



PETERBOROUGH

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

T RAIL GUIDE

PETERBOROUGH TRAIL GUIDE

"A brisk early fall afternoon. Sparkling grass and song birds. Everyone should be so lucky to have a place like this...just down the road!"

Conservation and the Public

Land conservation takes many forms and often results in wonderful trails open to the public. The Raymond Trail land and Casalis State Forest were donated outright by generous landowners; the Wheeler Trail and Fremont Conservation Land properties were purchased through Conservation Commission fundraising. The Cheney Avenue field (along the Wheeler Trail) was conserved by neighborhood fundraising. The Old Railroad Trail resulted in part from landowner donation.

In addition, many landowners in Peterborough have placed conservation easements on their land, whereby they remain owners-in-full but further development of the land is specifically limited by deed restriction – ensuring that future generations (human and wildlife) will enjoy the land as it is today. Landowner stewardship greatly influences the health of the forest resource, including its role in preserving air, soil, and water quality, as well as related wildlife and scenic values.

Increasingly, land stewardship involves monitoring for invasive upland plants – species that spread aggressively to crowd out natural plant diversity. Early detection and removal is essential to avoid densities difficult to control. The Conservation Commission's guide to the dozen most problematic plants in our region is available at the Town House.

Conservation Commission members are available to discuss stewardship practices with landowners, as well as a wide variety of conservation options. Land with wetlands or water bodies; with exceptional scenic, trail, or wildlife value; or that abuts existing conservation property has the highest conservation value.

Last but not least, volunteers are needed to clear trails of blowdowns, or join workgangs that tackle any number of projects on town conservation land including invasive plant monitoring and removal.

