



# *Twenty Years, Twenty Hikes*

*A guide to twenty hikes  
on protected land in  
North Central Massachusetts*

Written by John Burk, Elizabeth Farnsworth and Allen Young

Introduction by Leigh Youngblood

Cartography by Elizabeth Farnsworth

Edited by Nathan Rudolph

Cover photo by John Burk

Map source: Office of Geographic and Environmental Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

Published by Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust  
and New England Cartographics

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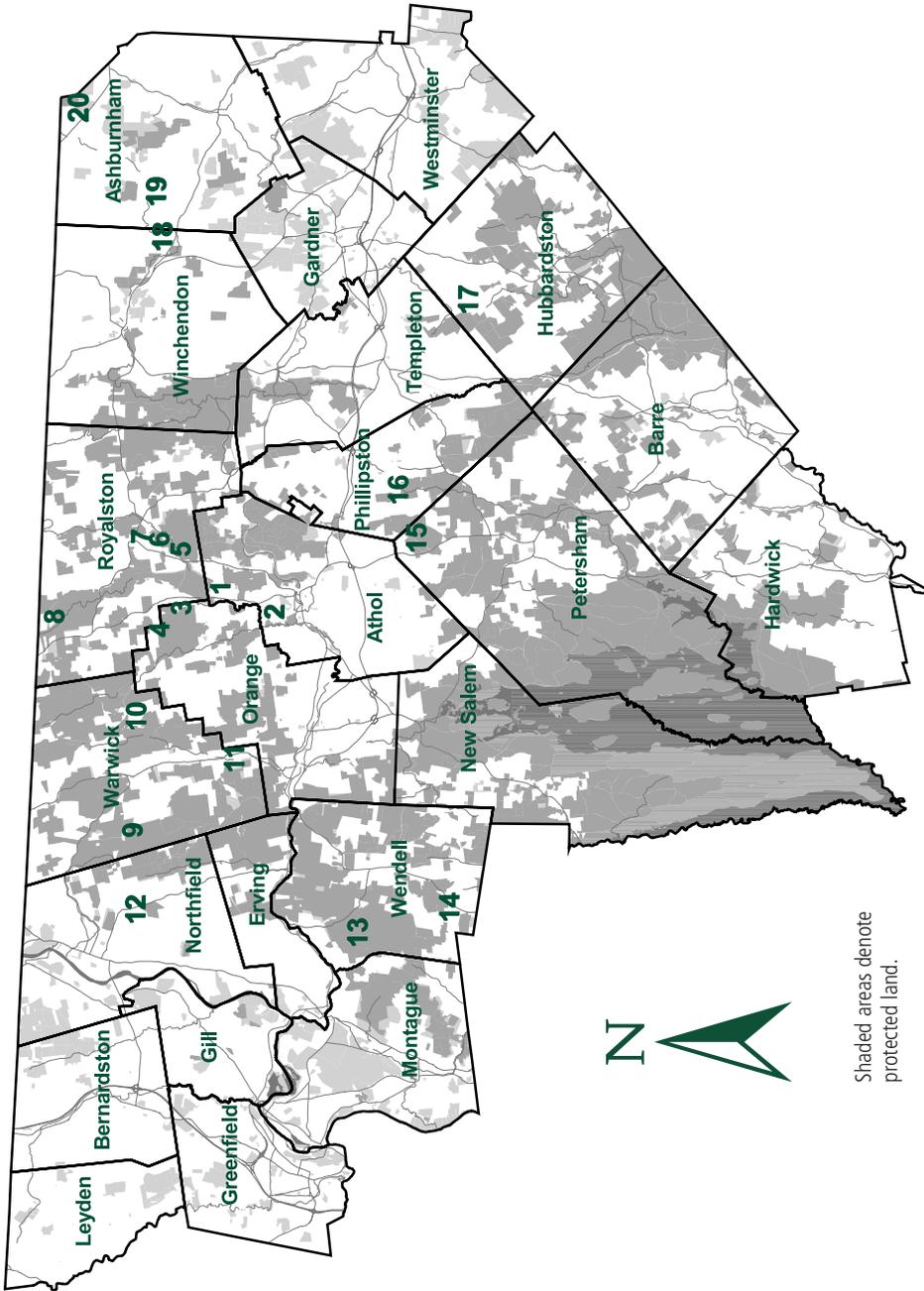
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The authors of these trail descriptions field checked all of the routes in the summer of 2006. The sketched trails are approximate and can change due to natural conditions or man-made alterations.

Before heading out, we recommend that hikers obtain and use topographic maps published by the U.S. Geological Survey. Follow blazes carefully and carry a compass or GPS device. Let others know your destination. Please notify Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust if you encounter any problems or uncertainties with trails on the land we own.

Finally, please do not litter—always carry out what you carry in.



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## Introduction

These twenty hikes will take you through twenty years of land conservation in North Central Massachusetts. Selected from more than two hundred land protection projects Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust has assisted with over the years, each of the trails crosses a portion of the extensive mosaic of protected land that characterizes the local landscape of the greater North Quabbin Region.

In 1986, Mount Grace was founded by group of local residents who convened themselves to discuss ways to address the rapid, unorganized development threatening the forests and fields of the local landscape. Our first project was the protection of the 365-acre Lawton Tree Farm in Athol. Since that time, Mount Grace has protected 20,000 acres in our 23-town region. Our office headquarters at the Skyfields Arboretum (see Hike 1, page 2) is located adjacent to the present day Lawton State Forest.

In honor of our 20th Anniversary, we are inviting you to visit and experience some of the special places that Mount Grace has helped conserve throughout our history. We have compiled 20 hikes or walks (actually nineteen hikes and one canoe paddle) that highlight projects we have completed or collaborated on which are best suited to hiking or visiting.

Six of the hikes will take you to conservation areas owned and managed by Mount Grace. As part of its mission, Mount Grace "encourages land stewardship" by demonstrating site-appropriate management of all our land, including ecologically sound forest management practices on portions of our conservation areas. Members and the public are able to experience forest stewardship firsthand on our conservation areas before, during, and after logging operations. All of our conservation areas are open to the public for non-motorized uses.

The Arthur Iversen Conservation Area, Hidden Valley Memorial Forest, Fern Glenn Conservation Area, Fox Valley Conservation Area, Paul C. Dunn Woodland Preserve, and Skyfields Arboretum are all examples of land permanently protected by a generous donation from a landowner to Mount Grace.

The other hikes take you to places that Mount Grace helped to protect, in whole, or in part. While we do not own these properties, Mount Grace served to facilitate their protection or an addition to the protected area. In some cases Mount Grace pre-acquired the property and later transferred it to another organization. On other projects, Mount Grace was there to assist towns or newer land trusts in utilizing land protection tools and programs. Other times, Mount Grace provided financial support to help the project move forward. In addition, Mount Grace holds conservation restrictions on land contained within some of these special places. In many of these facilitated projects, Mount Grace has participated in more than one of the ways mentioned above.

The following trail descriptions reflect the distinct passion and engagement with the natural world of three authors: Allen Young, Elizabeth Farnsworth, and John Burk. It is our hope that their varying perspectives will stimulate your own curiosity and sense of discovery, whether the places described are familiar or unknown to you. Please follow trail blazes carefully and beware that trail conditions change.

One consistent aspect of all of the projects Mount Grace has completed in our twenty years is that they were not completed alone. Ours is a history of collaborations. The success of Mount Grace would not be possible without the participation of land donors, other land trusts, town committees, state and federal agencies, local businesses, our financial supporters, and myriad other dedicated groups and individuals. Although we cannot list the names of all of our project partners here, we sincerely wish to salute each of them. Thanks to our collective efforts, 20,000 acres of the forests and farms of our local landscape have been protected to date, for the sake of the environment, the economy, and future generations.

Happy trails,

Leigh Youngblood  
Executive Director  
January 2007

## Athol Skyfields Arboretum & Willis Woods Loop Trail

**Owner** Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

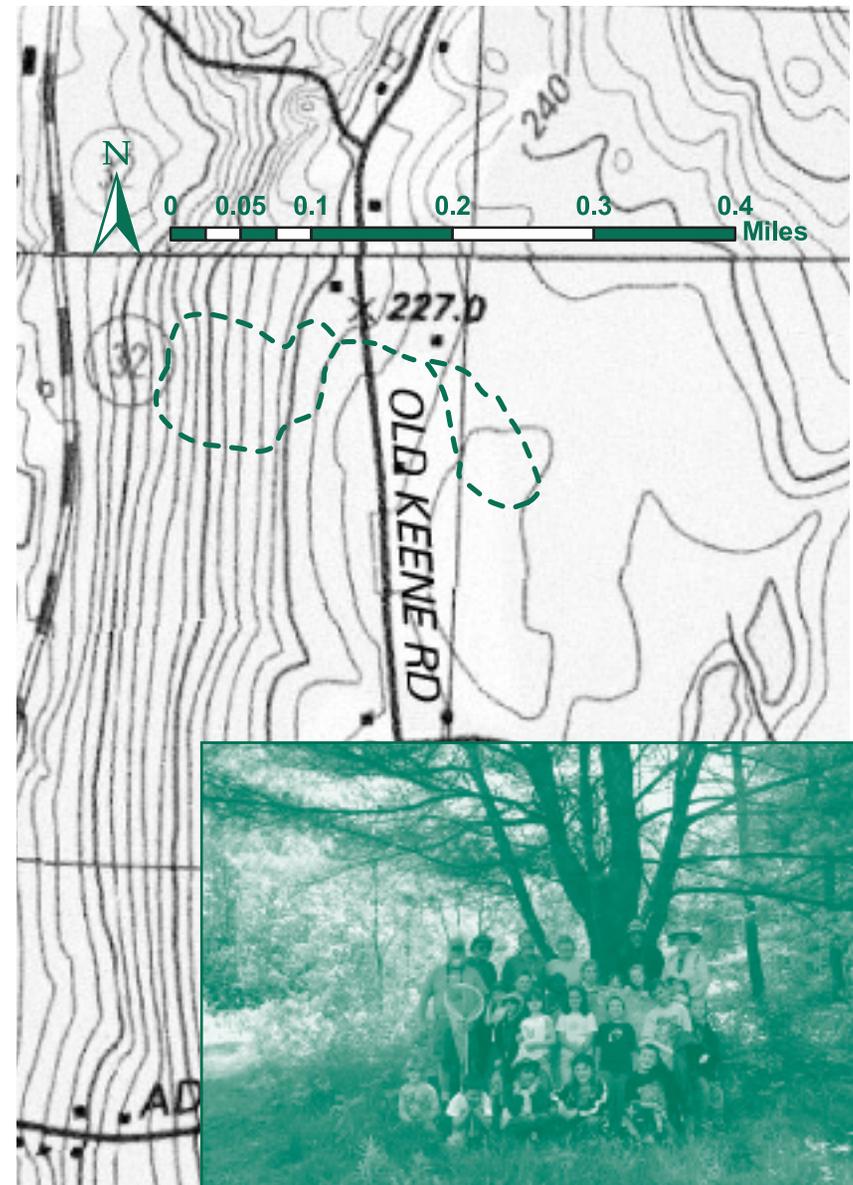
**Gift from** Margaret “Peggy” Power-Biggs, 1999

**Directions** Take Route 2 to exit 17 and follow Route 32 north. Cross bridge and bear right onto Chestnut Hill Avenue. After less than .25 miles, bear left at fork onto Old Keene Road (there is a fire hydrant at fork). Skyfields is about 1.5 miles north on right side of the road. Parking lot is located just past gray farm house—look for the Skyfields Arboretum sign.

The 40 acres of rolling meadows and mixed-deciduous forest surrounding the headquarters of Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust are a pleasure to wander. You can take a leisurely walk around the newly-installed arboretum, where dozens of informative signs will help you identify and learn about native trees of our region. On the other hand, heading west across Old Keene Road, you can walk the gently sloping hills of Willis Woods on a loop trail created in 2006. You can circumnavigate both the Arboretum and Willis Woods Trails in about an hour, but take your time!

From the parking area, go toward the visitor’s kiosk and take the trail to the right of the boulder, heading east and uphill slightly into the extensive meadow of Skyfields Arboretum. A mown loop trail will wind you through the flat, grassy fields, which come alive with tiny sparkles of blue-eyed grass (actually a lily) in spring, burst with colorful blooms of common milkweed and black-eyed susans in mid-summer, and are burished with the deep yellows of goldenrod in the fall. Peer among the milkweed flowers, and you’ll soon discover a rich world of interesting insects living only on this species. Most famous and flamboyant among these insects is the bright orange monarch butterfly; you can hardly miss them flitting around Skyfields in July. The adult butterflies cruise the meadow, then begin to congregate for their astonishing, 3,000-mile-long migratory flights to Mexico, where they will spend the winter. Take time along the trail to enjoy and learn about the dozens of diverse trees and shrubs planted around the arboretum, including balsam fir, New Jersey tea, highbush cranberry, shagbark hickory, and summersweet.

Once you return to the parking area, walk west across Old Keene Road to enter the Willis Woods Trail. Follow the arrows that guide you south through a moist field that skirts a wetland area. Though this field is “grassy” too, it has a very different suite of species from the upper field, including water-loving sensitive ferns and several different kinds of sedges. Small clumps of planted, bright orange daylilies are reminders that a barn once occupied this ground. The trail skirts the western edge of the field, then heads south over a stone wall next to an enormous “witness pine.” This giant tree and others like it in these woods date from the 1800s. They were originally spared from felling by farmers who kept them to mark the boundaries of their properties. These woods were selectively logged only four years ago (and 10 years before that), but you would hardly know it because this careful logging has encouraged the rapid growth of new trees. A few former clearings are good places to pick a wild strawberry or blueberry on your walk. Head back uphill and across another stone wall. The trail will wind you gently through the field and back to the parking area. —EF



Mount Grace staff

*“A place to learn and study—whether trees, stars, birds or butterflies—for people of all ages...Skyfields will be truly for and by the people”*

*—Peggy Biggs*

## Athol Cass Meadow

**Owner** Town of Athol and Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

**Directions** From Route 2A (Main Street) in downtown Athol at the traffic light, turn north on Exchange Street. Cross the bridge over the Millers River, and take the first left on Pequoig Avenue. Continue for approximately .25 miles, and look for Cass Meadow Conservation Area signs on left side of road. Park on the right side of the road at the curve.

The 85-acre Cass Meadow, managed by the town of Athol and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, lies just outside of downtown Athol at the confluence of the Millers and Tully Rivers. The wet meadow, which was historically used by Native Americans and also served briefly as an airfield during the 1920s, is now largely maintained as open habitat to enhance biodiversity.

