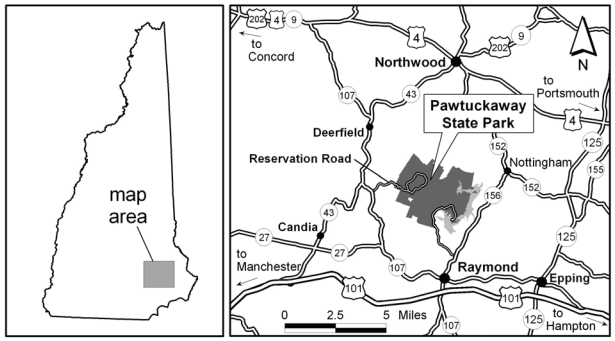
DIRECTIONS

From Rte. 4 east of Epsom, take Rte. 107 south to Deerfield. Take Reservation Rd 1.8 miles east into the park, bearing right at 1.2 miles. Park at a small dirt lot on the left side of the road (sign #12).

From Rte. 101, take exit 5 in Raymond. Go north on Rte. 107 for about 8 miles towards Deerfield. Take Reservation Rd 1.8 miles east into the park. Park at a small dirt lot on the left side of the road.



PARK USE GUIDELINES

This park is open to the public for recreation and education. Park trails may be closed for several months in spring to reduce erosion. Hunting is allowed in the park in late fall, so make sure to wear bright orange if you go then.

- NO MOTORIZED WHEELED VEHICLES.
- NO PETS ALLOWED.
- CARRY OUT ALL TRASH.
- NO CAMPING OR OPEN FIRES.
- PRACTICE LOW-IMPACT RECREATION. PLEASE DON'T PICK PLANTS OR FLOWERS.

NH DIVISION OF PARKS & RECREATION

The mission of the NH Division of Parks & Recreation is to protect and preserve recreational, historic, scenic, and natural areas of the state, to make park areas and facilities accessible to the public for recreational, educational, scientific and other uses consistent with their protection and preservation, and to encourage and support tourism and related economic activities within the state.

www.nhstateparks.org

PAWTUCKAWAY STATE PARK

This 5,500-acre park in southeastern NH contains a diverse mix of upland and wetland communities. Throughout much of the park, the dominant natural community is ***hemlock - beech - oak - pine forest***, the most characteristic forest type across much of central New England. It forms the background "matrix," in which other large and small patch communities are nested. The park also contains a wide variety of wetland types, including peatlands, emergent herbaceous marshes, and forested swamps.

A defining feature of the park is the Pawtuckaway Mountains, a circular formation of steep hills that occupies the western third of the property. These mountains are part of an unusual geologic feature called a "ring-dike," and are essentially the remains of an ancient volcano. The bedrock of the ring-dike weathers to create conditions that support a particularly high diversity of plant species. This site harbors one of the highest concentrations of rare species and exemplary natural communities and systems in the state. Much of the land within the ring-dike was cleared for pasture in the late 18th century, but most of it was subsequently abandoned in the mid-19th century, and is now re-forested.

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. 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

North Mountain At Pawtuckaway State Park

a property managed by

New Hampshire Department of Resources & Economic Development

Division of Parks & Recreation

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

TRAIL DESCRIPTION:

This guide primarily describes the vegetation seen along the North Mountain Trail, the Boulder Trail, and the North Mtn. Bypass Trail. The entire hike is approximately 5 miles long over rugged terrain.

At the parking area next to an old cellar hole, hike north past the closed gate on an old woods road (a snowmobile trail in winter). This is the North Mtn. Trail. It crosses a small stream and rises at a gentle grade. In about 0.4 miles, arrive at a trail junction and go right. Then take an immediate left and begin ascending North Mtn., steeply in places, on the white-blazed trail. Some spring wildflowers to look for along the way include blunt-lobed hepatica and wild columbine. Soon you arrive at open rock ledges with views to the east. Hike north along the ridge.

North Mtn. (also known as Mt. Pawtuckaway) is essentially a narrow, curving ridge that forms the northwest portion of the Pawtuckaway ring-dike system. Ecologically, North Mtn. has the greatest variety of habitats of any site in the park, and is also home to a large number of rare plant species. Differences in the mineral content of the underlying bedrock have a significant impact on the richness of the soils. These differences are reflected in the vegetation, with species of nutrient-poor soils tending to grow on the northwest slopes, and species of nutrient-rich soils growing on the southeast slopes.

The dry, upper portions of the mountain support an **Appalachian oak rocky ridge system**. The partially open tree canopy is characterized by red oak, white pine, shagbark hickory, white oak, white ash, and ironwood. It also includes a number of southern oak species such as white oak, black oak, scarlet oak, and chestnut oak. Several rare herb species grow here, including sickle-pod, Missouri rockcress, early buttercup, Back's sedge, reflexed sedge, hairy brome grass, American cancerroot, climbing fumitory, slender knotweed, hay sedge, and blunt-lobed woodsia, as well as the uncommon maidenhair spleenwort and fern-leaved false foxglove.

