

## Nottingcook Forest      County: Merrimack

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

Location: Woodhill Hooksett Road, Bow, NH      County: Merrimack

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

GPS location: 43.10185, -71.50224

### Directions

From Concord, take Interstate 89 north and exit #1 for Logging Hill Road. Head 4.0 miles south through Bow, as the road name changes to Woodhill Road. Turn left onto Woodhill-Hookset and travel 0.9 miles. Cross the four-way intersection onto the dirt portion and in another 0.4 miles is a small parking area. Another access point is from South Bow Road and the main parking area is from Bow Bog Road.

### Forest Data

Acreage: 761 acres

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

Trails: 13 interwoven trails are available with hiking distances. Trails are well marked with signposts throughout. Westerly trails are moderate in effort as you ascend multiple ridges.

Hamilton's Path is named for conservationist George Hamilton who in the 1940s and 1950s was one of the original Appalachian Mountain Club hut masters. Nancy's Trail is named for Nancy Reinhard who helped establish the forest's trail network.

### Nottingcook Forest Overview and History

The Nottingcook Forest was established in 1997 when 627 acres were purchased during town meeting. In 2000, additional lands were added to increase the total 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 New Hampshire, 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 town forest lots. In the Walker Town Forest, an 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 acidic 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:

- Ella Stroud Memorial Forest, home to black gum (Gilmanton)
- Hopkinton Greenway and multiple forests (Hopkinton)
- Piscataquog State Forest (Weare)
- Shaker Village (Canterbury).