

Camp Norse Conservation Trail Guide



Start the Conservation Trail by walking to the Native American Trail sign located at the Southeast corner of the Camp Norse parking lot. Then walk East 300' on that Indian Trail, where you will see a sign "The Conservation Trail begins here", with a green arrow to station #1

The Camp Norse Conservation Trail is a 2 mile trek that captures the natural and cultural recourses of camp. In sections, it follows the former boundary and blue dot trails. As you hike the trail, please reflect on your time in scouting and follow the scout oath, law, and outdoor code. It is identified by green markers affixed to trees at a height of 6'-8'. Along the trail, you will encounter eight stations that correspond to the various resources described below. The guide also includes topographic and aerial maps delineating the boundaries of the trail. Please remember to stay on the trail and leave no trace!

Share this guide with your unit and patrol. Hiking the trail and incorporating the guide will help you work toward rank and badge requirements. The conservation trail would not of been possible without the service of Tulpe Lodge, Wood Badge Course (N1-225-13-1), Sensata Day of Service, Jeffery Allie and Jon Young. If you have any questions, please contact David Paulson of the Annawon Council Conservation Committee at david.paulson.245@gmail.com.



Aerial Photograph of Camp Norse with the Conservation Trail demarcated in Green and the Reference Stations numbered in White.



History of Camp Norse (1)

Camp Norse was first purchased in 1934, totaling twenty-five acres on Darby Pond and surrounded by cranberry bogs in Plymouth. The site was known as "Camp King" and was purchased from Phillip Cole for \$2,500.00. The original entrance road was off of Plymouth Street just off of Carver St (Route 44). It crossed over the cranberry dam below the present BB Range.

In the mid 1930's the first dining hall was built; it had drop down canvas walls and had no electricity. The old camp had only 700 feet of water frontage on Darby Pond. The Waterfront area was originally located down below the dining hall. The Chief's (Scout Executive) house was also built in the 1930's at the top of the hill, now known as "Chief's Hill". The cabin burned down in the 1980's. The only other original buildings were the line cabins, built in 1939. The very first cabin was used as the camp office, check-in area and "Canteen".

In 1944 a hurricane struck camp. Hundreds of man hours were donated to clear the camp of blown down trees. One large area of blown down trees is where the present dining hall and the ball field are located.

In 1960 the camp received a bronze bell, dated 1891. Howard Fowler, Editor of The Mansfield News and former Council President, was instrumental in procuring the bell from the Mansfield Fire Department. It came from an old firehouse on West Church St in Mansfield. The bell was stolen from camp in the mid 60's. Police located the stolen bell just prior to it being melted down. The bell was finally brought back to camp. Used to signal chow, the bell was originally located down at the line cabins, close to the present Leo Yell nature building, so that Chief could walk up to it and ring the bell. When the new dining hall was built the bell was relocated to its present location.

In 1969 an additional 150 acres were purchased, including a half mile of shore line on the Southeast side of the pond. In the 1970's Lobl Island was purchased in the middle of the pond.

Over the years, the camp grew to over 350 acres. Some of the original buildings still stand, but have been modernized. Several tent sites and camping areas have Norse names, keeping with the Viking theme of the camp. The Line Cabins, overlooking Darby Pond, were originally built in the early years of Camp Norse. They were insulated, heated, and updated in the 1990's.

The original waterfront area was below our original Dining Hall, in a shallow cove of Darby Pond. The current waterfront was built in the 1960's, with help from the Magee Foundation. Several buildings were built in the 1960's - namely the current Dining Hall (remodeled and heated in the mid 1990's), the Administration Building and Trading Post, the Leif Cabin, and the Olaf Cabin. Our Camp Master's Cabin or Magee Lodge was built in 1984, with a log cabin style. Fort Magee was built in the 1990's as a themed program campsite. The Craft Cabin (renamed Kiwanis Craft Cabin in 2002) was built in the early 1990's, along with five Adirondack shelters. The Leo Yelle Nature Cabin was rebuilt from our previous Nature Cabin in the late 1990's. Our in-ground swimming pool was built in 1997, to allow summer camp swimmers a safe and consistent swim area. In the past, Darby Pond has had a rare algae bloom, rendering it temporarily unavailable for swimming use. Other additions to the camp have

included building three separate latrine/shower facilities, two of which are heated for year-round use.

