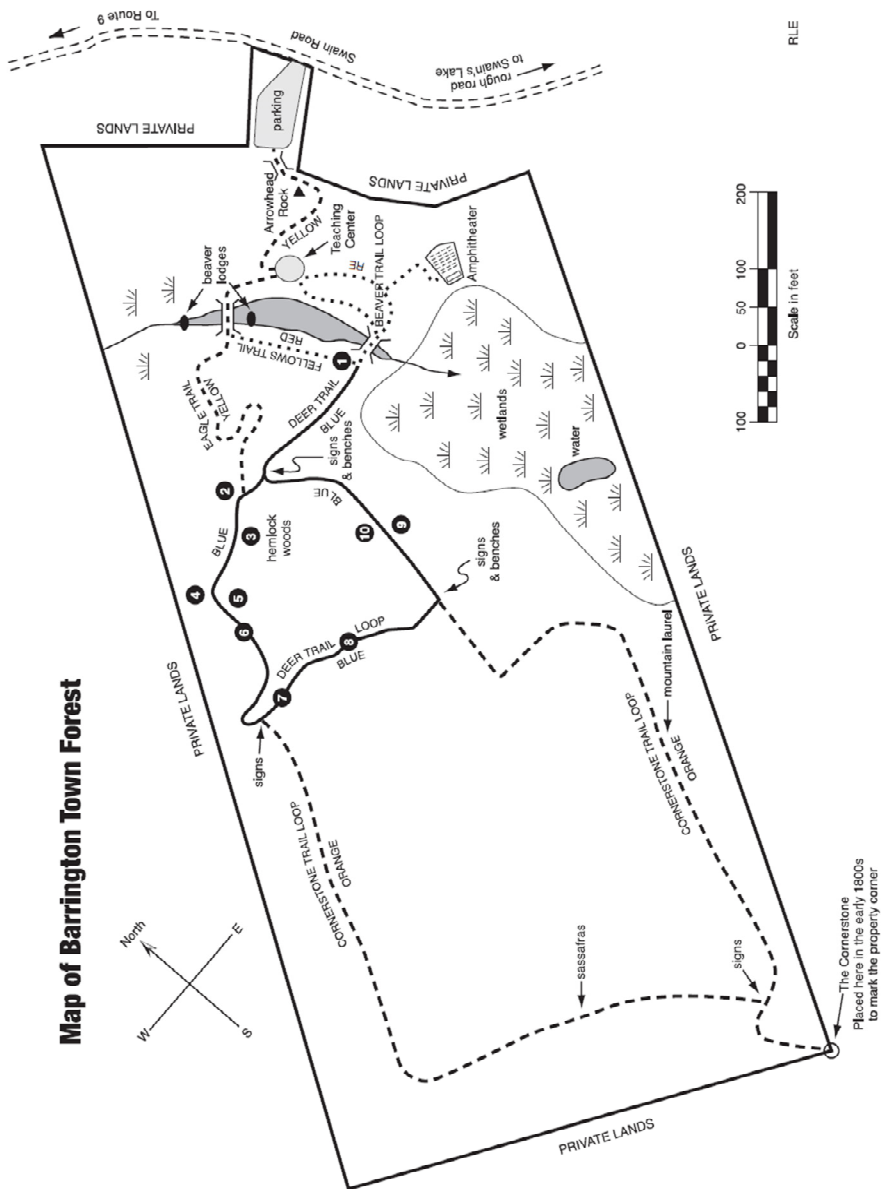


# Barrington Town Forest



*“One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.” - Shakespeare*

## THE TOWN FOREST



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updated and revised

- Length:** 0.5 to 1.5 miles or more, depending on trails taken
- Difficulty:** Easy
- Location:** Class 6 portion of Swain Rd (off Routes 202/9)
- Activities:** Hiking, XC skiing, snowshoeing, mountain biking. Snowmobiling and horseback riding are prohibited. Self-guided nature trail.
- Parking:** Parking lot at front of property, not generally plowed in winter. Parking along Swain Road is usually OK.
- Acreage:** 50.3

The Barrington Town Forest is a 48-acre wooded area dedicated to the provision of recreational trails, conservation education, and wildlife habitat protection. In addition, the Town has preserved this land for growing forest products, protecting the Bellamy River watershed (which includes Swains Lake and the Madbury Reservoir), wetland conservation, and the protection of unique plant communities.

Volunteers have provided thousands of dollars worth of labor, materials, equipment, and professional expertise to create the system of trails, bridges, and signs that exist on the property. Special recognition is given to Boy Scout Troop 358, which contributed hundreds of hours towards the initial construction of trails and structures. In more recent years the Girl Scouts continue to be involved in the maintenance and enhancement of the Town Forest. There is a somewhat out of date brochure describing the town forest and giving the details of the nature trail available at [barringtonconcom.org](http://barringtonconcom.org).



