Gilmore Trail

Tolland State Forest

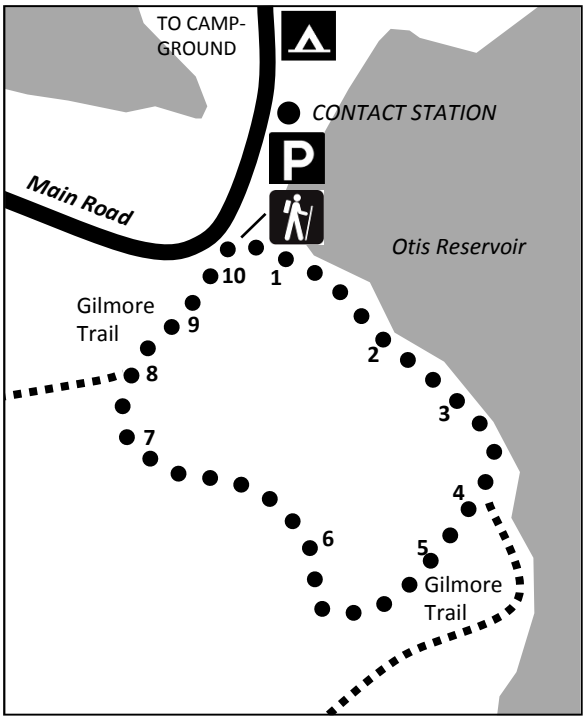
dcr
Massachusetts

SELF-GUIDED IINTERPRETIVE TRAIL

WELCOME to Tolland State Forest managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. This 15,000 acre forest is located within the towns of Otis, Tolland, Blandford and Sandisfield.

Interpretive stations are found on numbered posts along the trail which correspond with this guide. Pick up a park trail map at the headquarters if you choose to hike any of the other trails.

*Please remember to **carry-in, carry-out** all your belongings, including trash. Please leave no trace of your visit, and leave all that you find in its natural environment for all to enjoy. Thank you.*



*Gilmore Trail begins at the end of the parking lot near the contact station. Route length is **0.55 miles**. Hike is **easy** with little elevation change. Footing may be wet and uneven in places. Plan on **30 minutes** hiking at a moderate pace. Follow the **blue blazes** and trail signs.*

This now dense forest was mostly cleared throughout the 1800s for farming and grazing. With a keen eye you may find evidence, such as stonewalls, that this was once an open landscape. Agriculture and harvesting wood products provided a living for earlier residents. Fields of rye and oats, potatoes and corn, and orchards covered the landscape. Timber was cut into profitable lumber in mills along the many streams. Nature has since reclaimed much of this former landscape.

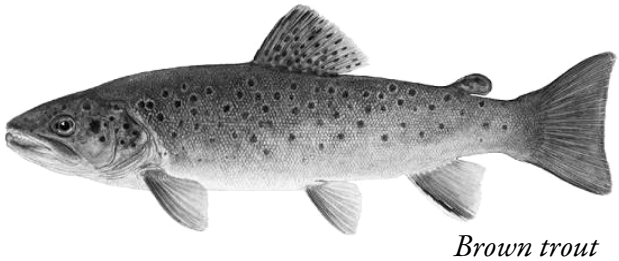
1) CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC). The CCC was a New Deal Federal government conservation program to alleviate unemployment during the Great Depression, from 1933-1942. The CCC improved the nation's natural and human resources and also created opportunities for the public to recreate and appreciate a healthy outdoor experience. At Tolland 'Pinecone Johnnies' built access roads, bridges, trails, the peninsula campground, beach, picnic area and parking lot. Visit the beach and see the bathhouse they built in 1939.

2) OTIS RESERVOIR is the largest body of water for recreational use in Western Massachusetts. About 1867 the Farmington River Water Power Company built a dam and flooded over the existing

Rand, Little and Messenger Ponds to create the present reservoir to help power the Collins & Company tool manufactory (1826-1966), downstream in Canton, CT. Tolland State Forest was created in 1925 and expanded with acquired abandoned and cut-over forests over the next 20 years. In 1966 the state purchased the 1,065 acre reservoir and surrounding land which were added to the state forest which now manages Otis Reservoir.

