow Smith's Neck Road for approximately ¾ of a mile to the boat launch.

A SAFETY REMINDER: When canoeing or kayaking along the Connecticut River Estuary Canoe/Kayak Trail, or anywhere else on the river or its tidal creeks, always be aware what time high and low tide will occur. Strongest currents, both ebbing (outgoing) and flooding (incoming) occur half way between low and high tides. Weakest currents occur during slack tide at low and high tide. Each tidal cycle (from low to high) has a duration of approximately 6 hours. Children, 11 and under, are required by State Law to wear a Personal Floatation Device (PFD) at all times while on a vessel. ALL canoe users must wear a PFD during cold weather months between October 1 and May 30. Take this into account when planning your expedition, especially on the longer 3 hour Northern Trail.

BROCHURE DESIGN/COVER ART: J. H. Torrance Downes
WILDLIFE ART: Paul J. Fusco

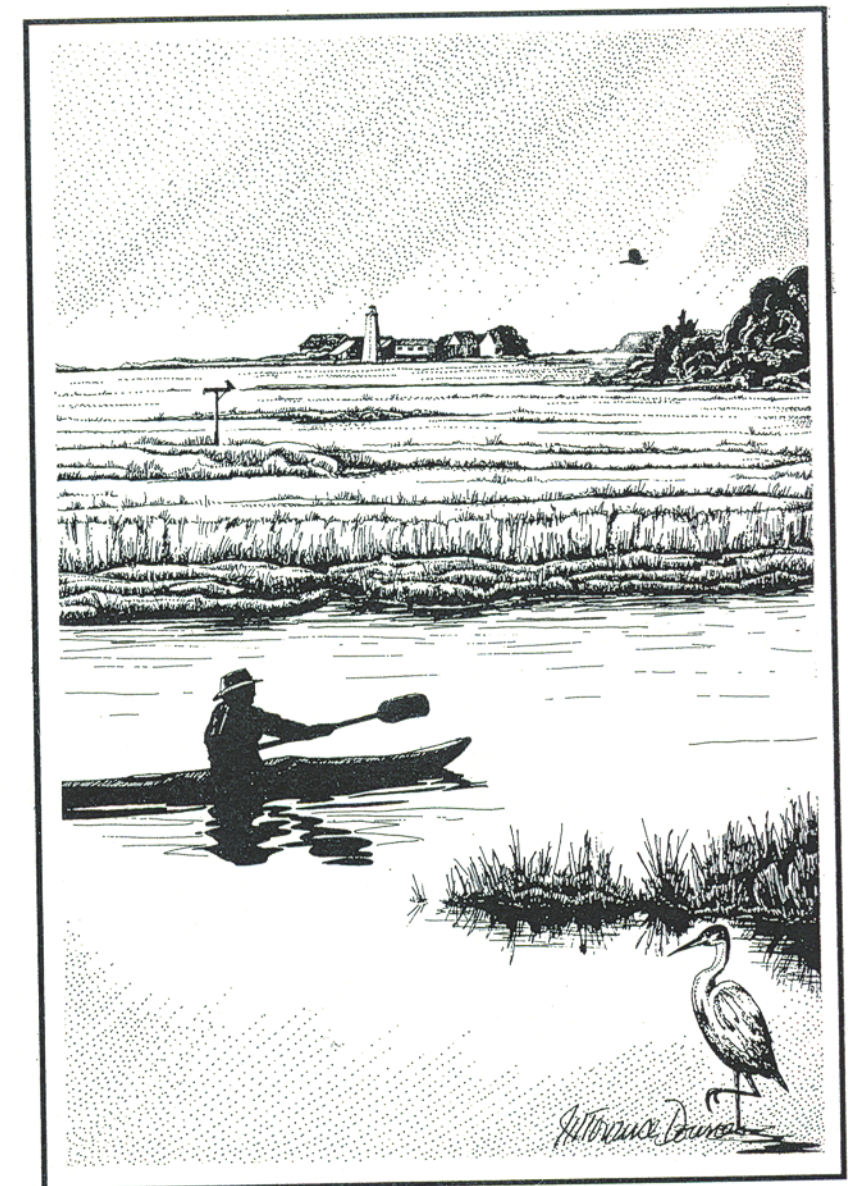
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Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection



