

WELCOME TO KNIGHTS HILL NATURE PARK.

The park consists of 74 acres of natural habitat set aside as a sanctuary for the protection of wildlife. It has a secondary purpose as a quiet and peaceful retreat for people to enjoy the aesthetic and scientific study of nature. The field house is open during the summer and staffed by a naturalist. Ask for a program of events that will include nature walks, bird watching, learning about wild and aquatic life, plant and tree identification, and an occasional night sky watch. For the naturalist in you there are checklists available at the field house to record your finds as you travel the trails. While there, check notes on other guests' discoveries and be sure to stop back to add your own.

We invite you to follow the interpretive trail, starting at the field house and proceeding from station number 1 to 10, as listed below. Refer to the enclosed map for the locations of these points of interest.

1. Fern Garden – All the ferns you see are native to this area. Some have been transplanted to this spot to provide an opportunity to compare different species, which might assist in identifying the various ferns you encounter as you walk the trails. In all, there are twenty-one different species in the park. Several are quite rare.

2. Evergreen Forest – The area you have been walking through is mainly a pine and fir forest, dominated by the large White Pines. This combination of several native conifers

growing close to one another allows you to see the features that help tell them apart. There are good examples of Red Spruce, Eastern Hemlock and Balsam Fir. You will notice that the understory consists of rather small, low-growing plants. This is the result of the tall evergreen canopy which limits the amount of sunlight reaching the forest floor. Where more sunlight gets through, young trees are able to get their start.

3. Hardwood Forest - As you continue along from this point, you will notice a thicker ground cover of club mosses and ferns. Notice the gradual thinning of the pines, resulting in a change to more hardwoods, including Sugar and Red Maples, Northern Ash and some birches. An intermittent stream feeds the marsh on your left. The saturated marsh soils provide suitable habitat for these hardwoods, which can tolerate “wet feet.”

4. Wetland Plants – On the right side of the bridge are more plants especially adapted to wet conditions, such as False Dragonhead, Turtlehead, Spotted Jewelweed, and Male, Cinnamon and Sensitive Ferns. Look on the large, split boulder on the left to pick out a hardy, evergreen fern with once-divided leaves. This is Polypody, a fern that prefers to grow on rocks.

5. Marsh – On the left of this bridge is a small beaver dam. This dam was rebuilt by beavers in the Spring of 2018. Because the marsh is shallow, only young beavers spend time here and only for a brief period. Beavers

need much deeper water for their lodges. The pioneer trees that are growing in the marsh include Black Cherry, Speckled Adler, Yellow Birch and Quaking Aspen. Upstream from the dam are more species of marsh plants, including many species of sedges and grasses.

6. Vernal Pool – A vernal pool is a very special kind of wetland, one that is ephemeral and is not fed by a stream. It is formed by snow melt and the level of water depends on the amount of rainfall during the summer. In some years, this pool dries out entirely. It supports some of our lesser known amphibians, including the large black and yellow Spotted Salamander, the noisy Wood Frog and the small secretive Northern Two-lined Salamander, as well as several species of aquatic invertebrates. These animals enjoy a greater reproductive success because their major predator, fish, is absent from vernal pools. See if you can find evidence of eggs or tadpoles in spring and early summer.

7. Selective Logging – Deciduous hardwoods dominate at this location because almost all of the coniferous softwoods have been logged. Even so, these hardwoods are not very mature, indicating that the clearing of this part of the forest was done recently. As more sunlight reaches the forest floor now, the coniferous softwoods are making a comeback. A species of Rattlesnake Plantain, a native orchid, can be found near the bridge. It does not bloom every year, so it is difficult to find the 6-8 inch stalks with small, waxy white flowers. This is one of six species of orchids known to grow in the park

8. Fruit Trees – There are several old fruit trees at the up-hill side of this field. The fruit provides food for a variety of wildlife - Wild Turkeys, White-tailed Deer and other “critters”, most of which feed at night. Because the fruit is food for insect larvae as well, these trees become regular stops for our beautiful resident and migratory song birds. Robins, thrashers, catbirds, kinglets, vireos, nuthatches, woodpeckers and warblers all find something here to satisfy their appetites.

9. Pond – At the pond, you may find many animals and plants found nowhere else in the park. Several kinds of dragonflies and butterflies use the pond as their primary feeding and breeding ground. The magical Question Mark butterfly has bright orange on the upper surface of its wings. When it folds its wings, the cryptic, brownish-gray under-wing coloration makes this insect suddenly seem invisible. Look for the Twelve-spotted Skimmer dragonfly hovering over the pond's waters. Amongst the Milkweed plants in this small field are the webs of the large, beautiful Black-and-Yellow Argiope spider. You can identify their webs by the characteristic zigzag pattern in the center.

10. Fields – These fields are mowed on a rotating basis in order to encourage the growth of the many grasses and wildflowers that support arthropods and insects, which, in turn, become the food supply for birds and other small animals. The young trees and bushes along the forest edges are preferred nesting and feeding sites. In fact, birdwatchers find more birds species along the edges of these fields than anywhere else in the park.

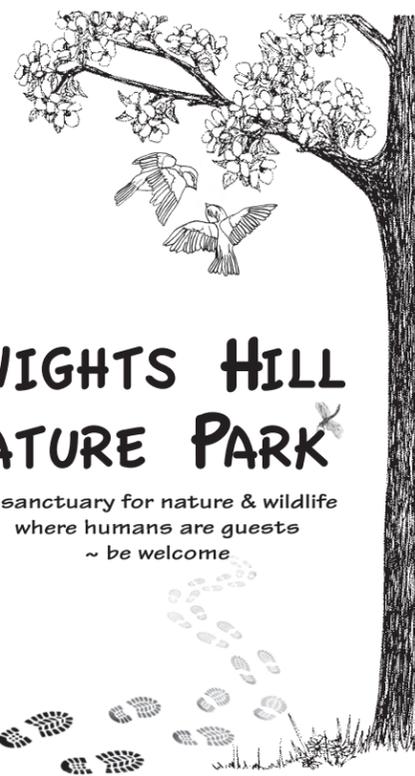
Blueberries are another source of food for many of the park's animals. This field has both Low and High Bush Blueberry plants. A few wildflowers are identified with labels, especially those flowers which provide food for butterflies. A new fern, not previously known in the park, was first discovered in 2006. Examples of this fern, the Cut-leaved Grape Fern, can be found in the field, growing flat on the ground, on either side of the trail going east from the field house during August and September.



In 1975 Knights Hill Nature Park was made possible by a generous donation of 70 acres of land by New London residents Lamont and Henrietta Moore. In the mid-1980's, neighbor Thomas Wistar made an additional gift of 4 acres, bringing the total acres of the park to 74.

Knights Hill Nature Park is a property of the New London Outing Club and through a variety of cooperative community efforts an additional 56 acres are now available for hiking trails.

We hope you enjoyed your visit to Knights Hill Nature Park! Come again and bring a friend.



Dedicated to the aesthetic appreciation, conservation, and scientific study of nature.

**74 Acres of Fields and Forest
Geology Garden
Pond, Marsh, and Stream
56 additional forested Acres
All linked by easy trails**

There are three geocaches at Knights Hill Nature Park

OPEN DAILY 8-6

**Admission Free
County Road
New London, N.H.**

Please sign the guest register at the entrance kiosks