

Welcome to DCR's  
Blue Hills Reservation

Stretching from Dedham to Quincy, and Milton to Randolph, the Blue Hills Reservation encompasses over 7,000 acres, providing the largest open space within 35 miles of Boston. More than 120 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 summit at 635 feet above sea level. Visitors may enjoy numerous outdoor activities including hiking, biking, swimming, skiing, and savoring nature in this four-season park.



ABOUT DCR

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is steward to over 450,000 acres of forests, parks, greenways, trails, historic sites and landscapes, seashores, beaches, ponds, reservoirs, and watersheds. The DCR serves to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the well-being of all; and to cooperate and partner with those who share this common purpose. To learn about DCR and discover more about the parks, programs, and recreational opportunities within Massachusetts state parks, please visit [www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr) or contact us at [mass.parks@mass.gov](mailto:mass.parks@mass.gov).

MAP PRINTED COURTESY OF MASS AUDUBON'S BLUE HILLS TRAILSIDE MUSEUM. ALL PROCEEDS FUND THE PRINTING OF ADDITIONAL BLUE HILLS MAPS.



Blue Hills  
Reservation



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

2020

TRAIL MAP

A World of Nature

The scenery before you is the product of a variety of forces. Geology, climate, soil, fires, logging, and farming have all shaped the delicate harmony of land and life you see today. Trails traverse many habitats: rocky summits, upland and bottomland forests, meadows, swamp and pond edges, vernal pools, and bogs.



These shy animals avoid people and do not bite unless provoked. Conservation of these endangered animals is a high priority for both DCR and MassWildlife. They are protected from any harm or harassment under state law. Stay on trails, respect trail closures, keep pets leashed, and avoid any wildlife—including snakes—you may encounter.

A diversity of wildlife finds 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 what you will observe as you walk the trails. Nature has its patterns. Note how plant and animal life change as you travel from the moist lowlands to the drier, wind-blown summits.



Enjoying the Reservation

**BLUE HILLS RESERVATION HEADQUARTERS** is located at 695 Hillside Street in Milton, ¼ mile north of Houghton's Pond, beside the State Police Station. A self-service information station provides trail maps for sale, park brochures and information, and a unisex restroom, open year-round. Visitor parking is available, limited to 10 minutes only. Please stop by or call (617) 698-1802 for park information.

**ATHLETIC FIELDS** are located on the southeast side of Houghton's Pond. Three fields are available. For reservations, visit [www.mass.gov/how-to/athletic-field-scheduling](http://www.mass.gov/how-to/athletic-field-scheduling) or call (617) 626-4913.

**BLUE HILL OBSERVATORY** and Science Center is perched atop the summit of Great Blue Hill and has maintained a continuous weather record since 1885. Educational programs and tours are offered for a fee. This National Historic Landmark also features a gift shop with weather-related items and souvenirs as well as beverages and trail snacks for sale. Visit [www.bluehill.org](http://www.bluehill.org) or call (617) 696-0562.

**BLUE HILLS TRAILSIDE MUSEUM** serves as the interpretive center for the Blue Hills Reservation and is operated by Mass Audubon. Interior and exterior exhibits highlight the habitats and wildlife of the park. A variety of rescued native wildlife call Trailside home and now serve important roles as environmental ambassadors. Before hiking up the red dot trail to the Eliot Tower, head inside the museum to visit the animals, learn more about the park and upcoming programs, and purchase a trail map and snacks in the gift shop. A small admission fee is charged for the museum exhibits; entry is free for members of Mass Audubon. A wide variety of programs for all ages and abilities are offered. Please, no pets or smoking on museum grounds. Visit [www.massaudubon.org/bluehills](http://www.massaudubon.org/bluehills) or call (617) 333-0690.

**BOAT** on Ponkapoag Pond, launching at Fisherman's Beach on Randolph Street in Canton. Non-motorized car-top boats only. For boating on the Neponset River, visit [www.neponset.org](http://www.neponset.org) for their *Neponset River Paddler's Guide* listing launch sites.

ROCKY HILLTOPS

The hilltops of the Blue Hills range offer sweeping views of the Boston basin, the harbor, and beyond. These summits are the remains of ancient volcanoes, which erupted 440 million years ago and then collapsed. Hikers climbing Great Blue Hill on the red dot trail will trace ancient lava flows that poured out of the volcano and quickly cooled into small crystalline rock on the surface. Millions of years later, during the last ice age, a glacier scraped and polished the hilltops leaving only a thin layer of soil.

