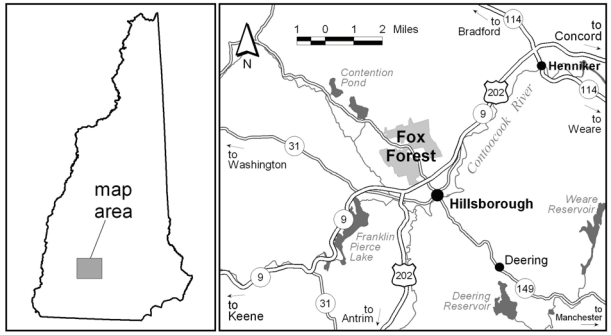
DIRECTIONS

From Rte. 202/9, take the Henniker St./W. Main St. Hillsborough exit. Go left at stop sign at end of exit ramp. Go 1.8 miles to the traffic light in the center of Hillsborough. Go right onto School St. (becomes Center Rd). Fox Forest is approximately 2 miles on right.



PROPERTY USE GUIDELINES

This property is open to the public for recreation and education. Please, for the protection of the area and its inhabitants, and for everyone's enjoyment:

- TRAILS ARE FOR MULTIPLE-USE. PLEASE SHARE.
- NO MOTORIZED WHEELED VEHICLES ON TRAILS.
- RESPECT THE PRIVATE PROPERTY OF ADJACENT LANDOWNERS.
- CARRY OUT ALL TRASH.
- PRACTICE LOW-IMPACT HIKING; TREAD LIGHTLY AND PLEASE DON'T PICK PLANTS OR FLOWERS.
- NO CAMPING OR OPEN FIRES ARE ALLOWED.

ABOUT FOX FOREST

Fox Forest is the State of New Hampshire's forestry research station. It is operated by the Forest Management Bureau, part of the NH Division of Forests & Lands in the Department of Resources & Economic Development. There are 22 miles of trails on nearly 1,500 acres of forest. Brochures and trail maps for the entire property are available at the site.

The NH Division of Forests & Lands protects and promotes the values provided by trees, forests, and related resources in the state. The **Natural Heritage Bureau** finds, tracks, and facilitates the protection of the state's rare and endangered plants and animals, exemplary natural communities, and systems. Natural communities are recurring assemblages of plants and animals found in particular physical environments.

ABOUT BLACK GUM SWAMPS

Black gum swamps are a rare wetland type in New England. They contain the highest concentration of black gum trees in the region. In New Hampshire, they are primarily found below 1000 ft. elevation, in central and southern parts of the state.

Black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) trees, also called black tupelo, are uncommon in New Hampshire, where they are at the northern edge of their North American range. They are the oldest known living hardwoods, and the oldest trees (nearly 700 years old) of any kind in New England.

The stag-headed upper trunks of old black gum trees are the result of repeated breakage of brittle limbs, which easily give way under heavy winds and ice loads. While the crown becomes a gnarled jumble of remaining branches, the strong trunks are left intact and the tree survives. The species is clonal, meaning trees close together may share the same root system and actually be the same genetic individual. The combination of an extensive clonal root system and brittle branches may have provided black gum trees with the right formula to withstand centuries of hurricanes and ice-storms. Look also for the rough, textured bark of older black gum trees.

This brochure was created by the New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau as part of a series designed to educate the public about the state's special plants and natural communities. It was reprinted with funds from the Caroline A. Fox Research & Demonstration Forest.
More site guides and profiles are available on the Visiting New Hampshire's Biodiversity program page at:

www.nhnaturalheritage.org

NEW HAMPSHIRE
NATURAL HERITAGE
BUREAU

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NH NATURAL HERITAGE BUREAU

VISITING NEW HAMPSHIRE'S BIODIVERSITY

FOX FOREST
BLACK GUM SWAMP

a property managed by

New Hampshire Department of Resources & Economic Development
Division of Forests & Lands

This brochure was developed with funds from the NH Conservation License Plate
www.mooseplate.com

TRAIL DESCRIPTION:

At the Fox Research and Demonstration Forest, several different natural and managed vegetation communities can be viewed along the trail to the black gum swamp.

The beginning of the trail gently descends from the road and you quickly come to a sharp right turn **(1)**. This area is a red pine plantation **(2)**: look for distinct rows of trees here. At a fallen-over tree, the trail turns sharply left **(3)**. Go through a break in an old stone wall **(4)** and bear slightly left. The forest transitions to a stand of white pine, red oak, and hemlock. Several glacial erratic boulders dot the ground in the woods on either side of the trail. Cross over a log bridge and arrive at a stand of hemlock and white pine **(5)**. At the junction with Hurricane Road **(6)**, go left on the road a short distance, then veer right off the road onto Ridge Trail. At the next junction **(7)**, bear right and down the hill on the Swamp Trail. The upland woods here are composed mostly of a mix of hemlock, birch, and white pine trees. Many small, young trees indicate healthy regeneration of the forest. Pass the junction with the White Cross Trail (coming in on the right) and continue straight to the eastern edge of the ***black gum - red maple basin swamp***.

