



2015 Take a Hike Series-Whittemore Sanctuary

Route 64, Middlebury

Planted by Two Adventuring Ladies

Hike time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Hike Length: 1-2 miles

Introduction:

A map of Whittemore Sanctuary and its location can be downloaded at:

http://www.flandersnaturecenter.org/flanders_places/hiking_trail_maps.html

The Take a Hike series is a set of four letterboxing trails created to continue to lure people to the family friendly properties with trails at Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust. Since we expect families to be hiking with children, we have added a checklist and included observations and information about what you might see as you hike in order to keep everyone engaged. One of the letterboxes on each trail will contain a rubber stamp for one of the letters: H, I, K or E.

Flanders has also created a passport to use when hiking the trails planted by the Two Adventuring Ladies. Anyone who hikes twelve of Flanders' letterboxing trails should go to the Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust office, present their passport with the twelve letter stamps from those trails and sign their Trail Name on our poster of Successful Flanders Letterboxers. They will receive a prize. The office is open Monday-Friday from 9 until 4.

The Flanders Passport and all the trails with hidden letter stamps can be downloaded at:

<http://www.flandersnaturecenter.org/letterboxing.html>

Dogs are allowed on the trails but must be leashed.

You may not see all the plants and animals that we mention. You will see many things that the Two Adventuring Ladies have not mentioned. The observations for the Take a Hike Series were made during the fall.

Clues:

Park in the Whittemore Sanctuary parking lot off Rte. 64.

Enter the trail to the right of the kiosk. It is marked with white blazes. Soon you will leave the white trail when you turn to the left on the trail that crosses a board walk. As you climb the hill you will begin to see blue blazes on trees.

Stop on the boardwalk and look back at the tree trunk with a wooden sign that has an arrow and says "BOG." This dead tree's trunk is called a snag or wildlife tree. It is not an unsightly blemish in the forest. It is an essential part of wildlife ecology. Snags are shelters and perches for small mammals, birds and insects. As you continue your hike, look for snags. Many of them are being eaten by insects and those insects are being eaten by woodpeckers. It is all part of the natural forest.

As you climb the hill look up into the trees on your right. The Two Adventuring Ladies and the educators walking with them saw large nests high up in those trees. We did not see the inhabitants of the nests. Perhaps you will.

As you walk, look on the ground for broken pieces of wood that have a distinctly blue green color. You are not looking for wood with mold growing on its surface. You are looking for decaying pieces of wood. The wood itself will be almost turquoise. We found some near the top of the hill. We have found other pieces on nearby trails. The blue green color is created by a fungus: *Chlorociboria aeruginascens* and its relatives. The fungus produces a pigment (xylindein) which permeates the wood. You might even be lucky enough to see the small cup-shaped bright turquoise fungus growing on a nearby tree. We did not see the fungus.

The blue-green wood is prized for its color. In fact it was used in the 14th and 15th centuries to add a greenish color to intricate artwork made of inlaid wood.

At the top of the hill you will come to what your map calls a pond. When you get there, turn left with the blue trail at the end of the pond. You will pass a picnic table on your left and benches on your right. You will come to an intersection. An unmarked trail goes to your right. The yellow trail goes straight ahead. You are to turn left with the blue trail.

Watch carefully. You will see an exposed ledge of rock on your right. At the far end of that outcropping of rock and opposite a tree with a blue blaze on your left, stop. Be patient. You will pass several trees with blue blazes on your right and on your left. Wait until you are very near the end of the rock outcropping and there is a tree with a blue blaze on your left. You will see a four sister tree (a tree with four trunks) on your right. It is off the trail near the rocks. Look in the base of that four sister tree. You will find a letterbox.

If you get to the end of the rocks on your right, back up. Look for the tree with the blue blaze. Then look for the four sister tree off the trail, at the base of the rocks.

After you stamp your logbook and our logbook, replace the letterbox with care and return to the trail. Continue in the same direction you were going. You will cross a stream with a broken metal pipe. You will probably keep your feet dry if you stay to the left as you cross.

You will come to a “you are here” sign near a tree with offset blue blazes indicating that the blue trail turns to the right. You do not take that right turn, but continue straight on the old east west road. Check your map.

You will find yourself surrounded by Mountain Laurel.

Continue on the old east west road until you come to a white arrow pointing to the left. The white trail also goes ahead of you. Turn Left.

The trail will go up and down hills. It will zig and zag to the left and right.

As you scramble down the second rocky slope with large outcroppings of rock on both sides, there will be a white pine (those evergreens with long needles in clusters of five) with a white blaze on it on your left. Actually, the blaze is only on the far side of the tree, so look carefully. Turn to your right. Go off the trail to a two or three sister tree near the end of the rocks. You will find a letterbox under a rock at the base of that tree. Be sure to stamp your passport as well as your logbook this time.

When you return to the trail, look back the way you came. On the far side of the trail, there is a tree that has done an incredible job of sending its roots around the rocks. The Two Adventuring Ladies were amazed by the tree’s ability.

Now continue in the same direction that you were going before finding the letterbox. Watch carefully. You want to stay on the white trail. It does a lot of twisting back and forth.

You will pass the orange trail twice. Just stay on the white trail and you will return to the parking lot.

As you finish the last part of this hike, notice all the young white pines. They vary from 6 inches to 6 feet tall. White pines are shade tolerant, so the young trees can grow beneath all the surrounding trees. As the forest matures, the white pine may be the tallest tree – creating too much shade for most other trees but the young white pines will continue to thrive.

You will soon see the parking lot.



CHECK LIST FOR WHITTEMORE SANCTUARY TAKE A HIKE SERIES

Did you see:

A snag

Nests high in the trees

A broken metal pipe

Mountain Laurel

Trees with crazy roots winding over rocks

Young White Pines
