

Welcome to the  
**BOSCAWEN TOWN FOREST & INTERPRETIVE NATURE TRAIL**  
maintained by the  
**Boscawen Conservation Commission**

*Please help us to maintain the forest for everyone's use and enjoyment by observing the following practices:*

- ❖ Park in designated areas at the turn-off near the entrance sign.
- ❖ This is a day-use area. Camping is allowed only by written permission from the Boscawen Conservation Commission.
- ❖ Fires are allowed only by written permission from both the Boscawen Conservation Commission and the Fire Warden.
- ❖ Hunting and fishing are welcome. Trapping and tree stands are allowed only by written permission from the Boscawen Conservation Commission.
- ❖ This is a carry in-carry out area. Please take home with you any litter or debris that you bring to the area.
- ❖ Hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing are welcome.
- ❖ Motorized wheeled vehicles are not allowed. Snowmobiles should use only designated trails.
- ❖ Do not remove or damage any structure plant or natural feature. Please do not cut any firewood.
- ❖ Respect abutting properties—Town Forest boundaries are marked by red blazes.
- ❖ If you don't plan to keep this Guide, please consider returning it to the trailhead for others to use.

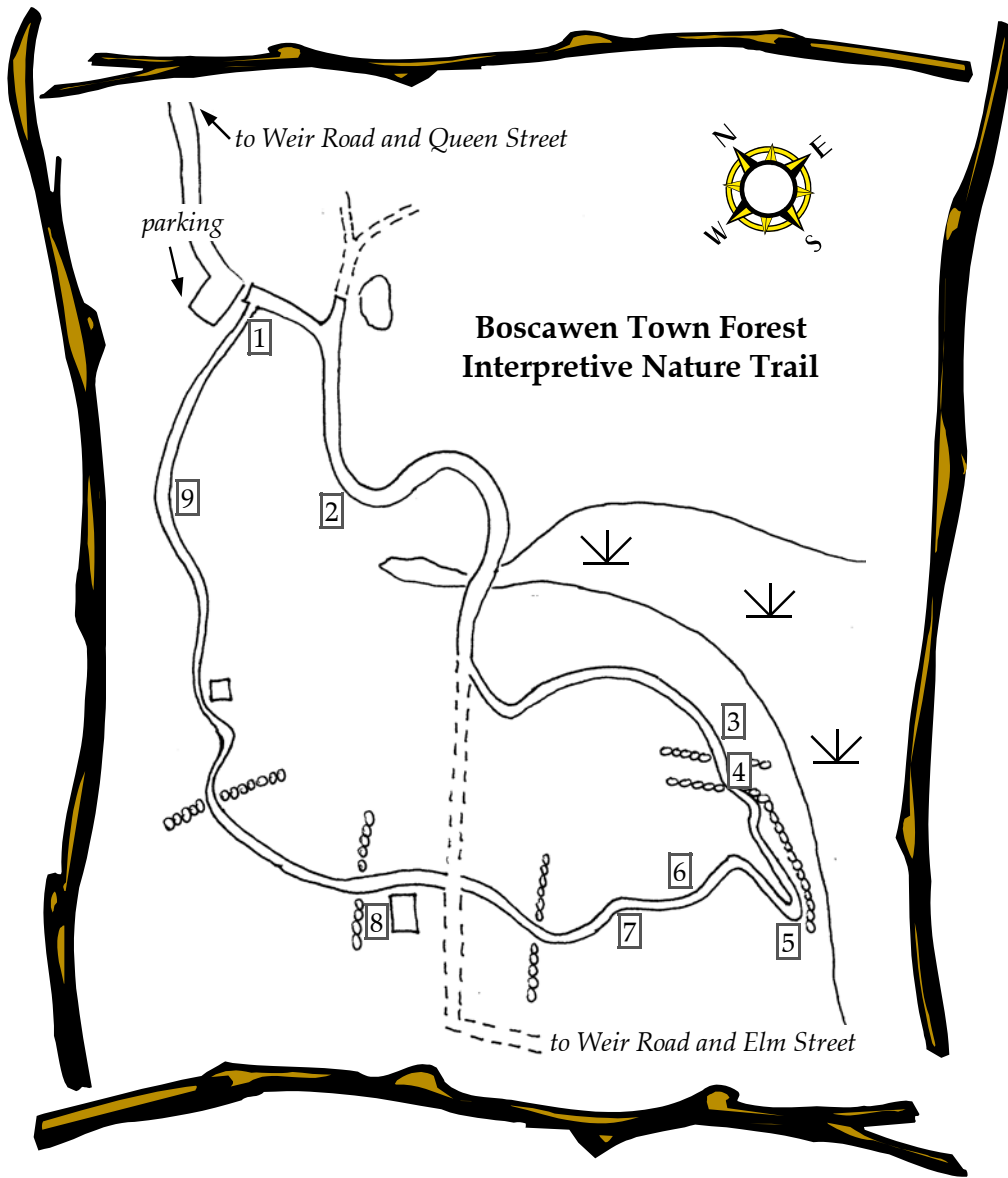


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# Boscawen Town Forest Interpretive Nature Trail