Scrub oak, pitch pine, and blueberry shrubs can tolerate the dry, acidic soils on the hilltops. In early spring and fall, watch for hawks, turkey vultures, and other birds riding the air currents, winging gracefully over the hilltops on their seasonal migration. Over 160 bird species may be seen in the Blue Hills during the year, including the eastern towhee and prairie warbler, which favor the brushy hilltops.



OUR CHANGING FOREST

The Blue Hills Reservation is endowed with a wide variety of tree species, providing a unique green oasis within sight of the Boston skyline. Mature oaks, hickories, and eastern white pine abound throughout the Blue Hills, many over 100 years old. Fire-adapted pitch pine and scrub oak provide important habitat for wildlife on our rocky summits. Today, trees face a number of threats including invasive species such as gypsy moths, which when combined with periodic drought conditions have caused some tree mortality. The strength of the Blue Hills forest includes its overall diversity, which can provide resilience from environmental pressures and help to support a green future for the next generation.

**BROOKWOOD COMMUNITY FARM**, through a community-supported agriculture model, grows produce using organic methods and provides on-farm educational and community-building opportunities. The farm also actively supports local food access projects. Visit [brookwoodcommunityfarm.org](http://brookwoodcommunityfarm.org) for more information.

**CAMP** year-round only at the Appalachian Mountain Club cabins on Ponkapoag Pond. Advance reservations are required. Visit [www.outdoors.org](http://www.outdoors.org) or call (781) 961-7007 for reservations and information.

**EDUCATIONAL & RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS** are offered by DCR park rangers year-round. Look for program schedules posted on park bulletin boards, visit [www.mass.gov/dcr/programs](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/programs) or call (617) 698-1802 for details on these free programs.



Visit [www.mass.gov/dfw/fishing](http://www.mass.gov/dfw/fishing) for more information.

**FRIENDS OF THE BLUE HILLS** is a non-profit volunteer organization founded in the 1970s to protect and preserve the Blue Hills Reservation. For information about free family events and trail maintenance opportunities, visit [www.friendsofthebluehills.org](http://www.friendsofthebluehills.org) or call (781) 828-1805.

**GOLF** at Ponkapoag Golf Course, which features two 18-hole courses on Route 138 in Canton, ¾ mile south of Route 93. In addition, there is a driving range, putting green, golf carts, snack bar, and pro shop. Lessons, season passes, and gift certificates are available. Call (781) 828-4242.

**FISH** in the reservation's ponds including Houghton's Pond, Ponkapoag Pond, St. Moritz Ponds, Hillside Pond, the Blue Hill Reservoir, and Pine Tree Brook. Houghton's Pond and Pine Tree Brook are stocked seasonally with trout. A state fishing license is required.



**HIKE** on 120 miles of scenic trails. Purchase a color trail map at the Reservation Headquarters or the Blue Hills Trailside Museum. Trails are well-marked and suitable for a range of abilities, from novice to experienced hikers. Please dress appropriately and bring water on all hikes.

**HORSEBACK RIDING** is popular among equestrians from privately-owned stables. Many of the wider trails throughout the park are former carriage roads and are suitable for trail riding.

**HOUGHTON'S POND RECREATION AREA**, located at 840 Hillside Street in Milton, offers a number of park amenities. A small, free visitor center features park information and exhibits highlighting the human history of the Blue Hills. Accessible restroom facilities are provided year-round. The recreation area also includes a playground, park benches, and a seasonal food concession. The visitor center overlooks Marigold Marsh, accessible from a boardwalk and viewing platforms with interpretive signage. The supervised swimming beach, picnic areas, and trails are very popular features, especially in summer.

**ICE SKATE** at a DCR skating rink in the Blue Hills. For the William T. Shea Rink in Quincy, call (617) 512-8402. For the Max Ulin Rink in Milton, call (617) 696-9869.

**MOUNTAIN BIKE** in designated areas of the reservation. Please respect "No Mountain Bicycling" signs in restricted areas and the seasonal closure of bike trails during the month of March to limit trail impacts during mud season. Stop by Reservation Headquarters to pick up a mountain bike map or visit [www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr) for information.

