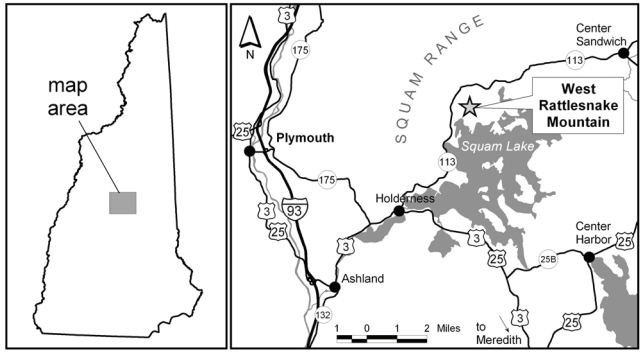
DIRECTIONS

From I-93, take Rte. 3 east to Holderness. From Holderness, take Rte. 113 (a slow, curvy road) north for about 4 miles. At the top of a hill, just past Pinehurst Road, park in the small lot on the west side of the road and then cross the road to the trailhead for the Old Bridle Path. The yellow blazed trail is about a mile long on an easy grade.

Note that there is no parking at the trailheads for the Ramsey Trail or the Five Finger Point Trail. If parking in this vicinity, vehicles should park off the road before the gate on Pinehurst Road (about 1/4 mile east of trailhead), taking care to not block the gate.



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:

- -Foot travel only; please stay on the marked trails
- -No horses, bicycles, or motor vehicles allowed
- -No camping or fires
- -Do not collect or disturb plants or animals
- -Please respect private property
- -Carry out all trash and litter

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

The University of New Hampshire owns and manages a portion of this site as a natural area. In keeping with the educational and research goals of the University, natural areas are intended to remain kept in a natural state for the purpose of study. Recreational activities are promoted on all UNH lands. The trails at the Rattlesnakes are maintained by the Squam Lakes Conservation Society. For more information, contact the UNH Office of Woodlands and Natural Areas: woodlands@unh.edu

www.unh.edu/woodlands

RICH RED OAK ROCKY WOODS

The views from the open outcrops at The Rattlesnakes are reason enough to visit, but the rich forest below the steep ledges is special as well. The dripping overhangs right below the cliffs support a variety of moisture-laden mosses and lichens. Lower down, a mix of medium-size trees grow among the mossy boulders of the talus slope. The community here is ***rich red oak rocky woods***, with a thin canopy dominated by red oak (*Quercus rubra*), white oak (*Q. alba*), red pine (*Pinus resinosa*), and maples (*Acer* spp.), with occasional white pine trees (*Pinus strobus*), basswood (*Tilia americana*), and hop hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*) throughout. The understory flora is diverse as well, containing rich soil indicator species such as rock cresses (*Arabis* sp.), hepatica (*Anemone hepatica*), and flat-leaved sedge (*Carex platyphylla*). Some other common plant species in this woodland include wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), early saxifrage (*Saxifraga virginiensis*), marginal wood fern (*Dryopteris marginalis*), harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum pubescens*), false Solomon's seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*), pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*), and poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*). The rare plants fern-leaved false foxglove (*Aureolaria pedicularia* var. *intercedens*) and rock sandwort (*Minuartia michauxii*) grow on some of the ledges here. Below the talus, the forest thickens and becomes less rich as it nears Pinehurst Road at the bottom. Due to its size and condition, this community occurrence is considered exemplary by the NH Natural Heritage Bureau.

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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The DFL is an equal opportunity employer and educator.

NH Natural Heritage Bureau

Visiting New Hampshire's Biodiversity

West Rattlesnake Mtn. Rich Rocky Woods and Outcrops

a property owned and managed by

The University of New Hampshire
Office of Woodlands and Natural Areas

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

TRAIL DESCRIPTION:

This trail guide describes the natural communities seen along the Old Bridle Path and at the granite outcrops near the top of West Rattlesnake Mountain. The ledges on East Rattlesnake are quite similar however (usually with fewer visitors), and a well-maintained network of other hiking trails can also be explored in the vicinity.

Entering the woods at the Old Bridle Path trailhead, look for a wide mix of tree species indicative of a forest recovering from past management. The natural community here is ***hemlock - beech - oak - pine forest***, one of the most common upland forest types in southern and central parts of the state.

As you approach West Rattlesnake's rock outcrops, the forest thins out and red pine (*Pinus resinosa*) becomes a common tree. Red oak (*Quercus rubra*) appears as well. Look left for a shrubby wetland filled with highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*) and moss hummocks.

Douglas' knotweed (*Polygonum douglasii*) grows in the thin soil on and to the sides of the pink outcrops here. This small, wispy herb is rare in New Hampshire, known from only about a dozen locations. The habitat for this species has been heavily disturbed in the past, and several dirt "islands" have been marked off with stone rings in an effort to protect it. Great care should be taken to not step or sit on the vegetation or soil here. Foot traffic should be limited to existing trails and bare rock.

Several other species growing on the dry outcrops of the ***red oak - pine rocky ridge*** community include ground juniper (*Juniperus communis*), staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*), rock spikemoss (*Selaginella rupestris*), and bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*).

The sweeping view from West Rattlesnake is classic New Hampshire, encompassing Squam Lake and its many forested islands, bald eagle roosts, and mountains in the distance. The actual summit of the mountain is a few hundred feet to the north in the woods along the Ridge Trail.

