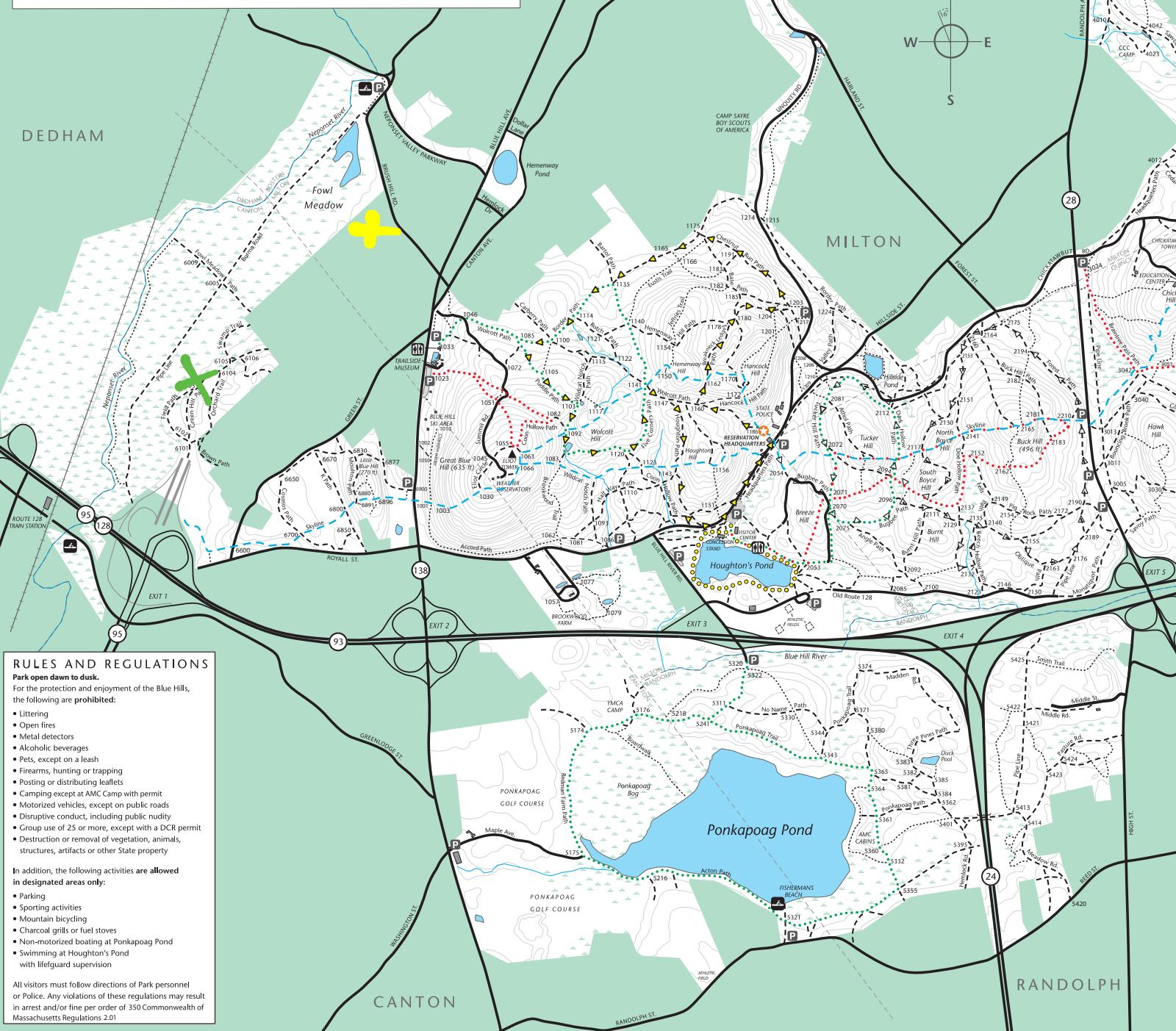


Blue Hills Reservation

dcr
Massachusetts



DCR Blue Hills Reservation Trail Map and Guide

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

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Blue Hills Trailside
Museum.



We invite you to discover... the Blue Hills Reservation.

Stretching from Dedham to Quincy, Milton to Randolph, the Blue Hills Reservation encompasses over 7000 acres, providing the largest open space within 35 miles of Boston. More than 125 miles of trails weave through the natural fabric of forest and ponds, hilltops and wetlands. Hikers can count 22 hills in the Blue Hills chain with Great Blue Hill noted as the highest landmark at 635 feet above sea level.

The trails of the Blue Hills lead to the park's most beautiful areas, inviting you to explore the subtlety and richness of the woodlands. Park visitors may enjoy numerous outdoor activities including hiking, biking, horseback riding, skiing and savoring nature. We share a fragile green oasis amidst the bustle of the city. It is a legacy we can hand to our children – if we care for it today.

A World of Nature



The reservation boasts a rich variety of plants and animals, including several rare and endangered species, such as the Timber rattlesnake and Eastern copperhead found nowhere else in the Boston area. Trails traverse a diversity of habitats, upland and bottomland forests, swamp and pond edges, meadows and an Atlantic white cedar bog.