One of the region's interesting wildlife viewing opportunities can be seen here from March through May, when woodcock perform their courtship flights in early morning and evening; over 30 individuals may be seen and heard (listen for the nasal "PEENT" call) at one time. A variety of wildflowers, birds, and insects, and even an occasional deer or black bear, can also be found here. The restored meadow provides habitat for grassland-favoring birds such as indigo buntings, yellowthroats, and eastern towhees.

From the yellow gate off of Pequoig Avenue, the wide gravel road slopes downhill, providing direct access to the meadow. An interpretive sign provides information about the area's management and natural history. During wet springs, portions of the meadow may be flooded, offering additional wildlife viewing opportunities. After .2 miles, the road ends at a yellow building. Turn left and follow the partially overgrown, narrower trail that makes a quick loop over a small hill which provides a view of the Tully River just before it discharges into the Millers River. Follow the road back to your car.

The town of Athol is currently working on a plan to connect Cass Meadow with the Alan Rich Environmental Park by building a footbridge across the Millers River.—JB



John Burk

John Burk

## Orange Tully Mountain

**Owner** Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

**Directions** From Route 2A (Main Street) in downtown Athol at the traffic light, turn north on Exchange Street. Cross the bridge over the Millers River, and take the first left on Pequig Avenue. Continue for 3 miles. After passing Tully Pond on the right, there's a good view of Tully Mountain; turn right onto Royalston Road, then immediately bear left on Mountain Road, a dirt road with the mountain rising to the left. Drive .25 miles to a small parking area on the left, marked "Tully Mountain Wildlife Management Area."

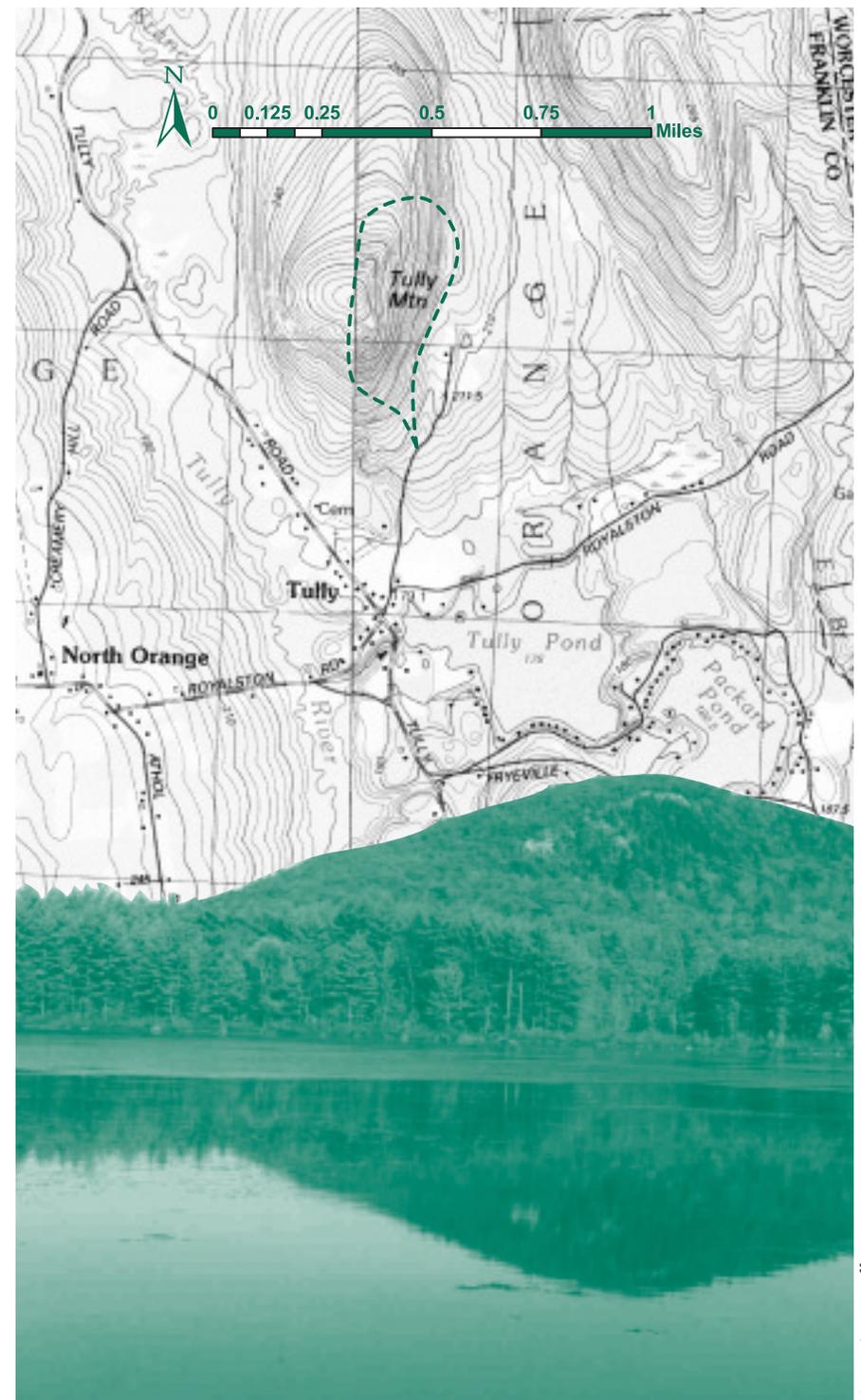
One of central Massachusetts' most scenic vistas is situated at the rocky ledges near the summit of 1,150-foot Tully Mountain, which rises high above the surrounding landscape of North Orange. The mountain is part of a 1,200-acre state wildlife management area and is a highlight of the 22-mile Tully Trail circuit. Allow an hour for this hike.

This loop features a moderate climb along the Tully Trail to the ledges and a short but steep descent on the return route. Those looking for a good workout or a short, direct, .25 mile route to the summit may wish to do this hike in reverse.

Follow the narrow trail at the back edge of the parking area into the woods to a Y-junction. (For the direct, steep climb to the ledges go left here). The path to the right follows the yellow-blazed Tully Trail on a level walk along the base of the hill. Watch for an impressive towering white pine on the left and note the adjacent rocky forest terrain, evidence of how difficult this land was for agricultural use. The trail enters a hemlock-hardwood stand with lots of downed timber, making a slight downhill arc to the right before meeting an old woods road at a T-junction. Go left here, climbing up the road past a Tully Trail marker. The path levels off after a few minutes before resuming a moderate climb, passing another yellow-blazed trail on the right and winding to the wooded summit. The open ledges are just beyond the summit.

The view from the rocky ledges includes Mount Monadnock on the northern horizon, its barren summit clearly visible. Across the Tully Valley, the ledges in Royalston including Jacobs Hill are to the right of Monadnock, and Wachusett Mountain's profile can be seen to the southeast. The large body of water in the foreground is Tully Pond, with Tully Lake further away and less visible to the northeast.

After enjoying the view, walk to the end of the ledges, and look carefully for the yellow-blazed trail on the edge of the woods to the right. The path descends steeply over large bare rocks. Note the difference in forest here, more open with more oaks, and fewer pines and hemlocks. As the trail begins to level off, follow the yellow blazes left at a marked junction. Cross between two stone walls, and you'll soon be at your car after a short walk back to the parking area. —JB



Mount Grace staff

## Orange Tully Meadow & the North Quabbin Bioserve

**Owner** Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

**Directions** From Route 2A (Main Street) in downtown Athol at the traffic light, turn north on Exchange Street. Cross the bridge over the Millers River, and take the first left on Pequig Avenue. Continue for 5.1 miles to a small parking area on right with Tully Mountain Wildlife Management Area sign. (Note: Pequig Avenue becomes Pindale Avenue and then Tully Road).

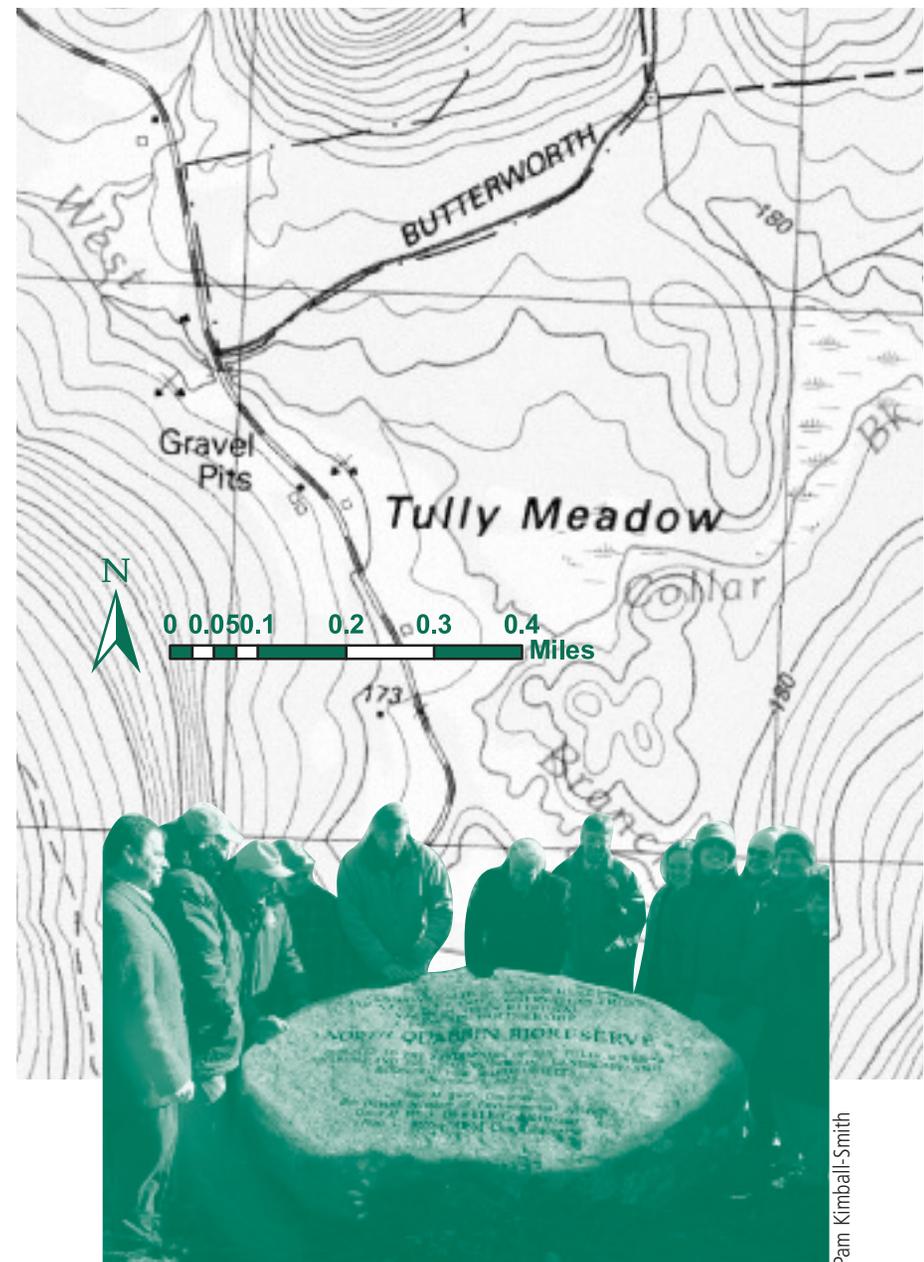
To get to the boulder commemorating the creation of the North Quabbin Bioserve, walk a few hundred feet along the paved road to the crest of a small hill just south of the intersection of Tully Road and Butterworth Road.

Tully Meadow, located within the state-owned 1,200-acre Tully Mountain Wildlife Management Area in the town of Orange, is the dedication site of the North Quabbin Bioserve. Nature-lovers now and for years to come will be truly moved as they stand in front of the boulder marking the place where, on December 3, 2002, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership celebrated the creation of the 120,000-acre bioserve. The engraving on the boulder states: "Dedicated to the landowners of the Tully River watershed and the citizens, the working landscape and the biodiversity of Massachusetts".

A bioserve is a large land area that is mostly protected from development and managed to ensure the long term health of the natural resources. The concept, which originated in a program of the United Nations, aims to balance conservation of biological diversity, protection of cultural resources, economic development, and human activity.

Tully Mountain, centerpiece of the wildlife management area, rises in the background to the south of the meadow. This meadow is not a field of waving grass, but rather consists of dense vegetation in an area where beavers have engineered parts of the Tully River into a rich wetland. The higher elevations here were once cultivated as a strawberry and vegetable farm and, more recently, a Christmas tree farm. The Wildlife Management Area includes 3,000 feet of frontage on the West Branch of the Tully River and one of its tributaries, Collar Brook. Incredibly diverse, the area boasts at least 13 habitat types, including various kinds of forests, swamps, seeps, talus slopes, and open bedrock slabs. The river is stocked with trout and the old fields with pheasant. The area is home to a large number of plant species, while deer, bear, bobcat, coyote, turkey, raccoons, snakes, woodcock, and numerous other animal species visit or make their homes here.

The visitor has two options after viewing the boulder. An adventurous hiker with proper footwear can sash along or through the river and eventually into the undefined wetland. This is slow-going bush-whacking with a surprise around each corner as numerous hummocks punctuate slow-moving pools of water that range from six inches to six feet deep. The visitor who prefers dry land can follow the yellow-blazed Tully Trail north along Tully and Butterworth Roads and into the woods to the Fish



Brook Wildlife Management Area, a hike of about an hour each way, including a steep climb up Butterworth Ridge. Both the Tully Meadow wetland and the Fish Brook Gorge are dramatic and beautiful retreats from civilization. —AY

## Royalston Tully Lake & Doane's Falls Loop

**Owner** US Army Corps of Engineers, The Trustees of Reservations

**Directions** Take Route 2 to exit 17. Follow Route 32 north approximately 6 miles. Start at parking area for Tully Lake boat launch and picnic area.

From the Tully Lake boat launch, walk back up Route 32, and head south along the road across the dam. The trail begins to the right of the dam at the brown "Doane's Falls—2 Miles" sign. Walk down the hill through the disc golf course and look for the yellow-blazed trail. Follow the trail right, across a paved road into the woods. After a few turns, look for a nice view of the south end of the lake. The trail rolls gently under pines and hemlocks, with a brief rocky crossing over the south outlet. Continue along the east shore, with a variety of wildflowers including painted trillium and eastern starflower visible during spring.