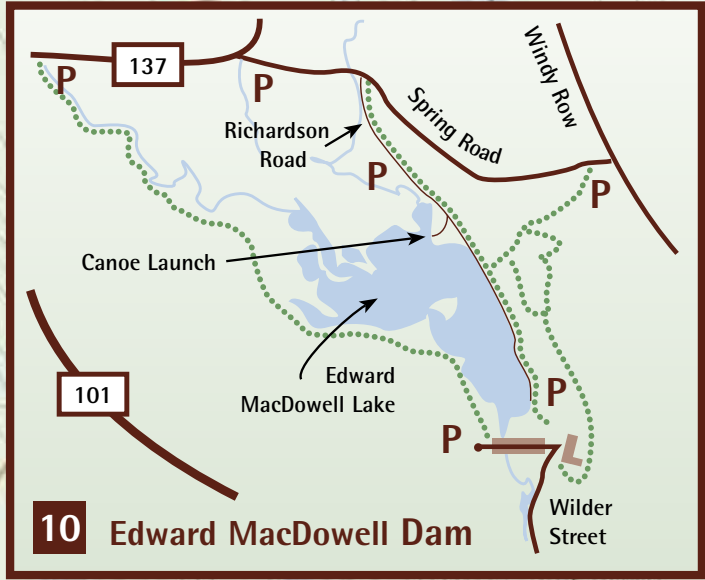
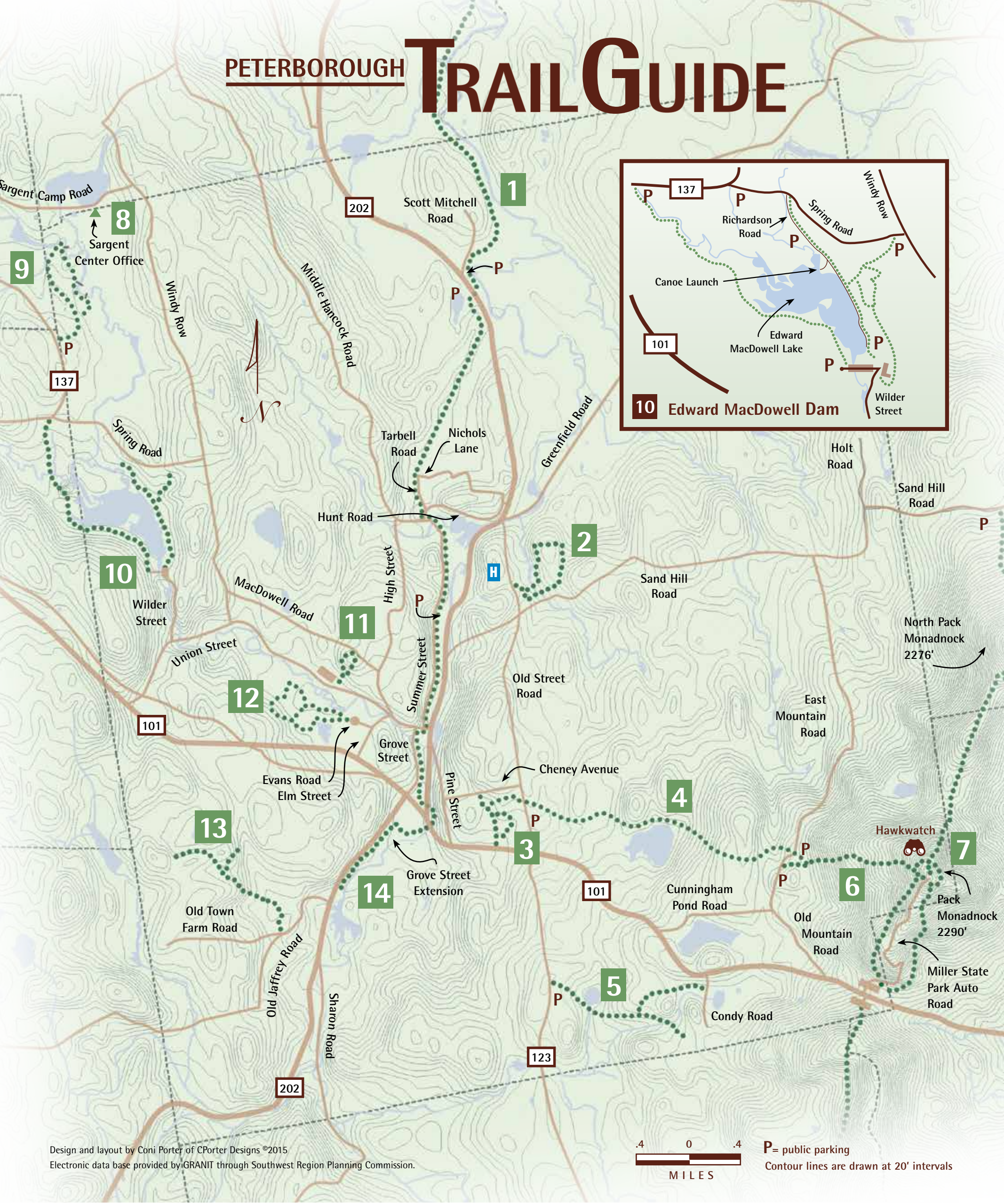
The Conservation Commission can be contacted through the Peterborough Town House (924-8000 ext. 101).



More information about conserved land and trails in Peterborough – and people who have made both possible – is available online at Peterboroughopenspace.org.

There are many wonderful trails on private land that are open to neighbors and townspeople by landowner permission. This guide is to public trails only. Class VI roads – former town roads that have been discontinued – also are public ways but as they lack parking areas they have not been included in this guide.

PETERBOROUGH **T**RAIL **G**UIDE



1 Old Railroad Trail

Trailhead and parking just beyond the town Recycling Center on Scott Mitchell Road, off Route 202N. The trail follows the old B&M Railroad bed along the Contoocook River corridor well into Hancock (2.7 miles to Forest Road). It offers flat terrain for jogging and cross-country skiing, as well as a scenic riverside ramble. Conservation of the trail was a project of the Peterborough and Hancock Conservation Commissions, the Harris Center, and N.H. Fish & Game, and land donated by the Walcott family.

