Winter Woodlands Wanderings

DCR South Region

TRIP-TIP SELF-GUIDED ADVENTURE

Welcome

Explore Borderland State Park, Bristol Blake State Reservation and F. Gilbert Hills State Forest this season. This DCR Trip-Tip self guided adventure features three parks within 20 minute driving time of one another in the Norfolk County area. Experience diverse woodlands and the wildlife that live in these forests featuring:

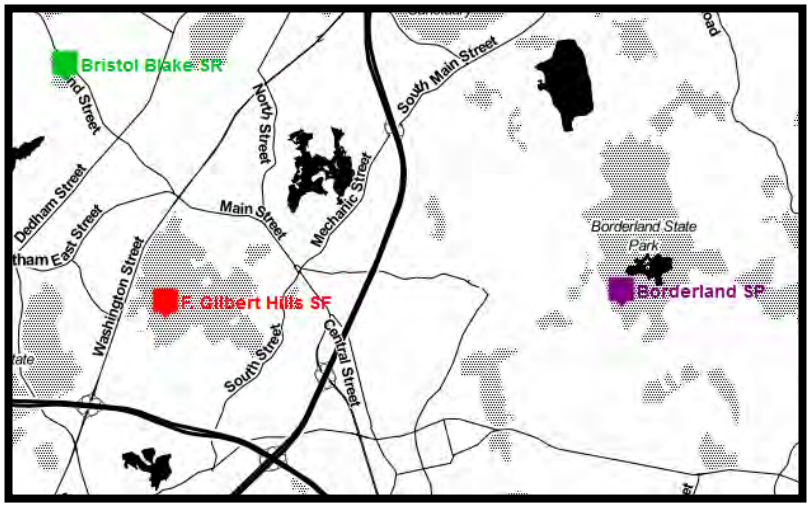
Tree Identification Challenge at Borderland State Park in Easton

Wildlife Detective Walk at Bristol Blake State Reservation in Norfolk

Discovering the Past at F. Gilbert Hills State Forest in Foxboro

Trip-Tips give you information and some fun ideas to explore the great outdoors at DCR Massachusetts State Park and Watersheds. With a little preparation and a sense of adventure, people of all ages can safely enjoy our outdoor spaces during our coldest months.

Look through this guide to help plan your outing. Choose one park, two parks, or make it a multi-day adventure. Visit them in any order, you decide. Challenge yourself to visit all the parks with your family during February Vacation Week, or anytime this winter. We hope you enjoy this Trip-Tip tour.



Share Your Adventure!

Share your Trip-Tip adventure with others through word of mouth, or on social media using the hashtags **#massdcr** and **#dcrtriptip**.

Things To Know, Before You Go

Please follow all rules and regulations posted at each park. Be a good steward of our parks by leaving no trace. Dress for the weather and limit your exposure to low temperatures.
Remember, at all DCR parks:

- Carry-in, carry-out all of your belongings, including trash.
- Stay on designated trails.
- All pets on 10-foot maximum leash, attended to at all times. Clean-up after your pet and

dispose of waste off-site. No pets are allowed at Bristol Blake State Reservation.

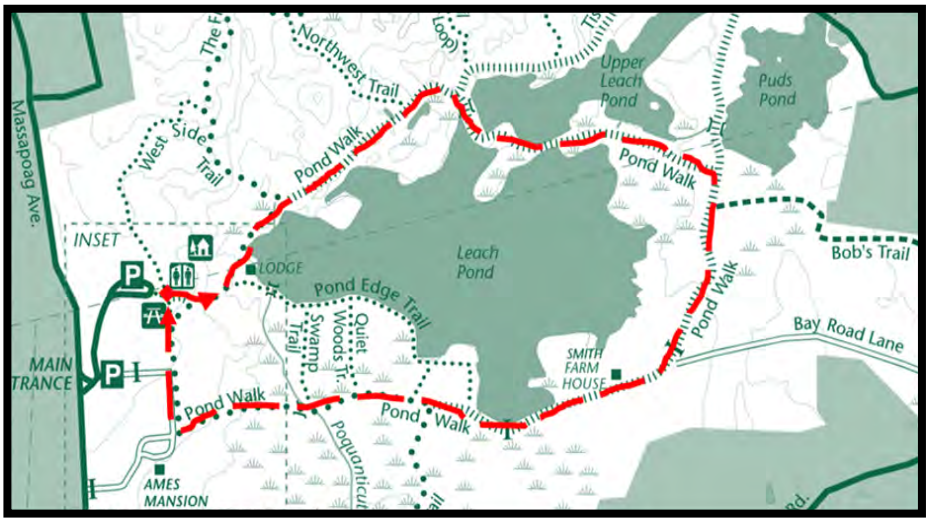
- Observe all posted rules and regulations.
- Be aware of hunting seasons and wear blaze orange when appropriate.

