

Nottingcook Forest, Bow, NH

Romp through almost 6 miles of trails to enjoy brooks, an expansive erratic field, cave, gorge, and swamps. In the western section, multiple scenic outlooks provide views to Mount Monadnock to the Presidentials including Mount Washington.

Location: Woodhill Hooksett Road, Bow.

Delorme Map edition and page: New Hampshire and Vermont (2018), page 75, B-5

GPS location: 43.10515, -71.52259

Directions

From Concord, take Interstate 89 North and exit #1 for Logging Hill Road. Head south for 4.0 through Bow, as the road name changes to Woodhill Road. Turn left onto Woodhill-Hooksett and travel 0.9 miles. Cross the four-way intersection onto the dirt portion. In another 0.4 miles is a small parking area. A larger parking area with the main kiosk is from Bow Bog Road to Woodhill Hooksett Road.

Forest Data

Acreage: 761 acres

Primary Ecosystem Types: Birch Family, Freshwater Swamp, Strong Hardwoods

Trails: Thirteen interwoven trails provide more than 5.5 miles of hiking. Trails are well marked with signposts throughout. Trails going north and south become moderate in effort as they ascend ridges. Hamilton's Path is named for conservationist George Hamilton who was one of the original Appalachian Mountain Club hut masters in the 1940s and 1950s. The Bow Parks and Recreation Department provides trail maps and hiking information.

Nottingcook Forest Overview and History

The Nottingcook Forest was established in 1997 when 627 acres were purchased during a town meeting. In 2000, additional lands were added to increase the total land to 761 acres.

The counties of central New Hampshire are in the forest region characterized as Appalachian oak-pine Forest and hemlock hardwood-pine forest by the NH Wildlife Action Plan (WAP).



Appalachian oak-pine forests contain oak, hickory, beech, birch, and sugar maples. Hemlock hardwood-pine forests are comprised mostly of hemlock, white pine, beech, and oak trees. This forest type is the most common in NH, covering nearly 50% of the state. The Nottingcook Forest provides direct access to both of these primary forest types. Woodlands consist of hopscotching stands of beech, birch, oak, hemlock, and pine.

Bow is home to more than a dozen Bow town forest lots. In the Walker Town Forest, a centuries-old black gum tree swamp was discovered. The black gum tree is a hardwood tree that can grow up to 75-80 feet tall and live for hundreds of years. These trees prefer the acid content of swamps and wetlands in which to grow.

Trails, Hiking, and Highlights

The main set of coordinated trails can be accessed after a 0.5 mile hike along the Class VI road from either of the two Woodhill Hooksett Road waypoints. An enjoyable hike is the Steer Brook, Glacial Erratic, Great Hill, Hamilton's Path, Nancy's Trail loop. The Steer Brook Trail ambles along the bubbling brook. The Glacial Erratic Trail rocks and rolls its way up the south and westerly slopes through boulder fields and outcroppings.

As you approach the Great Hill Loop, Nancy's Trail hairpins its way up. Take the loop for expansive vistas to the north and west. Great Hill tops out at 879 feet and is home to the Bow Bench rock formation.

At the summit, scattered bear, red, and white oaks protect the views of Mount Washington and many mountains, from Cannon to Catamount. Cairns and sitting benches entice with comfortable seats to peruse the views. Walter's Way to Hamilton's Path provides overlooks to see Mount Monadnock.



On your return, Nancy's Trail slithers its way to the south and west along swamps, streams, and differing ages of hardwood and softwood lots. At the Gorge, return to the road via Steer Brook Trail or continue on Nancy's Trail to connect to trails accessing a cave, black gum trees, swamps, and additional overlooks.

Other Town Forests and Places of Interest Nearby

Bow additional town forests and conservation lands include:

- Bow Town Forest and Bow Bog Lot
- Knox Road Forest and School Forest
- Robinson Road / I-93 Town Forest
- Turee Island Town Forest and Turee Pond Lot.

Other local points of interest are:

- Fox State Forest, Black Gum Swamp, and Mud Pond Bog (Hillsborough)
- Hopkinton Greenway and multiple forests (Hopkinton)
- Piscataquog State Forest (Weare)
- Shaker Village (Canterbury).