

POCKET PLACES

Wildwood Cemetery and Horn Pond Brook, Winchester

Marjorie W. Rines

The Stop & Shop in downtown Winchester is my grocery store of preference. I can't get there without passing Wildwood Cemetery — and I usually don't. Driving clockwise around the perimeter, the cemetery borders first a residential neighborhood with a tangled gully in between, followed by a small pond, then the dirt and compost area, and finally a woody edge. In the center, a hill overlooks a canopy of oak trees.

In spring migration there is nearly always a good flock of warblers somewhere in the cemetery, but the birding is terrific if they have concentrated in the oaks on the hill. Standing at the highest point, you get to enjoy the birds at eye level or below. For some reason, this is where I often get my first Tennessee Warbler of the year. I have had Cape May Warbler and Yellow-throated Vireo here in the spring.

In summer Orchard Orioles and Indigo Buntings regularly breed, and in 2000 a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers were seen regularly. In fall the compost area can offer nice sparrows (including a Blue Grosbeak one year). In winter the resident

Eastern Screech-Owl is a usually a shoe-in for the Christmas Bird Count.

In 2000 a family of foxes entertained many people throughout the late spring, with young that were remarkably approachable.

Leaving the cemetery, heading once again to the Stop & Shop, I am often diverted to Horn Pond Brook Bikeway just next door. It's funny, but this is just a dinky little path that only goes a few hundred yards, but it can be incredibly productive. Two years running I have found Connecticut Warbler in fall migration, and in spring migration there's

always a nice collection of warblers. On the Christmas Bird Count I always count on this location producing something special, and the highlight was an Indigo Bunting on the 1998 CBC. My favorite spot (known as a Fairy Meadow by the local preschool group that gathers there occasionally) is halfway down the path on the right, where a path goes down into a small open area.

Directions: Take Route 3 from Arlington into Winchester, and turn right at the light at Church Street. Turn left at the light at Fletcher Street, and then through the four-way stop sign at Wildwood Street. The entrance to Wildwood Cemetery is immediately after this intersection on the left. For Horn Pond Brook Bikeway, pass by the entrance to Wildwood, take your next left on Middlesex Street, and drive roughly .3 mile (go past Fairfield Place). Take a hard right on Horn Pond Brook Road (unmarked on any atlas I have), and park at the end. 🐾



Photograph by the author