

Section 14

Cobble Brook Vista Preserve

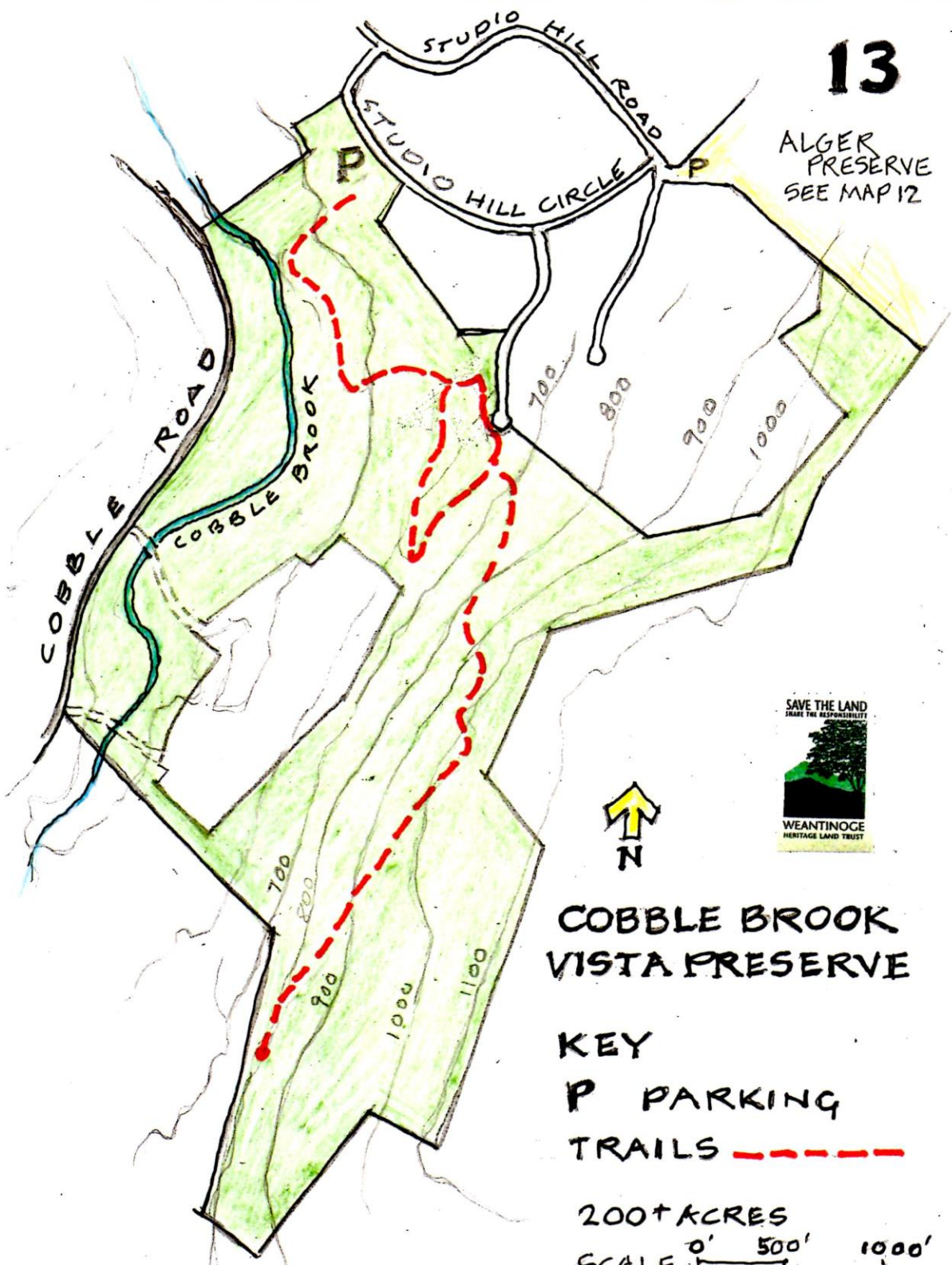
Cobble Brook Vista Preserve, comprising over 200 sandy acres, encompasses most of the undeveloped land in the valley of Cobble Brook, including almost a mile of Cobble Brook categorized as “at risk” by the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. The land is a mosaic of grasslands, meadow, riparian habitat, pocket prairie, upland forest, and ridgeline. The Preserve supports raptors (hawks and eagles), deer, red fox, beaver, and mink, as well as a sizeable songbird community. The area lies at the heart of Kent’s earliest settlement in what is known today as the Flanders Historic District.

Hikers can explore Cobble Brook Vista via the longer Red Trail Loop or the shorter Blue Trail Loop. Access for both trail loops is via Route 7 to Studio Hill Road and the George Lawrence Nelson Homestead. Turn right on Studio Hill Road and follow it to Studio Hill Circle on the right. Enter and drive to a wide grassy area off the right of the Circle where a Weantinoge sign board is visible at the edge of the tree line. Park on the road shoulder. To enter either trail start at the Red Trail Loop, which runs 2.5 miles and is steep in some places. To shorten the distance take the Blue Trail Loop (1.25 miles) connector which can be found part way along the descent. On either trail the walking is more sure-footed in a clockwise direction as it is safer to climb the steeper flank of the valley and descend the gentler way than vice versa.

The soils here are almost pure sand, supporting vegetation that includes junipers and “poverty grass”. Red crest lichen also grows here in abundance. Another name for this lichen is “British soldier”, so-named for the red coats or caps that grow atop the lichen and contain the spores needed for reproduction. Lichen, incidentally, are a remarkable form of life that fit neither within the plant nor animal kingdoms. In actuality, lichen are composed of two other organisms—a fungus and an alga--that live symbiotically, needing each other to exist. The fungus is the dominant partner, giving the lichen most of the physical characteristics you see (crusty stuff on bare rocks, leafy growths on tree trunks); they gather and store water from rain and atmospheric moisture. The alga, which live enmeshed within the fungus, use photosynthesis or sunlight to turn the stored water and nutrients into food to feed themselves and the fungus, keeping the fungus alive. Despite a lot of confusion, lichen are not related at all to mosses, and, in case you worried, touching the red crest lichen or any other is not poisonous.

13

ALGER
PRESERVE
SEE MAP 12



**COBBLE BROOK
VISTA PRESERVE**

KEY
P PARKING
TRAILS -----

200+ ACRES
 SCALE 0' 500' 1000'

MAP COURTESY JOHN MILNES BAKER, AIA

