



## Suggested Hike



### Explore the Trails of Cutter Woods Conservation Area

The **Cutter Merriam Conservation Area**, consisting of **Cutter Woods** and the **Frederick Merriam Conservation Area**, offers a scenic and diverse hiking experience. The area was named in memory of the late **Fred Merriam** and **Martine Merriam Banister** and is accessible from a parking lot on **Sherburne Road**.

**Trail Overview:** The trails are rated **moderate**, with occasional tree roots, medium-sized rocks, and some larger obstacles like logs or boulders to step over. Some sections feature steep slopes and seasonally wet areas, adding to the challenge.



*Phoebe Rock*

The **Phoebe Rock Loop** guides hikers past multiple ponds and back to the starting point, while the **Long Trail** extends north, connecting adventurers to the **Cutler-Spalding Conservation Area** and **Gumpus Pond Conservation Area** for a longer trek. Runners can use the trails but should proceed with caution due to natural terrain variations. Plan for **1–2 hours** to explore the property or extend your hike for a full-day adventure.

**Plan Your Visit:** Enjoy the natural beauty of the **Cutter Merriam Conservation Area** while discovering wetlands, wildlife, and scenic views. Whether you're here for a quick walk or a longer journey, the trails offer a rewarding outdoor experience for all!

**Phoebe Rock Loop** – 1.3 mi  
**Long Trail** – 0.5 mi  
**Charles Jack Path** – 0.4 mi  
**Pond View Trail** – 0.3 mi  
**Connector Trail** – < 0.1 mi

**Gage Lot Trail** – 0.2 mi  
**Boulder Loop** – 0.2 mi  
**Ridge Trail** – 0.1 mi (*steep on one end*)  
**Beaver Lodge Spur Trail** – < 0.1 mi

Sponsored by: Pelham Pathways Inc.

Have an idea we should consider? Want to join our active team? Reach out to us at  
**Email: [Pelhampathways@gmail.com](mailto:Pelhampathways@gmail.com) Web: [Pelhampathways.com](http://Pelhampathways.com)**

Community Trail Coalition *Presents*

## CUTTER WOODS CONSERVATION AREA



**Sherburne Road  
Pelham, NH 03076  
Park open dawn to dusk**

## Invasive Species in the Merriam Cutter Conservation Area

Invasive species pose a significant threat to the native ecosystems of Southern New Hampshire, including the Merriam Cutter Conservation Area. These aggressive plants outcompete native species, disrupt habitats, and alter soil conditions, making it difficult for local wildlife to thrive. Below are some of the most common invasive plants found in our forests and wetlands, along with methods for controlling them.

### Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*):

Originally introduced as an ornamental shrub, Japanese barberry has spread rapidly through New England's forests. It forms dense thickets that outcompete native vegetation and create ideal conditions for ticks, increasing the risk of Lyme disease. Barberry has small, spiny branches and red berries that persist through winter.



### Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*):

This fast-growing vine strangles trees and shrubs, cutting off their access to sunlight and nutrients. It is easily recognizable by its bright orange and yellow berries in the fall, which birds spread to new areas.



### Glossy Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*):

A major problem at Merriam Farm, glossy buckthorn is a tall shrub that forms dense thickets, shading out native plants. It leafs out earlier than most trees and retains its foliage longer, giving it a competitive advantage. Birds disperse its dark berries, allowing it to spread rapidly.



## Discover the Bufflehead at Merriam Cutter Conservation Area

The Merriam Cutter Conservation Area is home to the distinctive bufflehead duck. These small, striking birds are a delight to observe, whether gliding on water or diving for food.

**Meet the Bufflehead:** Buffleheads (*Bucephala albeola*) are among the smallest North American ducks, weighing under two pounds. Males stand out with iridescent green and purple feathers and a large white head patch, while females are more muted with a small white cheek patch.



### Fascinating Facts

- **Bighead Illusion** – Males puff up their head feathers to appear even larger when displaying.
- **Tree Nesters** – Unlike most ducks, buffleheads nest in tree cavities, often using old Northern Flicker nests.
- **Wanderers of the Americas** – Buffleheads migrate great distances, breeding in Canada and Alaska during the summer and traveling south to winter in the coastal waters of the U.S. and Mexico.

**Habitat & Diet:** Buffleheads thrive in freshwater lakes during breeding season and coastal waters in winter. They dive for insect larvae, snails, and worms in freshwater, while in saltwater, they eat shrimp, crabs, and small fish.

**Spotting Buffleheads at Merriam Cutter Conservation Area:** Whether you're an avid birdwatcher or simply enjoy a peaceful nature walk, keep an eye out for buffleheads in the conservation area. Their energetic diving and dazzling plumage make them a true highlight of the local wildlife.