CONNECTICUT RIVER ESTUARY CANOE/KAYAK TRAIL



State Boat Launch
Smith's Neck Road
Old Lyme, CT

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COVER ART: J. H. Torrance Downes
WILDLIFE ART: Paul J. Fusco

Southern (short) Trail

(1 ½ Hours)

- Judges Creek - Phragmites (*Phragmites australis*), or common reed, a very tall reed-like grass with tasseled tops that forms dense, nearly pure stands along the upper fringes of the tidal creeks, is favored by disturbance or by upland fresh water run-off. Since the late 1950's, Phragmites has been spreading into tidal wetlands of the lower Connecticut River system at an alarming rate, out-competing the natural plant communities. The decline in plant species diversity and the possible loss of habitat for typical wetland animals are major concerns of wetland ecologists.

Following a substantial decline in their population through the 1960's and early 1970's, the osprey, or fish hawk, has steadily increased in number statewide since the banning of the pesticide DDT, especially in the 500-acre Great Island Wildlife Management Area. Recent drops in the number of fledged offspring has resulted in efforts to discourage human disturbance and mammalian predators such as raccoons. As a result of these efforts and a cleaner environment, it appears that fledgling numbers may again be on the increase. PLEASE OBSERVE FROM A RESPECTFUL DISTANCE AND NOTE THAT IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO DISTURB THE OSPREYS OR THEIR PLATFORMS.

- Griswold Point is the name of a one mile long highly mobile sand spit that is constantly in motion. The spit is an important stopping point for numerous species of migratory birds as well as a nesting site for the piping plover and at low tide is a critical feeding habitat. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR CANOERS AND KAYAKERS NOT TO DISTURB THE NESTING SITE IN ANY WAY, INCLUDING LANDING ON GRISWOLD POINT. Any human or animal activity at all could lead to destruction of nests and the interruption of the recharging of the migratory birds' "batteries" before flying on to their destinations.

Piping plovers live and nest on sandy beaches and dunes and are therefore susceptible to predators, high tides and human disturbance. As a result, the pale sand colored plovers with a black stripe across their foreheads, yellow beak with a black tip, are on the threatened species list, both State and Federal. Simply walking a beach where the piping plover lives can destroy their nesting sites and disturb the plovers and should therefore be avoided. PLEASE OBSERVE FENCED AREA AND OBSERVE FROM A RESPECTFUL DISTANCE.

Griswold Point is also the location of the 1994 discovery of the remains of a mysterious wooden ship whose identity was never determined. The buried remains were subsequently destroyed by a coastal storm in 1996.

- West, across the mouth of the river from Griswold Point, are the Saybrook Lighthouse at Lynde Point (inner light) and the Saybrook Jetty Lighthouse (outer). The inner lighthouse, built in 1839, replaced the original wooden structure built at the site in 1803. The outer light dates from 1866.

The mouth of the Connecticut River is a mile-wide estuary made shallow by a large sandbar. The mobile sandbar so impeded river navigation by deep-draft ships that no significant industrial development has occurred along the banks of the lower river. In this respect, the river is the largest river system in the northeast that is relatively undamaged by human urbanization and is one of the few American rivers of its size without a major city at its mouth.

The submarine "Turtle", designed by Saybrook resident David Bushnell, was launched just off Poverty Island and Griswold Point in 1775. The launching was said to have been witnessed by Benjamin Franklin.

