

Benedict Pond Loop Trail

Beartown State Forest



SELF-GUIDED INTERPRETIVE TRAIL

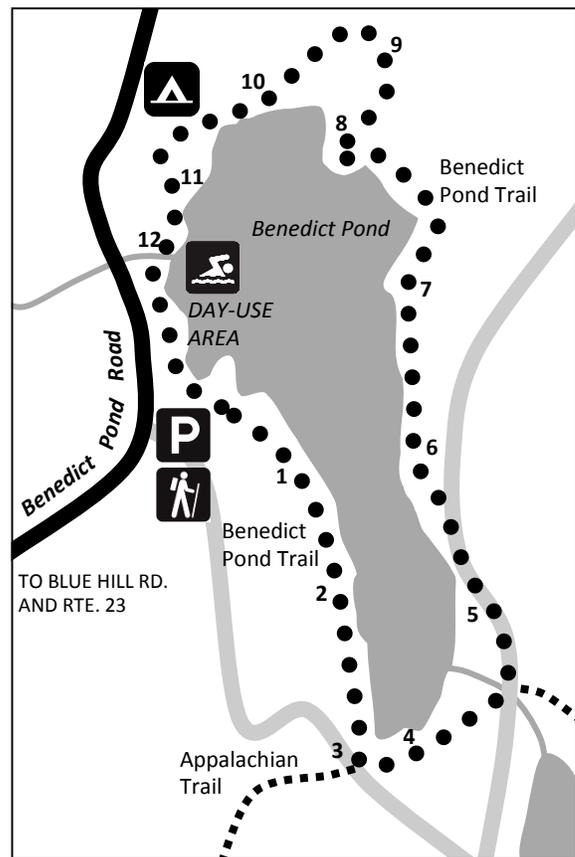
WELCOME to Beartown State Forest, managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. This 12,000 acre forest is within the towns of Great Barrington, Monterey, Lee, Tyringham and Stockbridge. The “Bear Town” name is attributed to the last bear hunted in this region about the early 1800s. Today, you may see black bear here once again.

*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.*

Interpretive stations are found on numbered posts along the trail which correspond with this guide. Pick up a Beartown State Forest Trail Map at any park kiosk or the state forest headquarters, 69 Blue Hill Road, Monterey, if you choose to hike any of the park’s other trails.

BENEDICT POND is a shallow (5-8 ft. deep), 35-acre man-made lake at a surface elevation of 1,580 ft. It supplies Stony Brook, a tributary of the Housatonic River. This water eventually flows into Long Island Sound.

This dense forest was mostly cleared throughout the early 1800s for farming and grazing. The remaining forest was practically stripped away in the later part of the 1800s for charcoal to fuel local iron furnaces. Fred Benedict, for whom Benedict Pond was named, once owned the surrounding farmlands. He and other farmers would cut ice from what was then a much smaller pond in winter and haul it by sled to his barns, where insulated with hay, it would keep his dairy products cool during the summer. His house, Blue Hill Farm, still remains nearby. In 1921 the state acquired the land from later owners lumber dealer Warren H. Davis who had cleared off much of the timber, and the former estate of millionaire Fred Pearson.



*Benedict Pond Loop Trail begins at the boat launch area. Route length is **1.7 miles**. Hike is **easy to moderate** with little elevation change. Footing may be wet and uneven in places. Plan on **60 minutes** hiking at a moderate pace. Follow the **blue blazes** and trail signs. There is a \$5 parking fee, weekends May-June; then daily late-June through Labor Day. Restrooms are located at the day-use area.*

1) **MAMMALS** you may encounter include white-tailed deer, eastern cottontail rabbit, red and gray squirrel, eastern chipmunk and eastern mole. As you walk the trail be sure to look for holes dug by small creatures: 1" diameter (mouse), 3" diameter (chipmunk). Look for tracks or scat from coyote, bobcat, black bear, fisher, red and grey fox, beaver or raccoon.

2) **MOUNTAIN LAUREL** (*Kalmia latifolia*) is a fragrant flowering bush is usually found among evergreens. Deep green leaves are waxy. White to pinkish flowers appear in June and July, giving the pond shore a snow-covered appearance. Flowers are so delicate that the slightest touch by an insect forces the stamen to spring, thereby spreading the pollen. The plant is inedible, even to most animals.



Mountain laurel

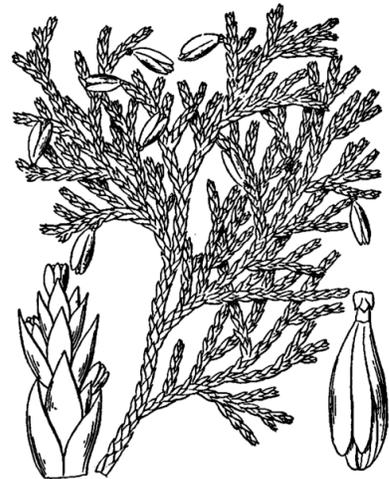
4) **NORTHERN WHITE CEDAR**, (*Thuja occidentalis*), also called Arborvitae (tree of life) is found growing in low, swampy areas throughout western and northern New England. Scale-like leaves overlap and form fan-like clusters. Distinctive elliptical cones look like a reddish-brown woody flower with 6-12 'petals'. Bark is gray to red and forms thin shreds.

