

## Flagg Hill Conservation Land

Stow MA

**Summary:** A 1.5 hour ramble through forest and by wetlands, with intriguing signs of earlier land use to consider, plus additional side excursions. Easy except for Erickson Loop, which has a steep section. Trails link to Stow's Heath Hen Meadow Brook conservation area, and through Boxborough to Windemere Drive. Additional extensions are possible across West Acton Road to Captain Sargent Land, and from there to Red Acre Land.

**Trailhead Location:** The Flagg Hill trailhead in Stow is located to the left of a gray-painted concrete storage building on the west side of West Acton Road, 1.3 miles north of the Stow Fire Department (corner of Hartley and Crescent).

### Quick Guide

Stow Trail including Erickson Loop and optional extensions

1. Follow white-blazed Stow Trail west from trailhead.
  - Optional: Turn left on light-green-blazed trail to Heath Hen Meadow conservation area (30 min round trip)
  - Optional: Turn left on narrow, unmarked trail through double stone fence to view remnants of stone storage structure (5 min RT)
  - Optional: Turn left on yellow-blazed Woodhead Trail out to Trefry Lane (45 min RT)
2. At the junction of red, green and white trail markers, continue straight on the green-blazed Erickson Loop.
  - Optional: Turn left on red-blazed Boxborough Trail to Windemere Drive in Boxborough (30 min RT)
3. Turn right at the Loop trail sign to follow the loop trail around and up Flagg Hill.
4. Upon completing the loop, retrace your steps to the trailhead.

### Detailed Hike Description – Stow Trail including Erickson Loop

- From the kiosk, head for the first white trail marker, uphill through mixed deciduous and evergreen, with a stone fence to your right. The trail soon levels to pass through a stone fence gap, then curves left onto a level but rock-studded stretch. A wetland lies to the right of the trail. In early spring, its resident wood frogs can sound like dozens of quacking ducks.
- At a T-junction, turn right, and right again at another T-junction a minute or two later. The white-marked trail is now a wide track, heading uphill under tall pine and oak. A stone fence runs parallel to the trail on the left; a second stone fence soon angles in from the right, and the pair of fences accompanies the trail for quite a distance.

