

Rockin' Around the Reservoir

By Kara Hedges

My entire life I have grown up with the Weston Reservoir Conservation Lands practically in my backyard.

Growing up, I have found that during all the four seasons of the year, it is an awesome place to walk with friends, to bike around on a nice day, to take the dog for a walk, or to go for a run when you want the exercise.



General Information

The Weston Reservoir was constructed in 1900 to serve Boston's water needs. However, in 1995 its usage was phased out when its supply system did not meet present day standards. It is currently managed by the Metropolitan Water Resources Authority (MWRA).

The Town of Weston owns 60 acres of conservation land just in the Ash Street Reservoir area alone. Throughout all of these acres, trails create connections for walks and hikes in the pine, hickory, and oak filled woods.

The beginning of the walk around the Ash Street Reservoir is about halfway down Ash Street from both directions. The Reservoir is on both sides of the road and there



is ample parking on either side of the bridge. Because the Reservoir has been divided onto both sides of the road, it conveniently creates two very different walks. The walk around the main Reservoir is a wide path that follows a fence all the way around the water. Although the fence prevents any close contact with the water, it is necessary to keep the water safe and clean. Even with the fence, there are still multiple opportunities for beautiful views of the natural beauty of the Reservoir. The distance around the larger part of the Reservoir is approximately 1.75 miles and because it is a loop, the walk can begin on either side.

On the other side of the road is a much shorter walk -- perfect for anyone who doesn't want to be out for too long. It is approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile. This trail is a very straight forward walk that is more open to air.

Originally, the Reservoir did not have the fence surrounding the water. However, people were abusing the privacy of the waters and were swimming and fishing in the water. To protect the drinking water and keep it safe and clean, the State thought it was best to protect the waters by putting up the fences.

As fabulous as the Reservoir is to get some exercise and get outside, I must warn you: if you're afraid of dogs, it is definitely not a good place. The Ash Street Reservoir is known to always be filled with dogs on walks.



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When I was younger, my Dad decided on a brisk fall day that he would take me and my two older brothers on a walk around the Reservoir so we could get to know our own backyard better and begin to appreciate the outdoors. I was too young to remember if this really happened or not, but he tells us today that the four of us saw a real mermaid playing on the rocks out in the middle of the Reservoir. It makes me think about what is living in and around the Reservoir today:

Life Under Water

It's hard to imagine life down there,
where humans cannot live.
Beneath the clear blue water's glare,
some lives are held captive.