Several buildings at Camp Norse have the name “Magee” on them. George Magee was a wealthy theater owner from Boston who died in the 1920’s. In his will, he left approximately \$25,000 to be invested and divided each year to Boy Scout camps throughout the state of Massachusetts. We are greatly indebted to Mr. Magee’s generosity. Recent additions to the camp thanks to the Magee and other similar foundations are brand new swimming docks and a COPE course featuring more than 11 high and low elements.

In an attempt to utilize Camp Norse more effectively during the summertime, the Southeast Massachusetts Camping Alliance (SEMCA) was created in the mid 1990’s with the former Moby Dick Council as well as Old Colony and Narragansett Councils. Cub Scouts from neighboring councils were encouraged to attend Cub Scout Resident Camp at Camp Norse, while the Boy Scouts could attend either Camp Cachalot or Camp Squanto, both nearby Boy Scout Summer Camps. While Old Colony Council is no longer included in the SEMCA agreement, many of their Cubs continue attend the summer programs at Camp Norse.

Camp Norse is also home to Tulpe Lodge, our Order of the Arrow brotherhood of honor scouts. The Lodge has been very active in making Camp Norse a quality year-round camp for all to enjoy. They supply much of the cheerful service around camp, helping set up and take down camp, work projects, etc. They recently rebuilt the Fowler Amphitheater, the John Perry Chapel, and constructed the new Tulpe Stage.

Darby Pond (2 & 3)

(2) Darby Pond is a 37 acre natural Great Pond located in Plymouth, Massachusetts. A Great Pond is defined as any pond or lake that contains more than 10 acres in its natural state. Bathymetric surveys of the pond have determined the maximum depth of the pond to be 24 feet, with an average of 13 feet. The substrate of Darby Pond is sand and pebbles. In the center of pond, there is an island known as “Lobl Island”. It was purchased in the 1970’s and was previously a private residence. The ruins of the cabin can still be seen today. Compared to the rest of the camp, it is uniquely forested by beech trees.

Darby Pond is also classified as a Coastal Plain Pond, which would have been formed during the last Ice Age by large chunks of ice breaking off the retreating glaciers and causing depressions in the ground. Global distribution of coastal plain ponds is extremely limited, and as a result so are the plants which grow abundantly on their shores. Some examples include Plymouth gentian (*Sabatia kennedyana*) and slender arrowhead (*Sagittaria teres*), which are mostly confined to Plymouth and Barnstable Counties.

The first thing you might notice about a coastal plain pond is that there are no streams flowing in and none flowing out. The water level fluctuates dramatically because there is no natural inlet or outlet. Every 5 years or so there is an exceptionally dry year, which leaves a lot of pond shore exposed. Plants that may not have been seen for years will now germinate and grow.

(3) Darby Pond is home to several rare and unique species of flora and fauna. Specifically:

Terete Arrowhead (*Sagittaria teres*) is a perennial emergent aquatic plant of the water-plantain family (Alismataceae), which grows in shallow water along the margins of coastal plain ponds. It has linear basal leaves and white flowers, which bloom from July to September.

Plymouth Gentian (*Sabatia kennedyana*) is a globally rare, showy perennial herb of the gentian family (Gentianaceae), with striking pink and yellow flowers and opposite lance-shaped leaves. It inhabits the sandy and peaty shorelines of coastal plain ponds.

Northern Red-Bellied Cooter is a federally threatened large freshwater turtle that grows to a carapace (upper shell) length of 15.7 inches. The head is dark brown with light stripes; a prominent stripe on the top of the head joins the thin lines above the eyes at the snout to form the prefrontal arrow, characteristic of this turtle. The tip of the upper jaw is notched with a tooth-like cusp on either side.