2 Shieling Forest

Trailhead near the Forestry Learning Center on Old Street Road, just north of the intersection with Sand Hill Road. Forest loop trails pass a variety of natural and man-made sites, including a wildflower garden maintained by the Peterborough Garden Club, the remains of a granite quarry and of a brickyard, and a collection of huge "glacial erratics" (boulders deposited by the retreating glacier). The land and buildings were donated to the state by author and longtime Peterborough resident Elizabeth Yates McGreal. Trail guide available online.

3 Wheeler Trail

Close to downtown, this gem of a trail offers a short loop hike over easy terrain. Named for Coburn Wheeler, Conservation Commission chair from 1978 to 1989, the trail meanders through mature forest along Wallace Brook, has an open-field spur to a small pond, and links with Cranberry Meadow Pond Trail (see #4). Look for an old-growth white pine near the larger, upstream bridge. Limited parking at trailhead which is located on Route 101, .7 miles east of the Route 101/202 traffic lights.

4 Cranberry Meadow Pond Trail

The Monadnock Conservancy and local forester Swift Corwin worked with private landowners to create the 2.6-mile Cranberry Meadow Pond Trail – a key missing link in their vision for a town-to-summit trail from downtown Peterborough to the Pack Monadnock summit. Cranberry Meadow Pond Trail links with the Raymond Trail (see #6) for a moderately strenuous 4.5-mile town-to-summit hike. Many hikers choose a shorter option: Cranberry Meadow Pond Trail from Old Street Road to East Mountain Road, 2.2 miles along wetland and winding brook, through hemlock and oak forests. That section is on private properties courtesy of the landowners. Accordingly, please stay on the trail. Trail guide available online and posted at kiosk on Old Street Road.

5 Casalis State Forest

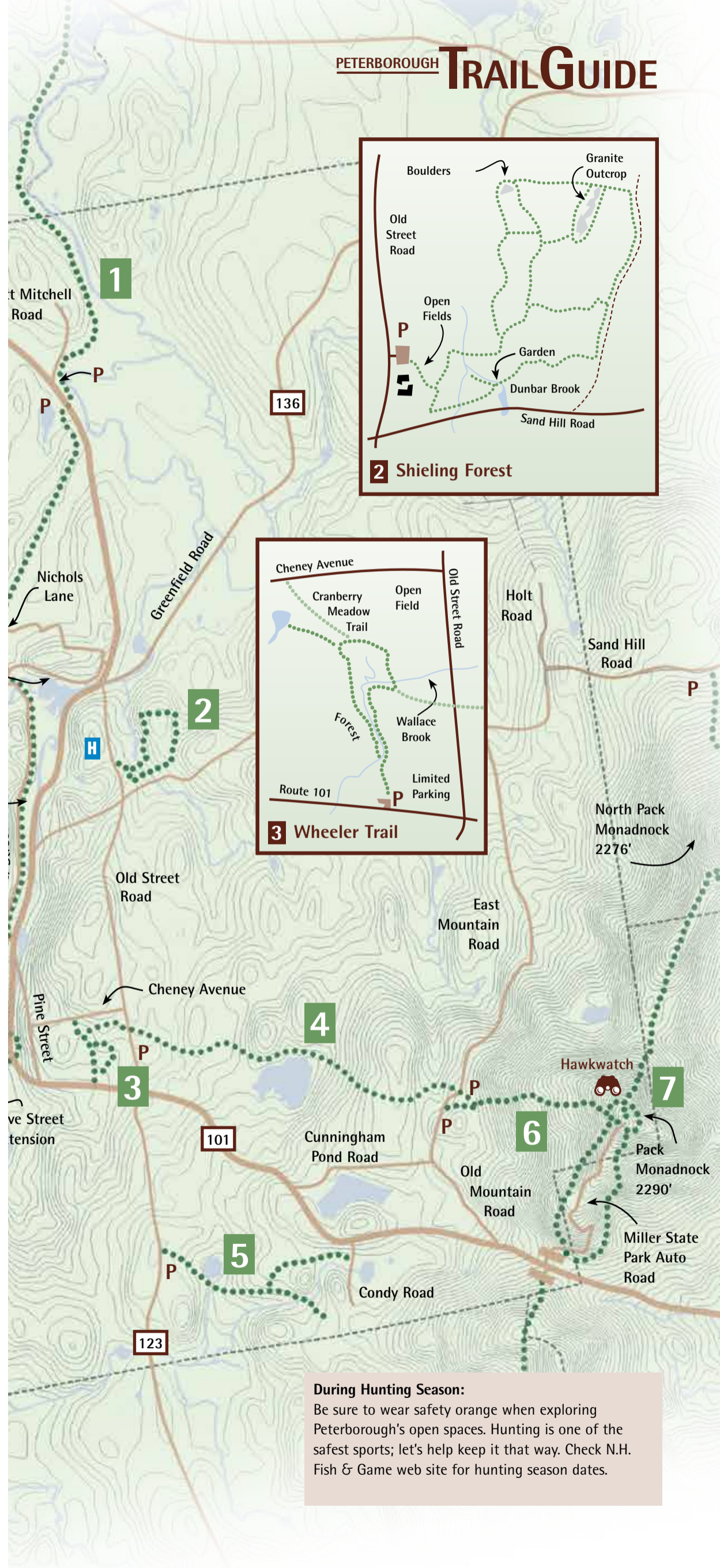
Encompasses 228 acres of forest, trails, pond, and streams. Parking area is located 1 mile from Route 101 on Route 123 toward Sharon. Main trail passes scenic pond and wetlands, proceeding easterly to Town Line Brook which cuts through a mature hemlock forest. A rugged bushwhack upstream leads to a dramatic mini-gorge. A left fork a few hundred yards past the pond meanders in a northeasterly direction to Condy Road, approximately 1.5 miles from the parking area. Property donated to the state by Isabel Adams Bross Casalis.