The ground in the swamp **(8)** consists of a thick layer of peat moss and is saturated year-round. As the community name implies, the tree canopy is dominated by black gum and red maple trees, though other species are present as well. A thick shrub layer of mountain holly, highbush blueberry, and winterberry grows below. The winterberry plants produce bright red berries in fall, providing an excellent source of food for birds. The herbaceous plant layer is mostly composed of several trailing evergreen species such as partridgeberry and wintergreen, as well as others such as bunchberry, cinnamon fern, and several sedges.

The black gum trees, several of which are visible from the trail, have blocky, deeply-furrowed bark ridges and characteristically stag-headed upper trunks. These trees are very old (over 400 years). Several dead trees that are still standing (snags) provide good habitat for small animals and birds.

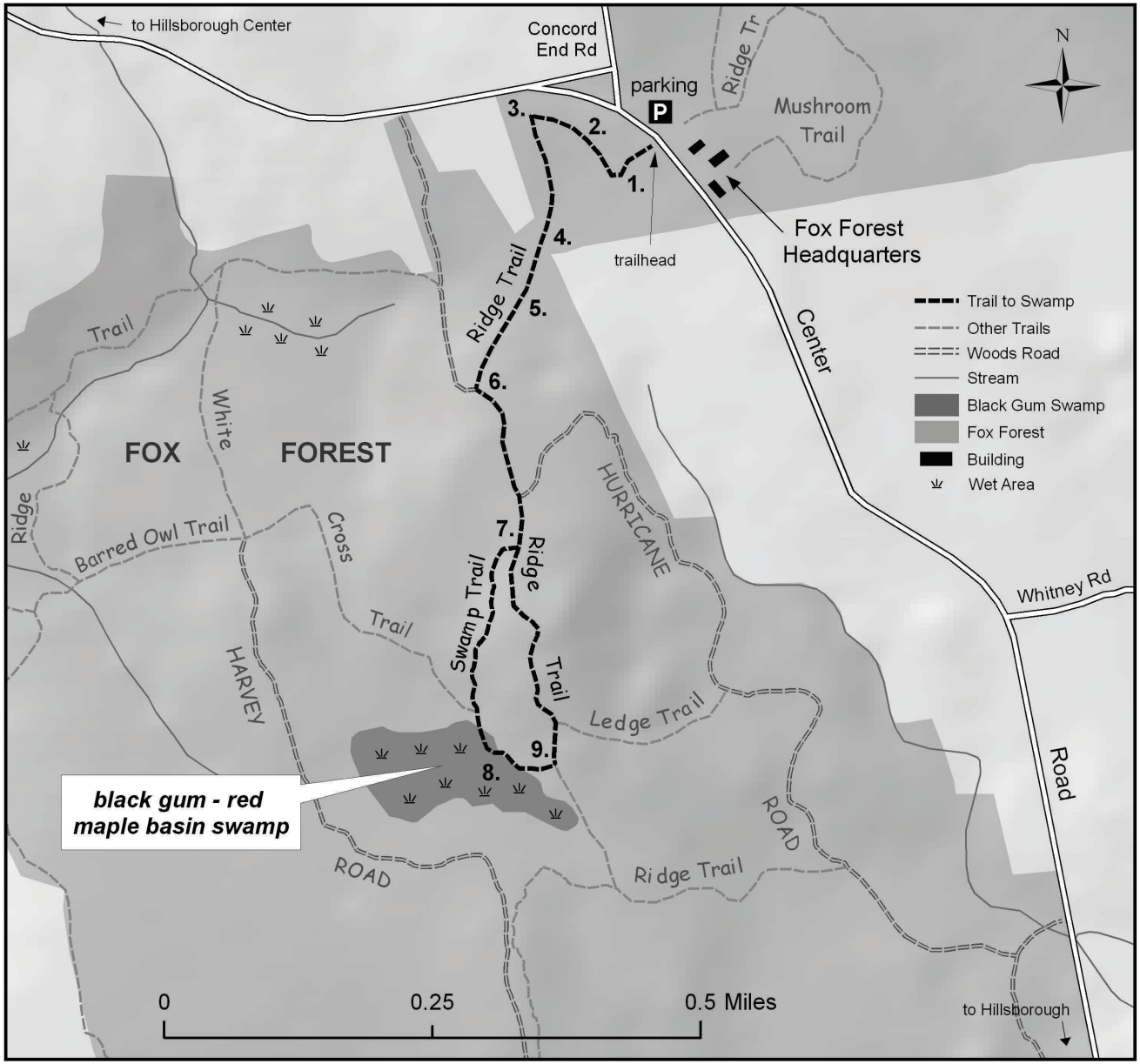
To return, either walk back the way you've just come, or make a short loop by continuing on to the Ridge Trail again **(9)**, and turning left up the hill.

TRAIL NOTES:

This trail travels over moderate terrain, with some small hills. The footing varies from dirt path to rocks to roots to wooden bridges. Please wear appropriate footwear and be prepared for a variety of possible weather conditions. The round trip distance is about 2 miles and takes about an hour to complete. The Ridge Trail is marked with red on white blazes.

OTHER TRAILS AT FOX FOREST:

This guide only highlights the walk to the black gum swamp, but Fox Forest contains many more miles of interesting and varied trails, including one to a bog at Mud Pond where a boardwalk extends out onto the peat mat. Trail maps are available at the trailhead at Fox Forest Headquarters at 309 Center Rd, and on the NH Division of Forests and Lands website.



Maps and photo by Ben Kimball