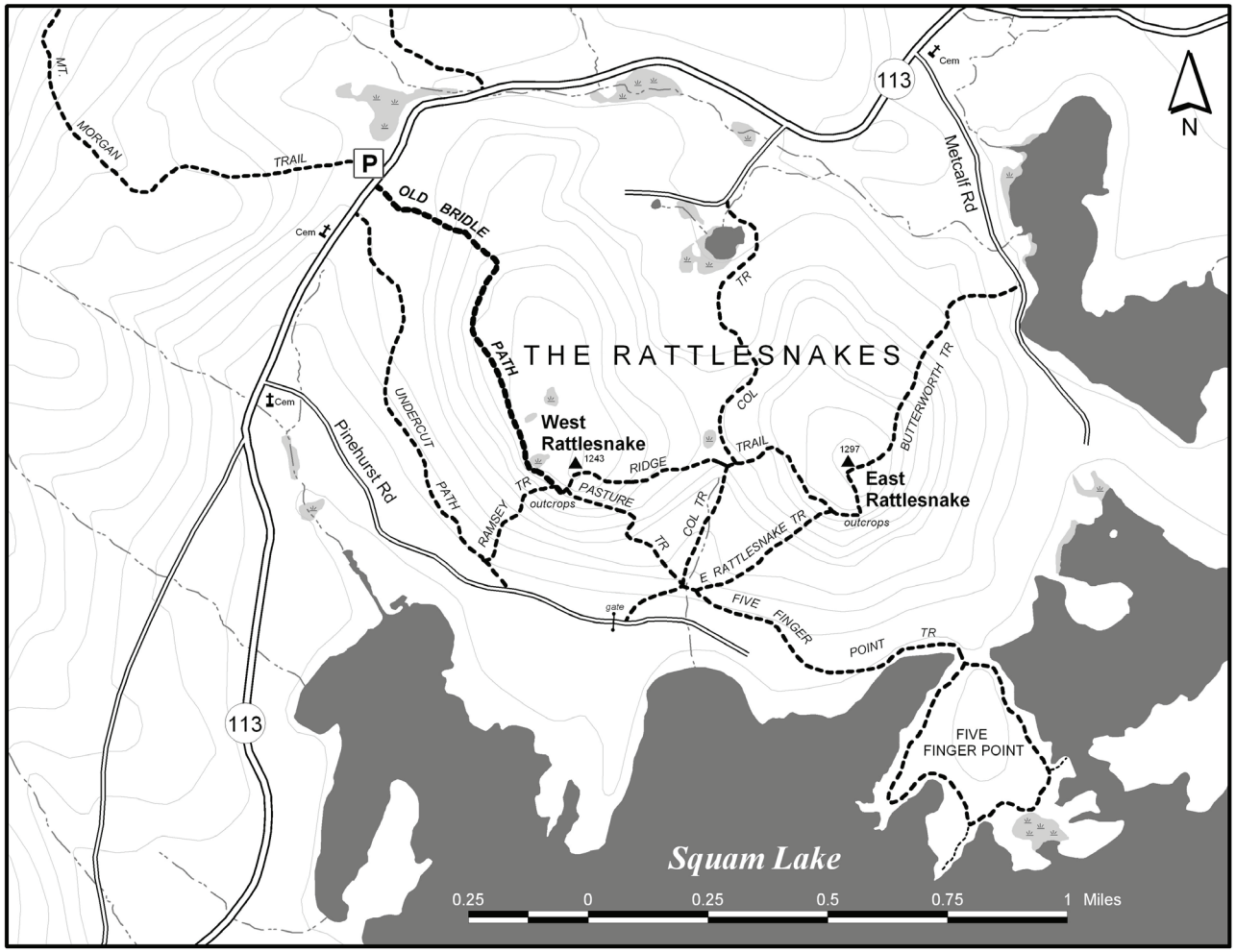
Descending to the east of the ledges, the Pasture Trail immediately enters the woods and briefly passes through a small but exemplary ***red oak - ironwood - Pennsylvania sedge woodland***. This uncommon natural community type is notable for the "grassy" lawn of Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*) that carpets the ground and the park-like nature of the tree canopy. Herbaceous species such as rusty woodsia (*Woodsia ilvensis*) are indicative of dry, rich soil conditions. Several other species you may see here include brightly colored wood lily (*Lilium philadelphicum*), hepatica (*Anemone hepatica*), and several species of rock cress (*Arabis* spp.).

From the west side of the outcrops, the Ramsey Trail drops steeply to the south. Along with the mostly flat Undercut Path, it provides a possible loop route back to the parking lot. This is also the best way to see the exemplary ***rich red oak rocky woods*** (see description on reverse side) that occurs below the ledges. In late summer, look for the bright yellow flowers of fern-leaved false foxglove (*Aureolaria pedicularia* var. *intercedens*), a rare plant which grows in profusion along this trail.

The Armstrong Natural Area encompasses the open outcrops of West Rattlesnake as well as much of the surrounding vicinity. Named after the original owners when they donated the land to the University of New Hampshire, the site is intended for recreation and education. There are currently very few property designations like this in the state. Hopefully this inspiring site will serve as a model to encourage protection of others in the future.

FIVE FINGER POINT

Connected to the Rattlesnakes trail network is the loop trail around Five Finger Point, a scenic peninsula that juts out into Squam Lake. On this trail you pass through a diverse and exemplary ***hemlock - beech - oak - pine forest,*** a portion of which is virgin old growth. The trail also passes close to several other interesting natural communities, including pristine rocky lakeshore, several small, sandy beaches in sheltered coves, and a boggy ***black gum - red maple basin swamp***. This is one of the northernmost occurrences of black gum (black tupelo), a tree species at the northern edge of its range in New Hampshire. Biologists value these populations since the individuals growing in them typically possess significant genetic variations from the ones growing closer to the center of the species' range, and as such they are important elements of biodiversity.



Maps and Photo by Ben Kimball, 2007.