Tree Identification Challenge
Borderland State Park

259 Massapoag Avenue, North Easton, MA 02356
Phone: 508-238-6566
Website: https://www.mass.gov/locations/borderland-state-park
Hours of Operation: Winter Hours, 8:00am-4:00pm
Parking Fees: $5 for MA vehicles / $20 for out of state vehicles
Restrooms: No public restroom access at this time due to COVID restrictions.

Borderland State Park is one of the most historically significant tracks of land managed by DCR. Once old farm lands, the Ames family purchased the land in 1906, creating a nature preserve for their children and future generations to enjoy and, over time, the forest reclaimed most of the farmland. Oakes Ames was a Harvard botanist and his wife Blanche was an artist and botanical illustrator. Explore Borderland and be inspired by nature as the Ames family was so many years ago.

Go on a tree hunt and discover the different trees that make up the woodlands at Borderland. Hike the 3-mile Pond Walk Loop and try to identify different tree species for the Tree Hunt. Begin at the visitor center which is next to the main parking lot. Have your trail map handy, and follow the sign to the "Lodge." The Pond Walk Loop used to be a carriage road; therefore the trail is wide. Keep the Lodge on your right hand side and continue until you encounter a wooden bridge. Cross over the bridge and continue until the path splits, bearing to the right. You will then go through a field and come upon a farm house, continue right. Follow the path until you arrive near the stone Ames Mansion; take one last right to lead you back to the visitor center. Plan to spend at least 90 minutes outside. Bring along a nature journal, something to write with and a tree field guide. Have fun!



Pond Walk Tree Hunt

Learn how to identify trees in the winter! On this Tree Hunt you are encouraged to find the six listed species of trees. All six can be found on the Pond Walk; but be adventurous and try to identify some more on your own. As Oakes or Blanche Ames would have done, write and draw what you see along your journey in your nature journal. Do a bark rubbing! Place a piece of paper on the tree and with a crayon rub the bark through the paper, creating a unique rubbing. Please no collecting items for your journal, leave nature alone so others can enjoy.

No leaves? No problem! Deciduous trees lose leaves in the fall, so winter tree identification can be a little tricky. Here are three easy ways to identify trees in the winter:

- Study the bark of the tree.
- Examine the characteristics of a twig on a tree, specifically the bud at the end of a branch.
- No snow cover? Examine clues on the ground such as fallen leaves to help identify the tree.
- Coniferous trees, also called evergreen trees, are a little easier to identify since they stay green throughout the winter. These trees include pines, hemlocks, spruces, cedars, and more.

The six species of trees to find on this hunt are:



Shagbark Hickory

- *Bark: long curling strips, looks "shaggy"*
- *Height: avg.60-80 feet*
- *Habitat: bottomlands, rocky hillsides in mixed woods*



Atlantic White Cedar

- *Bark: reddish-brown in long loose strips; looks shredded*
- *Height: avg. 60 feet*
- *Habitat: swamps and bogs*



Yellow Birch

- *Bark: mature trees are reddish-brown, peeling in thin papery strips to scaly plates*
- *Height: avg. 80 feet*
- *Habitat: mixed woods, woodland edges*



Eastern White Pine

- *Bark: blackish-gray scaly*
- *Height: avg. 80-100 feet*
- *Habitat: sandy soil, rocky slopes & swamps*
- *Note: 5 needles to a bundle*



Gray Birch

- *Bark: mature trees are grayish-white with many horizontal lines*
- *Height: avg. 30 feet*
- *Habitat: clearings, trail and roadsides*



American Beech

- *Bark: smooth, light gray*
- *Height: avg. 80 feet*
- *Habitat: uplands & well drained lowlands*
- *Note: tend to hold onto their leaves longer than most deciduous trees*

Extend Your Experience!