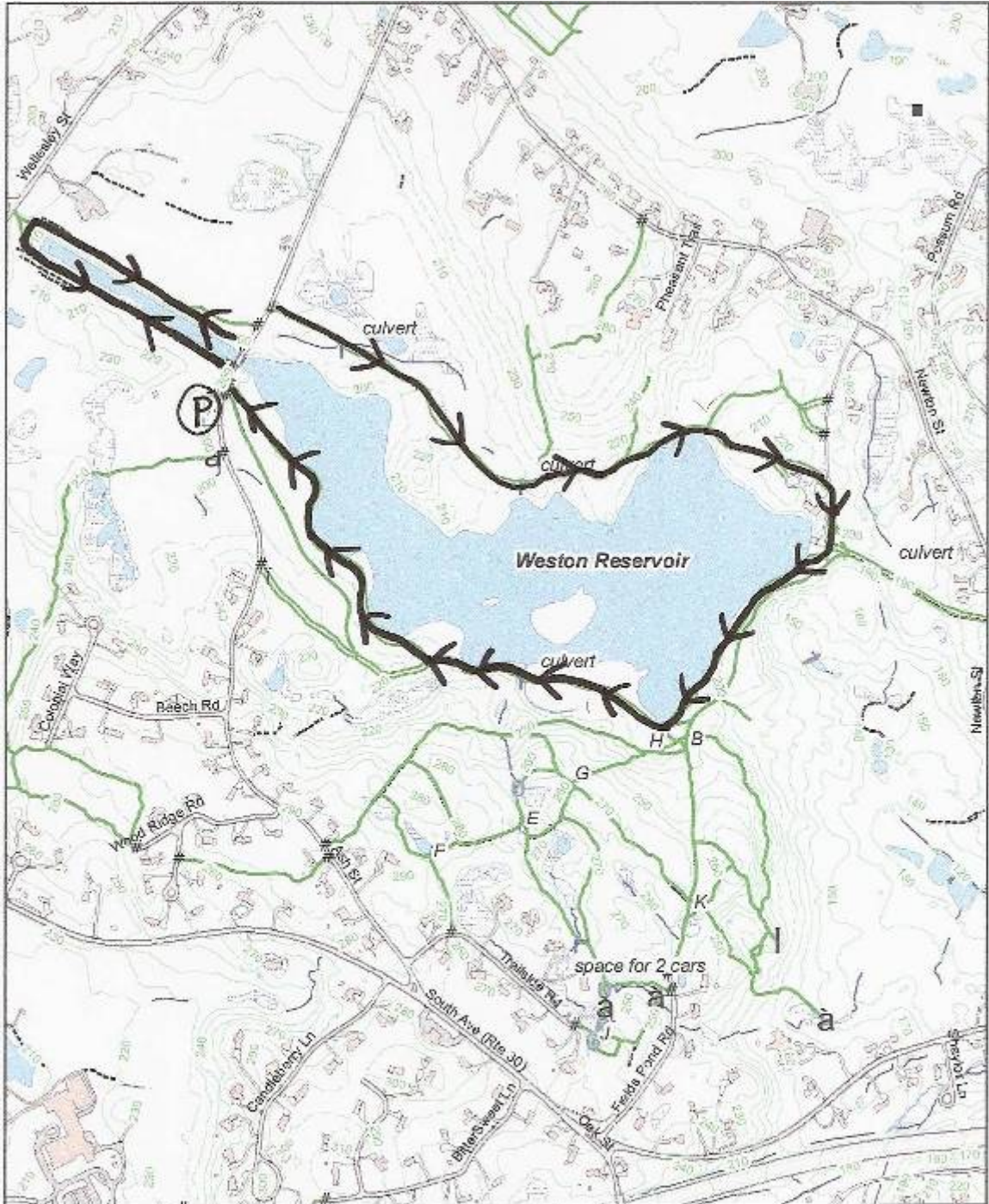
The lake's a home for many things,
some known yet some are strange.
I sometimes hear the fish, they sing,
their voices have good range.

I once was told that I could be,
whatever I would like.
If that is true, I'd live at sea,
like the mermaid from this hike.

But I'm not sure if I believe,
that mermaids do exist.
Go on this hike please, don't just leave
I really do insist!

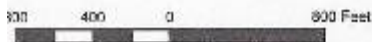
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Recommended Hike



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Reservoir

Weston Reservoir



So it's a beautiful day out and now is the perfect time for a hike! Because the Reservoir trail is a big loop, it can begin at either end. Usually I begin at the northern entrance. Since it really doesn't matter though, once you begin to know the trail it is fun to mix it up. Sometimes even if you and some friends want some exercise, each person, or team, can begin one on each side and see who makes it back out of the woods first on the other end. It creates some fun competition!!

When starting at the northern entrance to the large part of the Reservoir, the trail begins enclosed by forest on both sides and through the trees and fence on the right, the water can be seen. Because the trails are so wide and easy to see, the Reservoir is the perfect place to hike during any time of the year. I think it's the most fun right after a big snowstorm, because the huge evergreen trees create a snow canopy overhead and when the sun shines, the snow glistens above you. Only after a short



distance, there is a small brook to cross over, but it is often dried up. Another landmark that can't be missed is what I call the "jail cell." My friends and I pretend that witches are locked inside and every time we walk by, we look inside again to see if there's anything interesting. It can't be missed and be sure to let us know if you find anything!!

