

## Delaney Project – North Parcel

**Summary:** A one-hour exploration of trail loops atop ridgelines and alongside wetlands, in a serene forest populated with a variety of birds and other wildlife. Includes several briefly steep climbs up and down ridges, and some muddy spots.

**Trailhead Location:** Parking for several cars is available on both sides of Finn Road, just west of the Harvard-Stow border. The suggested hike below starts from the clearing on the north side of the road.

**Geology:** The north and south parcels of the Delaney Project occupy a relatively low-lying area that is surrounded by bedrock and glacial-till-covered hills. Sand and gravel deposits in this area were left behind by melt water near the margin of the retreating glacial ice sheet. Elongated, linear ridges of sand and gravel in the north parcel are eskers that were formed in tunnels or channels within the ice.

**History:** The Delaney Project, managed by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, is open to public use for recreation, including hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing and hunting (October – December). The original purpose of the project was flood control on Elizabeth Brook and waterfowl management, to include hunting. The brook is the largest tributary of the Assabet River, which in turn is the largest tributary of the Concord River, which is itself the largest tributary of the Merrimac River.

**Nature to Look For:** With its 500 acres of wooded and open space, 8 miles of trails, habitats of hardwood forest, conifer forest, upland meadows, and water, Delaney has become a premier birding spot. Among the bird species seen at Delaney are pileated, downy and hairy woodpeckers, osprey, red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, brown creeper, gray nuthatch, killdeer, ruby-throated hummingbird, white-throated sparrow, chimney swift, bluebird, and brown thrasher. Water birds include the Canada goose, green heron, blue heron, belted kingfisher, mufflehead, mallard, pintail, and merganser. As the seasons change you can find springtime warblers and migrating ducks, summertime swallows and nesting songbirds, and ducks any time of the year.

### CAUTION

Hunting is permitted on the Delaney project. Hunting season is approximately October to December. For safety, wear bright orange clothing.

**Suggested Route:** Head north from the parking area, continuing straight as a trail heads off to the right. At the next trail junction (A on map) continue straight, staying on the ridge, with forested wetlands on both sides. Turn right at B as the trail climbs slightly. At a T-junction (C), turn left onto a wide, level trail.

At the next junction (D) turn right, descending from the ridge on a moderately steep slope. The trail soon levels and becomes occasionally muddy as you skirt a wetland, with a fine view to the left over the lush marsh grasses.

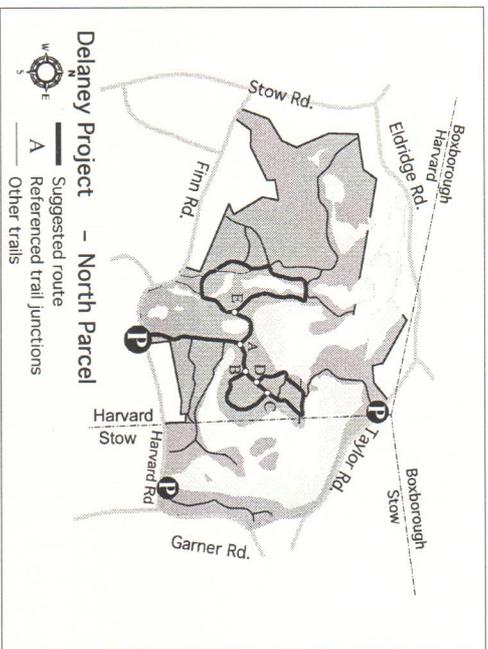
At a lovely spot by the edge of an open pond, decorated with yellow-flowering lily pads, several trails converge. Continue ahead, parallel to the water, bearing left at a Y-junction. You'll pass a beaver lodge on the left, and the remains of an old chimney on your right.

The trail soon curves sharply right and uphill away from the water. Turn right at a T-junction, and continue straight past junctions C, D and B. At junction A, turn right on a wide path and descend on a moderate slope. The trail soon levels at a low spot between wetlands.

Continue straight at E, heading uphill on a moderately steep slope; turn right at a T-junction onto the ridge-top path. At a Y-junction, bear right and descend from the ridgeline. Make your way across a bubbling stream on a fallen tree trunk – a walking stick is very helpful here!

Continue uphill and along another ridge-top trail. Soon the trail dips moderately steeply to angle down the ridge to the left into dense forest. Turn left at a Y-junction at the foot of the slope, then continue straight as another trail comes in from the right.

A rough wooden bridge carries you across a deep-y-cut stream. Just on the other side of the bridge, turn left. The path parallels the stream for a time, then heads uphill on a moderate slope. Just as it begins to rise, bear right at a Y-junction, continuing uphill. At the top, continue straight as a trail angles in from the right. Bear left at a multi-trail junction; continue to bear left at a series of trail junctions, heading downhill. Continue straight at a Y-junction just past the wet area. Back at E, turn right, then right again and uphill at a Y-junction. Turn right again at the top of the ridge (junction A) to return to the parking area.



The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity! I did not wish to take a cabin passage, but rather to go before the mast and on the deck of the world, for there I could best see the moonlight amid the mountains. I do not wish to go below now.

Walden Pond - Henry David Thoreau