STOP 7

The trail climbs to Rocky Ledges, the highest point in Wellesley. These ledges are among the oldest rocks in Wellesley. Precambrian granites and diorites, they were formed from molten magma several miles below the earth's surface over 600,000,000 years ago. Erosion of overlying rock by rain, ice, wind, plants, and the glacier itself have exposed them to view. A favorite climbing place for children, these rocks provide hiding places for snakes and other wild life.

Return to Stop 6 and follow the trail to the right.

STOP 8

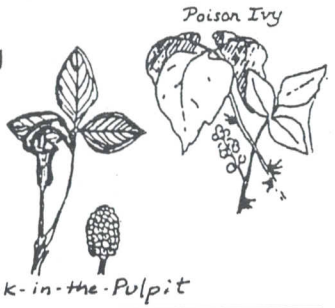
Other small glacial erratics dot the woods. Catbrier thickets provide protection for wild life. Watch for ground pine (rare, do NOT pick), an ancient plant which grew as tall as surrounding trees when dinosaurs lived. In late winter look for tiny black specks which jump. These ancient insects are called springtails and they also shared the Earth with the dinosaurs.

STOP 9

Approaching Westgate Road follow the right hand fork down and across the brook. Many woods wildflowers and ferns grow along this path and beside the brook, but do watch out for poison ivy.

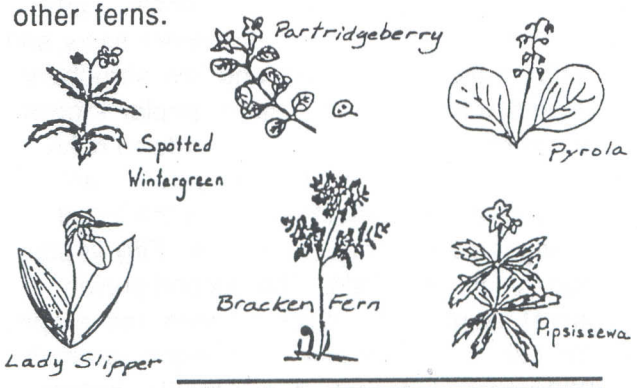
STOP 10

Sumac, a shrub commonly found in disturbed areas, lines the left of the trail, while two large vines climb trees to the right. Poison ivy vines, up to one inch thick and covered with dark brown rootlets, contrast with the stringy bark of wild grape vines climbing to reach the sun. Jack-in-the-Pulpit are nearby to be discovered by sharp eyes.



STOP 11

As the trail ascends this gentle slope, it passes through a rich and varied plant community of ground pine, partridgeberry, pyrola, pipsissewa, spotted wintergreen, lady slippers, blueberry bushes, bracken, and other ferns.

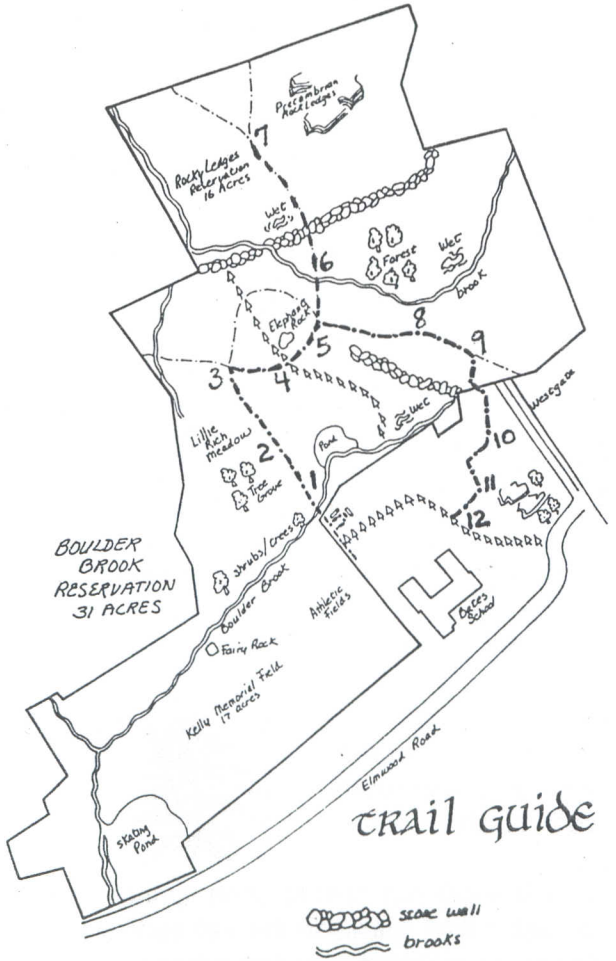


STOP 12

The trail leads finally along bedrock smoothed and polished by the glacier, and down to Bates School playground.

