

Rules and Regulations:*

- Use of designated trails for wildlife observation, hiking & photography is permitted 30 minutes before sunrise through 30 minutes after sunset.
- Surf fishing on Morris Island is permitted 24 hours a day with a state permit. Shellfishing is permitted in accordance with Town regulations.
- To protect wildlife, pets are prohibited year-round on offshore refuge islands and from May 1 through Sept 15 on Morris Island. Leashed (6 ft or less) dogs are permitted on Morris Island from Sept 16 through April 30.
- Seals are protected by law. For your safety and theirs, keep at least 150 ft away from seals at all times
- We are a carry-in/carry-out, leave-no-trace facility. All trash, including pet waste, must be removed.
- Bicycles and motorized vehicles are permitted only in the parking lot.
- Due to narrow stairways, launching of canoes and kayaks is prohibited; instead, use the Morris Island Rd causeway. Kiteboarding is prohibited.
- Waterfowl hunting is permitted offshore of South Monomoy Island in accordance with state regulations
- Camping and camp fires are prohibited
- Launching, landing, or operating unmanned aircraft (i.e., drones) is prohibited (50 CFR 27.34)

**Additional regulations are in effect. Contact the refuge office for details.*

For more information:

Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is one of eight refuges managed by the Eastern Massachusetts NWR Complex. To learn more about the refuges in the complex, stop by the visitor center, give us a call (508-945-0594), or call the NWR Complex headquarters in Sudbury, MA (978-443-4661).

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www.fws.gov/refuge/Monomoy/
www.facebook.com/MonomoyNWR/



Semipalmated plover (S.E.Devlin/USFWS)



Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge Morris Island self-guided trail map



Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was established in 1944 to protect migratory birds. The refuge encompasses 7,604 acres — most of which is accessible only by boat — with the exception of a 40-acre unit on Morris Island, where you stand now.

The 1-mile Morris Island Trail offers a glimpse of the unique habitats found throughout Monomoy NWR. As you explore the trail, take note of how the species' communities change as you walk from one station to the next; through beach, sand dune, forest, salt marsh, and tidal flat.

Trail Marker #1- The tall grass and wildflowers to the left attract eastern gray squirrels, eastern cottontails, meadow voles, and numerous insects. The bird feeders allow birds to feed without expending much energy. American goldfinches and black-capped chickadees are some of the most frequent users of the thistle feeders, while mourning doves forage on the ground and hawks soar overhead.

Trail Marker #2- Step off the trail to the left and before you is the Atlantic Ocean. North and South Monomoy Islands are visible in the distance to the right (south). The sands in this area are continuously shifting. One of the most recent changes is to the far left (northeast), where a 2017 Nor'easter created a break in South Beach. Take note of the display showing the evolution of the Monomoy Islands.

Trail Marker #3- As you begin your descent down to the beach, take a minute to look around. Can you spot the arrowwood tree? Arrowwood is distinguished by its straight, twiggy shoots protruding from the ground in bundles. Native Americans used these shoots to make hunting bows.

Do you know what a sassafras leaf looks like? There are actually three different leaves per tree! One looks like a football, one looks like a mitten and the third looks like a ghost. You will not find these plants on the beach; they prefer the moist rich soils found inland.

Trail Marker #4- There are typically two high and two low tides along the shore each day. These fluctuating tides are caused by the gravitational attraction between the earth, sun and moon. All surfaces on the earth are pulled toward the sun and moon, but only water can move. Therefore, as the moon revolves around the earth each day, ocean water is continuously "pushed" toward land, causing high tide. Roughly six hours later, the water is "pulled" away from land, resulting in low tide.



Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge, Morris Island Trail Map



Trail Marker #5- As you make the transition from open beach to sand dunes, notice the presence of rooted vegetation, primarily beach grass and poison ivy. Both plants have extensive root systems which enables them to act like a net, holding the sand and soil back from being washed out to sea during tide and storm cycles. These tall grasses also serve as vital shorebird habitat.

Trail Marker #6- Away from the harsh conditions of the open beach, woody plants become established. The strong winds of Monomoy prevent trees from growing very tall. A great example of this is the chestnut oak to your right. In normal conditions, this tree would reach 60-80ft!

Trail Marker #7- As you round the corner, observe the variety of trees and shrubs, all of which thrive in sandy soils. Try to locate some of the common species such as pitch pine, lowbush blueberry, juniper, and red oak.

Trail Marker #8- A fresh supply of nutrients is washed into this salt marsh twice daily. Here you will find many different types of plants, crustaceans, fish, shorebirds and waterfowl, which are attracted to the abundance of food these marshes provide. Fish, including striped bass, feed in the saltmarshes and depend upon them as nursery habitat.

Trail Marker #9- Sea lavender and sea rocket, to your right and left, are common salt marsh plants at Monomoy. These plants bloom on Morris Island from August through October, covering the ground with beautiful shades of purple. Please remember that all plants are protected on the refuge; collecting is not allowed.

Trail Marker #10- This area, a mix of saltmarsh and cord grasses, provides ideal habitat for many shorebirds. During the spring and summer months, observe willets as they gather food from the shoreline and quickly rush back and forth to their nests in these grasses.

We hope you have enjoyed walking the Morris Island Interpretive Trail. If you have no further need for this brochure, please return it to the kiosk or the visitor center for re-use.

Thank You!



Greater yellowlegs (S.E. Devlin/USFWS)