At the northeast corner of Tully Lake, the trail veers away from the lake. Listen for Lawrence Brook on the left. Begin a moderate climb, passing stone walls and a boundary marker. Continue straight on the yellow-blazed trail. Continue the climb, with the sound of water cascading through Doane's Falls audible through the woods to the left; there are no views on this side. After crossing a stone wall, the trail meets Athol Road. Turn left here (watch for traffic) and cross the bridge over Lawrence Brook at the top of Doane's Falls.

The Falls are one of the best-known attractions in the North Quabbin region. Just beyond the Trustees of Reservations sign, the trail continues, with a good view of the bridge and upper falls. The path makes a moderate descent along the cascades; rocks and tree roots make footing a bit tricky here. At the cable railing, there's a good view of Lawrence Brook as it drops, narrows, and curves into a pool above the main falls. Look through the trees for more views of the main falls. From here the trail levels off and continues to the junction with Doane's Hill Road. Turn left here and follow the road past the Long Pond boat launch on the right.

At the Tully Lake campground on the left, immediately look for the yellow-blazed trail (also marked with Tully Trail signs) at the rear corner of parking lot. The lake soon comes back into view, including a brief view of the dam in the distance. The trail continues with several nice vistas, crossing a log bridge at an outlet with a wetland on the right. Go left downhill at a marked junction.

After briefly paralleling Doane Hill Road, the trail crosses another wood bridge and a small brook. Continue along the west shore, passing the Story Trail on the right. At a Y-junction, a brief detour left leads to a nice view of the lake. The main trail soon returns to the parking area; stay straight at a sign for the picnic area (the Tully Trail branches off to the right here).

Doane's Falls can be done independently as a much shorter hike. There are parking areas near the bridge at the top of the Falls, and at the bottom at the yellow gate just east of the Long Pond parking area where the Tully Trail crosses the road. —JB



John Burk

## Royalston The Ledges

**Owner** The Trustees of Reservations

**Directions** Drive about 1 mile north of Royalston center on Route 68 (Warwick Road). The entrance to the Jacobs Hill Reservation, marked by a green Trustees of Reservation sign, is on the left.

Few hikes offer as many rewards in so short and leisurely a walk: forty minutes of easy hiking will lead you past wetlands, across waterfalls, through deep hemlock woods, and finally up to an astounding view over the Tully region. Although you can make this a quick two-way hike, the path connects to the much more extensive Tully Trail system and the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail. Your options for a beautiful day are endless.

Begin the hike at the Jacobs Hill parking area maintained by The Trustees of Reservations, on Route 68 north of the historic Royalston town common. Follow the yellow blazes to the left and downhill of the informational kiosk, skirting a large wetland on your left. This large and diverse wetland forms the headwaters of Spirit Falls, which drops almost 200 feet in a series of cascades to the shores of Long Pond in the west. Watch for signs of active beaver or a kestrel swooping out of one of the large standing snags that line the wetland. In August, the round-leaved nannyberry may be heavy with its bright red fruits.

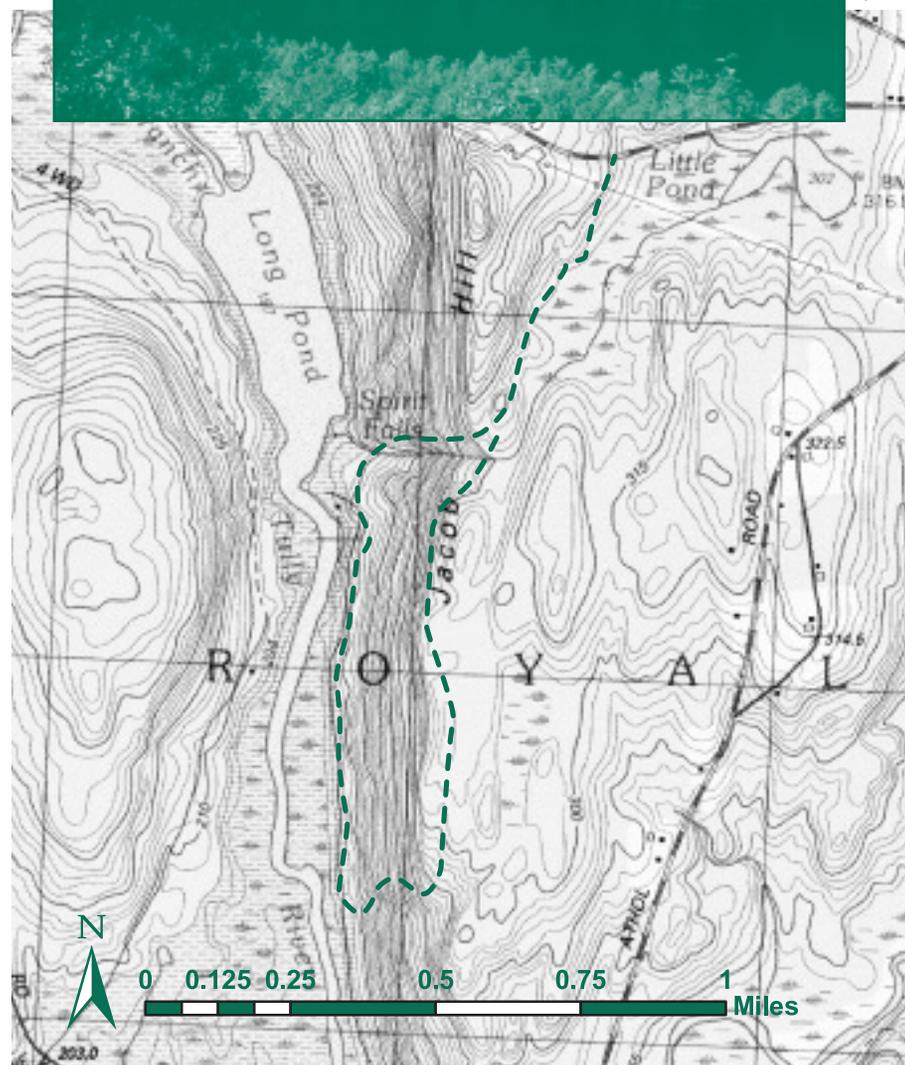
The trail courses south beside the wetland then heads gently uphill into the deep shade of a mature hemlock grove. Look for chipmunk holes tucked among the rocks in the trail; you may hear their startled chirps or the scolding of a red squirrel as you pass through here. Follow the yellow blazes across a narrow boardwalk of logs and you will rejoin another arm of the wetland. A small waterfall (the summit of Spirit Falls) runs out of the wetland where you will turn sharply right (west) and downhill.

Very shortly, turn left (south) at the double blazes and cross the stream, joining the Tully Trail. You will walk through a majestic stand of hemlocks and red oak, similar-aged trees that most likely got their start after the great hurricane of 1938. To your right, you will begin to glimpse areas of open sky, hinting at the view that awaits you at the ledges. After jogging around a large fallen tree, the trail will become narrow and rockier. You are enclosed by the gnarly stems and shiny green leaves of old mountain laurels—reminders of the pastures that once covered this hilltop. Look for their intricate pinkish-white blooms in mid-summer.

Shortly, you will see a small path trace off to the right, which will lead you in a few steps to the open ledges. The stellar vista from the ledges takes in Tully Lake to the south, Tully Mountain and Mount Grace to the west, and the Vermont and New Hampshire hills to the north, across miles of farms and forest. Tear your eyes away from the view, and notice at your feet the swirls of quartz in the gray bedrock that forms these dramatic cliffs. Look for soaring turkey vultures and, in fall, migrating broad-wing and red-tailed hawks soaring the thermals above Long Pond. From this outlook, you can retrace your steps back to the parking area, or continue south to a steep set of switchbacks that will lead you to the base of the gorge and the Tully wetlands. Or, you can walk north at the junction of the Tully Trail near the waterfall about .5 miles to Jacobs Hill, which affords a sweeping view to the north. —EF



John Burk



## Royalston Long Pond (a paddling trip)

**Owner** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**Directions** Take Route 2 to exit 17. Follow Route 32 north approximately 6.75 miles and turn right onto Doane Hill Road. About 1 mile east of this intersection, cross the bridge over the Tully River. The canoe launch area is a sharp left into a gravel parking area, just beyond the bridge.

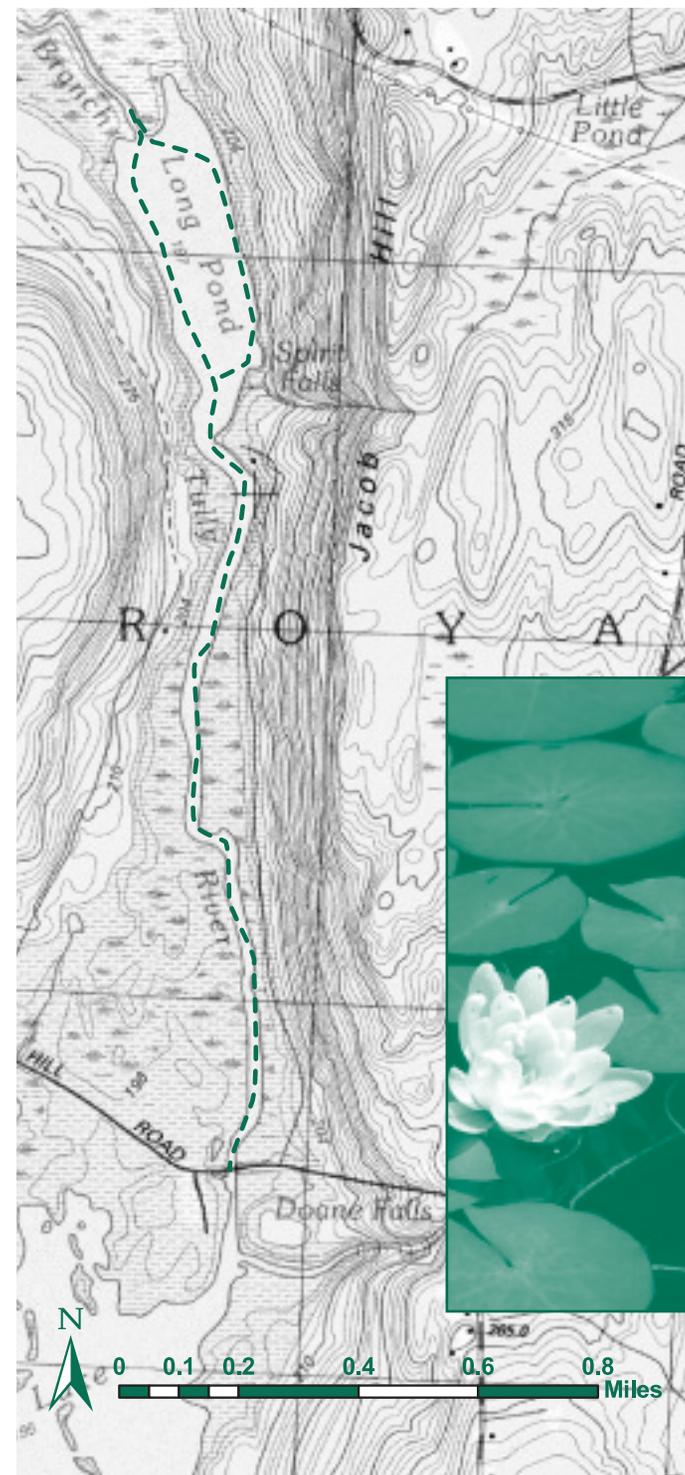
Tully Lake and its northern arm, Long Pond, offer the paddler an unusual experience of serenity. The forest-clad hills overlooking these waters are only sparsely dotted with houses, and to those plying Long Pond, there is almost no sign of human disturbance. There are plenty of shaded shores at which you can pause for a picnic or a nap. Long Pond is formed by the drainage of the Tully River; where it meets the dammed Tully Lake, the “river” widens out into a placid stretch of calm open water lined with wetlands. This reach is especially amenable to canoeists and kayakers, although a shallow-draft fishing boat (10-horsepower maximum) might be able to cast a line in some of the deeper areas.

From the canoe launch parking area, maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers, put in and head north (to the right). The current in this short, narrow stretch can be surprisingly swift, but is negotiable by even beginner paddlers. Stay to the left of the channel early on, though; a rather large boulder, made colorful by all the patches of scratched-off boat paint, is the only dangerous obstruction you will encounter during your whole trip.

Soon, the channel will widen and you will have a very easy paddle up a relatively straight channel flanked by grassy wetlands. Look for the striking purple spires of pickerelweed and the showy white flowers of water lilies during July. As Long Pond jogs briefly to the west, you will come across an area that beavers have worked long and hard to dam (they should consult the Army Corps downstream!). Fortunately, they haven't quite succeeded, but you will need to hug the northeastern shore and scoot through a narrow opening in their dam. Beyond this hurdle, the pond will widen out and take on a more boreal feel.

The surrounding wetlands are taller, dominated by buttonbush (its round, white blossoms give this close relative of coffee its name) and swamp rose, festooned with pink flowers in mid-summer. One more jog to the northwest and you will enter the wide expanse of Long Pond proper. Here, dragonflies and damselflies will dart about. A great blue heron is likely to be patiently foraging along the shore. The boggy wetlands to the north can be explored by smaller boats and you can thread through them to find the drainage of the original Tully River. Farther north, the going becomes tougher and portages are necessary—you might as well be in Maine.

