

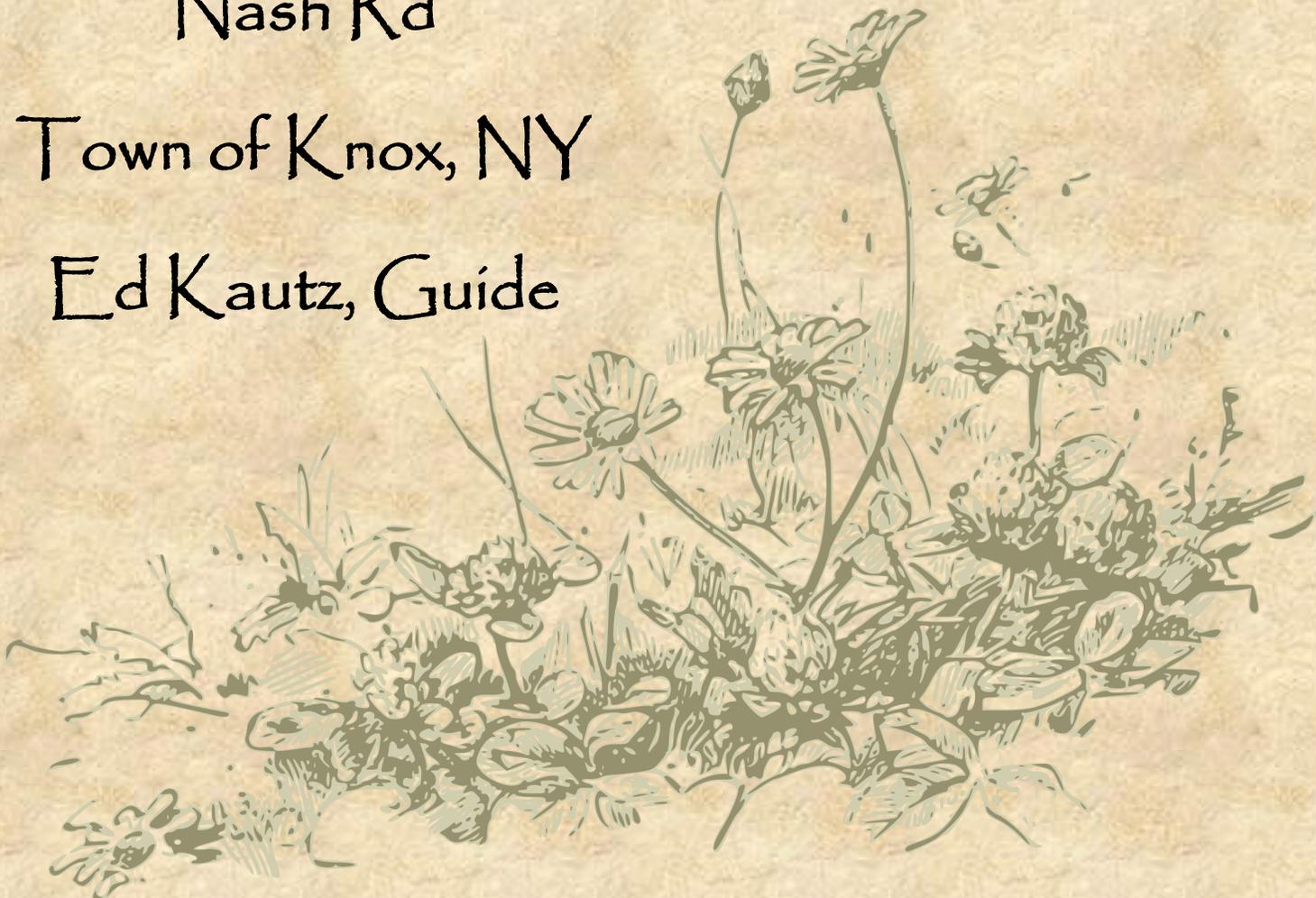
Spring Walk Virtual Tours

Limestone Rise

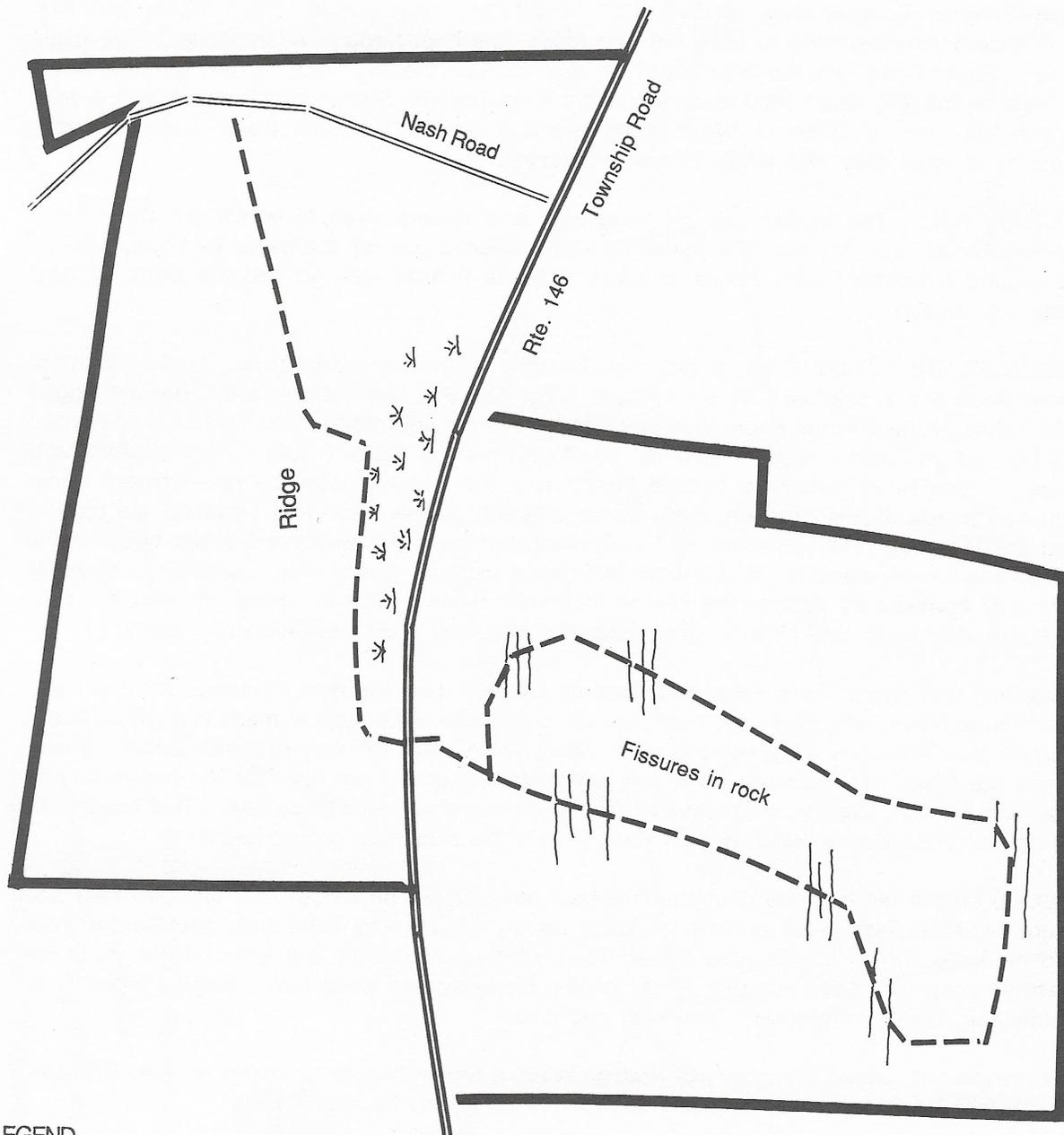
Nash Rd

Town of Knox, NY

Ed Kautz, Guide



LIMESTONE RISE



LEGEND

- Roads 
- Trails 
- Preserve Boundary 

ECOS WALKS

Limestone Rise

Nash Road. Town of Knox, NY 12107

Map from: ECOS Natural Areas of Albany County

Virtual Tour at ECOSNY.ORG, Spring Walk Virtual Tours

ECOS Virtual Tour

Nature Walk at Limestone Rise Preserve, 5/2/2020

Led by Ed Kautz

ECOS planned 7 Spring Flower Walks on Tuesdays from April 28 through June 9 this spring. They were cancelled due to COVID-19 virus. Instead we are offering would-be participants a virtual experience of what they might have expected to encounter on these walks, and may encounter if they take these walks on their own.

I'm leading the virtual tour of Limestone Rise Preserve. Owned by The Nature Conservancy, the preserve is well known for its spring wildflowers. I walked this area on 5/2/20 and 5/12/20. Both of these dates were too early for most wildflowers.

Limestone Rise is located in the Town of Knox at over 1200 ft. elevation. Thus wildflowers bloom later than elsewhere in the Capital District. NY 146 splits the preserve into two sections with different communities. The north is an old field growing into young forest. The **entrance** is on Nash Road, 0.2 mi N of NY 146, atop a small ridge. It has a large sign, and the trail is well marked with orange paint.



It goes over a small ridge to NY 146. The approach to the highway is wet, so wear boots or shoes that you don't mind getting wet.