6 Raymond Trail

Moderate to rugged 1.6-mile climb up the west side of Pack Monadnock. Near the summit, the trail joins the 21-mile ridgeline Wapack Trail (see #7) for those wishing to extend their hike. Limited parking at trailhead on East Mountain Road .9 miles north off Route 101. A larger parking area for the Cranberry Meadow Pond Trail is a short distance farther along, and connects to the Raymond Trail by a short link. The trail was designed by Friends of the Wapack and cut with assistance from Boy Scout Troops 808 and 8 on land given to the town by Joanne Bird Kane.

7 Wapack Trail & Miller State Park

The popular 21-mile ridgeline Wapack Trail runs from Mount Watatic (MA) to North Pack Monadnock in Greenfield. Local access is by the Raymond Trail (see #6), or the Temple Mountain or Miller State Park parking areas on Route 101. Many regulars hike the paved auto road (1.5 miles) up Pack Monadnock year-round for a good workout on sure terrain, while others choose companion trails to the summit (Wapack Trail on the rockier west side through coniferous forest, or the less steep Marion Davis Trail to the east of the auto road through mixed forest). The state collects a Park fee during the summer and on fall weekends from the parking area kiosk. Many people also hike from the northernmost point, where Sand Hill Road extends into Greenfield (trailhead 4.3 miles from Route 202). Wapack Trail guides and maps are available online, and Miller State Park maps are at kiosk.



During Hunting Season:
 Be sure to wear safety orange when exploring Peterborough's open spaces. Hunting is one of the safest sports; let's help keep it that way. Check N.H. Fish & Game web site for hunting season dates.



8 Sargent Center / Nature's Classroom
 Located on Sargent Camp Road off Windy Row on the Hancock border, the Center offers trails on 700 acres for hiking/cross-country skiing. The Center asks that trail users check in at the main office to sign a one-time liability waiver. Trail map available at office and online.

