

EASY WALKERS' NATURE TRAIL

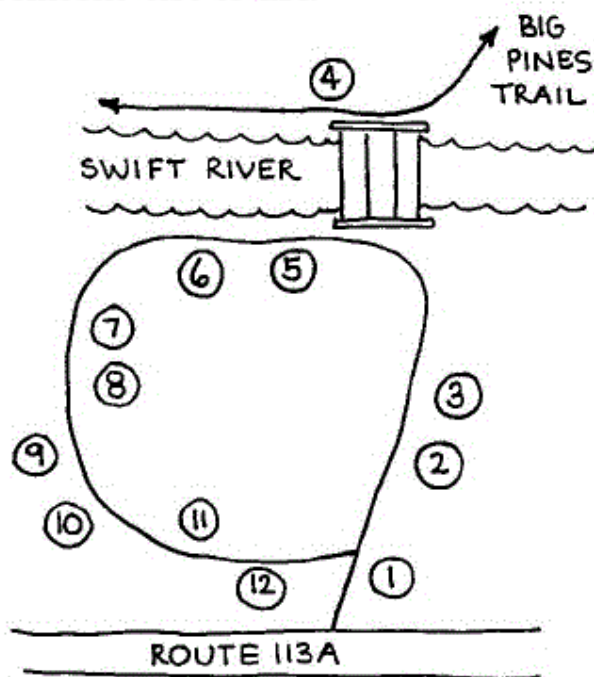
BIG PINES NATURAL AREA

MAINTAINED BY THE
TAMWORTH CONSERVATION COMMISSION

This is a short, easy trail (20 to 25 minutes) marked by red arrows and numbered signs.

PLEASE leave all plant material undisturbed. Stay on the trail. Leave the trail cleaner than you found it - carry out any trash.

If you do not wish to keep this guide, please return it to the box for someone else to use.



#1 SPLIT ROCK

For many years water seeped into a thin crack in this boulder. Each winter the water froze, expanded, and applied pressure. The crack widened and more ice formed inside the crack. Finally the boulder split from this annual ice pressure. This is Nature's first step in forming soil. All subsoil in New Hampshire originated from rock.

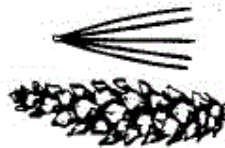
#2 HEMLOCK (*Tsuga Canadensis*)

The hemlock has flat needles--which give a soft, lacy look--rough bark, and small oval cones which are stalked and pendant.

Other short-neededled conifers common in this area are the Red Spruce with its prickly, four-sided needles and the Balsam Fir with its fragrant, soft, flat needles, smooth bark, and upright-standing cones.

#3 WHITE PINE (*Pinus Strobus*)

This is the largest conifer in the east and probably New England's best-known timber tree. Before the Revolutionary War the largest were marked with a broad arrow and reserved for the English navy. The needles are about four inches long and in groups of five.



White Pine

Before going to Stop #4 go out on the bridge for a view of the Swift River, which originates in Wonalancet. The state has classified this as Class B water. Only Class A water is pure enough to drink. Across the bridge is the Big Pines Trail which is marked by orange arrows. This 1.1 mile loop trail involves a small amount of climbing.

#4 BARBED WIRE

Barbed wire is embedded in hemlock trees along the south side of the river. Decades ago, this marked the boundary of a pasture which probably extended up Great Hill. In the early 1900s, this area had more farm fields. The big pines in this area probably started as seedlings in abandoned fields, as they typically do. Barbed wire and stone walls are commonly found in pine and other forests throughout New England, reminding us of how people affect the landscape.

#5 WOODLAND PLANTS

Along the trail you will see plants typically found in a northern coniferous woodland. Some are identified by markers. Please leave the markers in place. Look for Witch Hazel, Blueberry, Red Trillium, Goldthread, Clintonia, Wintergreen, Partridgeberry, Common Wood-sorrel, Lady Fern, Cinnamon Fern, Bracken Fern, and a variety of trees.

#6 HOBBLEBUSH (*V. alnifolium*)

This *Viburnum* is an "under-story" growth which grows large and full in the open and has broad white blossoms in early spring. The red berries are attractive to birds.



Hobblebush

#7 EXPOSED ROOTS

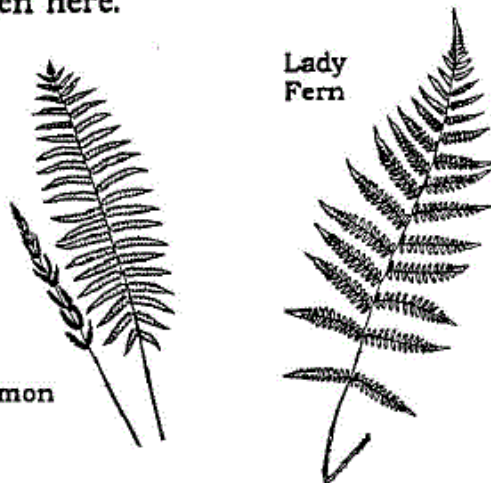
The hemlock tree on this boulder to the left of the trail has many exposed roots. At one time there was soil on and around the boulder. As the soil washed away, the roots grew down to the base of the boulder. They now have bark and function as a normal tree trunk.

#8 SPRING

The small pool on the left and the surrounding wet soil is created by a spring. The water seeps through the porous forest soil down to the Swift River which joins the Bearcamp. The Bearcamp flows into Ossipee Lake which is the source of the Ossipee River which joins the Saco and reaches the Atlantic at Saco, Maine.

#9 FERN DELL

Ferns are members of a unique group of flowerless plants. They reproduce by spores which form on the underside of the fronds, on frond stems, or on separate stems. Two of the most common woodland ferns can be seen here.



Cinnamon Fern

Lady Fern

#10 ROTTING LOG

The rotting log you are crossing shows how nature breaks down the forest debris and recycles it into humus which enriches the soil and increases its capacity to hold water.

#11 BLOWDOWN

Powerful winds remove weak, tall, or old trees from the living forest. Openings in the leafy canopy created by blowdowns let sunlight penetrate to the forest floor, enabling patches of sun-loving plants to thrive.

#12 GLACIAL BOULDER

On the hill to the right is a glacial erratic left when the last Ice Age receded about 15,000 years ago. Growing on the boulder is a very simple plant form, a lichen called rock tripe. Lichens contain fumaric acid which over centuries of time breaks down rock, thus aiding in the formation of soil. At least one group of early arctic explorers survived by eating boiled rock tripe. It contains starch which forms a jelly-like substance when boiled.