Oakes Ames was a Harvard botanist who enjoyed planting more ornate trees, shrubs and flowers around their home. Walk around the Ames mansion and you will find some planted ornamental trees, which you will not find in the woods. Using a field guide or a smartphone application, try to identify these ornamental trees and make sure to write and draw them in your nature journal. Some ornamental trees you may find include American Holly, Cherry, Sweet Gum, Yew, Crabapple, and Yellow Popular.

Did you know that there is an ornamental tree named *Malus 'Blanche Ames'* or Blanche Ames Crabapple? At Borderland, a Malus *'Blanche Ames'* was planted in 2020. For more information about this tree visit: http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/1991-51-1-the-shy-yet-elegant-crabapple-blanche-ames.pdf

How many trees did you identify? Share your adventure on social media using the hashtags **#massdcr** and **#dcrtriptip**.

Wildlife Detective Walk
Bristol Blake State Reservation

108 North Street, Norfolk, MA 02056
Phone: (508) 528-3140
Website: https://www.mass.gov/locations/bristol-blake-state-reservation
Hours of Operation: Sunrise to sunset
Parking Fees: No parking fee. Donations are suggested for Mass Audubon.
Restrooms: No public restroom access at this time due to COVID restrictions.
Note: No pets are allowed.

Bristol Blake State Reservation encompasses 140 acres of ponds, marshes and woodlands managed by DCR. Mass Audubon assists DCR and operates the Stony Brook Nature Center. Walk the half mile Pond Loop, traveling through a variety of habitats along level terrain. Enjoy the varied sights and sounds from field to forest to wetland. Take your time, and move quietly. You might observe a muskrat, mink, or otter dart through the underbrush and into the pond.

Pond Loop and Wildlife Spotting



For the hike, pass the nature center and begin your journey by starting on the Sensory Trail. Continue over a wooden bridge. The path will split, the Pond Loop will continue to the right (indicated by only the red on the map), but if you are adventurous, continue straight on the boardwalk to the Beech Grove Loop (indicated in yellow on the map), this will loop you back to the split. After you finished the Beech Grove Loop and step off the boardwalk, turn left and continue on the Pond Loop. Follow this well-maintained trail back to the nature center. Plan to spend at least 45 minutes on this trip. Remember not to disturb the wildlife.

Bring along a nature journal, binoculars and a camera for this adventure. You will be walking through various habitats and might see some wildlife. Make sure to use your detective skills to find evidence of wildlife—such as tracks in the mud or snow, stripped pine cones where a squirrel may have snacked, or gnawed tree trunks that tells you a beaver has visited. In your nature journal, draw what you see and write about what you hear and possibly even smell.



To help identify animal tracks, download MassWildlife Pocket Guide to Animal Tracks: https://www.mass.gov/doc/identify-animal-tracks/download

How many different species of wildlife can you find? Capture your experience by taking pictures and share it on social media using the hashtags **#massdcr** and **#dcrtriptips**.

Discovering the Past
F. Gilbert Hills State Forest

45 Mill Street, Foxborough, MA 02035
Phone: 508-543-9048
Website: https://www.mass.gov/locations/f-gilbert-hills-state-forest
Hours of Operation: Sunrise to sunset
Parking Fees: No parking fees
Restrooms: No public restroom access at this time due to COVID restrictions.

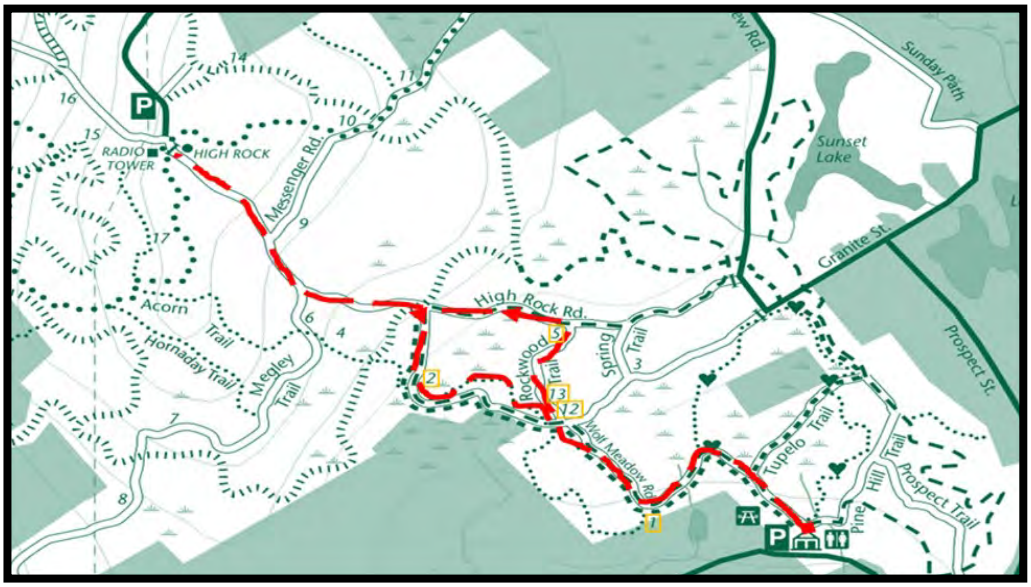
Go beyond the natural beauty of F. Gilbert Hills State Forest and unearth the stories of the land. Once a camp for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), F. Gilbert Hills State Forest now encompasses over 1,000 acres of protected land for you to discover and enjoy. Explore a 3-mile round trip hike from the Park Headquarters to High Rock while looking for clues of the past.

