

Heath Hen Meadow Brook Woodland Conservation Area

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Summary: A 45-minute tour of Heath Hen Meadow Brook and its surrounding forest and wetlands, plus views over Flagg Hill Pond and neighboring Shelburne Farm Orchard, and a connection to Flagg Hill Conservation Land. Trails are level or gently rolling. Expect wet and muddy spots throughout the well-marked trail system.

Trailhead Location: East side of Boxborough Road, just north of its junction with Packard Road.

Quick Guide

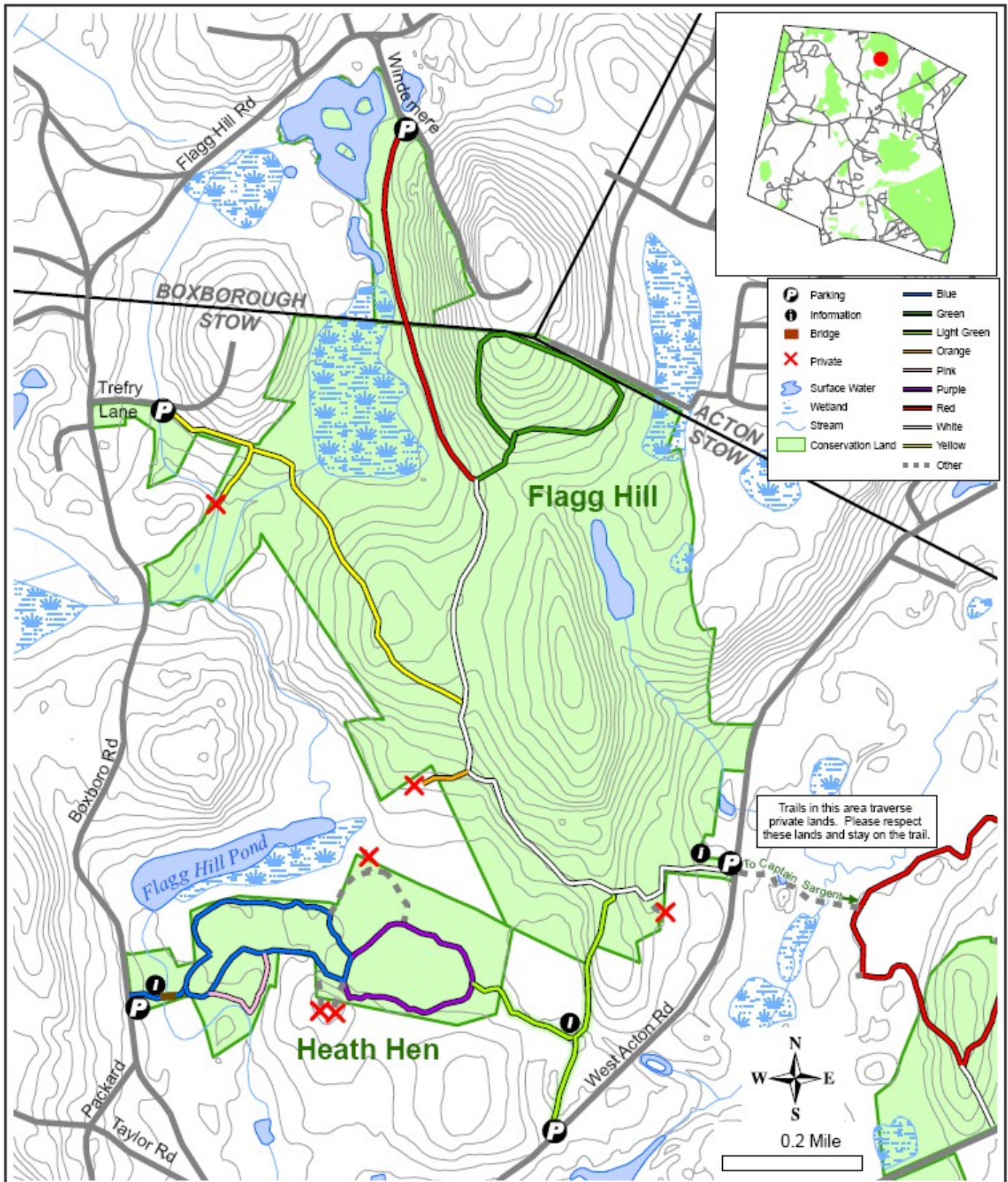
1. Follow blue trail from kiosk; right at T-junction through stone fence gap, continuing on blue.
2. Right on pink-blazed trail; left just before orchard's edge to continue on pink.
3. Right on blue; left on narrow purple-blazed trail just before windmills in orchard.
4. Left at T-junction, then left at Y-junction to continue on purple.
5. Turn right on wide blue-blazed trail.
6. Left on blue at Y-junction near edge of pond; continue straight on blue along pond's edge.
7. Turn right on blue through stone fence to return over footbridge to trailhead kiosk.

Key Trail Directions and Landmarks

- From the kiosk on the north side of Boxborough Road, a level path with blue wooden trail markers leads to a boardwalk and railed footbridge over Heath Hen Meadow Brook. After enjoying the feeling of being in the midst of marshland, continue along the blue trail over rocks and roots to a T-junction just on the far side of a stone fence. Turn right, continuing on the blue trail.
- As you pick your way around a large wet spot in the trail, you may hear the plop of frogs ducking down into the water, and see their eyes peeping warily out at you.
- Turn right onto the pink-blazed trail. The wide brook gurgles to the right of the trail. In spring, ferns unfurl their fiddlehead crowns along your route.
- Just before a stone fence by the edge of an orchard, the pink trail turns sharply left, becoming narrow and less well trodden. The trail runs roughly parallel to the orchard, then turns away to thread between close-growing white pines. At a trail junction turn right, back onto the blue trail.
- The wide grassy track soon passes a patch of blueberries, then rises briefly to another trail junction – continue straight on blue. At a fainter trail junction in a wide clearing, detour right to climb a short but fairly steep rise to a fine view of Shelburne Farm Orchard. Return down-slope to the blue trail and turn right to continue in the same direction.
- At the next junction, bear right on blue. As the orchard's modern windmills become visible, turn left on a narrow, purple-blazed trail.
- The trail passes through a mixed-growth forest with a carpet of ferns and pine needles. After crossing an open but overgrown area, the trail meets a wide track leading to the orchard on the right. Turn left, returning back into shadowy forest, still on the purple trail.
- The trail passes into a wetland area. The next trail on the right bears light-green markers, and leads to the Flagg Hill Conservation Area. For the main hike, continue on the purple trail.
- At a Y-junction near a large glacial erratic, bear left to continue on the purple trail. At the next junction, turn right on the wide blue-blazed trail, rolling gently up and down hill toward Flagg Hill Pond.
- The next major junction lies near the edge of the pond. The trail to the right leads a short distance before becoming flooded; turn left instead, continuing on the blue trail through a stone fence gap.
- Follow the trail as it parallels the shore of the pond, while several other trails angle away to the left. Though the pond will soon fade from view, the calls of ducks and geese continue to remind you of its presence.
- The blue trail curves left to run parallel to a stone fence on the right. Where your trail curves right to join a path coming in from the left, you also continue to the right.



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.

- As you approach a stone fence, double blue trail markers alert you that you are almost back to the entry trail. Turn right through the stone fence, cross back over the footbridge and boardwalk, and return to the trailhead kiosk to end your hike.

Jill Phelps Kern
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