Note that boaters can also head south from the canoe launch to access the northeast corner of Tully Lake. The possibilities for exploration are nearly endless. —EF



Elizabeth Farnsworth

## Royalston Royalston Falls

**Owner** The Trustees of Reservations

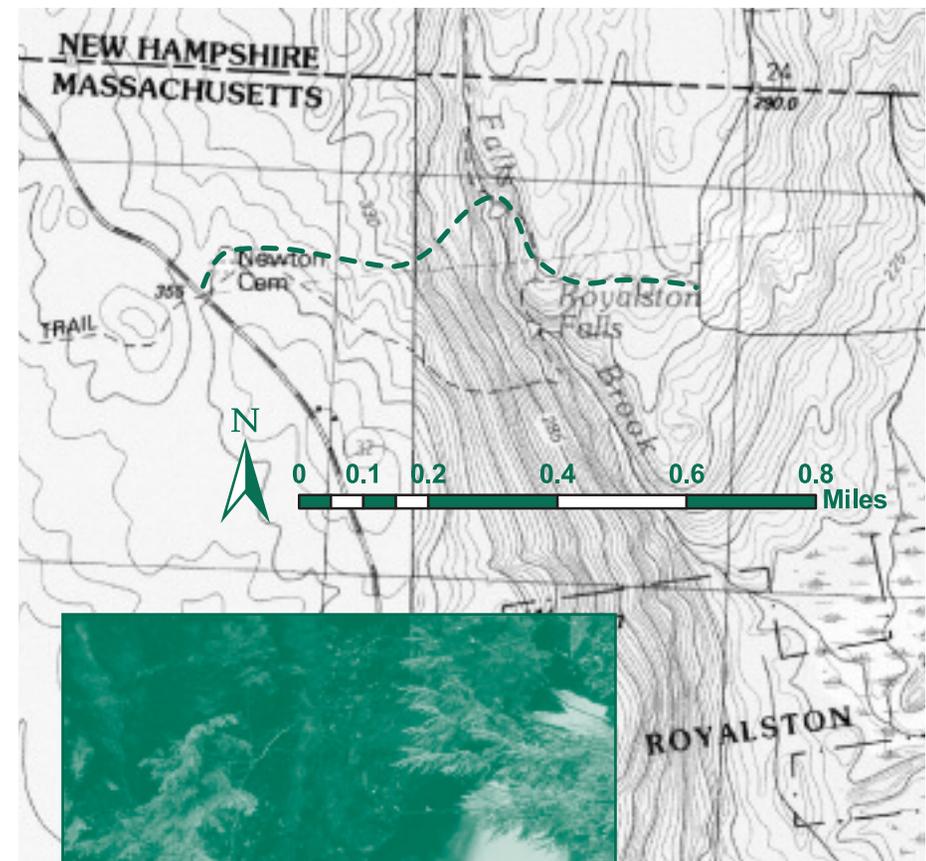
**Directions** For the main entrance, follow Route 32 north from Athol past Tully Lake into Royalston. After passing the junction with Route 68 south on the right, watch for The Trustees of Reservations parking area for the Falls on the right. For the Falls Road entrance (four-wheel drive recommended), from the Royalston town common follow Route 68 north past the Jacobs Hill Reservation. Turn right on Falls Road and drive as far as you safely can; after the last residence the road is not maintained year-round.

Tall, remote Royalston Falls is a beautiful, hemlock-lined gorge just south of the New Hampshire state line and is one of Massachusetts' most scenic waterfalls. The waters of Falls Brook make a dramatic 60-foot drop from the top of the falls into the chasm below. As is the case with waterfalls along small streams and brooks, volume varies considerably according to hydrologic conditions. In September 2004 the falls went from a trickle to a thundering cascade within hours as the remains of Hurricane Ivan passed over central New England. This is an interesting area to visit in winter, as a myriad of ice formations can be found along the gorge. There are two options for exploring Royalston Falls, from the west at the Newton Cemetery entrance on Route 32, or from the east via Falls Road. During winter and other times when road conditions are poor, the Newton Cemetery area is more reliable for vehicle access.

From the Royalston Falls Reservation parking lot, the trail to Falls Brook is marked with both white (Metacomet-Monadnock) and yellow (Tully Trail) blazes. Follow the path downhill, curving to the left and crossing two tiny seasonal streams. After 15–20 minutes, arrive at Falls Brook, with a wood shelter up on the slope to the left. Cross the brook on a recently constructed wooden bridge. At this point the trails split; follow the yellow blazes to the right. From here the Tully Trail follows the brook downstream for .3 miles to the falls, passing a pool and several flow-dependent small rapids.

From the parking area at the end of Falls Road, continue down the dirt road on a moderate descent. After crossing a pair of streams, the road climbs back uphill; look for the green Trustees of Reservations sign on the left. Follow the trail through the woods for .5 miles over rolling terrain; listen for the sound of the water as you approach the falls.

The views from the top of the falls are dramatic. A cable railing allows a safe walk along the top of the gorge, with good views from the side overlooking the water as it drops into the chasm, as well as a dead-on view from the front. The bottom of the gorge is less accessible, though ambitious explorers can reach it by carefully descending the steep slope off the main trail. Both hikes return the way you came. —JB



John Burk

## Warwick Mount Grace

**Owner** Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

**Directions** From Route 2A in Orange, take Route 78 north to the center of Warwick. After passing the small town center, look for Ohlson Field on the left after about .5 miles and park in parking lot.

Mount Grace is the namesake of Mount Grace Conservation Land Trust and hosts a stunning view of the region from the fire tower. Please note that views are limited from the summit without climbing the tower.

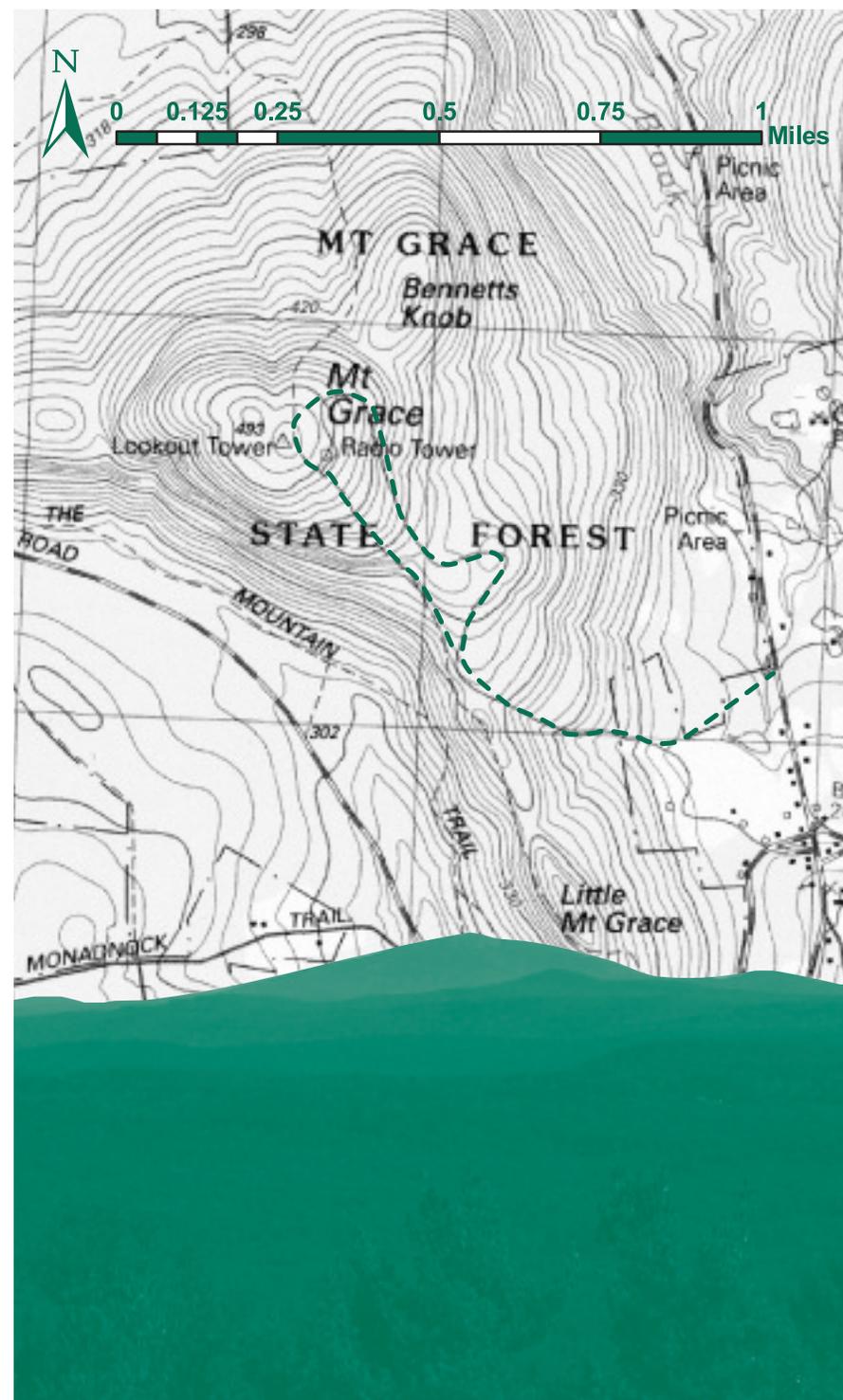
Rising above the rural town of Warwick two miles south of the New Hampshire state line, 1,625-foot Mount Grace is the third highest peak in Massachusetts east of the Berkshire Hills. Like Wachusett Mountain in Princeton, it is known as a “monadnock,” or “mountain rising high above the surrounding landscape.” The fire tower on the wooded summit features a 360-degree view of the forested countryside. During the 1930s, a small ski area operated on the mountain. This hike features a moderate climb to the fire tower, on well-marked trails. Allow two hours for the round trip.

At the large parking area at Oscar Ohlson Field, just north of Warwick center, look for wildflowers blooming in the field during spring and summer, including bluets and buttercups. Walk across the field towards the far left corner, and look for the blue-blazed trail leading into the woods. Follow the level trail right, then left at a fork; the trail on the right here is the return route.

The trail makes a moderately steep climb through young birch saplings and tall pines. Continue to the next fork, and turn right on another dirt road. After a few minutes the trail levels off for a while and the summit fire tower may be visible through the trees to the right. Continue straight past a trail on the right marked with blue blazes and a small cairn; this is the top end of the return route. The road resumes a moderate, rocky climb to the summit.

At the summit, pass the white-blazed Metacomet-Monadnock Trail on the right. The small grassy open area can be a good wildlife area; look for dragonflies on the rocks and butterflies, including tiger swallowtails and mourning cloaks. The view from the fire tower features seemingly unbroken forest in all directions with a good view of Mount Monadnock to the north.

From the summit, backtrack down the road, making sure to bear right away from the M-M Trail. Where the descent levels off, bear left on the blue-blazed trail at the junction mentioned above. Continue down the rocky trail, which is narrower and has more of a forest trail feel. Near the base of the descent, look for the neatly sculpted bark from a large fallen tree on the right. Soon you’ll arrive at the junction with the ascent route; go left here and follow the clearly marked path back to Ohlson Field. —JB



*Warwick*  
Arthur Iversen Conservation Area

**Owner** Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

**Original Parcel Gift from** Elmyra "Myra" Iversen, 1991

**Directions** From Route 2A in Orange, take Route 78 north to the center of Warwick. Turn right on Athol Road, and follow it .8 miles to another right on Gale Road. Continue along Gale Road for 1 mile to the Devil's Washbowl Trail on the right, and another .1 miles to the Rum Brook Trail on the left. Please park on Gale Road for both trails.

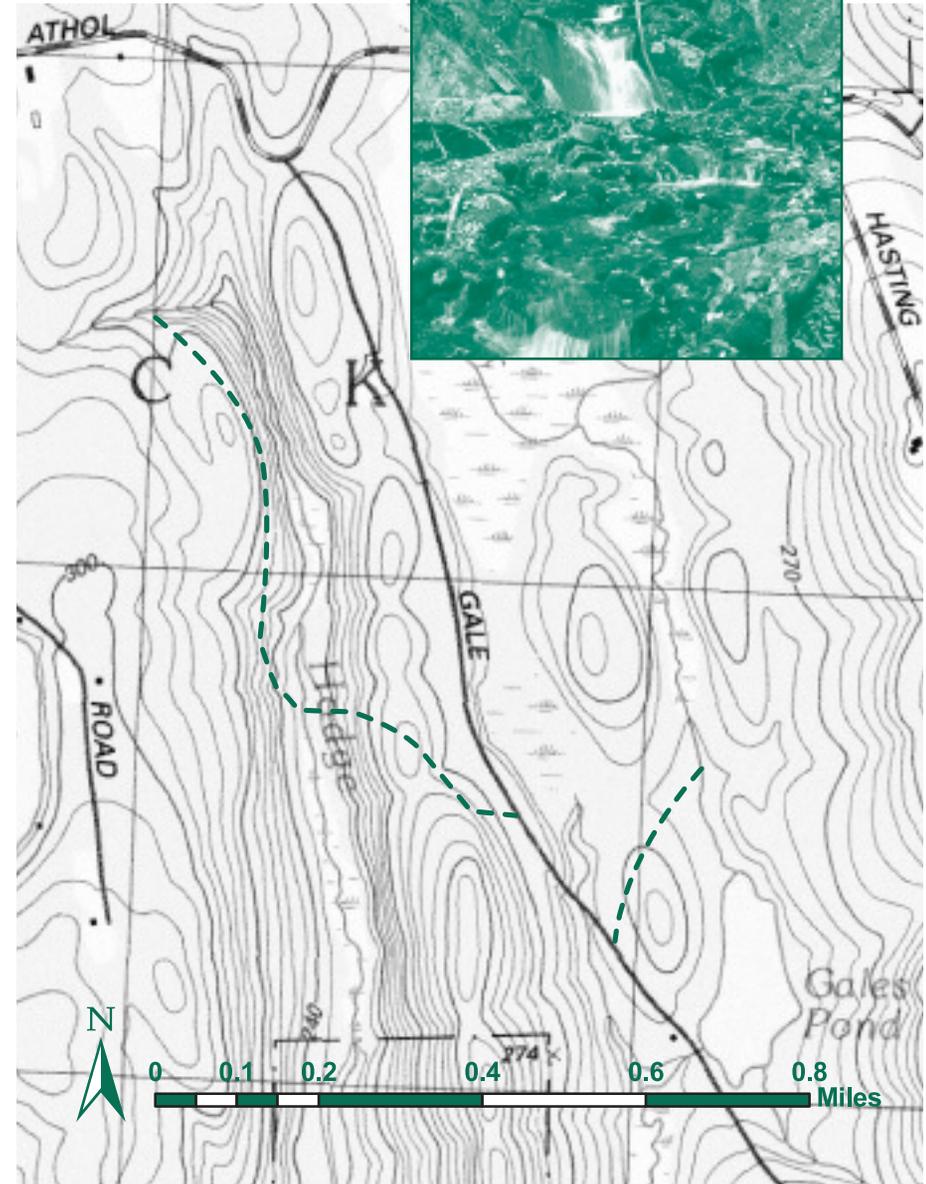
In the east shadow of nearby Mount Grace, 500 acres of forest within the Hodge and Rum Brook watersheds are protected in this quiet area. A pair of one-way trails leads to wetlands associated with both brooks.