About 1.4 miles from Reservation Road, you reach the actual summit of North Mtn., the highest point in the park. On the descent along the ridge to the north, pass a large, green communications reflector on an open ledge. Then swing left and begin a steep descent through a dark ***hemlock forest***. After bearing right at the bottom of the slope, the trail continues along the ridge and passes more dry, open rocky ledges with views, then steadily descends through a boulder-strewn hardwood forest to Dead Pond.

An acidic, nutrient-poor peatland currently fills most of the eastern half of Dead Pond. This basin has been impacted by beaver activity in the recent past, which may have affected the vegetative composition of the peatland. Bear right and continue descending.

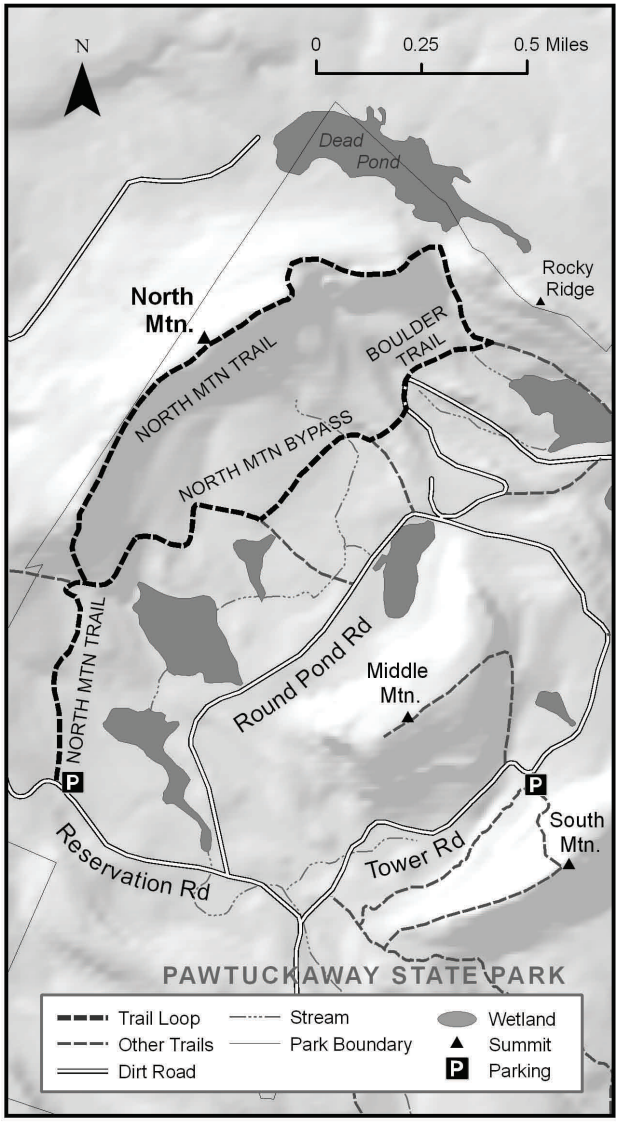
Nestled in the notch between North Mtn. and Rocky Ridge is the area of huge boulders known as the Boulder Field. The tallest rocks here are about 30 feet high. This geologic phenomenon is the result of glaciers "plucking" large chunks of bedrock from the northern end of North Mtn. and depositing them below. In addition to being a popular recreation site for rock climbers, the boulder field harbors an exemplary ***hemlock - white pine forest***. Tree coring in this community has identified several trees over 150 years old. Dense colonies of rock polypody and lichens grow on many of the rock surfaces, as does fringed bindweed, an herbaceous vine.

Take a right at the junction with the Boulder Trail. About 0.1 miles south of the end of the Boulder Trail on Round Pond Rd, go right onto the North Mtn. Bypass Trail. Hike southwest along the lower slopes of the mountain.

The trail crosses the headwaters of Mountain Brook, a small perennial stream that flows south out of the ring-dike. Along the course of the brook are a series of wetlands, collectively forming an **emergent marsh - shrub swamp system**. This complex system contains many different natural community types in various stages of succession. The hydrology of these wetlands is determined by a combination of seasonal flooding and groundwater seepage. In several places, beavers have impounded the stream, and created or expanded open wetlands.

Upslope from the trail, soils have received some nutrient enrichment from the underlying bedrock. They hold moisture and support areas of ***semi-rich oak - sugar maple forest***. This community is characterized by a diverse tree canopy of sugar maple, shagbark hickory, red oak, and white ash, among others. There is a fairly diverse suite of herbaceous species, with some of the more common being Christmas fern, red baneberry, and foamflower. East of the trail, the community is the more common ***hemlock - beech - oak - pine forest***.

At the junction with the North Mtn. Trail, take a left and return to the parking area the way you came in.



Map and photo by Ben Kimball, 2010