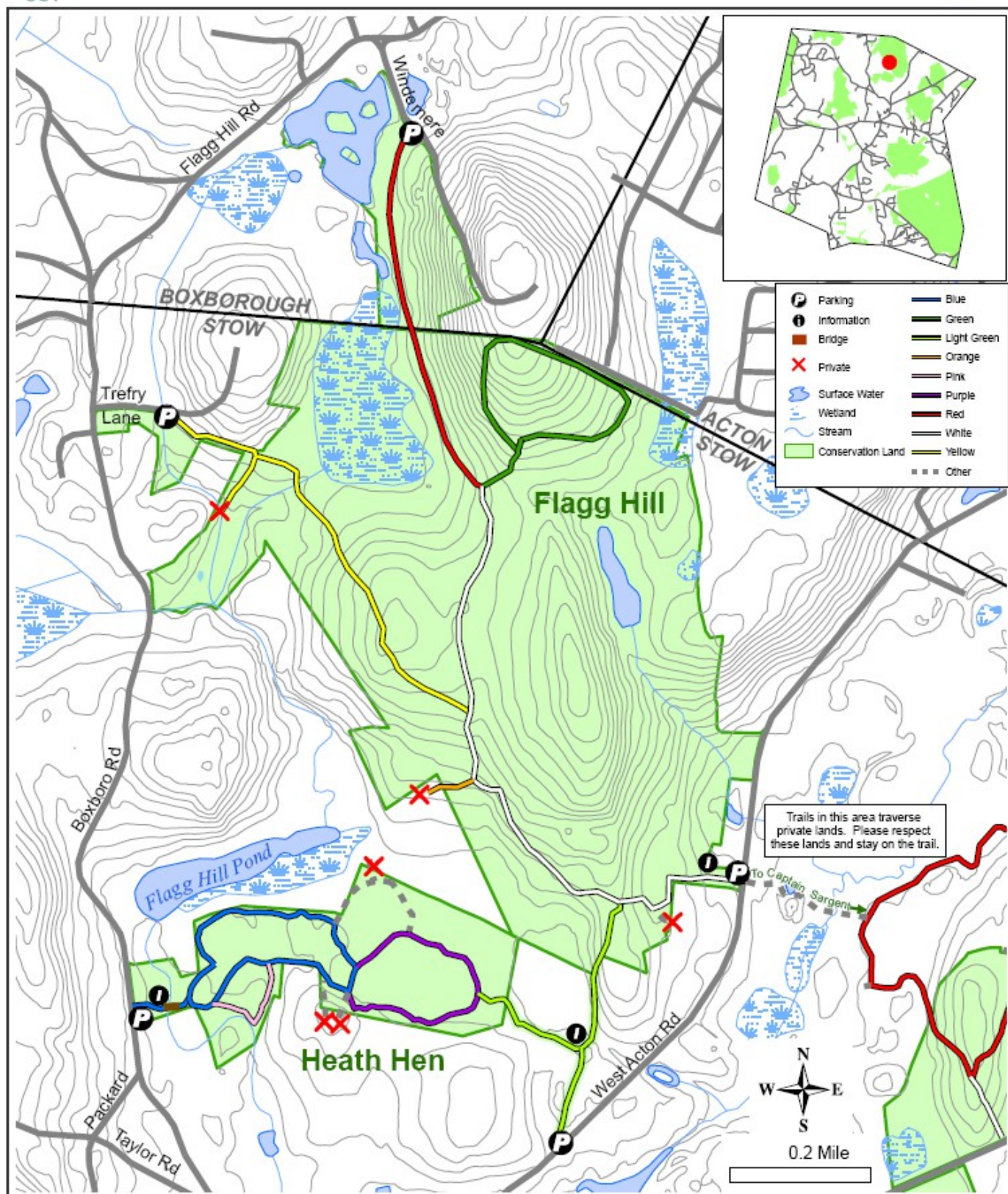
Note: A light-green-marked trail angles sharply left through the parallel fences - you may choose to follow this trail into the nearby Heath Hen Meadow conservation area. \*\* Refer to Heath Hen trail description for more details.

- Watch for an unmarked trail about 5 minutes' walk from the last trail junction, heading straight to the left through gaps in the stone fences, amid an under-story of young pine. Take a brief detour down this trail, heading downhill to find a rectangular stone storage structure nestled off to the left side of the narrow path, a testament to earlier human activity in the area. Then return to the main trail.

Note: One visitor has suggested that this was likely a spring house, and probably had a door on the front of it. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spring\\_house](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spring_house)



# Heath Hen - Flagg Hill



While conservation lands are open to all, their continued beauty relies on the participation of all hikers. Please stay on the trails and carry out anything you carry in.

- The white-marked main trail continues wide and level, then makes a gradual curve to the right on a gentle uphill gradient. A trail junction with the orange-marked Sureau Trail, which leads left to private property; continue on the wide main trail as it rolls uphill to a junction with the yellow-marked Woodhead Trail.

Note: You may choose to extend your hike by exploring the Woodhead Trail extension below.

For the main hike, continue straight on the white-marked trail.

- The uphill path continues into an area dominated by tall pines, with a younger under-story of pine and oak. A wetland is hidden off to the right of the trail, given away by more ‘quacking’ frogs. Several wet and muddy areas make the trail more of a challenge in this area.
- At a junction of the white, red and green trails, the white trail ends, and the red trail heads off to the left. For now, continue straight ahead, on the green-marked trail.

Note: The red-marked Boxborough Trail leads to the Windemere Road parking area in Boxborough.