The 1.5 mile Devil's Washbowl Trail begins on the west side of Gale Road, at a cable gate and small posted map. The old woods road climbs briefly uphill, then levels off and descends gradually through a hemlock-hardwood forest to a small beaver pond on Hodge Brook. A variety of flora and wildlife can be found here, including colorful late-summer wildflowers. The trail continues on the other side of the wetland; make a sharp right just after re-entering the woods and follow the blue blazes. The gently rising forest path here is less obvious than the road but clearly marked. Continue along the rim of the brook basin to the trail's end at a marked sign at Devil's Washbowl, where a seasonal waterfall may be seen on the left. Just before the sign, look for a towering birch on the left growing amidst the hemlocks. Return the way you came.

The second trail begins on the east side of Gale Road, .1 miles south of the Devil's Washbowl Trail, also at a cable gate and trail map. An easy northeast walk leads to a good open view up the Rum Brook wetland; part of a large beaver dam lies across the wooden bridge here. The trail continues to a right-of-way over private land (stay on the main trail here) and eventually ends at Hastings Heights Road. —JB



Mount Grace staff



Mount Grace staff

## Warwick Hockanum Hill

**Owner** Town of Warwick

**Directions** From Route 2A in Orange, travel north on Route 78 for 2.7 miles. Turn left on Hockanum Road and proceed .3 miles to the Warwick Conservation Commission sign and parking area on left.

Sometimes, you want to take a hike and enjoy a scenic vista, but you don't have a lot of time, or there are people (of any age) in the group who can't handle a strenuous hike. In such a situation, Hockanum Hill in Warwick is a perfect destination. A 15-minute walk uphill on the Overlook Trail from a marked parking area leads to a narrow but scenic overlook of the surrounding valley.

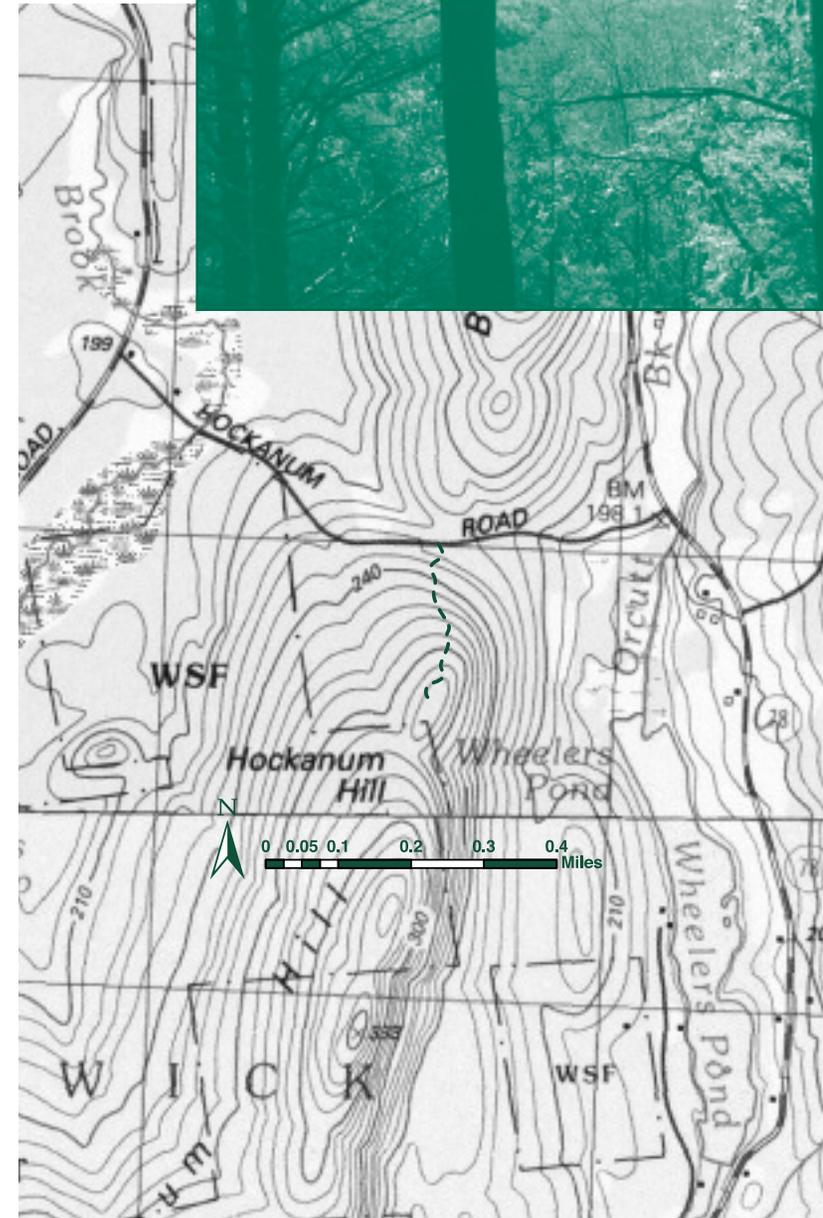
This 36-acre property is owned by the Town of Warwick and managed by its Conservation Commission. The Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust acquired the land and then worked with the town's Open Space Committee so that it could become a town-owned conservation area. This was completed in 2004 through the Self-Help Program of the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services.

The trail, though short, requires a steady and gentle uphill climb, taking the hiker through a mixed forest of deciduous trees and conifers before reaching the summit. On the hilltop, a large boulder and an area carpeted with pine needles are perfect for picnicking. The view, primarily to the south, includes hills in the distance and part of Wheeler Pond. This body of water is fed by Gales Brook which in turn is fed by Hodge Brook, Rum Brook, and Black Brook. Flowing out of Wheeler Pond, the waterway is named Orcutt Brook and eventually flows into Millers River in West Orange.

In addition to the Overlook Trail, hikers can take the Darling Brook Trail heading west off the Overlook Trail near the parking area at the base of Hockanum Hill. It connects to an old cart road through a portion of Warwick State Forest, and continues about three miles in a southwesterly direction to a small parking area at the Wendell Road bridge crossing Moss Brook. The Laurel Lake Recreation Area is nearby; this popular destination includes a campground, a beach with lifeguards, a concession stand, and trails with scenic views. —AY



Pam Kimball-Smith



Pam Kimball-Smith

# Northfield Brush Mountain & Crag Mountain

**Owner** Town of Northfield

**Directions** From Route 2 in Northfield east of the French King Bridge, take Route 63 north for 5.6 miles. Turn right on South Mountain Road (look for a sign for the Linden Hill School on the corner) and follow the long climb for 3.6 miles and take a left on Gulf Road. Continue for 1.75 miles and look carefully for a turnout where the white-blazed Metacomet-Monadnock Trail crosses the road.

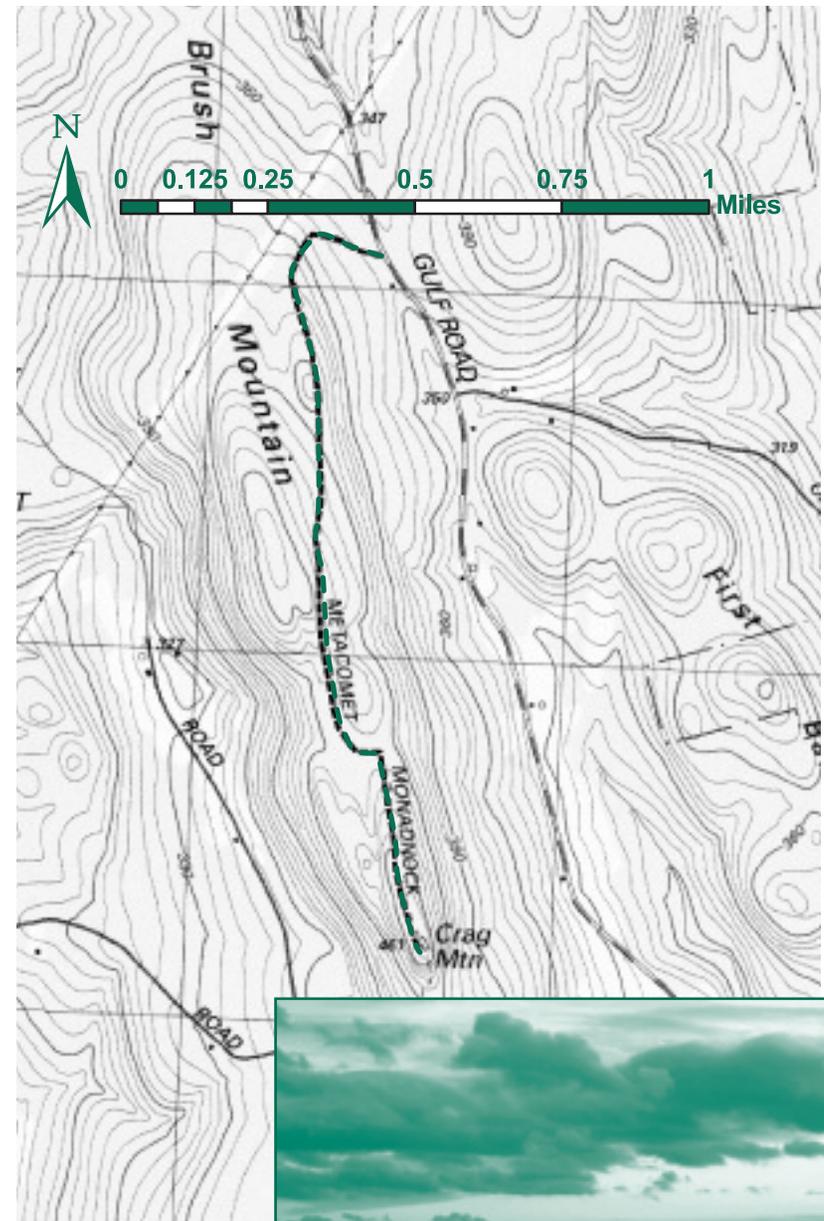
The 1.7 mile (one-way) walk on Brush Mountain to the summit of Crag Mountain can be accessed from Gulf Road. Follow the M-M Trail south on an easy ascent along the ridge of Brush Mountain. You will pass a black gum tree swamp with several 150+-year-old black gum trees and then follow a beautiful path through a hemlock forest along the ridge of Brush Mountain to Crag Mountain's open ledges, making sure to continue a few feet beyond the ledges to the view of Mount Grace and Mount Monadnock.

The rocky ledges of 1,503-foot Crag Mountain feature excellent views of northeast Franklin County and southern New Hampshire. Because most of the elevation is gained driving up the mountain, the trails are easy walking, and the most direct route can be done in 15–20 minutes. The Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, which winds nearly 120 miles from the Connecticut border to Mount Monadnock's summit, passes over Brush and Crag Mountains.

Backtrack to Gulf Road for a 3.4 mile round trip. —JB



Pam Kimball-Smith



John Burk

**Owner** Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

**Gift from** Mabel Cronquist, 1996 in memory of Arthur Cronquist

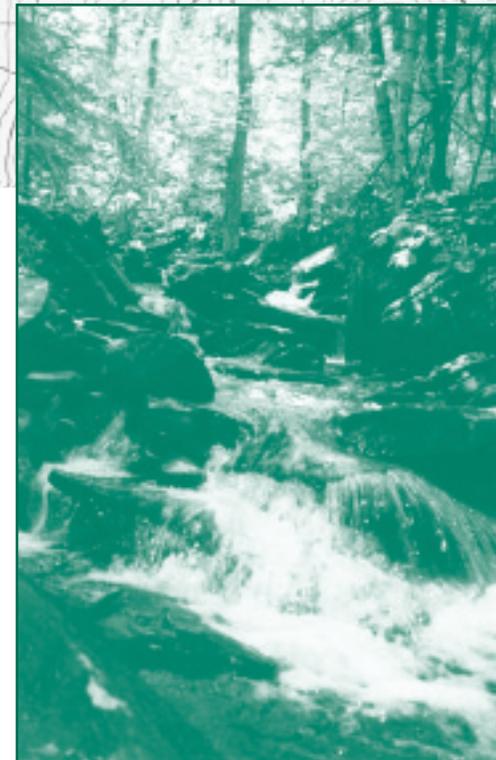
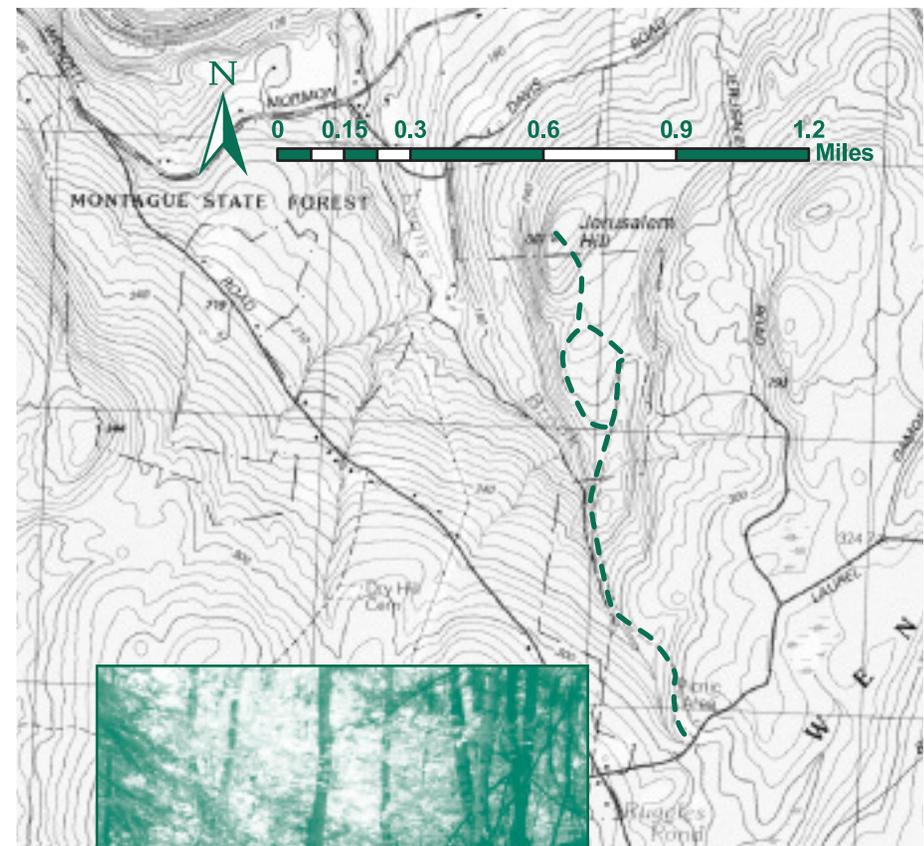
**Directions** From Route 2, take Route 63 south. In the village of Millers Falls take Wendell Road across railroad bridge. Take Montague Road right at fork and follow signs to the forest headquarters on the left. Enter here and proceed to the Ruggles Pond parking area—parking fee may apply.