**Scouts in 2017**

The Forest is open to foot traffic and non-motorized bikes only. Wheeled vehicles (except for wheelchairs and bicycles), motorized vehicles, and horses are not permitted in the Forest.

The short trail from the parking lot to the kiosk and the Beaver Trail Loop has been improved to accommodate people with walking disabilities. At various spots along some of the trails there are benches for rest and contemplation.

**Directions to the Town Forest:** From the intersection of Routes 9 and 125 in Barrington: Take Route 9 West. Go 4.5 miles to Swain Road, which is about 1/4 mile after the junction with Route 202. Turn left onto Swain Road.

Go about ½ mile on Swain Road (hard-top) and then another 0.6 miles on dirt to the driveway into the Town Forest parking lot – there’s a sign on the right. Note that the dirt part of the road is class 6, i.e. maintained by the local homeowners, not by the town. Driving on it, especially during mud season, is sometimes challenging.

From the intersection of Routes 4 and 202/9 in Northwood: Take Route 202/9. Go 4.8 miles to Swain Road. Turn right onto Swain Road and follow directions above.

**Trail Description and Direction:** A couple hundred feet from the trail head at the parking area you’ll pass **Arrowhead rock**.



**Arrowhead Rock**

*Legend has it that giants roamed this area in prehistoric times, and this is a relic of that era. Unfortunately there are no remains of the mammoth that was shot with it.*

Next is a small clearing with a kiosk and some benches, also known as the Teaching Center. Visible to the left is the infamous “tool shed.” This was originally installed to be an outhouse, but as it did not meet regulations, it was renamed. When second graders from the Barrington Elementary School used to take an annual trip to the town forest, the tool shed was used to teach the meaning of the word “euphemism.” Its present functionality for any purpose other than teaching is highly suspect.

A ways past the tool shed is an amphitheater, built by the Boy Scouts for various meetings. It’s available for other functions too, so contact Town Hall if you think you might be interested.

As seen on the map, the kiosk is the starting point for all the other trails, which are color-coded to correspond to the blazes marking them. There is a wide variety of trail lengths to choose from: a simple perusal of the **Beaver Trail** (in red) results in a total hike of about 0.3 mile, while a round trip going out to the cornerstone and back is about 1.5 miles.

**The Deer Trail** is a self-guided nature trail, but as of now (2020) the information in it is in need of being updated. Nonetheless, many of the interesting features described in it are still there, and it’s worth checking out. There may be copies available in the mailboxes at the kiosk, or you can download your own copy at [barringtonconcom.org](http://barringtonconcom.org).

Here are the captions from the 2000 brochure about the nature trail.

### 1. **Beavers**

Beavers built this dam and the lodge upstream. They cut trees for food and shelter. The lodge is a year-round residence. These “engineers” change the environment to suit their needs more than other animals do, except people. Beavers prefer birch and aspen trees, which are not plentiful in the Barrington Town Forest.

At the intersection of the Deer Trail and the Deer Trail Loop, where the bench is, bear right to go to Stations 2 through 10.

### 2. **Different Kinds of Forests**

The forest behind the sign is mostly oak trees. Oaks provide acorns, used as food by wildlife such as deer, squirrels, wild turkeys, and wood ducks. What will this forest look like 30 years from now? (Clue:

notice the large number of small white pine trees.) To the left is a dense hemlock forest. Will this forest look very different in 30 years? (Clue: notice the absence of young trees of other species in the hemlock forest.)

### **3. Deer Umbrellas**

Evergreen forests often serve as a place for deer to gather in the winter. These dense hemlock woods act as umbrellas to protect deer from wind and snow. It is easier for deer to walk around in these woods as the snow is not as deep as in the more open forests and fields.

### **4. Cutting Trees Is for the Birds!**

The trees in this area were cut. The cutting has allowed sunlight to reach the forest floor. Succulent new growth of shrubs and young trees now provide food for wildlife including deer. The warmth of the sun attracts an abundance of insects—a food source for birds and their young. Listen. Woodland birds such as chickadees, nuthatches, and tufted titmouse can often be heard singing here. This opening has improved the forest for wildlife. Cutting trees is only one tool that a wildlife biologist may use to improve wildlife habitat.

### **5. Deer Rubbings**

For years bucks have come to this hemlock tree and to the ones behind you to rub the velvet off their antlers. Each year deer lose their antlers and grow a new set in the spring. In the summer they rub the soft, fur-like coating from their new antlers.

### **6. Bed and Breakfast for Animals**

As a tree dies, insects invade the weakened tree. Hungry birds peck at the tree to get the insects, leaving the holes that you see. Many birds and mammals will use these “cavities” for nesting, denning, and resting. Around the other side of the tree, at the ground level, you will see a hole for a comfortable shelter for a small animal. Foresters often leave trees like this to benefit wildlife.