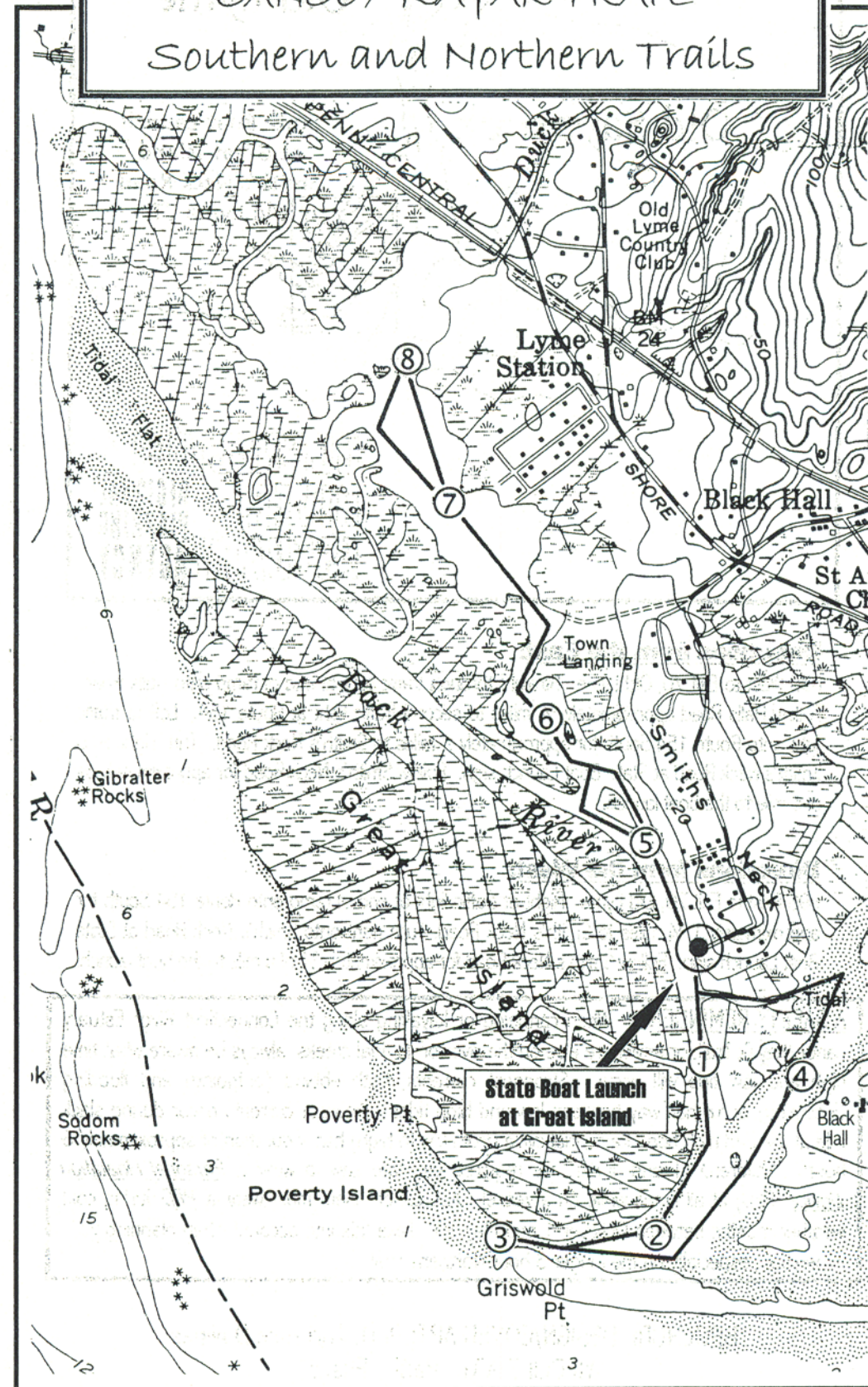
- Legend has it that the name "Black Hall" came from a simple log frame house initially occupied by Mathew Griswold's black male servant. The servant was sent ahead to the settlement on the east side of the "Great River" from the Saybrook colony to scout and secure claim to an area populated by unfriendly Indians. "Hall of the Black", it has been said, is the predecessor of the present name Black Hall. Another explanation is that the name Block Hole, originally named after the Dutch explorer Adriaen Block, could have easily been corrupted by the English to become Black Hall.

Black Hall, the point forming the eastern bank of the mouth of the Black Hall River, was originally granted to Mathew Griswold around 1640 by the first magistrate of the Saybrook Colony, George Fenwick. Much of Black Hall is still owned today by descendants of Mathew Griswold. Home lots of the first Old Lyme settlers were located in the Black Hall and Duck River areas as early as the 1660's.