Bridal Shiner, a small minnow, is a 28-40 mm in length and has large eyes. It is slim, sometimes deep-bodied. The dorsal fin origin is above the front half of the pelvic fin base. There is a black side stripe that circles the snout and extends onto the tail fin base. Its back, lower side, and belly are straw colored with silver flecks.

Darby Pond is also home to great a fisheries which provides ample opportunities for anglers. The following fish species have been identified in the pond - in some cases, certain species were stocked by the state:

White Perch, Yellow Perch, Brown Bullhead, Bluegills, Chain Pickerel, Small Mouth Bass, Large Mouth Bass, Golden Shiner, Pumpkinseed, Red-finned Pickerel, Banded Sunfish, American Eel, Darters, and various Minnow species.

During the spring and summer it is common to hear coursing pickerels, green frogs, and bullfrogs along the shoreline. Other wildlife you may find in and around Darby Pond include the common snapping turtle, musk turtle, painted turtle, northern water snake, great blue heron, mallard duck, wood duck, and various other waterfowl.

Cranberry Bogs (4)

Cranberry Bogs have been associated with Darby Pond before Camp Norse was established along its shores. There was a time in which the camp actually owned and harvested the bogs. In addition, the importance of cranberries can be seen throughout our council (Fall Cranborees and the famous Cran-a-Scout).

The cranberry, along with the blueberry and Concord grape, is one of North America's three native fruits that are commercially grown. Cranberries were first used by Native Americans, who discovered the wild berry's versatility as a food, fabric dye and healing agent. Today, cranberries are commercially grown throughout the northern part of the United States and are available in both fresh and processed forms.

The name "cranberry" is derived from the Pilgrim name for the fruit, "craneberry", so called because the small pink blossoms that appear in the spring resemble the head and bill of a Sandhill crane. European settlers adopted the Native American uses for the fruit and found the berry a valuable bartering tool.

The cranberry helped sustain Americans for hundreds of years. Native Americans used cranberries in a variety of foods, the most popular of which was pemmican - a high protein combination of crushed cranberries, dried deer meat and melted fat. It was also used as a medicine to treat arrow wounds and as a dye for rugs and blankets.

Cultivation of the cranberry began around 1816, shortly after Captain Henry Hall, of Dennis, Massachusetts, noticed that the wild cranberries in his bogs grew better when sand blew over them. Captain Hall began transplanting his cranberry vines, fencing them in, and spreading sand on them himself. When others heard of Hall's technique, it was quickly copied. Continuing throughout the 19th century, the number of growers increased steadily.

Cranberries are a unique fruit. They can only grow and survive under a very special combination of factors: they require an acid peat soil, an adequate fresh water supply, sand, and a growing season that stretches from April to November, including a dormancy period in the winter months that provides an extended chilling period necessary to mature fruiting buds.

Contrary to popular belief, cranberries do not grow in water. Instead, they grow on vines in impermeable beds layered with sand, peat, gravel, and clay. These beds, commonly known as "bogs," were originally made by glacial deposits.

Normally, growers do not have to replant since an undamaged cranberry vine will survive indefinitely. Some vines in Massachusetts are more than 150 years old.

Vernal Pools (5)

Another unique wetland type that was formed by the glaciers within the boundaries of Camp Norse are vernal pools. A cluster of pools can be found behind the ball field and chapel.

A vernal pool is a contained basin depression lacking a permanent above-ground outlet. Many vernal pools in the Northeast are covered with ice in the winter months. They contain water for a few months in the spring and early summer. By late summer, a vernal pool is generally (but not always) dry. Below are views of the same pool at three different times of the year.