The Faces and Places

With high vantage points, proximity to the Neponset River, easy access to the coastline and harbor islands, and an abundance of year-round resources, the Blue Hills have been attracting people throughout the ages. Today, DCR's Blue Hills Reservation is rich in both archaeological and historic resources. Interesting structures and other traces of our past include artifacts of the First People, cellar holes and fruit trees of early settlers, legacies of the granite industry at the Quincy quarries, and observation towers and trails built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Enriching the park 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.



THE PEOPLE OF THE GREAT HILLS

The First People in this region called themselves the Massachuseuk, which translates to "people living near the great hills." The Massachuseuk people followed a way of life closely tied to the natural rhythms of the seasons. Small family groups moved within the Blue Hills and Neponset River area harvesting nuts and berries, cultivating corn, beans, and squash, and fishing and hunting among the bays, rivers, and uplands.

The Massachuseuk lived in balance with nature. Their seasonal movements meant that no single resource was overexploited. Their survival depended upon a keen knowledge of local flora and fauna and the changing environment. Hornfels, a brown volcanic rock found in the Blue Hills, was crafted into tools. Artifacts made from materials

**NORMAN SMITH ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER** is managed by Mass Audubon's Blue Hills Trailside Museum. The Environmental Education Center hosts programs year-round including Blue Hills Summer Camp. The facility is also available for rentals and overnights by businesses and groups, featuring an industrial kitchen, dormitories, a large meeting space, beautiful views atop scenic Chickatawbut Hill, and access to numerous trails. Visit [www.massaudubon.org/bluehills](http://www.massaudubon.org/bluehills) or call (617) 333-0690.

**PICNIC** tables and charcoal grills are available at Houghton's Pond and Chickatawbut Overlook. Picnic sites at Houghton's Pond are in great demand during the summer—plan accordingly. Permits are required for groups of 25 or more persons. For group picnic site reservations at Houghton's Pond Recreation Area, visit ReserveAmerica at [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com) or call (877) 422-6762.

**ROCK CLIMB** at the Quincy Quarries Historic Site on Ricciuti Drive in Quincy. Proper safety equipment is required.



Enjoying the view from Eliot Tower

**SCENIC VIEWING** from the Eliot Memorial Observation Tower atop Great Blue Hill is outstanding. The tower boasts a panoramic view of Boston and the surrounding area, accessible via the hiking and biking trails. Chickatawbut Overlook on Chickatawbut Road features a striking view of the Boston skyline; the area is accessible by car, with a parking area and picnic tables.

quarried in the Blue Hills have been found at sites throughout Massachusetts. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is named in honor of these first people of the hills.



CHARLES ELIOT & THE PARKS SYSTEM

Visionary landscape architect Charles Eliot was a major force behind the creation of the Blue Hills Reservation, one of the first acquisitions of the new Metropolitan Parks System in 1893. Eliot's idea was to set aside beachfront by the bay, land along the Charles, Mystic, and Neponset Rivers, and high ground throughout the Boston metropolitan area. Today, this regional park system has grown statewide to include more than 450,000 acres of open space across Massachusetts, a legacy we must protect and preserve. Enjoy a panoramic view of the Boston skyline from the Eliot Memorial Observation Tower atop Great Blue Hill and offer thanks to one of the founding fathers of the Metropolitan Parks System, who "sought out hill, forest, shore for all to enjoy."



Charles Eliot, c. 1892 (1859–1897)

*"...crowded populations, if they would live in health and happiness, must have space for air, for light, for exercise, for rest, and for the enjoyment of that peaceful beauty of nature which...is so wonderfully refreshing to the tired souls of townspeople."*

—CHARLES ELIOT

*Report of the Board of Metropolitan Park Commissioners, January 1893*



**SKI (CROSS-COUNTRY)** or snowshoe on trails throughout the reservation when there is sufficient snow cover. A free *Cross-Country Ski Routes* brochure is available at the Reservation Headquarters.

**SKI (DOWNHILL)** or snowboard at the William F. Rogers Ski Area on Great Blue Hill on Route 138 in Canton. Equipment rentals and instructional classes are available. Visit [www.bluehillsboston.com](http://www.bluehillsboston.com) or call (781) 828-5070.

**SWIM** at Houghton's Pond beach with DCR lifeguard supervision during the summer season. The pond and picnic areas are very popular, especially on weekends. Parking is limited; ride sharing is encouraged. Seasonal restrooms, outdoor showers, and changing stalls are provided.