Bates School Nature Guide to

BOULDER BROOK RESERVATION



TRAIL GUIDE

STOP 1

Boulder Brook is one of two brooks which drain the north-west corner of Wellesley, flowing under Route 9 to Morses Pond; it is important both for recreation and the aquifer which supplies town wells.

Waterstriders are often seen skating on the brook's surface where the water is quiet. The small nature pond was dredged in 1972 for nature study at Bates School. Sediment by Boulder Brook over the years is slowly returning the pond to meadow. Watercress and other aquatic plants nearly cover the surface in summer and fall. Lovely blue flag iris brightens the pond edge in May.

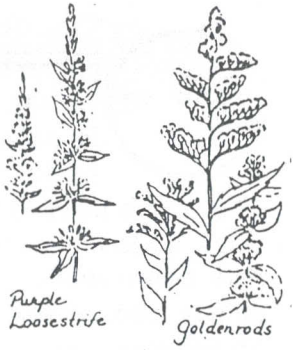
STOP 2

This very wet meadow is mowed annually to preserve open space for wildlife habitat and for our enjoyment. The wooded grove to the left of the meadow path shows the meadow as it would change if allowed to grow.

The dark brown spore stalks of the sensitive fern are conspicuous against winter snow.

This is a glorious spot to greet spring. Flocks of robins hunt worms in the wet earth and use the abundant grasses and mud for nest building in the tall evergreens. Listen for pheasants calling from nearby thickets.

The succession of bloom throughout the summer culminates in a sea of goldenrod and purple loosestrife. Despite the beauty of the purple blooms, loosestrife is an alien which is crowding out many lovely native wildflowers.

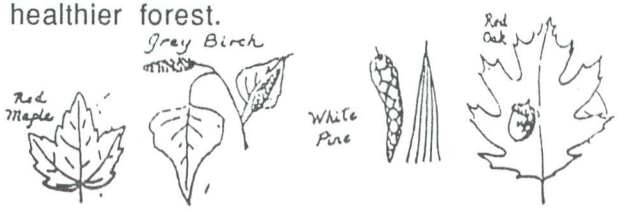


STOP 3

Continue along the meadow path to the dry upper field. Listen for birds calling and watch for colorful butterflies. The tunnels of meadow mice can be found in the summer grasses or under the winter snow, providing protection from any hawk circling overhead.

STOP 4

The forest edge is home to many birds and other animals. Look for tracks in the winter snow and rabbit trails in the grass and low shrubbery. "Nurse trees" - birch, aspen, poplar - grow in a sunny area. They create shade so oaks, maples, and other shade-loving trees can become established. Notice how the forest changes as you enter the woods. Fifty years ago this too was field. This second growth forest is primarily quick-growing red maple, red oak, and white pine. Left alone, in another 200 years white oak, sugar maple, hickory, and other trees will make this a richer, healthier forest.



STOP 5

Elephant Rock is a glacial erratic, a large boulder moved by the glacier to this spot 10,000 years ago. Since then, Native Americans hunted deer near the boulder, the cows of Boulder Brook Farm grazed in its shadow and today neighborhood children climb its steep sides.

Directly across the trail is a witch hazel shrub. In late fall look for the scraggly yellow blossoms. Exploding seed pods throw their seeds nearly 20 feet. The bark of this plant has long been used to ease muscle strain.

STOP 6

Joining the main trail, the hiker has a choice. The left fork leads over a brook lined with wild geranium in May and jewelweed all summer. Children love to touch the jewelweed seed pods and watch them explode. Notice the stone walls marking the boundary of the old farm. Several small ponds dot the woods, providing habitat for amphibians and other small woods creatures. The cheery call of spring peepers (a tiny tree frog) on late March evenings is a welcome first sign of spring.