The scenery before you is a product of a variety of forces. Geology, climate, soil, fires, lumbering, and farming have all shaped the delicate harmony of land and life you see today.

A diversity of wildlife find suitable habitat-food, water, shelter and space-among the mix of trees, shrubs and flowers of the reservation. The habitat and the season of the year play a large role in determining where you may best find wildlife. Nature has its patterns. Note how plant and animal life change as you travel from the moist lowlands to the drier, rocky hilltops.

Ponds and Marshes

The Wet and Wild

The freshwater wetlands of the reservation are teeming with life. Treat yourself to a dazzling display of pink and white pond lilies at St. Moritz Pond in July or watch patiently as a great blue heron stalks sunfish fingerlings at Marigold Marsh near Houghton's Pond.

Ponkapoag Bog

A Quaking Experience



Ponkapoag Bog is a unique and mysterious world. Neither solid land nor water, the bog is a realm in between. A cedar boardwalk at the northwest corner of Ponkapoag Pond allows safe entrance into an Atlantic white cedar bog. Look for the carnivorous pitcher plants and sundews which capture insects to supplement their diet in this acidic and sterile environment.

The Meadow

A Pioneer

Imagine the Blue Hills Reservation cleared for fields and pastures with an occasional wooded area or small orchard. Such was the scene in the mid-1800's. Red fox could be seen feeding on wild grapes and brambles. White-tailed deer frequented the apple orchards. Since Colonial times, much of the Blue Hills has reforested, although open fields and meadows remain an important habitat for fox, deer, turkey, mice and songbirds.

The Forests

Of Oak and Hickories



Today, oaks and hickories abound throughout the Blue Hills, particularly on south facing slopes. Prior to the 1940's, the once mighty American chestnut dominated the woodland canopy. The chestnut blight, a damaging fungus from China, reduced the American chestnut population to sprouting trees, usually able to grow no taller than 20 feet. The oak-hickory forest produces a wealth of acorns and nuts which provide food for hungry gray squirrels, chipmunks and wild turkeys. Look for the broken shells identifying where a squirrel may have enjoyed a meal.

Rocky Hilltops

A Windswept World

Lowbush blueberry and huckleberry can tolerate the dry acidic soils of the wind-swept hilltops. Snack on wild blueberries in late July while enjoying the sun-baked vista atop Buck Hill or Houghton's Hill. Early spring and fall are great times to watch for hawks, falcons and other birds winging over the hilltops on their seasonal migration. Over 160 bird species may be seen in the Blue Hills during the year.

The Faces and Places

Early European settlers encountered Native Americans living off the rich resources of the Blue Hills. The natives referred to themselves as Massachusuck, or "people living near the great hills." Close proximity to the Neponset River, the seacoast and Boston, high vantage points and an abundance of quarry materials have made the reservation lands an attraction throughout history. Today, the reservation is rich in both archaeological and historical resources. Interesting structures and other traces of our past include observation towers built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, old homesteads and legacies of the granite industry at the Quincy quarries. Enriching the reservation are more than 50 prehistoric sites, 15 historic structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and a National Historic Landmark- the Blue Hills Meteorological Observatory.



Native Americans

The People of the Great Hills

For more than 9,000 years before Europeans arrived, Native Americans quarried in the Blue Hills, seeking brown volcanic rock or hornfels which they crafted into tools, spearheads and arrowheads. Note the many Native American place names throughout the Blue Hills, a tribute to the first people of this land.

The Colonists

Of Axes and Ploughs

Seventeenth century Europeans and their descendants settled in the Blue Hills, introducing orchards and honeybees, houses and barns. They logged the hillsides for lumber while clearing fields for pasture. Look for the stone walls, which once separated these fields, still winding throughout the Blue Hills.

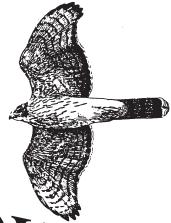
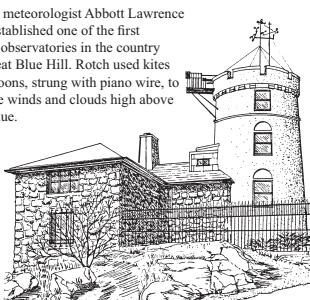
Quincy Granite

The Birth of Two Industries

The granite hills at the east end of the reservation launched the birth of two industries, large-scale granite quarrying in 1825 and the first commercial railroad in 1826. Quincy granite was used in the construction of some of the most impressive granite buildings, monuments, sculptures and fortifications across the nation, including customs houses in Boston, Savannah, New Orleans and San Francisco.

The Blue Hill Weather Observatory Of Kites and Clouds

In 1885, meteorologist Abbott Lawrence Rotch established one of the first weather observatories in the country atop Great Blue Hill. Rotch used kites and balloons, strung with piano wire, to study the winds and clouds high above Great Blue.



Enjoying the Reservation

The Blue Hills Reservation Headquarters is located at 695 Hillside Street in Milton, 1/4 mile north of Houghton's Pond, beside the State Police Station. Please stop by, or call (617) 698-1802 for further information.