### **7. Boulders**

The glacier left these boulders scattered here over a million years ago. The glacier also made the small hill behind the “7” sign. Hills like this run north and south, in the direction that the glacier traveled. The land changes as you go east. By the Barrington Elementary School, the ground is sandy. That area was the beach front on the ocean which was once there.

## 8. **Rock Wart**

The large rock behind the “8” sign is covered by lichen (pronounced “lie-ken”). The lichen has many names including “rock wart.” It is a combination of an alga and a fungus. They depend upon each other for life.

At the intersection, stay on the Deer Trail Loop (not the Cornerstone Trail.)

## 9. **An Important Watershed**

Behind the “9” sign, the land slopes down to a wetland. This wetland serves as a reservoir and a filter for water traveling to Swains Lake, which is used for drinking water, fishing, and swimming. We need to care for the forests and wetlands in this watershed so we can protect water quality for people and other living things.

## 10. **A Building Here?**

Yes. There was a building right here. Evidence such as boards and nails, along with rocks used as a foundation, has been found here. Nature has a way of taking back some of what people have done. Even the road you traveled on to come to this forest would return to trees if left alone for a long time. Some things that people do don’t “heal” as quickly and as well as what you see here.

Most of the town forest is either hardwood forest or open marsh, but there are sections in which hemlocks dominate. Where the Eagle Trail meets the Deer Trail, at point 2 on the map, you will see one of these transitions. It is especially apparent in the winter, when you go from an open, well-lit forest into the darkness of the thick evergreen cover. You emerge from this ‘dark tunnel’ at point 7. Turn left to stay on the Deer Trail, or continue straight to start the Cornerstone Trail.

**The Cornerstone Trail**, shortly after it emerges from the Deer Trail at point 7, goes right through the middle of a large split boulder.

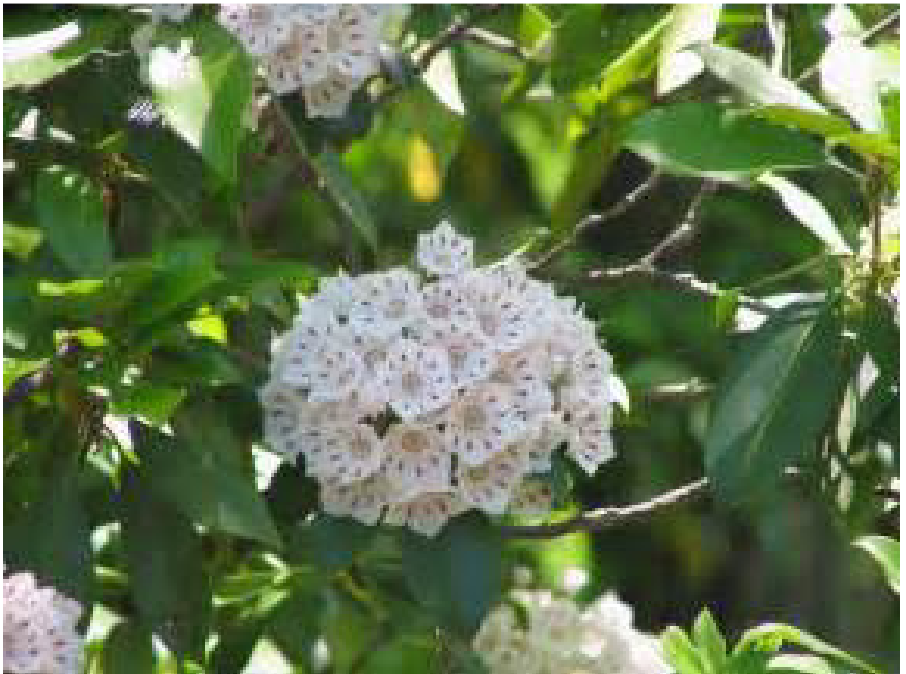
Further along on the Cornerstone Trail there is a vernal pool on your right. Vernal pools are unique wildlife habitats best known for the amphibians and invertebrate animals that use them to breed. Vernal pools typically fill with water in the winter and spring due to rainfall and snowmelt, and remain ponded through the spring and into summer. They usually dry completely by the middle or end of summer each year, or at least every few years. The drying prevents



fish from establishing permanent populations, which is critical to the reproductive success of the frogs and salamanders that rely on breeding habitats free of fish predators. If you walk by this vernal pool at the right time of year – general early to mid-April – you will hear the croaking of wood frogs in vernal pools, sounding like the quacking of ducks! This precedes the more commonly heard peeping of spring peepers by a week or two.

Shortly after the vernal pool there is a short spur of the trail that leads to the property corner, marked by a granite monolith. It was placed there in the early 1800s.

After returning to the Cornerstone Trail and going right, you will pass by a patch of mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), a rarity in this area of the state. It produces beautiful white flowers in late spring and early summer. It is the state flower of both Connecticut and Pennsylvania. *Admire, photograph, but do not pick these or any other plants in the town forest.*



**Mountain Laurel**