# Natural Wonders of the Park

## The Hairy Woodpecker: A Woodland Drummer of the Merriam Cutter Conservation Area

Amid the tranquil forests of the Merriam Cutter Conservation Area, the rhythmic drumming of the Hairy Woodpecker (*Dryobates villosus*) signals its presence. This striking black-and-white bird thrives in diverse habitats, from Spruce-Fir forests and mixed hardwoods to suburban backyards. Unlike many migratory species, it remains a year-round resident, a familiar sight and sound in our woodlands.

**Identifying the Hairy Woodpecker:** Easily mistaken for the smaller Downy Woodpecker, the Hairy is larger, with a longer, sturdier bill and pure white outer tail feathers. Its distinct calls include a steady rattle and a rapid “wicka wicka wicka.” Its drumming, used for territory defense and courtship, is faster and more consistent than the Downy’s.

**A Year-Round Resident with a Busy Nesting Season:** Males begin drumming as early as January, with nesting starting in April. By late spring, the forest comes alive with the eager calls of nestlings. Listen closely on your hike—you may hear their muffled chatter.

**Conservation and Coexistence:** Though their population is increasing, Hairy Woodpeckers face threats like predation and collisions. Support them by maintaining a bird-friendly yard with dead trees for nesting, avoiding pesticides, and offering suet feeders in winter.



When you visit Merriam Cutter, look and listen for this woodland drummer—an emblem of the wild spaces we cherish.

**Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*):** Found in wetlands, invasive *Phragmites* forms tall, dense stands that displace native plants, alter water flow, and create fire hazards. This aggressive grass spreads through underground rhizomes and seeds.



## How You Can Help

- **Stay on trails** to prevent spreading invasive seeds.
- **Learn to identify invasives** and report sightings.
- **Volunteer** for removal efforts to restore native habitats.

By working together, we can protect the Cutter Merriam Conservation Area and ensure its forests and wetlands remain healthy for generations to come.

# Beavers

Beavers (*Castor canadensis*) are one of nature's most remarkable engineers, transforming landscapes by building dams and creating wetlands that support a diverse range of wildlife. At the Merriam Cutter Conservation Area, beaver activity has played a major role in shaping the land over the years.

**The Impact of Beavers on Merriam Cutter Conservation Area:** Once nearly extinct in New Hampshire due to over-trapping, beavers have made a strong comeback. At Merriam, their dam-building has greatly expanded wetland areas, creating critical habitat for waterfowl, amphibians, and fish. These wetlands act as natural filtration systems, improving water quality and slowing erosion.

However, beaver activity is a double-edged sword. In the southeast corner of Cutter Woods, their dams have caused flooding, leading to the loss of nearly two acres of valuable white pine timber. This can be seen from Sherburne Road, where standing dead trees mark the area of high-water impact. Despite this, the benefits of beaver-created wetlands often outweigh the challenges, as they provide rich ecosystems that sustain many species.



## Fascinating Beaver Facts

- **Masters of Construction** – Beavers build complex dams using sticks, mud, and stones. These structures can reach over 10 feet high and extend hundreds of feet in length!
- **Built for the Water** – Their webbed hind feet make them excellent swimmers, and they can hold their breath underwater for up to 15 minutes.
- **Teeth Never Stop Growing** – Their bright orange incisors are self-sharpening and continuously grow throughout their lives.
- **Family-Oriented Creatures** – Beavers mate for life and live in close-knit colonies with their offspring, who stay with their parents for two years before setting out to build their own lodges.
- **Ecosystem Architects** – By creating ponds, beavers provide essential breeding grounds for species like black ducks, wood ducks, and amphibians while also raising the water table and preventing droughts.