Athletic Fields

Three reservable athletic fields are available at Houghton's Pond. For reservations, call DCR Recreation at (617) 727-4708.

Blue Hills Trailside Museum

This DCR facility, managed by the Mass Audubon Society, features cultural, historical and natural history exhibits with a display of live wildlife of the Blue Hills. Trailside Museum is located at 1904 Canton Avenue (Route 138), 1/2 mile north of route 93 (Exit 2B) in Milton. An admission fee is charged. For more information and operating hours, call (617) 333-0690.

Boating

Non-motorized boats are permitted in Ponkapoag Pond and the Neponset River only.

Camping

Overnight camping is permitted only at the Appalachian Mountain Club cabins on Ponkapoag Pond. Call the AMC at (781) 961-7007 for reservations.

Fishing

Fishing is permitted at Houghton's Pond, Ponkapoag Pond, St. Moritz Pond, Hillside Pond, Blue Hill Reservoir and Pine Tree Brook. A state fishing license is required.

Friends of the Blue Hills

For over 30 years, the Friends of the Blue Hills, a non-profit volunteer organization has been dedicated to protecting and promoting the Blue Hills Reservation. Call (781) 828-1805 or visit info@friendsofthebluehills.org for more information.

Golfing

The 36 hole Ponkapoag Golf Course is located in Canton on Route 138, 1/2 mile south of Route 93. Call (781) 828-4242.

Hiking

The Blue Hills Reservation offers over 125 miles of scenic trails for hikers. Please refer to the map and legend on the reverse side for details of hikes. Remember to dress appropriately and carry water on all hikes.

Horseback Riding

A number of privately owned stables operate in the area of the Blue Hills Reservation. Many of the dirt roads through the park are former carriage roads and are suitable for trail riding.

Ice Skating

The DCR owns and leases three ice skating rinks in the Blue Hills Reservation. For Ulin Rink in Milton, call (617) 696-9869, for Shea Rink in Quincy, call (617) 472-9325, and for Metropolis Rink in Canton, call (781) 575-6660.

Mountain Bicycling

Mountain bicycling is allowed in certain areas of the reservation. Stop by headquarters at 695 Hillside Street in Milton to pick up a mountain bike brochure and map.

Norman Smith Environmental Education Center

Located on Chickatawbut Hill and operated by the Mass Audubon Society, the center offers environmental education workshops, including overnight programs and summer camp. Call (617) 333-0690.

Observation Towers

Observation towers are located at Great Blue Hill and Chickatawbut Overlook. Both offer scenic views of the Boston skyline and surrounding area.

Picnicking

A limited number of picnic tables and charcoal grilles are available at Houghton's Pond and Chickatawbut Overlook. Picnic sites at Houghton's Pond are in great demand during the summer. Plan accordingly. Please call the reservation headquarters at (617) 698-1802 for more information or to reserve a picnic site. Permits are required for group use of 25 or more persons.

Ranger Programs

DCR Park Rangers offer free educational and recreational programs throughout the year. Look for program schedules posted on park bulletin boards, call (617) 698-1802 or visit www.mass.gov/dcr for details.

Rock Climbing

Rock climbing is popular at the Quincy Quarries Historic Site off Ricciuti Drive in Quincy and in the Rattlesnake Hill area in the eastern section of the reservation. Proper safety equipment is required. Special use permit required for groups. Visit www.mass.gov/dcr

Skiing, Cross-country

Cross-country skiing is permitted on trails throughout the reservation with sufficient snow cover. A free brochure of suggested Cross-Country Ski Routes is available at the reservation headquarters.

Skiing, Downhill

On the west side of Great Blue Hill, the William F. Rogers Ski Slopes offer the nearest downhill skiing to the metropolitan Boston area. Call (781) 828-5070.

Swimming

Swimming is allowed only at Houghton's Pond beach with DCR lifeguard supervision. Seasonal restrooms are provided.

TrailWatch

Blue Hills TrailWatch is an all-volunteer organization of concerned recreational trail users whose goal is to promote safe and cooperative trail use by acting as an educational liaison between reservation managers and the public. For more information, call (617) 698-1802.

Visitor Center

The Houghton's Pond Visitor Center features park information and exhibits highlighting the human history of the Blue Hills. Wheelchair accessible restroom facilities are provided.

Weather Observatory and Science Center

Perched atop the summit of Great Blue Hill, the Blue Hill Observatory and Science Center features continuous weather study from 1885 through today. Educational programs and tours are offered. A fee is charged. Call (617) 696-0562 or visit www.bluehill.org for more information.

Important Contacts:

DCR Blue Hills Reservation (617) 698-1802
695 Hillside Street, Milton, MA 02186

DCR 24-hour Radio Dispatch (617) 722-1188

Blue Hills Trailside Museum (617) 333-0690

For accessibility details, call DCR at (617) 698-1802

Check DCR Website for updates: www.mass.gov/dcr

In case of emergency, call 911 or contact the State Police, Blue Hills Barracks at (617) 698-5840.

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