This “secret” trail traversing a 66-acre inholding within the Wendell State Forest features spectacular cliffs, Jerusalem Hill Overlook, Lyons Brook, historic foundations and diverse forests with numerous mosses, ferns, and wildflowers. For many years, this land was the research camp of the famous botanist, Arthur Cronquist, who observed that “time here refreshes my soul.” With the wealth of interesting wildflowers, deep forests and placid waterfalls, you can see why. The trail links into the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, a much longer route stretching from Mount Monadnock in New Hampshire to southern Connecticut. Allow two hours for this hike.

From the parking lot, take the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, which heads north and gently downhill at the picnic area. This trail follows beautiful Lyons Brook through cool, deeply shaded forest. It is hard to miss the impact of the tornado that swept through Wendell in 2006 on the early section of the trail. Look for a profusion of red trilliums in bloom along the trail in May. Soon the trail will cross an impressive waterfall, Lynne’s Falls, tumbling over large boulders of gneiss. After several more minutes, you will arrive at a junction of trails; the M-M Trail continues north and the Hidden Valley Loop Trail heads to the west (left).

The loop trail provides views of forest changes caused by three different agents: the great hurricane of 1938, defoliation of oaks by gypsy moths in 1980, and a selective timber harvest in 1998. The lack of older oaks will first clue you in to the destruction wreaked by the caterpillars of the gypsy moth, an invasive insect introduced in the 1860s as an experiment to encourage silk production. Further along the trail, there will be evidence on your left of the timber harvest, although apart from the young regenerating trees it is hard to tell that the area was logged. As you travel further down the trail, you will notice that the forest understory is “lumpy” in places: this is “pit and mound” topography, which reflects the jumble of large trees and their root boles left by the massive blowdowns of the 1938 hurricane. In places, you may also notice that there are few or no trees older than about 70 years—the generation that grew up after the hurricane blew down their elders.

As you round a gradual bend and begin heading uphill, a spur trail will appear on your left, heading north. You can take this spur to the top of Jerusalem Hill for some lovely views of the Millers River valley. Returning to the Hidden Valley Trail, you will pass the foundation of a historic house site. Head southeast (left) through some lovely hardwood forest (don’t miss some of the big rock outcrops and cliffs hidden among the trees!), and meet up with the M-M Trail on the left, which circles back due south to the parking area. Cool off after your hike with a refreshing swim in Ruggles Pond. —EF



Mount Grace staff

**Owner** Town of Wendell

**Directions** From Route 2A on the western end of Orange, take the Wendell Depot Road south across the Millers River, past the Wendell Depot post office and store, then uphill 5 miles to the town center. Continue straight along Lockes Village Road 3 miles to the intersection with West Road just north of the Shutesbury town line. Turn right on West Road and travel about .1 miles to the Fiske Pond parking area on the left.

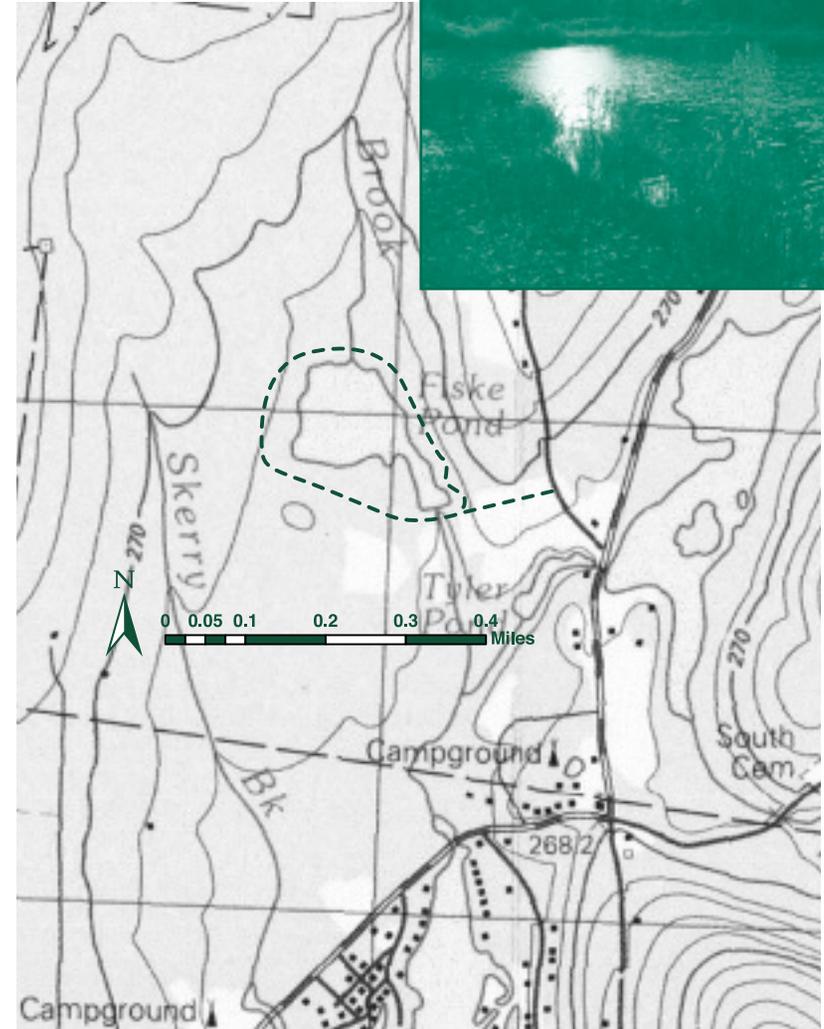
The Fiske Pond Conservation Area, created in 2005, is owned and managed by the Town of Wendell, and is protected by a conservation restriction held by the state. Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust assisted the community with the protection process, which involved many individuals and organizations over a period of five years.

This 10-acre pond and surrounding forest and wetlands, located in one of the state's least densely populated towns, was owned by an out-of-state landowner for many decades and had become a popular swimming hole—but was put on the market for sale and at risk of development. The primary purpose of the conservation restriction is to maintain the ecological and scenic integrity of the area while allowing public access in the form of low-impact passive recreation. This includes unsupervised swimming, hiking, cross-country skiing, bird-watching and nature study. The pond is fed by Fiske Brook and the outflow feeds nearby Lake Wyola in Shutesbury, site of a small state park featuring a public beach with lifeguard service.

For a lovely hike, follow the West Road Entrance Trail west from the parking lot toward the pond. You will soon hit the white-blazed Pond Loop Trail, which completes an easy one-mile circuit around Fiske Pond.

The extraordinary range of ecosystems on the Fiske Pond property includes a meadow, northern hardwood upland forests, cranberry bogs, blueberry heaths, a shrub swamp, a hemlock swamp, streams, and an unusual spruce bog. According to a study by University of Massachusetts Geology Professor Paul Godfrey, the Fiske Pond area is typical of a coastal sand plain pond and contains species found on both the Atlantic coast and the Midwest prairies. Godfrey identified an “incredible mixture of aquatic and semi-aquatic plants, including bladderworts and sundews, sedges, orchids, quillwort, yellow-eyed grass, and aquatic shrubs.”

Wendell town meeting voters appropriated \$123,000 of town funds toward the purchase, approved the conservation restriction by a wide margin, and obtained \$280,000 in matching funds from the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services through its Self-Help Program. —AY



Mount Grace staff

*“...the Fiske Pond area is typical of a coastal sand plain pond and contains species found on both the Atlantic coast and the Midwest prairies.”*

*—University of Massachusetts Geology Professor Paul Godfrey*

**Owner** Harvard University

**Directions** The headquarters of Harvard Forest and its Fisher Museum and access to Prospect Hill are on Route 32 in Petersham, 2.5 miles south of Exit 17 on Route 2, and 3 miles north of the Petersham town common.

For the past century, the Harvard Forest, a research station of Harvard University, has been a leader in forestry and ecological research from a variety of perspectives, including economics, silviculture, biology and physiology, land-use history, and biogeochemistry.

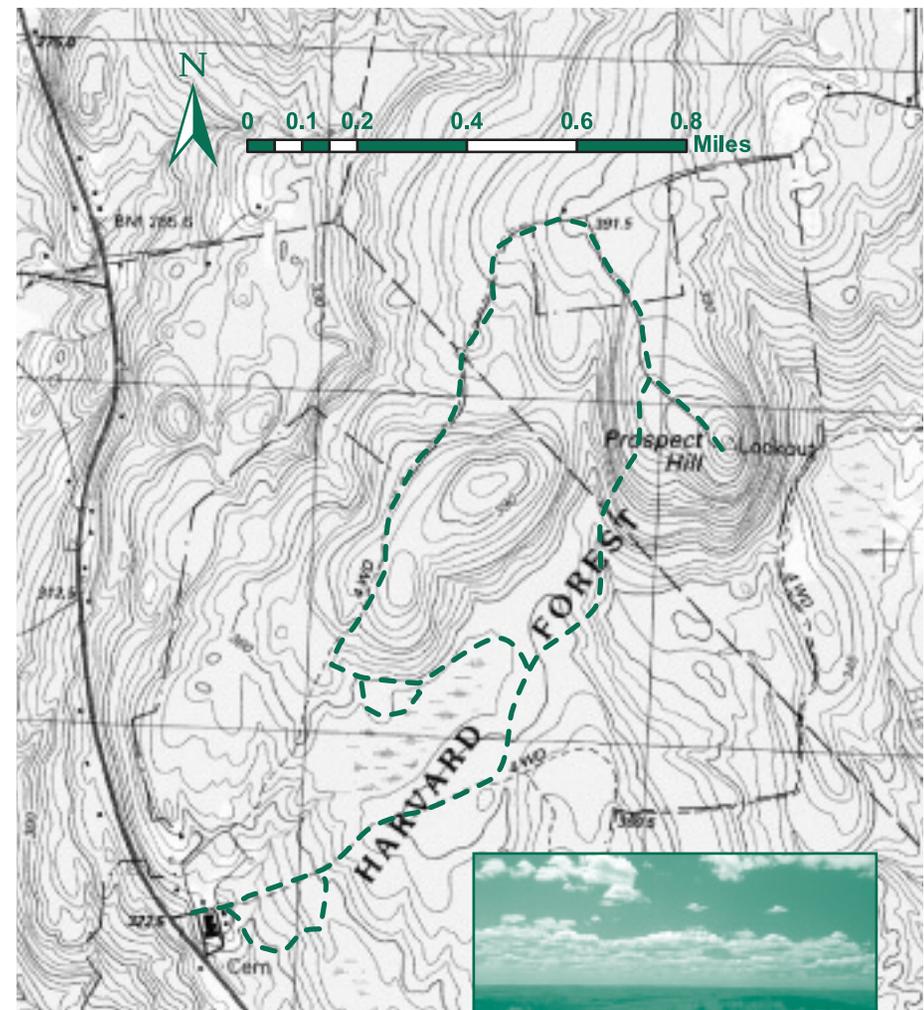
This long walk of approximately 5 miles is over mostly easy terrain with one short steep section and begins on Locust Opening Road (unmarked), a wide dirt road behind the brick building. From the parking lot, walk up the driveway on the left side of the administration building, passing a large white residence and cow pasture on the left. The antenna in the pasture is a meteorological station which continually records weather data. Follow the road into the woods, passing a small seasonal brook and a row of sugar maples; silver and black interpretive signs, which are part of the museum's .25 mile interpretive trail, detail the area's landscape and natural history.

At sign 12, turn right onto a grassy road through a clearing, where woodcocks court in spring. Continue straight past sign 19, passing a pine plantation and a house in the field to the right. At a junction bear left, following the trail over a causeway where a bog and pond (known locally as Gould's Bog) features a diversity of wildlife, including moose, mink, dragonflies, and waterfowl. Continue through deciduous forest to a red pine plantation, then turn right at a T-junction, rejoining Locust Opening Road.

Continue on Locust Opening Road, passing a trail marked with a yellow arrow on the left, and then another dirt road on the left. Just before a Y-junction with another woods road, look for the Pierce cellar hole to the left. At the fork, go left, following the road downhill, passing several turnoffs near a research site. The trail levels off and crosses Bigelow Brook. Beyond the brook, the road begins to climb moderately as it enters a large hemlock grove. After leveling off, it begins to climb again; look carefully here for a narrow trail on the right leading uphill, marked as of this writing with orange flagging on two small hemlocks. This trail climbs steeply for a few minutes, then levels off and winds through the woods to the junction with the wide, rocky fire tower road. Go right (uphill) here and follow the road to the fire tower.

The tower view is one of the finest in central Massachusetts, featuring a good look at Mount Monadnock and the southern New Hampshire mountains and hills, the Wapack Range to the northeast, Wachusett Mountain to the east, the northern tip of Quabbin Reservoir to the southwest, and Mount Grace and the southern Green Mountains of Vermont to the northwest.

Return to the tower road and follow it downhill for .5 miles, staying straight passing the trail you ascended on and a green gate, to the junction with Prospect Hill Road. Go left on Prospect Hill Road, passing a private residence on the right. Continue for just over a mile along Prospect Hill Road, passing Gates 5 and 4. At a pine plantation,



John Burk

look for the grassy road at Gate 3 on the left. Follow this road, marked with yellow discs, to a narrow trail on the right, opposite a yellow arrow. After a few hundred feet, the trail enters the Black Gum Swamp and the boardwalk begins. Several of the black gums here are over 400 years old. One impressive specimen is easily viewed on the left, not long after the boardwalk begins. Snowshoe hares and moose frequent this area.

The boardwalk curves to the left and eventually ends at the grassy road. Go right here, passing an area on the left which was burned during a large forest fire in 1957. Reenter the hemlock stand, following the yellow discs right on a narrow trail which leads through the dark hemlock stand, passing some large old trees. The chestnut blight combined with removal of other hardwood species allowed this area to evolve to a hemlock-dominated forest. After a small wet area, the trail rejoins Locust Opening Road; go right here and follow it back to the parking area. —JB

# Phillipston Fox Valley Wildlife Sanctuary

**Owner** Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

**Gift from** Helvi Frilander, 1990, and the Hazeltine Family, 1998

**Directions** From Phillipston Common (junctions of Templeton and Petersham Roads), drive west on Petersham Road and bear right (east) onto Lincoln Road. Cross two streams and pass the sign for the Popple Camp Brook Wildlife Management Area. The entrance to the Sanctuary is on the right side of Lincoln Road just past the second stream crossing (approximately 1 mile). Look for sign at trailhead, and park with care along the road.