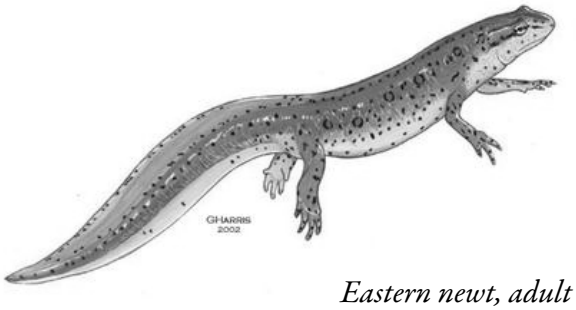
3) NORTHERN HARDWOOD FOREST. You are standing in a northern hardwood forest. Tree species forming the canopy in this forest include: eastern hemlock, American beech, white ash, white pine, red and sugar maples and paper, grey, black and yellow birches. Understory plants include hobblebush, striped maple, partridgeberry, wintergreen and various ferns. Trees that were once abundant here during early settlement included American chestnut and walnut.

4) FISH. Otis Reservoir is a popular fishing spot. Some of the fish found here include trout, bass, salmon and tiger muskellunge (stocked), along with perches, pickerel, and sunfish. Anyone 15 years or older must have a valid Massachusetts fishing license to fish.



Brown trout

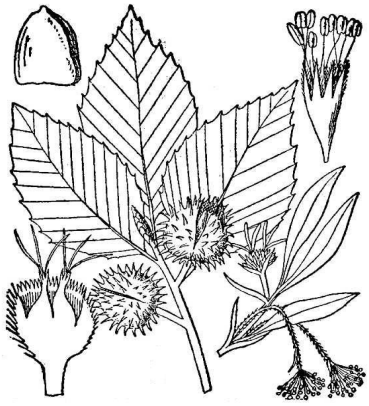
5) DECOMPOSTION. Along the trail notice the dead trees in various stages of decay. Decomposition is a gradual process of returning nutrients to the soil. Many plants and animals are involved in the process. To begin, insects tunnel in to the live tree leaving paths that moisture, air and fungi can enter. Eventually, the tree weakens, dies and falls. On the ground, fungi and bacteria inhabit the moist log while spiders and insects favor the drier parts. Mosses and a other plants take hold in and on the surface of the decaying log. Salamanders and centipedes find new places to live in and under the log. By about ten years, the log has broken down and resembles the soil in the forest.



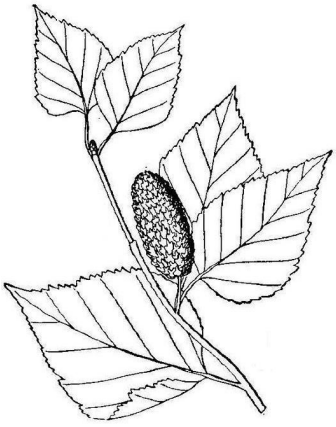
Eastern newt, adult

6) EASTERN NEWTS may be found along the trail in the summer. Look for these bright orange amphibians in the morning or when it is damp. Young Eastern or Red-spotted Newts are called *red efts*. The bright orange color warns predators that the eft is toxic and not to eat it. Hatched from eggs in water these terrestrial efts can wander the forest for up to nine years before returning to water to breed as olive-skinned adult salamanders.

7) BEECH AND BIRCH. Notice the smooth gray bark of the American beech *(Fagus grandifolia)* trees alongside the lone paper birch *(Betula pa-*



American beech



Paper birch

pyrifera). These trees grow in upland areas with moist soils. Native Americans used birches for light-weight canoes. Today, birch lumber is used to make furniture, toothpicks and spools.

8) STONE WALLS. Early settlers who farmed the land here used these stone walls as livestock fencing as well as property boundaries. Remnants of stone walls may be seen throughout New England and are often used by chipmunks and snakes as homes.

The stone located along the trail between stops #7 and #8 are perhaps the remains of an old mill near this site. Please walk carefully around them.

9) FOREST ANIMALS. Over the past 100 years and more, the New England landscape has gone from one that was mostly cleared for agriculture to a landscape that is now mostly forested. Within the state forest and adjacent lands live a variety of animals: black bear, bobcat, coyote, fisher, white-tailed deer, red and gray fox, gray squirrel, porcupine, otter, raccoon, beaver, muskrat and mink. You may see ruffed grouse or wild turkey too.



Mink



Mountain laurel

10) MOUNTAIN LAUREL *kalmia latifolia* is an evergreen shrub that blooms from May to July and fills the woods with beautiful clusters of pink and white flowers. The plant is not edible for either people or wildlife.

Continue to the end of the loop trail at the parking lot. We hope your visit was pleasant and come back to explore Tolland State Forest again. Please return this brochure unless you choose to keep it.

Gilmore Trail is a *Healthy Heart Trail* to promote healthy outdoor recreation, also found at many DCR parks state-wide.

TOLLAND STATE FOREST
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dcr Healthy Trail

UPDATED 3/2012