- The green trail moves gently uphill through mixed deciduous and evergreen. At a trail junction near a round white Stow Conservation Land Boundary marker, turn right to continue on green.
- The trail continues uphill through a stone fence gap to a T-junction just beyond the fence, marked by a “Loop” trail sign. Turn right on the green-marked Erickson Loop.

Note: The green loop trail is noticeably more rugged – narrow, uneven and rocky -- than the white trail you have enjoyed to this point, and includes a rather steep uphill segment.

- The loop trail runs parallel to a stone fence, and soon heads downhill past emerald-green moss-capped rocks under oak, pine, birch and more.
- The trail bears left, away from the stone fence, still on a gentle downhill slope. At a trail junction, bear left as a faint trail joins from the right. The trail soon curves left and uphill, then left again as you approach a couple of houses. Here, the track is wider, and grows steeper as you pass by a vast round water tank.
- At a trail junction at the top of the hill, bear left (a granite upright nearby to your right marks the corner where the boundaries of Boxborough, Acton and Stow meet.)
- The trail now runs more gently uphill. Another stone fence parallels this segment of trail.
- The path soon jogs right to a T-junction; turn left. A few dozen paces beyond, turn left at a T; a round white boundary marker alerts you to the junction.
- The trail eases downhill through cedar, pine, birch and oak. As you approach a well-defined stone fence directly ahead, the path turns left. At the next trail junction, you have completed the Erickson loop; turn right through the stone fence gap.
- Bear left at the next trail junction, and return to the red/white/green trail junction. Retrace your path along the white-marked trail to the parking area.

#### **Boxborough Trail** extension to Windemere Road (30 min round trip)

- Turn left at the junction of the red, white and green trails, onto the red-blazed Boxborough Trail. The narrow trail leads gently downhill for a few minutes, then rolls easily through the woods. There are several wet and muddy places to skirt along the way.
- After about ten minutes, the trail emerges into an open area with a nearby pond. The trail re-enters the woods briefly, passing by a comfortable bench, then arrives at Windemere Road.
- Return the way you came, enjoying the profusion of blackberry bushes just east of Windemere, daisies, clover and other wildflowers near the pond, and the calls of the wood thrush and many more varieties of bird as you retrace your steps to the white-blazed Stow Trail.

#### **Woodhead Trail** extension (45 min round trip)

- Turn left at the junction of the white and yellow trails, onto the yellow-blazed Woodhead Trail. The path curves through an overgrown clearing, through a wide stone fence gap and into an area of tall pines.
- The path soon eases uphill to a local high point, then continues on a level but rock-strewn track through the quiet pines.
- The path heads back downhill on a moderate slope, eventually reaching a low spot under mixed deciduous and evergreen. As you pass through a stone fence gap and onto a grassy section of trail with birdhouses scattered about, look to your right to find a huge log bench in an overgrown clearing – a lovely spot to rest and enjoy the sounds of the forest around you.
- Shortly after crossing a Meadow Brook tributary, turn right, then left to continue out to Trefry Lane. Return to the main trail the way you came.

#### **Captain Sargent Land Extension** (15 minutes to edge of CS land)

- From the kiosk off West Acton Road, cross the street to the east, to a wide grassy track running alongside private property to the north. The trail soon passes through a series of wetlands.
- At a Y-junction, turn left; turn left again at the next Y-junction.
- After crossing a series of culverts connecting two wetland areas, the trail rises to the edge of a large grassy field. Turn left at the T-junction, then bear right at a Y, and continue skirting the edge of the field.
- Wetlands lie to the left as you pass through a stone fence gap into woods at the end of the field. Follow the red-blazed trail past a waterway and wetlands, to drier ground beneath tall pines.
- After passing over two stone fence gaps in quick succession, you arrive at the boundary of the Captain Sargent Land. \*\* Refer to **Captain Sargent Land** and **Red Acre Land** hike descriptions for information on further explorations from this point.

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