Continuing along on the trail, it begins to go up and down and gets very rooty. Watch out, the roots can be slippery when they're wet! As you start to turn the corner, the trees open up and if you look across the Reservoir there is a small house. This house is part of the water protection program that the Reservoir is part of. This part of the trail borders Newton Street and there is access to the trail from there, but more commonly it is accessed from Ash Street. At the house, there are a lot of big boulders. From personal experience, I know that they are very fun to climb around on and provide a superb spot to have a snack break.

Speaking of snacks.....even though this is not a very long hike, it is very important to be prepared whenever you are going into the woods. Water is a necessity! The best trail food is gorp, more commonly called trail mix. Gorp is an unfamiliar snack food for most people especially if you don't hike a lot, but you learn to love it and it becomes addicting!

Gorp is extremely easy to make and making it is part of what makes it so much fun to eat!

It's usually made of:

- All kinds of nuts
- M&Ms (I like to put a lot!)
- Raisins
- ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT!



Once you've gotten all the ingredients, mix everything together into a bag and shake it all up until everything is equally distributed. When you're on the trail and you feel hungry, just grab a handful. I bet you won't be able to eat just one handful! 😊

Once you've finished your snack and you continue hiking, the trail will bend around and you will be walking back in the direction towards the road. This trail on the south side of the Reservoir stays a lot closer to the fence and the water the entire time. This allows you to see the water a lot more closely and sometimes if you're lucky, you can see fish swimming around, but **NO FISHING!**



On this side of the Reservoir there will be opportunities to meander off the trail. To get back to the main parking lot, don't take any of the turns. Just follow the fence enclosing the water and you will get back.

After walking for a while on this side of the Reservoir and you look back, it is quite an accomplishment to look across the entire lake and see the buildings back where the boulders were where you had your snack break. It's hard to believe that you were all the way on the other side of the Reservoir not too long ago! If you just follow the fence to the end of the trail, the parking lot will appear in front of you.



At this point it's ok to go home, but sometimes I feel like I am up for more. If you want more, the reflecting pool on the other side of the road is the perfect way to end a good hike. It

isn't too long and it isn't quite the adventure that the big Reservoir is, but although this may seem funny, it always amazes me how much of a perfectly straight line all the trees are in (they were planted, of course!). The reflecting pool also has a little house at the end, and from there you can look back at the road, the bridge, and beyond the bridge to the big Reservoir where you have just been. It's quite an accomplishment to walk this much!

The hike around the Ash Street Reservoir walk is not a very long hike. Walking, it takes roughly 45 minutes to an hour.

Although sometimes people try to, don't ever use the excuse, "No I don't want to go on a hike. I've already done that." Around the Reservoir and most of all the other conservation lands in Weston, there is so much opportunity for exploring. Especially around the Reservoir, there are so many ways to enjoy the outdoors. It is perfect for walking, trail running, walking the dog, and mountain biking. The Reservoir is also easily accessible during all four seasons of the year - except during mud season when boots are a necessity.



Poison Ivy!!

From first hand experience, I have learned that these woods are filled with poison ivy. I can also tell you that poison ivy is not fun to have at all and should be avoided at all costs!! Poison ivy is a shiny three-leaf small plant. The oils on the leaves of the plant are "poisonous" and if they touch your skin they give you a very red, bumpy, and itchy rash. Unfortunately, the more it is itched, the worse it gets. If you ever see poison ivy on the ground, it is best to just avoid it and DO NOT touch it. Poison ivy is very uncomfortable and one plant that is not very pretty.



About the Author

Kara Hedges is a freshman at Weston High School. She loves being in the outdoors and exploring new places. She also loves being on stage dancing or running on the field playing many sports. She hopes that her chapter of this "Weston Trails" book will encourage more kids to get outside and go on a hike. Doing this project has enabled her to share her love for the outdoors with other people and she hopes it will allow Weston's kids to appreciate nature the way she has learned to.

