

Furry Friends Welcome: KELT's Leash Policy on Preserves

By Carrie Kinne, Executive Director

KELT believes that access to Maine's rich natural landscapes is important for people of all ages as well as their families and friends.

Our families often include beings of the canine species, our dogs! Of the ten public preserves KELT owns and manages, six allow pet owners to walk their dogs on the trails while the pup is on a leash at all times. This policy has been a part of KELT management of properties since owning our very first preserve in 1999, Weber Kelly Preserve in Georgetown. Granted, the Land Trust's use of public signage and notification on our preserve literature has not always been consistent.

With the growing popularity of our preserves, it has become crucial to not only make it clear that KELT has a leash policy but *explain to preserve users why we require dogs to be on leash at all times within a preserve.*

Concerning children and sensitive preserve visitors: Even well-behaved animals can be too enthusiastic for some of our visitors. Small children can be knocked down or frightened by a dog that runs or jumps at them, and people of all ages might be nervous around or severely allergic to dogs. In addition, children may not recognize when a dog is nervous, and their behavior may provoke or harm the dog. A leashed pet is under the control of the owner, so that negative interactions are avoided.

Concerning interactions with other pets: Conflicts arise between pets and pet owners when some animals are leashed and others are not. A dog on leash may feel threatened when approached suddenly by one that is off leash, or feel defensive of its owner. Dogs off leash may not listen to their owners if another animal is nearby. "Under voice control" is not the same as "on leash". Keeping all pets on leash is the only way to control these interactions and avoid conflicts.



Preserves & trails where we welcome folks to walk their leashed dogs:

Lilly Pond Community Forest in Bath

Thorne Head Preserve in Bath

Sewall Woods Preserve in Bath

Whiskeag Trail in Bath

Green Point Preserve in West Bath

Weber Kelly Preserve in Georgetown

Squam Creek Preserve on Westport Island
(opening summer of 2017!)

Visit www.kennebecestuary.org for more information about these preserves, to get driving directions, and print out trail maps for your next adventure with Fido!

Concerning interactions with wildlife: KELT preserves are conservation land, which means wildlife and wildlife habitat must be preserved. When dogs are allowed off-leash, they may chase or startle wild animals like birds. Even the scent of dogs can cause wildlife to avoid the areas around trails, reducing the opportunity for others to enjoy viewing wildlife. Keeping dogs on leash and on the trail reduces their impact.

Concerning trampling of habitat and waste removal: KELT policy and good sense requires that owners clean up their animal's waste. A pet off leash will often deposit their waste further from the trail. Sometimes the owner will leave the waste, which can impact the health of the surrounding habitat and waterways. Without leashes, both the animal and it's owner may end up trampling the trailside vegetation, reducing others' ability to enjoy wildflower displays and healthy woodland scenery.

Concerning the safety of your pet: KELT preserves are not safe environments for animals off leash. Wildlife conflicts, defensive humans, and other pets may all pose a threat to an off-leash animal. If your pet causes a problem, you will be responsible for the consequences. KELT wants every two- and four-legged visitor to our preserves to have a safe and enjoyable experience; so we insist that visiting animals remain on leash at all times.