**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 information, call (617) 698-1802.

**YMCA CAMP** at Ponkapoag Outdoor Center hosts a children's summer camp located near Ponkapoag Bog. Camp facilities include a lodge, outdoor swimming pool, pavilions, and activity fields. Visit [www.ymcaboston.org](http://www.ymcaboston.org) or call (781) 575-9905.

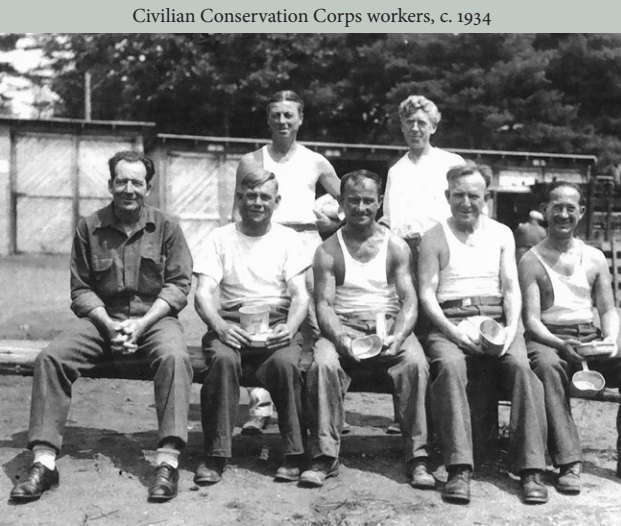


Eliot Tower construction, 1937

ROOSEVELT'S TREE ARMY

In 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced the creation of an emergency conservation work program, which became known as the Civilian Conservation Corps or CCC. This program was designed to provide employment for many young men who were out of work, and to improve the country's forest and recreational resources.

Here in the Blue Hills, the Civilian Conservation Corps lived and labored from 1933 to 1937, adding two stone observation towers, ski runs at Great Blue Hill, miles of trails, and numerous other features to the reservation. Nature is rapidly overtaking the concrete foundations and remains of the CCC camp located east of Randolph Avenue, but the good works live on, a testament to sweat and stone.



Civilian Conservation Corps workers, c. 1934

A Precious Resource...

We ask that you extend special respect to the parkland:

- Keep pets leashed at all times and remove all pet waste.
- Stay on marked trails for your own safety, and to avoid disturbing sensitive habitats and wildlife.
- Leave no trace. Carry out all that you carry in.
- Leave plants and animals undisturbed.
- Note that all rare species are protected under state law from any harm, removal, or harassment.

GO GREEN TO THE BLUE HILLS!

**Public transportation and ride sharing are strongly encouraged. Public parking is limited—expect heavy use, especially on weekends, and plan accordingly.**

The Blue Hills Reservation is serviced by three main MBTA bus lines. Schedules vary. For more information, visit [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com) or call the MBTA at (800) 392-6100.

- **West Area** (Trailside Museum, Blue Hills Ski Area, Great Blue Hill, and Houghton's Pond): Take the Mattapan Station–Cobbs Corner (Canton) bus, Route 716 (this route has an unusual schedule—see website)
- **Central Area** (Chickatawbut Overlook): Take the Ashmont Station–Avon Square bus, Route 240
- **East Area** (St. Moritz Ponds and Shea Rink): Take the Quincy Center–Holbrook/Randolph bus, Route 238

Important Contacts:

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

DCR 24-hour Radio Dispatch: (508) 820-1428

Blue Hills Trailside Museum: (617) 333-0690

Comments and concerns: please contact DCR Community Relations at [mass.parks@mass.gov](mailto:mass.parks@mass.gov) or call (617) 626-4973

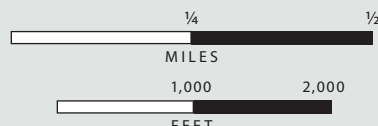
For accessibility details, call DCR at (617) 698-1802

Check DCR website for updates: [www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr)

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



# BLUE HILLS RESERVATION



SCALE 1:16,800  
1 INCH = 1,400 FEET

PROJECTION: MASSACHUSETTS STATE PLANE NAD83 METERS

## RULES AND REGULATIONS

Park open dawn to dusk.

