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BREWSTER CONSERVATION TRUST SEEKS TO PRESERVE HUCKLEBERRY HILL

By Rich Eldred copyright 2011 The Cape Codder

Celia Riechel, Mark Robinson and Peter Johnson rest near the lofty 134-foot peak of Huckleberry Hill

BREWSTER —

Why climb Huckleberry Hill? The eternal answer is “because it’s there.”

And hopefully it’ll stay there if Brewster Conservation Trust can raise the \$150,000 necessary to purchase 10 acres that are home to the highest point in Brewster.

At a vertigo-inducing 134 feet, it is indeed a lofty peak – by Brewster standards anyway.

Actually, the town’s high point isn’t all that noticeable, as it rises from the shore of Cliff Pond in Nickerson State Park. The walking trail misses the peak as it traverses Huckleberry Hill’s shoulder, all the better for climbers to avoid altitude sickness.

The peak is roughly halfway between Cliff and Baker’s ponds, on land owned by Jamar Realty Trust. The 10-acre property would link up with about 90 more acres of town-owned land. Combined with Nickerson State Park and conservation land around Baker’s Pond in Orleans, it’ll form a nice wildlife corridor.

“It’ll be unfragmented forest, in the DCPC (District of Critical Planning Concern) and it’s a gorgeous piece of property,” said Peter Johnson, president of Brewster Conservation Trust. “It is frequented by white-tailed deer.”

In autumn, the black huckleberries that cover the hill turn a brilliant scarlet. The walking trail up the hill winds off a dirt road through white and black oak woods. The soil is dry, and sassafras, beech and even mockernut hickory can be found. There’s plenty of trailing arbutus and winter-green covering the ground.

The backside of the hill is steep and drops to a vernal pool that was filled with spotted salamander or wood frog eggs. Water striders perused the surface.

Johnson, Mark Robinson and Paula Pariseau of Cape Cod Compact of Conservation Trusts and Celia Riechel from the State Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs traversed the trail last Thursday afternoon.

The Trust hopes to gather a matching grant from the state to cover half the acquisition cost. Riechel was there to check out the property.

“We want to evaluate the property and what significance it has,” she explained.

Anyone who wants to help the Trust can visit www.brewsterconservationtrust.org or send a check to BCT, P.O. Box 268, Brewster MA 02631.