**Boscawen Conservation Commission**



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#### How to find the Boscawen Town Forest

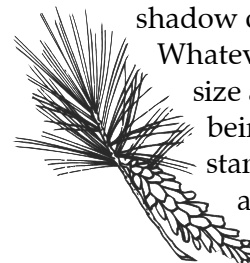
From Interstate 93, take exit 17 and turn west on US Route 4. Cross the bridge over the Merrimack River and go through the blinking light. Take a left on Route 3 (heading south) at the next light. At 1.1 miles, take a right on Queen Street. After one mile, look for the Boscawen Town Forest sign on the left and take a left on Weir Road. The trailhead and parking area are at the end of the road on your right.

At the **Cellar Hole** site, you will also notice Poplar trees, known to some as Aspen. These “pioneer” trees are among the first to re-forest fields as well as burned or recently logged areas. “Popple,” as they are sometimes called in New England, are fast-growing and sun-loving trees. Their most significant feature are the nearly rounded, flat leaves with fine teeth. Many animals depend on Poplar as a source of food and shelter. White-tailed Deer feed on the leaves in summer and on the twigs and buds during winter. Poplars provide food for

Beavers and Hares while birds use the vast branches for springtime nesting. You may also have noticed the large amount of Asian bittersweet, a non-native vine with red berries covered by a pale yellow husk. When non-native plants are introduced to a new place, they can overwhelm native vegetation because the invaders don’t have their own predators and other environmental conditions that kept them in balance in their original homes. This non-native species was brought to the US by gardeners, landscapers, and other planters.



**Bull Pine**—As you look up at this large, gnarly-looking tree, consider its long and odd history. Bull pines grow in a field rather than in a forest. Because of their isolation and exposure, they are more susceptible to weevils, a small insect that bores into trees. Instead of growing straight up from one main branch, the damage from these insects causes the tree’s branches to all try to “be the leader,” forming a claw-like crown. This results in many branches growing up from the center and forming the tree’s unique shape. These trees are sometimes called “wolf pines” because on a moonlit night, their shadow or silhouette can look like a howling wolf.

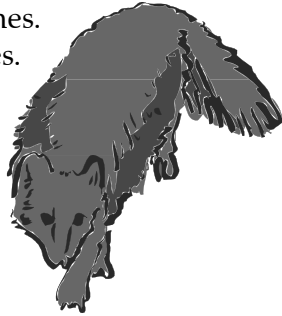


Whatever the origins of these names, the trees’ large size and knotty wood generally keep them from being harvested for lumber so these they remain standing all over New England, providing shade and beauty to farm pastures and old fields.

**7 Apple Trees**—At the Weir Farm, you will see an aged apple orchard. Special care has been taken to protect and increase the vigor of these trees by pruning them and removing the surrounding plants. Apple trees are valuable to New Hampshire's wildlife because they provide food to animals such as deer, rabbits, foxes, and porcupines.

A variety of songbirds also feed on apples.

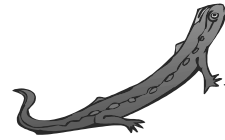
The fruit is particularly important to returning spring migrants such as the Evening Grosbeak. Unfortunately, the abundance of this valuable tree is declining as the number of orchards in New England has decreased.



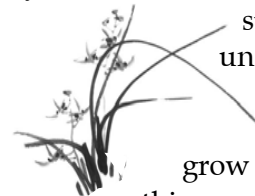
**8 Cellar Hole**—This cellar hole is a remnant of the Weir Farm, circa 1850 including a house and other buildings. Nancy Weir gave her two children, James and Olivia, \$600 to purchase the property. In return, the children promised to give their mother a home for the rest of her life. As the years passed, more buildings were erected including a woodshed, two additional barns, an ice house, and a blacksmith shop. The Weir Farm was truly self-sufficient as were many families' homes in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. James eventually married and raised a family of four children. One of his descendants lived on the farm until his health declined in the late 1930s. The Weir Farm, already in disrepair, was deeded to the Town of Boscawen. Sadly, the farm was deemed beyond repair and was burned by the Boscawen Fire Department. If you look carefully here and in many wooded areas in New Hampshire, you can still see cellar holes, stone walls, and lilac bushes, evidences of long-gone and almost forgotten houses and farms.