When you reach NY 146, the **entrance to the south portion** of the preserve is across the highway, slightly to the left. This portion is marked with large plastic squares.



The trail map shows a bent oval shape. But the two parts of the trail seem to come together at one place near the top. Near this area one trail has white markers on the uphill side and orange on the downhill side. It works to follow the white markers back, though they change back to orange near the bottom.

This portion of the preserve has a limestone substrate with thin soil. Be careful walking, because the limestone has "solution channels," narrow gullies which crisscross the area.

After crossing the highway, I saw a **red trillium** in bloom in the trail on 5/2, and it was still in bloom on 5/12.



The trail starts uphill with a limestone cliff on the left. Take the time to look carefully at this cliff. It is covered with mosses and ferns, and should be a nice challenge to those familiar with these plants. At the top of the cliff, follow the top edge to the left a short distance. Lots of **Bishop's cap** grows here. Its $\frac{1}{4}$ " flowers have 5 tiny white frilly petals. On 5/12 the flowers were just about to open. Continue on up the trail.



On May 2, there were **hepatica** flowers in bloom everywhere. The density was low, but there were the most hepatica plants I've ever seen in one area. Most blossoms were gone by 5/12.



Blue cohosh is scattered throughout, but only a few were in bloom by 5/12. One has to look carefully to see the blossoms. The petals are purplish gray and blend with the plant. Look for the small yellow centers.



About half way up the trail, evergreens (mostly hemlocks) virtually disappear from the forest. Here I found large numbers of leaves of **white trillium**, but they were about half grown with no buds yet. Most of these will produce a white flower with the ground “covered with it for acres.”



Other species I saw which were just starting to bloom were: several species of violets, sessile-leaf bellwort, barren strawberry, wild ginger, and **Carolina spring beauty**.



Other flowers which will be found here later include **foam flower**, Indian cucumber root, Jack in the pulpit, **wild columbine**, and Canada mayflower.



I was struck by the lack of a shrub layer in the limestone forest. The only understory woody plants were mostly young hop hornbeam. They had thin-bare stems with leafy branches above 5 feet. Leaves were just starting to grow. As I looked around me, I saw a ceiling of small leaves starting at head high. Occasionally I found short woody plants that were still alive, but all the branches had been nibbled to stubs. This is due to heavy deer browsing in winter. But white trillium is a preferred food for deer. How could there be so many here? At the top of the trail there was a clue -- two large green fields, probably hay or pasture. And the aerial view in Google Maps shows that about half of the surrounding area is agricultural fields. Apparently, the deer have more abundant high-quality forage by the time the wildflowers come up.

A walk at Limestone Rise in the last week of May should provide a good wildflower show.