9 Hiroshi Conservation Land
 A 1.6-mile loop trail begins with open field before entering forest grown up along old farm roads. A scenic section along Nubanusit Brook leads to a northernmost viewpoint across wide wetlands. By cable bridge or pull-along raft, hikers can cross the Nubanusit to access Sargent Center trails (see #8). The Harris Center for Conservation Education with help from Peterborough's land conservation fund purchased the 109-acre property in 2014. The land is named in memory of its longtime owner and well-known chef, Hiroshi Hayashi, honoring his deep connection to the land. Located on Route 137, 2 miles north of Route 101 and Carr's Store. Trail map at trailhead kiosk and on Harris Center website.

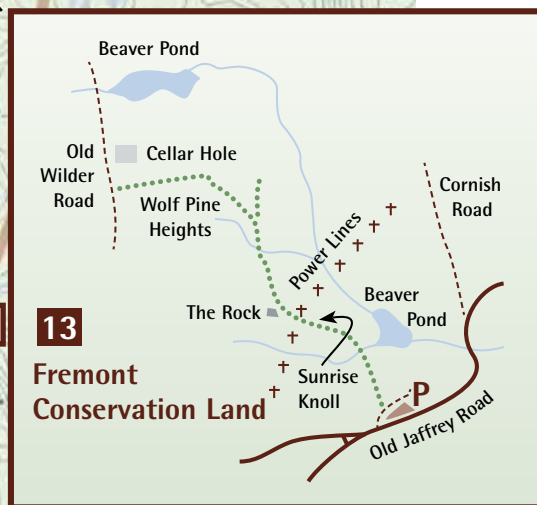
10 Edward MacDowell Dam
 The dam and floodway, built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to control flooding of Nubanusit Brook, created a lake and recreation area of over 1,000 acres. Open daylight hours for boating, fishing, swimming at designated beach area (no lifeguard), hunting during state-regulated hunting seasons, and picnicking (grills, tables, and two large shelters that can be reserved for a fee for group use). Trails offer a mix of forest and wetland/shoreland exploration. Car access from the north by Spring Road and Richardson Road parking areas, and main entrance off Union Street. Trail map at headquarters kiosk and online. Dogs on leash.

11 Seccombe Trail
 Created by the Peterborough Recreation Department on land donated by the Seccombe family, this short woodland trail starts near the Adams Playground pool on Union Street and leads uphill past the old Seccombe family cemetery. William Seccombe, a sea captain who served as a Lieutenant Commander in the Spanish-American War, is buried there, and gravestones also honor a son and daughter who perished along with 1,196 others when the Lusitania was sunk by a German submarine in 1915.

12 Evans Flats Trail
 Volunteers including neighbors and Conservation Commission members mapped and cleared this 1.6-mile, mostly forested trail along Nubanusit Brook lowlands. The land's former owners, eager to conserve land they loved, offered it to the town first and at a favorable price. In 2001 voters approved funds to purchase the 109-acre property, thereby conserving significant wetlands, and aquifer and floodplain geography. Blue blazes mark the main loop and orange blazes mark a midway shortcut option. Watch for signs of the land's farming history as you explore the trail. It's rough underfoot at times, and waterproof boots are recommended during wet periods. Trailhead and kiosk at Evans Road cul-de-sac off Elm Street. Note: Because of exceptional wildlife habitat on this river-corridor land, dogs are not allowed.

13 Fremont Conservation Land
 A mix of habitat types provides an outstanding variety of plants and wildlife, accessed by a trail through open field and forest (172 acres; 2 miles, out and back). Trailhead located on Old Jaffrey Road, .5 miles from Route 202 at Noone Falls. Park well off the pavement on the old farm road that parallels the open field (near mailbox #100). Trail guide in mailbox at trailhead gives land history and highlights.