A vernal pool, because of its periodic drying, does not support breeding populations of fish. Many organisms have evolved to use temporary wetlands, where they are not in danger of being eaten by fish. These organisms are the "obligate" vernal pool species, so called because they must use a vernal pool for various parts of their life cycle. In New England, the easily recognizable obligate species are the fairy shrimp, the mole salamanders, and the wood frog. Two species of obligate vernal species that can be found at Camp Norse are the wood frog and

spotted salamander. Other species present at Camp Norse that may utilize vernal pools are American toads, grey tree frogs, and spotted turtles.

Wood frogs are an amphibian species of upland forests. They venture to vernal pools in early spring to lay their eggs, and then return to the moist woodland for the remainder of the year. The tadpoles develop in the pool and eventually follow the adults to adjacent uplands. The evidence of breeding by wood frogs (chorusing or mating adults, egg masses or tadpoles) indicates that a pool is a vernal pool.

Spotted Salamanders - a type of mole salamander - are also upland organisms. They spend most of their lives in burrows on the forest floor. Annually, on certain rainy nights, they migrate to ancestral vernal pools to mate and lay their eggs. They soon return to the upland. The eggs develop in the pool and, by the time the pool dries, the young emerge to begin their life as a terrestrial animal. Evidence that mole salamanders breed in an area makes that water body a vernal pool. Breeding evidence would be a breeding congress, spermatophores, egg masses or larvae.

The Woodlands of Camp (6)

The dominant vegetative cover type found at camp is eastern white pine. In addition to white pine, northern red oak and white oak can be found in the forest canopy. This forest type also occurs in southern and central New England to elevations of 1,500 feet, generally on deep, well-drained soils. Once again, the glaciers formed the landscape of Camp Norse by depositing soils consisting of sand, gravel, and fine loam. Tree species found in the understory of camp are beech, black cherry, birch, maple, aspen, sassafras, and pitch pine. Other plants found in the understory are blueberry, huckleberry, common lady slipper, azalea, mountain laurel, baptisia, and holly.

As you explore the woodland portions of the trail, keep an eye out for wildlife. Here is a brief list of the species that you may encounter on your trek: eastern box turtle (state protected), garter snake, ribbon snake, eastern black racer, milk snake, red-bellied snake, ringed neck snake, American toad, white tailed deer, eastern coyote, red & grey foxes, raccoon, skunk, opossum, red, grey & flying squirrels, chipmunks, wood chucks, fisher, bats, cottontail, moles, voles, mice, ruffed grouse, turkey, black-capped chickadee, tufted titmouse, nuthatch, dark-eyed junco, finches, blue jay, American crow, northern flicker, downy woodpecker, barred owl, screech owl, great horned owl, mourning dove, red-tailed hawk, cooper's hawk, cedar waxwing, eastern towhee, northern cardinal, vireos, phoebes, and various sparrow species.

Power Lines and Early Successional Habitat (7)

As you walk along the trail within the forest edge of the power lines, you will notice that the vegetation is managed in a shrubby state. This area is rich with sandy soils, grasses, forbs, and shrubs. This is very different from the wooded landscape of camp. While the vegetation is managed for the safety of the power lines, it also provides great early successional habitat for wildlife and increased habitat diversity. The corridors can be used by wildlife as travel lanes between isolated patches of suitable habitats, increase the amount of early successional habitat

available to species, and much more. In the spring and summer listen for the unique calls of the woodcock (Peent), eastern whip-poor-will (chanted whip-poor-will) and prairie warbler (Zee- zee-zee). In addition, look for wildlife tracks in the sandy soil. The lack of forest canopy also provides great nesting and basking sites for reptiles such as turtles and snakes.

People Tree Road (8)

As you continue on your journey from Olaf Cabin toward the parking lot, you may think you are just walking down your average camp road. In fact, it is officially named People Tree Road and it is a path that was utilized by Native Americans and the pilgrims! You are walking down a path that served as a travel route between Plymouth and Kingston. When Camp Norse was operated as a fulltime Boy Scout camp, it was tradition for campers to hike from camp to Plymouth Rock. Talk about being in the footsteps of history!