This pleasant hike takes you through the wetlands of Popple Camp Brook, across a shaded rocky stream (a delightful place for a picnic), up to a rich talus slope with large trees, and along stone walls following a heart-shaped route that takes about two hours to complete. The trail is rustic and little-visited (part of its charm!), so watch carefully for the blue blazes as you circuit through, and be prepared, especially in spring, to get your feet a bit muddy.

Fox Valley (which was given its name by students of the Phillipston Memorial Elementary School at its dedication in 1990) is a lovely pocket of mixed New England hardwoods and conifers. You enter the trail on Lincoln Road and are immediately enclosed in shade. Popple Camp Brook babbles along to your right. Take note of the plaque on a boulder at the trail's entrance, noting the gift by Helvi Frilander in memory of her husband; her generosity made this hike possible. Walk several hundred yards through thigh-high ferns—cinnamon, interrupted, and hay-scented.

The trail then forks; to the left, where a stone wall meets the trail, you can proceed west and uphill, but we recommend taking the right fork (really continuing straight) to stay on level ground. Follow the trail across a few moist but easy crossings on rocks or logs. These are tributaries and floodplains that join Popple Camp Brook. You will also meet up briefly with a stone wall that marks the eastern boundary of the property. Once it has threaded through the assorted wet areas, the trail will head uphill on a gentle slope, then gradually turn west and head downhill through a stand of large hemlocks, to meet the mainstem of Popple Camp Brook. Pause here to enjoy the calming water currents coursing over mossy boulders.

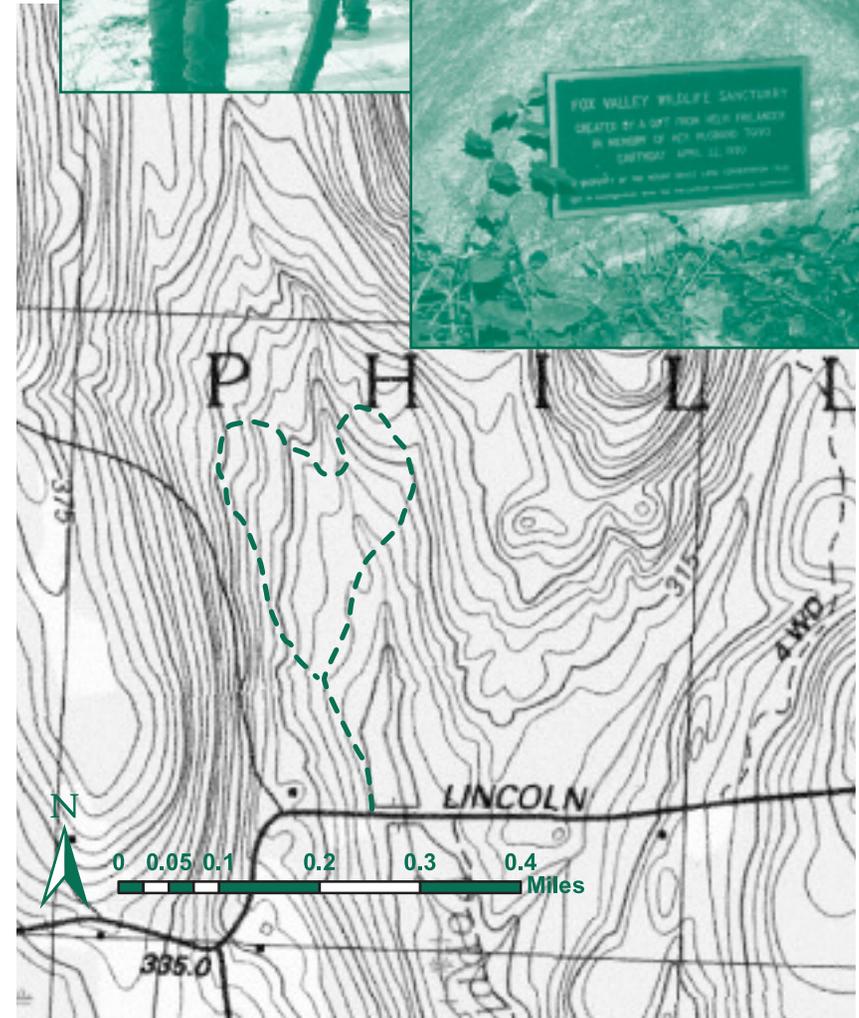
Continue to walk south along the streambank; a few hundred yards downhill, you will cross the stream. The trail now heads north, then northwest out of the stream valley to a rocky but relatively flat terrace, crossing another small branch of Popple Camp Brook. To the west of you are relatively steep, rocky hillsides that are riddled with seeps. These moist, cool conditions create good habitat for interesting plants like Christmas fern. You will walk southwest along this terrace, paralleling the foot of the rocky slope, then head uphill toward the western boundary of the property, marked by a stone wall. As you ascend, be sure to admire the very large trees that populate this rich slope. Follow the stone wall south; you will cross a few perpendicular stone walls that once marked pastures and homesteads. Then, proceed downhill to the southeast, passing by a large fallen pine tree that has created an opening in this otherwise dense forest. You will soon meet the original trail; turn right and walk back to the road. —EF



Mount Grace staff



Mount Grace staff



# Hubbardston Mount Jefferson Conservation Area

**Owner** Town of Hubbardston

**Directions** From Route 68 near Hubbardston Center at a white church, go west on Williamsville Road. After approximately 1 mile, go right on Mount Jefferson Road, marked with a brown "Conservation Area" sign. Go up Mount Jefferson Road for 1.5 miles, the parking area is on the left at the open fields.

At 1,213 feet, Mount Jefferson is the highest point in the rural town of Hubbardston. The trails of the Mount Jefferson Conservation Area and adjacent Hubbardston/ Templeton State Forest feature mixed wildlife habitat within the Canesto Brook watershed where moose and the occasional black bear can be found, as well as several historical features.

This hike makes a loop of the reservation's southern trails. It is mostly easy walking on rolling terrain, with a few rocky sections. The trails and trail junctions are clearly marked (some trees in the state forest are also marked with blue paint, follow the obvious trails). Allow at least 1.5 hours to complete the circuit.

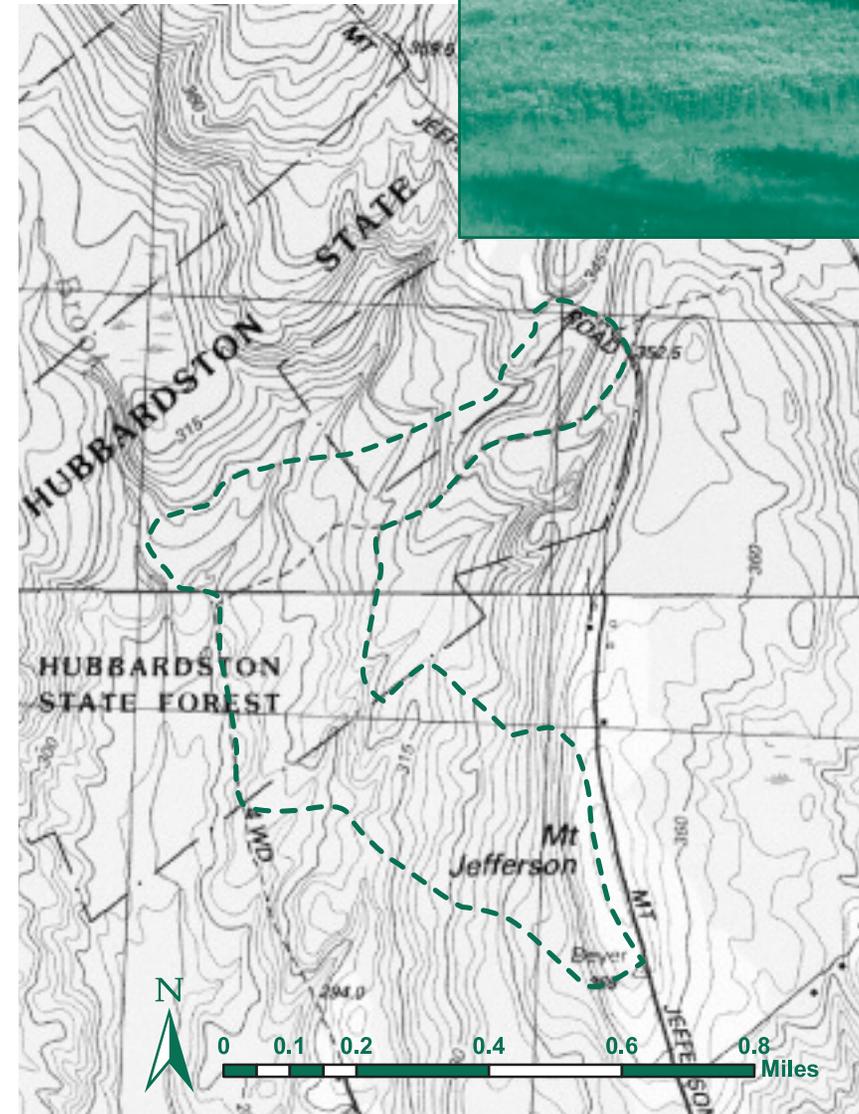
The open fields surrounding the parking area feature a partial view of Wachusett Mountain rising to the east. Look for indigo buntings, yellowthroats, and a variety of wildflowers in this area. Walk past the signs and the Gates foundation site to the edge of the field, and enter the woods on the Behind the Chimney Trail, marked with blue blazes, on the right. The trail slopes gently to a hemlock stand, passing a small brook to the left.

At the junction with the Canesto Brook Trail, go right, passing a timber harvest site. Cross a brook and continue straight, passing the Old Cross Road on the right. Just beyond this junction is a good view of a wetland. The trail continues along Canesto Brook, a tributary of the nearby Ware River, soon arriving at the old mill pond site. A bridge to the left offers a good look at the stone dam, and a path leads to the pond's edge. The path, now the Mill Pond Trail, continues to the right of the pond, rolling up and down for over half a mile through the forest. At a large, wide stone wall, the trail bears right and arrives at the public dirt road. Go right on the road, passing a small pond on the left and climbing uphill, then re-enter the state forest at the Old Cross Road gate on the right.

Follow the Old Cross Road southwest to a timber harvest clearing at an old pine plantation. On the left-hand side at the clearing, bear south on the partially overgrown but well-marked Gates Hill Trail. This trail eventually enters the woods and slopes uphill to a large field. Go right along the edge across to the far side, then bear left (trees along the edge are blazed) to the view of Wachusett and the parking area. —JB



John Burk



## Winchendon Fern Glenn Conservation Area

**Owner** Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

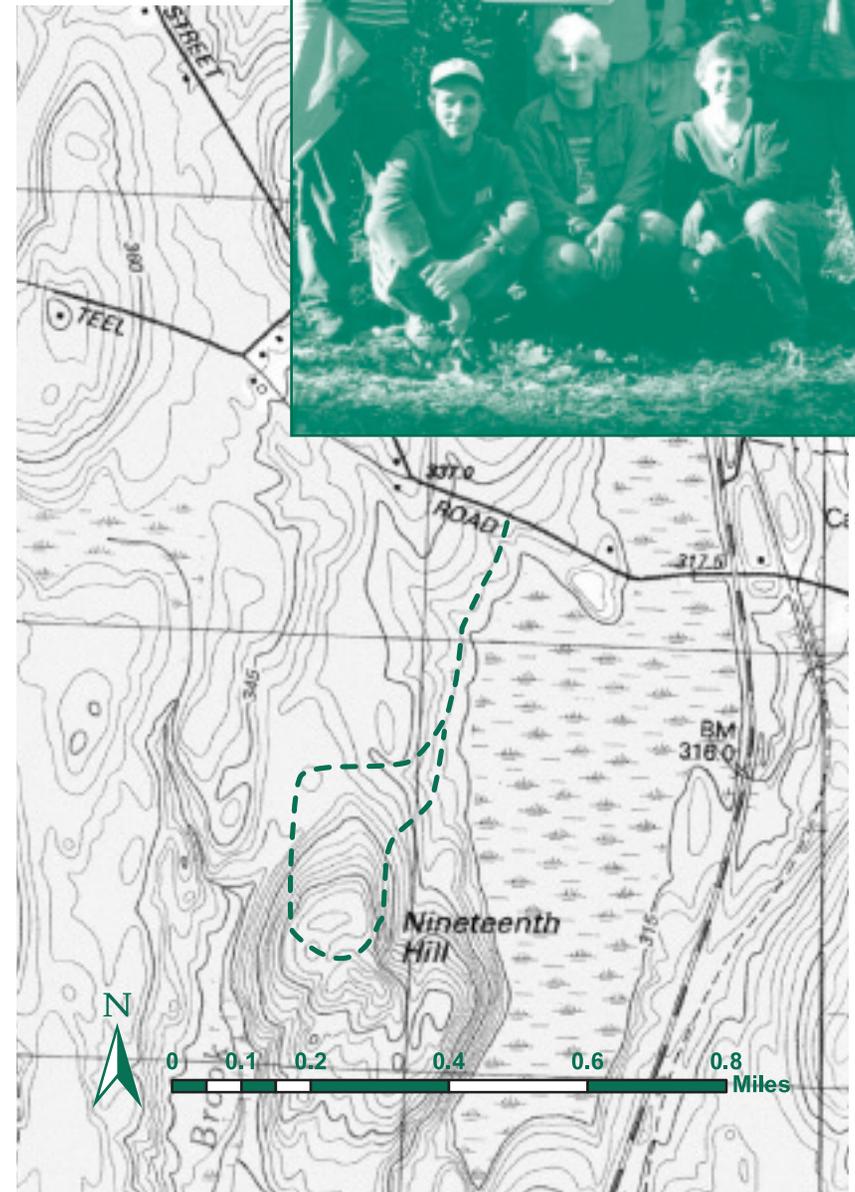
**Gift from** Nathan J. Olson, 1995 and 2002

**Directions** From Route 140 in Winchendon, turn west onto Teel Road. .25 miles from this turn, see an inconspicuous dirt drive on the left between two houses marked with a sign set in off the road. Turn south on this gravel road and proceed another .25 mile to the large clearing and parking area.