14 Common Pathway
 Built in phases, the 6.5-mile Common Pathway begins at the Noone Falls area in south Peterborough and follows the Contoocook River corridor north by a combination of the old rail bed, sidewalks through the downtown area, and two highway underpasses. The map indicates parking areas on Summer Street, and along Route 202N where the Pathway connects with the Old Railroad Trail (see #1). The Pathway offers easy walking on level terrain, and the paved portion (Noone Falls north to Southfield Lane) is plowed by the town in winter. Note: Navigate the Peterborough Plaza as best you can to the Route 101 underpass close by the river, and then by sidewalk through the downtown and north along Summer Street until the trail returns to pastoral settings.



Quotes from the Wheeler and Fremont trail logbooks communicate so well what trails mean to townspeople and visitors.

"Amazing how a trail can lift your spirits."

"Thank you for this little peaceful haven. We'll be sending our B&B guests to enjoy this great spot. Enchanting!!"

"The weather is gorgus. The sun is so bright and warm. The breez is chilly but nice. My Dad and I and our dog Rose all sunbathed in the sun and played on the wonderful ice."

Love, Sophia 9½, Rose 3½, Dad 57

"A lovely soft sky, warm morning. Thank you for caring for the land."

What to see on the trails

Four general habitat types occur in the area. Different plant and animal species favor particular habitats, so where you go will influence what you see – or what sees you!

Pond, Wetland, and River Corridor

Listen in early spring, when ice and snow linger on, for the "Peent!!" notes of male woodcocks at dusk and dawn. The wood frog male chorus sounds like ducks quacking and indicates the presence of a vernal pool – required breeding habitat for species including wood frogs and certain salamanders. The frog chorus continues with spring peepers on through to trilling toads and croaking bullfrogs as summer arrives. Territorial red-winged blackbirds are a lot easier to find than secretive wood ducks at water's edge. Beavers resume their busy work schedules at dusk (earth moving, dam building, small-scale forestry), and wide-ranging river otters are always worth watching for.

Open Field

A disappearing habitat as the forest grows up, open field and field edge host many wildlife species. Fremont Field is cut in late summer to encourage milkweed for monarch butterflies, a rapidly declining and very charismatic species, along with other pollinators. In fall, goldenrod is a honeybee favorite. Nestboxes maintained at the Wheeler Trail and Fremont fields host bluebirds and tree swallows. Early morning is the best time to observe wildlife along with dusk as many wildlife species are crepuscular (a great word worth looking up).

Ridgeline and Mountain

Raymond and Wapack Trails offer good hawkwatching views in fall, especially in mid-September when broad-winged hawks swarm south on hazy, hot, and humid days. Listen for the "aulk-aulk" of playful ravens year-round. Watch for bobcat signs near rocky, south-facing ledges. September through October visit N.H. Audubon's staffed hawkwatch site at Miller State Park, a short walk north of the summit parking area along an improved trail. Over 10,000 hawks fly by!

Forest

Tracks in winter give the best evidence of wildlife presence, but lend an ear for woods warblers and the haunting songs of our three forest thrushes (hermit thrush, wood thrush, and veery), as well as the improbably long and intricate song of the tiny winter wren. Look for deer "barking" on young hemlocks and moose on red maples, where the animals rake their lower teeth (the only front teeth they have!) up saplings for a barky meal of sap and starches. Bears leave their calling cards by clawing and biting trees, especially white birch and red pine – and telephone poles.

Dog Walkers:

By state and town law you must pick up after your dog when on property not your own. Additionally, by town ordinance you must carry a plastic bag or scoop for that purpose. Contents of bag or scoop must be removed from the property and disposed of in a sanitary manner. Dog feces have twice the fecal coliform count than a human's, and are a significant contaminant of waterways. They also transmit disease to other dogs, wildlife, and humans.

Note that several trails including MacDowell Dam and Cranberry Meadow require leashing dogs, and Evans Flats Trail prohibits them.

All Walkers:

Please be part of the solution to the serious problem of dog waste by asking dog-walkers if they are carrying a means of removal, and be sure to thank dog-walkers who do for their responsible behavior.