French explorers brought this native tree back to Europe in the 1540s after using its foliage to brew a Vitamin C tea to cure scurvy. It is now widely used for ornamental planting. Native Americans valued this tree's lightweight wood for building canoe frames. Today it is used for posts, lumber and medicinally for cedar oil, distilled from the twigs.



Eastern chipmunk

3) **APPALACHIAN TRAIL (AT)**. Look for white AT paint blazes on trees marking the AT route. In 1921 visionary forester and planner Benton Mackaye (*mah-kie*) first conceived an idea for a foot trail that would follow the Appalachian Mountain chain as a back-to-the-land effort. Over the next 15 years this pioneer National Scenic Trail was mostly created, with the cooperation of Federal, state and local agencies and the Appalachian Trail Conference of local clubs and volunteers. It now traverses 2,180 miles from Springer Mountain in Georgia to Mount Katahdin in Maine. 90 miles of the AT passes through Massachusetts, touching highpoints at Mount Greylock (3,491 ft. elev.), Mount Everett (2,602 ft.) and here in Beartown over Mount Wilcox (2,155 ft.).



Arborvitae

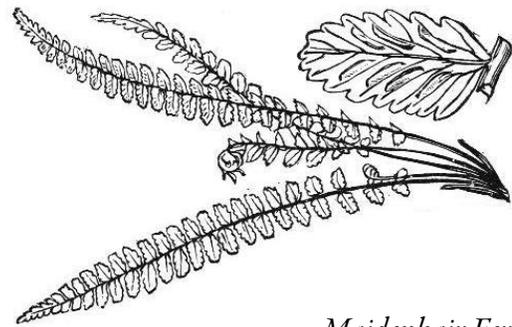
5) **CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC)** was a New Deal Federal government conservation program to alleviate unemployment during the Great Depression from 1933-42. The CCC improved the nation's natural and human resources and also created opportunities for the public to recreate and appreciate a healthy outdoor experience. At Beartown 'Pinecone Johnnies' built access roads, bridges, trails, campground and picnic areas. The road you are walking on was built by the CCC. Look for their rustic stonework.

6) NORTHERN HARDWOOD FOREST. The forest canopy is a variety of deciduous hardwoods: American beech, white ash, birches, and maples, famous for producing colorful fall foliage. This forest with most trees 70-90 year old is considered middle-aged, now re-grown after being cleared by the early 1900s.

7) ROCK OUTCROP. Here we can use our imaginations and travel back some 15,000 years to the Pleistocene Period. When the glaciers retreated, they left behind rock debris and exposed some of the more ancient layers of earth like this quartzite and granite outcrop. Over thousands of years the climate warmed to accommodate forests growth and shade this spot for moisture-loving plants, mosses and ferns, like the polypod fern found here. Fungi, ferns and mosses grow from spores which are transported by wind dispersal.

8) BEAVER are the largest rodents in North America. They have special incisors for gnawing and felling trees, including their favorite, the poplar. They also eat the roots of water lilies. Beavers are second, only to humans, in their effect on the physical environment. They require lots of green plant material and water deep enough to provide protection and underwater access to their lodge. To do this beavers fell trees and use them not only as food but also to dam streams creating deep ponds. Look for evidence of beaver along the pond.

9) MAIDENHAIR FERN (*Asplenium trichomanes*), commonly known as *maidenhair spleenwort*, is a rare and delicate fern found particularly in rocky habitats rich with lime. Each of the swirled fronds is horseshoe-shaped with a characteristic purplish-brown stalk. The roots grow horizontally so the fern is usually an interconnected group.



Maidenhair Fern

10) POND FISH are bony vertebrates (almost 800 bones in their bodies) and masters at sensing their environment. Their smell and eyesight are keen and structures called lateral lines, located along their sides, detect changes in sounds and pressure. Some even have sensory 'whiskers' called barbells. Benedict Pond fish include: perch, pumpkinseed, golden shiner, pickerel, brown bullhead and largemouth bass.

11) A WETLAND is a habitat supporting a rich and diverse community of plants and animals. Wetlands purify water through the natural filtering system of plants that absorb nutrients and cycle it through the food web while allowing silt to settle out. Wetlands also act as buffers preventing flooding and erosion. Many kinds of animals depend on them for breeding areas, protective homes and wintering habitats.

12) RETAINING WALL & DAM. This concrete core and earth fill dam was originally built in 1934 by the CCC. What was once mostly a red maple swamp was cleared and dammed to form Benedict Pond, creating the recreation area, and wildlife habitat you have been hiking through. If the water level is low you may see the stumps of the former swamp!

Continue to the end of the loop trail at the parking lot. We hope your visit was pleasant and that you come back to explore Beartown State Forest again.

Benedict Pond Loop Trail is a *Healthy Heart Trail* to promote healthy outdoor recreation. *Healthy Heart Trails* may be found in many DCR parks state-wide.

BEARTOWN STATE FOREST
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