These spectacular 130 acres are managed as a conservation area by Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. The trail here skirts gorgeous examples of two rare, contrasting natural community types: an extensive boreal swamp that dominates the eastern half of the property, and a woodland on steep talus slopes with huge old sugar maples, ash trees, and red oaks. Fern Glenn takes its name from the incredibly lush growth of at least ten species of ferns that give the forest understory and wetland a soft, feathery feel in the summer and as a tribute to Mount Grace forester Glenn Freden. Clubmosses including ground cedar, running pine, shining firmoss, and Hickey's tree clubmoss run everywhere along the ground, looking from above like a miniature forest within a forest. Plant enthusiasts will find much to marvel at in this preserve, particularly along the fringes of the spruce-tamarack swamp where rose pogonia orchids bloom profusely in July. Allow two hours for this hike.

From the parking area, follow the blue-blazed trail uphill. The trail will hug the stone walls that delineate the western and southern bounds of the property, leading you steadily to the top of Nineteenth Hill. Toward the summit, you will notice large outcrops of granitic gneiss, studded with veins of quartz like fat veins in a steak. Centuries of glacial action and the forces of water and ice have plucked these squarish stones from the hill and deposited them in a steep jumble, called a talus slope, on the eastern flank of Nineteenth Hill. Talus slopes create their own microclimate, capturing cold air in the spaces between the tumbled rocks. Cold-loving northern plants scramble over these slopes. Water seeping among the rocks supports the growth of ferns and the enormous trees here. Look for woodfrogs, which frequent the vernal pools tucked into the hillside. Being the color of dead leaves, they are well-camouflaged; only their distinctive raccoon-like face mask gives them away. Listen for gangs of nuthatches playing on the branches above you.

The trail will meander smoothly down the hill, where you can look up at the dramatic talus and admire the towering trees. Turning north and walking along the broad gravel logging road with the swamp to the east, you can return to the parking area. But if you don't mind getting your feet wet, take some time to wander down the road toward the entrance and divert to the east to the edge of the swamp. With the tall tamarack and black spruce overlooking a soft carpet of sphagnum moss beset with three-leaved False Solomon's Seal and the grass-pink orchid, you could be in Maine or Canada. Moose find this area a popular refuge, and their prints and sign are everywhere. —EF



Mount Grace staff

## Ashburnham

### Paul C. Dunn Woodland Preserve

**Owner** Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

**Gift from** Paul and Laura Dunn, 1991

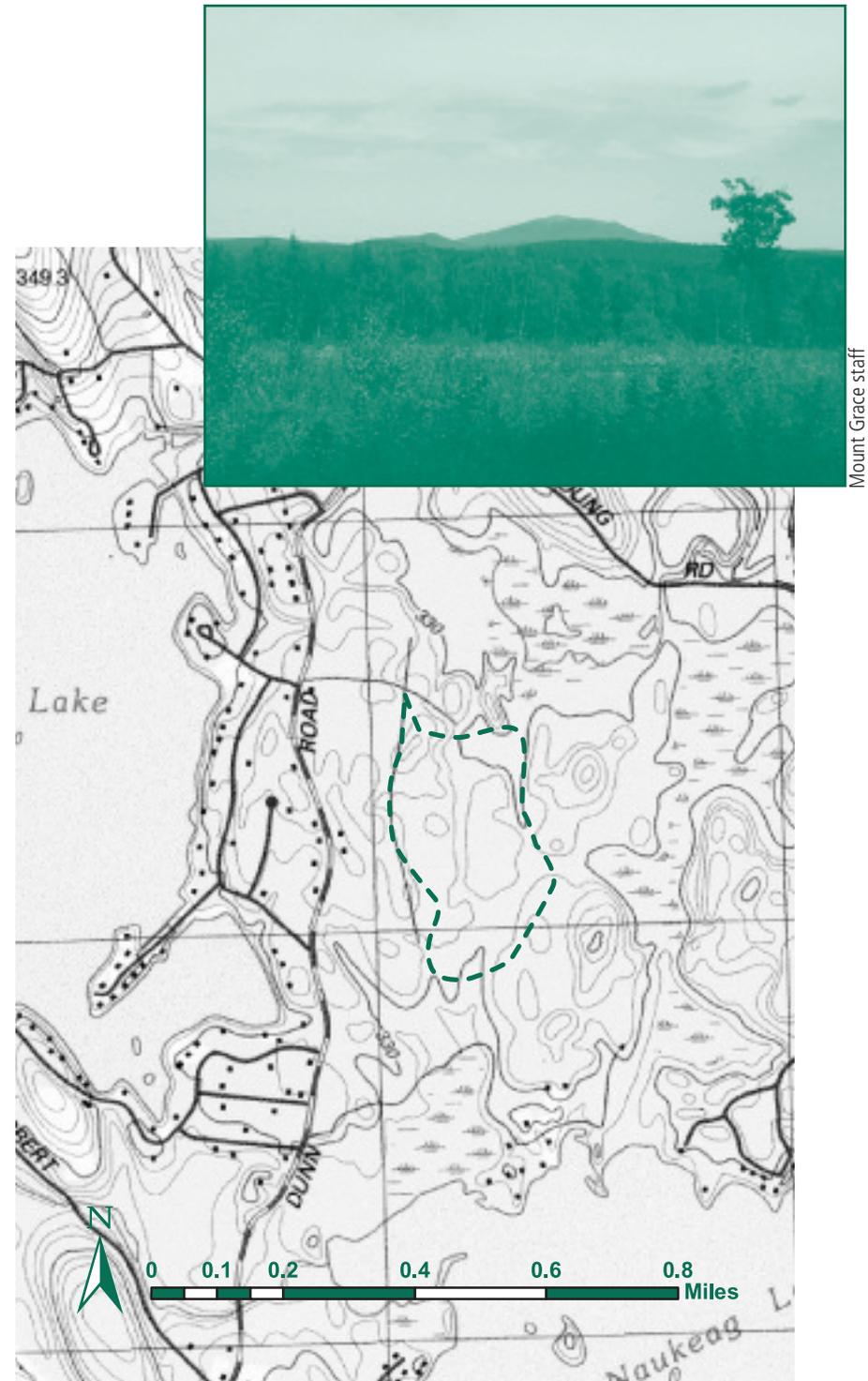
**Directions** From the junction of Route 12 and Route 140 in Winchendon, take Route 12 south. Turn north on Depot Road toward Sunset Lake. Cross Sherbert Road extension, continuing to head north on Dunn Road. Turn right (east) just opposite Blueberry Road onto a dirt road next to a house. Proceed less than .1 miles to an open clearing and park near the sign welcoming visitors to the Paul C. Dunn Woodland Preserve.

This trail takes you over a classic example of an esker, gives you glimpses of a large, species-rich wetland complex and pockets of dark spruce swamps reminiscent of Alaska, and traverses large stands of young and old white pine. Be sure to stop and sample the profusion of berries available late summer, if the bears and birds haven't beaten you to it. Allow two hours for this hike.

From the clearing where you park, walk east past the Mount Grace sign along the old logging road. Several informal trails and old skid roads thread through this area, but stick to the clearly blue-blazed path. You will take a leisurely climb through a young stand of head-high white pines, with the silhouettes of large black spruce looming behind them. Within a few moments, you will notice that the footpath follows a narrow, sinuous ridge which slopes down steeply both to the left and right of you. This ridge is an esker, a line of mounded gravel and sand that melted out from the underbelly of a glacier some 14,000 years ago. The gravelly soils on eskers tend to be very well-drained, so plants more characteristic of dry areas—like the very fragrant sweetfern, wintergreen, and trailing arbutus—abound here. The ridge forms a peninsula that looks out over a large grassy wet meadow with open water meandering through it. Red-winged blackbirds will greet you from their perches on the cattails with their characteristic raspberry calls. You might even spot a tiny marsh wren here.

The trail turns south along the big wetland and descends from the esker, leading you through closed-canopy woods dominated by large white pines and red maple. At times, though, your nose will pick up the unmistakable turpentine scent of balsam fir as you approach one of the many small spruce-fir swamps that lie in the colder valleys. Look for young fir saplings with their long, soft green needles on branches that lie close to the ground; fir often layers, forming new trees from horizontal offshoots that root in the soft, mossy soil. Cheeky red squirrels will scold you from their perches high in the spruce; conifers are their domain.

Returning north toward the parking area, the trail widens out into a logging road lined with raspberries, blackberries, black raspberries, blueberries, and many other fruiting shrubs that make great forage for wildlife and hikers alike. —EF



Mount Grace staff

# Ashburnham

## Mount Watatic & Nutting Hill

**Owner** Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

**Directions** From Route 2, take Exit 24, Route 140 north, and follow it to Route 101. Turn right (north) on 101, and follow it to the junction with Route 119 in Ashburnham. Turn left (west) on 119. Follow Route 119 for 1.4 miles to a dirt parking area in the woods on the right with a brown Midstate Trail sign.

The 1,832-foot Mount Watatic is the southern terminus of the Wapack Range, which extends into southern New Hampshire. The upper and lower summits of Watatic feature sweeping views of central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. In spring and early fall, it is a popular hawk-watching site, as thousands of raptors pass by during migrations; hundreds of sightings are possible when conditions are appropriate.

Watatic's most popular hike is an easy to moderate 3.8 mile loop which includes adjacent Nutting Hill, which has lesser views from its partially open top. This hike, described here, features a moderate climb to Nutting Hill along a rocky path, rolling terrain from Nutting Hill to Watatic's summit, and a steep descent from the summit.

The trail begins at the parking lot on an old dirt road, passing a small beaver pond on the right. (Note: After .3 miles, the Wapack/Midstate Trail branches off to the right for a direct route to Mount Watatic's summit; this is the return route on this loop.) Follow the blue-blazed State Line Trail, which makes a gently moderate climb along a rocky path for .8 miles. Where blazes for the State Line Trail point left, stay straight for .06 miles to the junction with the Wapack Trail. Turn right here, following the yellow blazes of the Wapack and Midstate Trail to the rocky open top of Nutting Hill. Continue to an overlook, with a good view of Mount Watatic's west side and Wachusett Mountain on the distant horizon.

Descend back into the woods following the yellow blazes, where a network of stone walls offers evidence of the extent of historical agricultural activity in central Massachusetts, even on steep, rocky hills such as Watatic. The trail makes an easy to moderate climb through the woods, before emerging at an old ski area road, which offers views of southern New Hampshire. Follow a sign marking the trail to the right, passing the Midstate Trail, which is the return route.

Though the summit of Watatic features nice views, including a look through the trees of Mount Monadnock to the northwest, the best views are from the lower summit which can be reached via an unblazed trail which leads .06 miles southeast downhill from the main summit. Wachusett Mountain dominates the view to the southwest along with a number of other hills, lakes and ponds, and the Boston skyline is visible to the southeast on clear days.

To return to the parking area, follow the Midstate Trail south on a steep descent, passing another vista at a clearing to the left. After a rocky stretch through a hemlock stand, the trail levels off and passes between two large boulders. Cross a small creek and turn left back onto the State Line Trail, following it past the beaver pond to the parking area, 1.1 miles from the summit. —JB



Pam Kimball-Smith



John Burk

## Land Conservation Options

*The following list provides some of the land conservation options available to land owners.*

### Conservation Restriction (CR)

A CR is a legal agreement between a landowner and a conservation organization whereby the landowner retains ownership but donates or sells the right to develop the land. A CR may be donated or sold.

### Gift of Land

A gift of property to the land trust that is protected and managed in accordance with the donor's wishes.

### Sale of Land

The land trust may purchase land with important natural resource values and protect it.

### Retained Life Estate

Landowners may donate property to the land trust but retain a life interest for themselves and their family. This allows them to live on or use the land for their lifetime.

### Limited Development

The land trust designs a limited development scenario whereby environmentally sensitive land is protected as open space, while well-planned development in the remaining area allows the owner to realize income.

### Bequest

A gift of land or a conservation restriction through a person's will removes the property from the donor's taxable estate.

### Chapter 61/61A/61B

Massachusetts legislation that offers reduced property tax assessments to landowners who meet certain criteria for active forestry (Chapter 61), agriculture (Chapter 61A), or recreation (Chapter 61B).

### To learn more about protecting your land or to support Mount Grace, please contact:

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust  
1461 Old Keene Road  
Athol, MA 01331  
(978) 248-2043  
landtrust@mountgrace.org

## Supporting Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

*There are many ways to support Mount Grace's land protection work:*

### Membership

Members, through annual dues, special donations, and volunteer efforts, are our main source of support.

### Cash Donations

Your generous, tax-deductible donation will be put to good use wherever it is needed the most. Donations can be designated to support your favorite property or program.

### Honorary and Memorial Gifts

A gift to Mount Grace is a wonderful way to celebrate a birthday or a couple's wedding day. It can also be a meaningful way to mark the passing of a friend or family member who loved the special places we protect.

### Bequests

Make a lasting gift of cash or property to Mount Grace through a bequest in your will or living trust. You have the option to designate the use of funds from your bequest.

### Stocks, Bonds, Mutual Funds and other Publicly Traded Securities

Assets of these types can be easily donated to Mount Grace. Please check with your financial advisor before deciding on the best way to make a gift, and call us at (978) 248-2043 to facilitate the transfer.

### Life Income Gifts

Retained life income gifts, such as a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust, can provide you or your beneficiary with income for life and create income and estate tax benefits while providing a major benefit to Mount Grace. We can work with your financial advisor to determine the best way for your gift to benefit both you and Mount Grace.

### Life Insurance and Retirement Accounts

You can name Mount Grace as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy or retirement account and/or transfer the ownership of the policy to Mount Grace during your lifetime.

Please contact the Development Director at Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust at (978) 248-2043 to learn more about how your tax-deductible contribution can help support land protection in North Central and Western Massachusetts, benefiting the environment, the economy, and future generations. If you would like to make a donation to support the efforts of the Mount Grace, you may send your check to:

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust  
1461 Old Keene Road, Athol, MA 01331

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Please complete and return to:  
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1461 Old Keene Road, Athol, MA 01331

Start my annual membership with my contribution of:

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\_\_\_\_ Contact me about protecting land that is special to me.

\_\_\_\_ Send me information about volunteer opportunities.

\_\_\_\_ Send me information about how to include  
Mount Grace in my will.

\_\_\_\_ Do not publish my name in your list of contributors.

\_\_\_\_ Do not share my name with other organizations.

***Donations to Mount Grace are tax-deductible.***



## Our Mission

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust protects significant natural, agricultural, and scenic areas and encourages land stewardship in North Central and Western Massachusetts for the benefit of the environment, the economy and future generations.

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

1461 Old Keene Road

Athol, Massachusetts 01331

[www.mountgrace.org](http://www.mountgrace.org)



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