On this moderate 3-mile hike to High Rock, you will pass various water hole structures that were built for forest fire suppression by the CCC in the 1930's. As stewards of the land, the CCC promoted forest diversity and health through fire prevention.

Park at the Park Headquarters at 45 Mill Street in Foxborough. Stop by the kiosk at the trail head which is at the back of the parking lot between the two red buildings. Next to the kiosk, you will find an interpretive sign about the history of the CCC. Take a look! Before you hit the trail, make sure you download a trail map and notice the small numbers (1-17) that list CCC water hole structures. On this hike, you will be passing water holes 1, 12, 13, 5 & 2.

History & Hike to High Rock

From the headquarters, start on Wolf Meadow Road and follow this trail until you get to an intersection with Rockwood Trail (at water hole #12). Stay straight on Rockwood Trail until you hit the intersection with High Rock Road (at water hole #5). Turn left onto High Rock Road and stay straight, uphill until you reach High Rock. This is a beautiful place to rest, explore, and have a snack. Continue back down High Rock Road until you come to the intersection of Wolf Meadow Road. Turn right onto Wolf Meadow Road until you get to the Acorn Trail near water hole #2. Turn left onto the Acorn Trail and stay on the Acorn Trail until you reach water hole #12. At water hole #12, bear right onto Wolf Meadow and stay on it until you reach the headquarters. Plan to spend approximately two hours on this trip. Please respect the CCC legacy and stay safe near the water holes; no climbing or removing stones.
Along your hike, you will pass 5 water holes (#1, 12, 13, 5 & 2). Stop at each of these water holes and try to answer the following questions:





- Why did the CCC build so many water holes in this forest?
- What tools do you think they used to build these water holes in the 1930's?
- What do you think happens to the water level during a drought?

Capture your experience by taking a picture in front of each water hole you find and share your pictures on social media using the hashtags **#massdcr** and **#dcrtriptips**.



Extend Your Experience!

For a nice 30-minute adventure, explore Pine Hills Trail and Tupelo Trail on a 1-mile hike. Start at headquarters and head towards the Pine Hill Trailhead. Along the Pine Hill Trail you will find another structure built by the CCC. Look for clues to figure out what this structure was used for. Continue until the trail meets Tupelo Trail and bear left. Continue to the end of Tupelo Trail where it meets Wolf Meadow Road. At this intersection, look at the trees around you. You will notice most of the trees are Norway spruce. These trees were planted by the CCC in the 1930s. Take a left onto Wolf Meadow Road, which will lead you back to the headquarters.

Thank you for joining us for this Winter Woodland Wanderings Trip-Tip! Now that you have experienced some of these Trip-Tip adventures, gaining a better understanding of the importance to preserve woodlands, its inhabitants and some history. With the skills you have gained identifying trees, observing wildlife, and unearthing stories from the past, on your next park visit, perhaps you will experience it a little differently. We hope that you will be invigorated to take even more Trip-Tip outdoor adventures all year long!

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The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) oversees over 450,000 acres of state parks, forests, beaches, bike trails, parkways, watershed lands, and dams across the Commonwealth. DCR's mission is to: *Protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources for the well-being of all.* For more information visit: https://www.mass.gov/orgs/department-of-conservation-recreation.

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dcr MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION