

6 – Shrub Wetland

The low, scrubby brush growing on the banks of the channel connecting Messer and Clark ponds is an interesting wetland community. This wetland, dominated by sweet gale, leatherleaf, and spirea, is important for erosion and flood control. It also provides valuable habitat for waterfowl and songbirds. There is another bench overlook along this trail that also offers a nice view of the wetland and stream.

7 – Crooked Trees

In this area there are number of crooked trees. This was caused by a single wind event that blew these trees part way over. The trees still seek to grow upward despite their tilt, so one upward facing branch will grow to replace the trunk. The direction in which these trees have been blown suggest that they were caused by the strong winds of a tropical storm or hurricane.

8 – Stone Wall

This stone wall is one typical of those found throughout New England. It was likely built during the first few decades of the 19th century when most of Central New England was cleared for sheep pasture. The large sizes of the stones in this wall suggest it was used to enclose livestock, most likely sheep.

9 – I-89

In many places along the trail, traffic on the interstate can be heard through the trees. Its presence presents a significant physical barrier for wildlife that live in the area. The construction of large roads such as interstates cut off large portions of animals' ranges. This is especially true for smaller creatures that have a more difficult time crossing such roads.

10 – Borrow Area

The entire area that the Allen Loop passes through was scraped of all vegetation and topsoil for roadbed material and fill during the construction of the interstate during the 1970s. The birches and blueberries that dominate the area are the product of 30-35 years of regeneration. The section of the Norman trail between the first intersection of the trails and the turn off for the Allen loop was also an access road for construction equipment when the borrow area was in use.

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More information on this trail and
others available at:
<http://www.nl-nhcc.com/>

Clark Pond Interpretive Trail

Clark Pond Natural Area is home to a number of natural features, human disturbances, and species common throughout the region. This trail highlights these noteworthy features, many of which can be observed on other New London trails.

Clark Pond Natural Area is located on Bog Road near Messer Pond & Forest Acres Road. It covers a total of 91.4 acres and consists of 4 separate parcels. The first parcel was gifted to the town in 1996, with the purchase of the remaining parcels ending in 2008. The land is now protected under easement for future generations to use and enjoy.

Please stay on the trail and be respectful of plants and wildlife.

Numbered signs along trails indicate objects or areas of interest. See their corresponding entries in this brochure.

Species labels

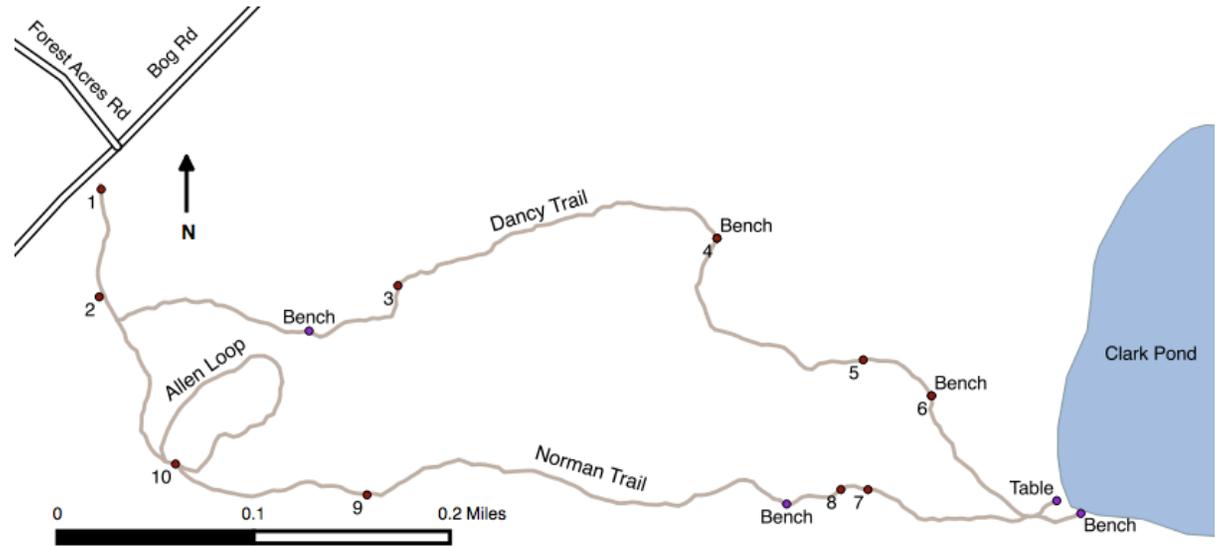
There are over 70 species labeled along the trails. Many of these species are labeled several times in order to show the plants in both their mature and immature forms. Note the locations of some species in the context of their habitat, for example the species found in wet areas by streams versus the species found in rocky upland areas.

Wildflowers

Hiking through in mid May - late June, one is likely to see numerous species of wildflowers in bloom. Wildflowers that can be found along this trail include starflower, painted trillium, bunchberry, blue bead lily, goldthread, foamflower, pink lady slipper, and Canada mayflower. Look for their labels along the trails.

1 – Witches' Broom

The thick masses of twiggy growth seen in these blueberry bushes are caused by a disease called witches' broom, which is fairly common among blueberries both wild and domestic. It is caused by a rust fungus that is transmitted from either from blueberry to blueberry or from balsam firs, in which the fungus damages needles. While common, it is not lethal to the plant.



2 – Cattail Marsh

Cattail marshes such as this one are common across central New England. They provide important habitat to many species of amphibians, birds, and mammals. Some species common to this kind of habitat include muskrats, painted turtles, and several species of frog. Listen for the distinctive song of the red-winged blackbird as you walk by. This wetland drains into a larger wetland, and ultimately into Clark Pond.

3 – Frost Wedging

This rock was split by the wedging action of ice over the course of many centuries. Water that filled a once tiny crack froze and expanded, making the crack slightly wider until eventually the crack was so great that the rock split.

4 – Beech Bark Scale Disease

The blisters and scars on this American beech and other ones along the trail are caused by a combination of a fungus of the genus *Nectria* and the beech scale insect. The fungus enters the bark of the tree when the Beech scale insect lays its eggs in the bark of the tree. The fungus then spreads to the rest of the bark, creating more and more blisters until the wounds ultimately kill the tree. This disease is devastating the beech population across New England.

5 – Glacial Erratic

This large boulder was deposited here some 10 – 12,000 years ago by a retreating glacier at the end of the last ice age. Others like it can be seen along this and other trails in New London. Notice the piece that's fallen off; this is another good example of frost wedging.