For the protection and enjoyment of the Blue Hills, the following are prohibited:

- Littering
- Open fires
- Metal detectors
- Alcoholic beverages
- Pets, except on a leash
- Hunting or trapping
- Posting or distributing leaflets
- Camping, except at AMC Camp with permit
- Motorized vehicles, except on public roads
- Disruptive conduct, including public nudity
- Group use of 25 or more, except with a DCR permit
- Destruction or removal of vegetation, animals, structures, artifacts, or other State property

In addition, the following activities are allowed in designated areas only:

- Parking
- Sporting activities
- Mountain bicycling
- Charcoal grills or fuel stoves
- Non-motorized boating at Ponkapoag Pond
- Swimming at Houghton's Pond with lifeguard supervision

All visitors must follow directions of park personnel or police. Any violations of these regulations may result in arrest and/or fine per order of 302 Commonwealth of Massachusetts Regulations 12.00.

## LEGEND

Blue Hills Reservation has over 120 miles of trails, including 40+ miles of recommended color-coded routes for easier navigation. These trails are blazed with painted markings that correspond to the map symbols listed to the right.

	Reservoir Headquarters		Stream
	Restroom (year-round, seasonal)		Intermittent Stream
	Parking Area (large, small)		Pond
	Swimming (seasonal)		Wetland
	Snack Bar, Picnic Area		Elevation Contours (20 foot interval)
	Playground		Hilltop (with elevation)
	Skating Rink		Town Boundary
	Canoe Launch		Blue Hills Reservation
	Tennis, Basketball		Other State Parkland
	Athletic Field/Court		
	Building Footprint (within reservation)		
	State Police		
	Train Station		
	MBTA Bus Stop		

## RESERVATION ROADS AND TRAILS

	Narrow Trail		Paved Path
	Wide Trail		Bicycle Path
	Unpaved Road		Boardwalk
	Paved Road		Bridge

## INTERSECTION NUMBERS

The four-digit numbers seen on the map indicate trail intersections. Look for the small white signs with black numbers on trees or posts along trails. Find the corresponding number on the map to determine your location.



STAY ON DCR-DESIGNATED TRAILS FOR SAFETY AND RESOURCE PROTECTION.

## SKYLINE

The Skyline Trail crosses the length of the reservation and is marked with blue rectangular blazes. The trail climbs many of the peaks of the Blue Hills range, offering spectacular views over steep and rugged terrain.

There are two ways to explore the Skyline Trail:

Skyline Traverse travels an east-west route across the Blue Hills range. This is the longest and most challenging hike in the park, with steep and rocky terrain. This is not a loop trail so plan your transportation back to your starting point.

Skyline Loop Trail is a popular sampling of the Skyline Trail. It links the north and south branches of the Skyline Trail between the Reservation Headquarters and Elliot Observation Tower atop Great Blue Hill. This challenging route summits five hillsops over steep, rocky terrain. Follow the blue blazes from the headquarters, heading west toward Great Blue Hill.

## LOOP TRAILS

Loop trails are marked with dots. They begin and end at the same point, at designated parking areas as marked on the map.

**Yellow Dot Loops**  
0.6-1 mile · 1 hour · easy  
Yellow dots mark short loops which enable you to enjoy parts of the reservation in a small amount of time.

**Green Dot Loops**  
2.7-4.25 miles · 2-2.25 hours · moderate  
Green dots mark several woodland loops which allow you to enjoy the natural beauty of the reservation.

**Red Dot Loops**  
1.3-3.8 miles · 1-2.25 hours · challenging  
Red dots mark rugged, rocky loops over hilly terrain providing a more challenging hike.

## DIRECTIONAL LOOPS

Directional loop trails are marked with triangles, and both loops begin and end at the Houghton's Pond main parking lot. These are designed as rolling routes for a fun mountain bike ride or long woodland hike. The trails are marked in one direction only and are to be followed counterclockwise.

**Forest Path Loop**  
6 miles · moderate  
White triangles mark this rambling loop in the Houghton's Pond section. It offers a long woodland hike or novice-to-intermediate mountain bike ride.

**Breakneck Ledge Loop**  
4.5 miles · challenging  
Yellow triangles mark this hilly loop in the Great Blue Hill section. It provides a rocky, rugged experience for the advanced mountain biker or avid hiker.

NOTE: MAP INK COLORS MAY FADE WHEN EXPOSED TO SUNLIGHT. PRINTED WITH SOY INK ON RECYCLED PAPER.