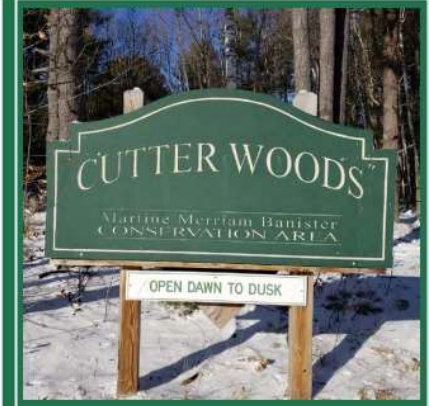
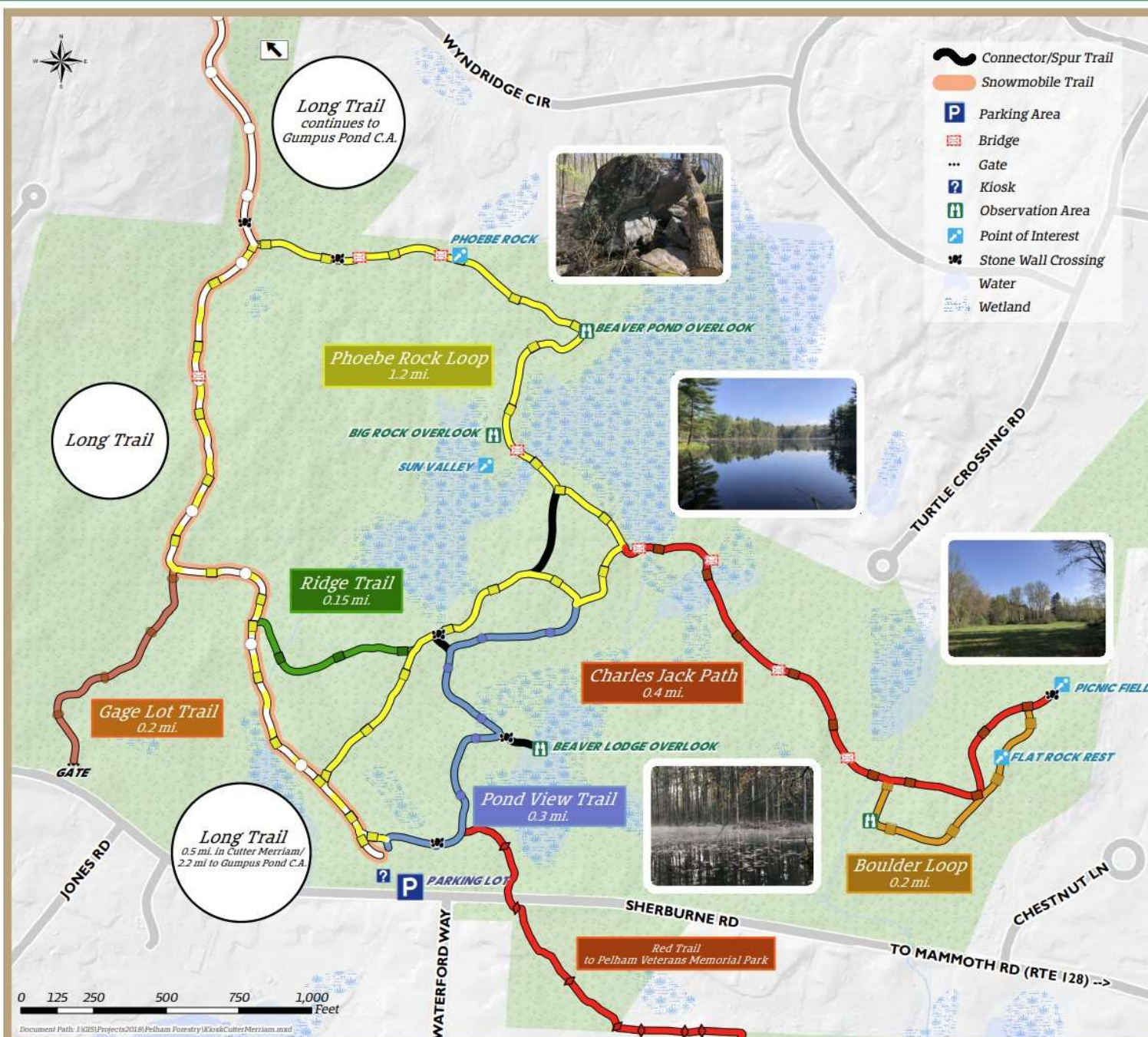
**A Delicate Balance:** Beavers are a vital part of the conservation area's ecosystem, but their influence requires careful management. Conservation efforts at Merriam Cutter focus on preserving the wetlands they create while mitigating the impacts of flooding on timber and trails. Their work may be messy, but without beavers, many of New Hampshire's wetlands—and the species that rely on them—would disappear.

As you hike the Merriam Cutter Conservation Area, keep an eye out for beaver lodges, felled trees, and the telltale gnaw marks that signal these industrious rodents are hard at work!



# CUTTER MERRIAM CONSERVATION AREA

TOWN OF PELHAM, NH  
 PELHAMWEB.COM/  
 FORESTRY-COMMITTEE



## PERMITTED

Walking  
 Bicycling - including e-bikes  
 XC Skiing and Snowshoeing  
 Pets (leashed)  
 Hunting (in-season and according to NH law)  
 Snowmobiling (only on designated trails)

## NOT PERMITTED

OHRV  
 Camping  
 Fires

Please carry out all trash



For mobile navigation, download the  
 ESRI Field Maps app to your device  
 and search for PELHAM TRAILS

Map by **NRPC**