CONNECTICUT RIVER ESTUARY

CANOE / KAYAK TRAIL

Southern and Northern Trails



½ Mile

Old Lyme Quadrangle, Connecticut
7.5 Minute Series (Topographic)

Northern (long) Trail

(3 Hours)

- Coastal salt marshes rank among the ecosystems with the highest productivity (amount of plant material produced annually by an ecosystem) of any in the world, rivaling the tropical rainforests in this respect. Along with being important breeding grounds and wildlife habitat, coastal marshes act as filters for pollutants as well as flood storage areas and storm buffers.

The Connecticut River estuary and tidal wetlands complex was identified in 1994 under the Ramsar Convention international treaty as a "Wetland of International Importance", one of only 15 such designations in the United States. In addition, in 1993 The Nature Conservancy designated the *Tidelands of the Connecticut River* one of 40 last great places in the hemisphere.

Early settlers used the tidal marshes extensively in and around Great Island for salt haying. The salt hay was used mostly for livestock bedding so that the better quality upland hay could be saved for feed. Once used, the salt hay bedding was spread on fields and gardens for fertilizer.

- Bartlett's Landing, at the end of a dirt road extending to the edge of the marsh from the northern end of Smith's Neck Road, was one of several town landings in Old Lyme, likely used during the 18th and 19th centuries as a spot where scows laden with salt marsh hay could be brought ashore.

Since colonial times east-west transportation routes, such as construction of the shoreline railroad and trolley in the 1800's and Interstate 95 in the mid 1900's, had a tremendous impact on tidal marshes in the state. Fill was often placed in the marshes to create an elevated base for these projects and to bridge the numerous north-south oriented tidal creeks and rivers along the Connecticut coast. Because of the importance of tidal marshes in the ecological framework of Long Island Sound, laws such as the Connecticut Tidal Wetlands Act of 1969 and the Connecticut Coastal Management Act of 1980 were passed to require that all impacts to tidal wetlands be minimized or eliminated altogether.

The mouth of the Connecticut River was a vantage point against the Indians when the Dutch established the first trading post there in the 1620's and when, a decade later, Lionel Gardiner built the English fort at Saybrook Point that served as the stronghold of the Saybrook Plantation.

- Great Blue Herons, one of New England's largest birds, are steel blue-gray. They are common inhabitants of local marshes in warmer months. Most migrate south but some will remain during the winter. They stand motionless or wade with utmost deliberation in shallow water, poised to strike at its primary food source, unsuspecting fish. This area is also home to a large number of snowy egrets.

Since the Civil War, hundreds of kilometers of mosquito ditches have been dug in wetlands throughout Connecticut. The ditches, which drain marsh surface waters, were originally dug to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds to prevent the spread of mosquito-borne malaria that was introduced to the area by homeward-bound soldiers. Extensive mosquito ditching has left no natural open water pools in the marsh and has made the marshes a more conducive environment for phragmites domination.

- Watch Rock, opposite Lyme Station, is said to have been an important indian lookout point in the area of the Great Island marshes. Because of its archaeological significance, the Old Lyme Conservation Trust, along with the help of the Connecticut River Gateway Commission and others, purchased the 25+ acres in order to preserve what is considered the first topographical feature one approaches in Old Lyme upon entering the mouth of the river.

The Connecticut River boasts the world's largest run of Blueback Herring and New England's largest run of American Shad. Anadromous fish, including the Blueback Herring, Alewives and American Shad, spawn annually during April, May and June in fresh water bodies like the Connecticut River and, upon maturing, return to salt water to live.

Northern diamond-backed terrapins have a light tan, gray or black carapace with concentric-grooved plates or dark and light rings. These turtles are only found in salt or brackish waters and are fairly common in tidal marshes such as those in and around Great Island.

The Connecticut River is the third largest river on the east coast of the United States and the largest in New England. Tidal influence extends almost to the Connecticut/Massachusetts state border. The actual estuary, where salt and fresh waters mix, extends up as far north as Brockway Island just above Essex Center.