**1 Vernal Pools**—Small pools of water that form for only a short time in the spring are known as vernal pools. They can be found at the bottom of steeply-sloped land or in small depressions in the woods. During a drier period, it is difficult to envision this area filled with water. However, if you look closely at the leaf litter, you'll notice that it is covered with fine silt—a sign that it has been covered with water. Because vernal pools harbor no predatory fish, they pools provide essential breeding habitat for wood frogs, spotted salamanders, spring peepers, turtles (such as the endangered Blanding's Turtle), and waterfowl. Vernal pools are a perfect example of how seasonal habitat is essential to wildlife.



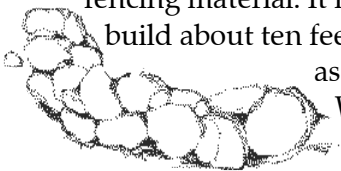
**2 Old Leather Dump**—Until 1998, two acres of leather waste was "temporarily stored" here in the Town Forest by Allied Leather. Although the Town of Boscawen had only agreed to temporary storage of the leather, by the mid-1970s it became apparent that the rapidly growing pile of waste better resembled a permanent landfill. In response to urging from the State of NH, Allied agreed to bury the scraps. However, the earthen cap placed over the waste was not effective and there were complaints about odors and other problems from the buried leather. Although Allied agreed to remove the scraps at a rate of one million pounds per month, the work did not proceed according to plan and the firm filed bankruptcy. With no responsible party available to complete the work, the mountain of leather sat until 1997 when a town, state, and federal partnership was formed to restore the site. A nearly non-stop stream of trucks relocated approximately 25,000 cubic yards of waste to the Boscawen landfill during the spring and summer of 1998 where the leather was sealed under an impermeable cap. Today, memories of the twenty foot-tall leather piles are rapidly fading as grasses, flowers, bushes, and trees grow in the freshened soil and wildlife habitat in this area steadily improves.



**3 Snags**—Thinking about the woods most often brings to mind pictures of a lush, green forest. However, dead trees are just as important to a healthy forest. Often called snags, dead trees provide food and a place for nesting and perching for many species of wildlife. When a tree dies, the wood softens, attracting woodpeckers and chickadees who create holes for nests. When nests are abandoned, they are used by animals such as flying squirrels and fishers. Snags are choice perching sites for hawks and owls and homes for many insects, which in turn become food for birds. When snags fall, they are used by other animals, such as black bears, for dens. Eventually, fungus and insects decompose the wood. During this process, the tree's nutrients will be used by insects and other animals and returned to the soil, giving life to new plants. Snags are an essential part of all forests and provide food and shelter for wildlife.



**4 Stone Walls**—The stone walls so common to the woods of New Hampshire remind us of a time when farming was the dominant land use. Stones were not the farmer's first choice in fencing. Often, a farmer's first fence would be made of stacks of brush created when fields were cleared of trees. The second fence would be made of the stumps pulled out of the fields, laid side by side so that their roots would interlock. Next, a farmer would build a fence of wood rails. It wouldn't be until the farmer had cleared the land of trees that the seemingly never-ending supply of rocks would be used for fencing material. It is estimated that two people could only build about ten feet of stone wall in a day. An amazing fact as one considers the many stonewalls on the Weir Farm property—and the thousands of miles all of them over New England.



**5 Beaver Pond**—Beaver ponds create important wildlife habitat. Using their large front teeth, beavers cut trees and branches and stick them into the mud of a streambed. Stones, mud, and more branches are added to seal off most of the stream flow. The beavers eat the inner layer of the bark, called cambium. As the beavers go about their daily business, they are unaware that they are contributing to habitat diversity. The new pond slows the cool moving water and raises its temperature. Plants, insects, and animals who like warmer water colonize the pond. Beavers live in a lodge, which is a large mound made of sticks and mud with an open room in the center above the waterline in the pond. As the pond enlarges and ages, trees in the water die, attracting insects, which draw numerous species of birds to feed and nest. The Boscawen Conservation Commission maintains duck boxes to encourage waterfowl nesting. A beaver pond provides homes for salamanders, frogs, and fish, which will in turn attract otters, raccoons, mink, and fox. In time, the beavers' food supply will be exhausted and they will move on to a new area. As the un-maintained dam deteriorates and the pond drains and becomes a grassy meadow, it provides new habitat for different plant and wildlife species.



**6 Old Field**—Because the Boscawen Town Forest is about 90% wooded, this open field is very important to the habitat diversity of the area. Animals such as foxes, coyotes, and owls prey on the small rodents in the field. Bats and birds feed on the field's insects. The field's edge provides habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals. To maintain the open fields, the area is periodically burned. Periodically, the Commission conducts a controlled burning. It is a management technique that prevents old fields from growing over with shrubs and saplings and returning to forest.

