

East Foss



Farm

Durham, NH

Interpretive Trail Guide

East Foss Farm



East Foss Farm, a 164 acre land tract, is owned by the University of New Hampshire. It is actively managed by the Woodlands and Natural Areas Office under the direction of the Woodlands and Natural Areas Committee, a campus inter-departmental and inter-disciplinary group. Used by the university for teaching and research, the property is open to the public for recreational purposes.

Mountain biking, cross-country skiing, birding, and hiking are encouraged. Arrangements can be made through the UNH Woodlands and Natural Areas Office (862-3951) for outdoor group activities by campus and community organizations.

In December, 1996 and April, 1997 members of the Durham community came together to refurbish the trails on East Foss Farm. Three trails of differing lengths, and each with its own story, are described in this interpretive guide. Volunteers not only rebuilt trails, but also contributed their impressions of the East Foss Farm in journals from which this guide was written. The guide was developed by the UNH Cooperative Extension Forestry and Wildlife Program. Desktop publishing provided by UNHCE Educational Marketing and Information Office.

For their time, energy and advice we dedicate this guide to members of:

- UNH Forestry and Wildlife Departments
- CLUB TRED - UNH Mountain Biking Club
- SEAC - UNH Student Environmental Coalition
- UNH Office of Campus Planning
- Complex Systems Research Center
- NH Coverts Project
- NH Community Tree Steward Program
- Girl Scout Troop #2396 - Madbury
- Lee Hill 4-H Club
- Durham Historic Association
- Durham Conservation Commission
- Durham Recreation Department
- Durham Department of Planning, Zoning, and Code Enforcement



The East Foss Farm Project is a cooperative endeavor of the USDA Forest Service, UNH Cooperative Extension, NH Fish & Game Department and the UNH Woodlands and Natural Areas Office.

The Historic Trail

(The Yellow Trail)

Dairy products and vegetables harvested on Foss Farm were sold at a general store on the premises in the 1800's. Farm equipment, maple syrup, and even gin, at 25 cents a quart, were also made available to Durham Village residents. The large maples standing on both sides of the road and around the cemetery provided the sap for the syrup.

The owner, Deacon John Emerson Thompson was a staunch supporter of the church and delighted in telling stories of past times and people. Many old shade trees on Main Street in front of the university were planted by him and still stand as a memorial to him. Little is known about the Fosses, the original owners.

Vinca weaves in and out of the thin markers of the Thompson family cemetery. An intricate iron gate and fence once protected this graveyard. Only the beautiful stone wall remains.

In 1841, the Boston and Maine Railroad split the farm, separating the grazing area for livestock on the east, from the barns and the Thompson homestead on the west, creating what is now known as the East and West Foss Farms.



Drawing courtesy of Durham Historic Association

The Deacon probably welcomed the railroad as the promise of an improved economy. Ironically, his farm began to fail because of the disruption by the railroad.

Foss Farm was sold to New Hampshire College in 1893. In the summer months it was used by the college to graze cattle. In 1923, New Hampshire College became the University of New Hampshire, and the property was managed for agriculture, forestry and wildlife.



East Foss Farm Today. . . .

UNH professors and students now use East Foss Farm as an outdoor teaching and research laboratory. Forestry and wildlife habitat management plans are coordinated by the UNH Woodlands and Natural Areas Office of the Department of Natural Resources.

Trees, scarred and deformed by disturbance and disease, hide behind the lichen and moss-covered stonewalls. Sugar maples stand guard on both sides of the old farm road that leads from the cemetery to the powerlines.

Grassy fields, tangled thickets and scraggly shrubs are scattered throughout this opening in the forest.



Such a diverse landscape attracts a wide variety of insects, birds and mammals. Bluebirds, red tailed hawks, red fox and New England cottontails especially favor this under-the-powerlines habitat. It is a wildlife supermarket and hunting ground! Take time to get a close look at the plants and animals that share this open space.

Listen for the roaring engine and the squeal of steel followed by the ka-klunk of railroad cars. Running parallel to the powerlines, the tracks define the boundary between the East and West Foss Farms.

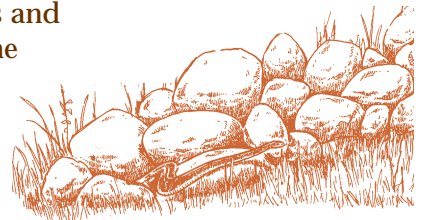
As you follow the trail around the cemetery, try to imagine cow-grazing pasture rather than woodland surrounding you. Take a guess at the age of the regenerating trees.

Look for snags (standing dead or partly dead trees) and live trees with cavities. These “wildlife trees,” as well as the fallen logs, provide food, shelter, hiding places and highways for wild things, large and small.



Watch for deer tracks and scat in the wooded areas and salamanders and frogs near the wetland.

Nooks and crannies in stone walls are cool



spots that snakes welcome on a hot summer’s day. Who lives underground? The location and size of the hole is a clue.

A chipmunk’s chatter and a woodpecker’s rap remind us to walk softly through this forest they call home.



The Forest Management Trail

(The White Trail)

In 1923, East Foss Farm was approximately evenly divided between open agricultural land to the west and forested land to the east. For several decades, the open land was used for pasture for the UNH livestock program, while the wooded portion was managed by the Forestry Department.

Through the 1930's, 40's and 50's, the forest management activities were mostly timber-related, with student involvement in improvement harvests, small plantations, and road improvement. During this time, a small stand of old white pine was set aside for aesthetic enjoyment, and an Adirondack log shelter constructed.

Although the western portion of East Foss Farm abutting the railroad tracks was used for pasture through the 1960's, this trail winds through old fields that were abandoned much earlier. Notice the forest of oaks, hickories, and pines is older here than in the western part of East Foss Farm.

Today East Foss Farm is managed for multiple values - wildlife habitat, forest management, recreational opportunities, and water quality.

Management practices carried out on East Foss Farm in the past 20 years represent and demonstrate a diversity of opportunities. Serving as invaluable educational demonstration areas, small management units in close proximity have allowed students to compare a wide variety of forest and wildlife habitat management practices.

As You Walk This Trail. . . .

Look for these important forestry and wildlife habitat management options:

- ▶ **Oak Tree Release:** The removal of surrounding vegetation near oak trees allows for growth of a larger crown and greater nut production. More than 40 wildlife species rely on acorns for food in the fall.
- ▶ **Single Tree Selection:** Individual trees are removed to improve the health of the remaining trees and to minimize change in the habitat for wildlife that require mature forest.



- ▶ **Prescribed Burning:** A planned or prescribed burn creates an open understory in the forest, allowing new growth to spring forth. Thinning by fire can be more cost effective than cutting by hand.
- ▶ **Thinned White Pine:** Thinning reduces competition between trees and allows for increased growth of trees that can be used for quality wood products.

- **Group Selection:** Groups of trees are removed to improve the forest and to create small openings that are important to wildlife.



- **Seed Tree:** To change the variety of trees in a forested area, all but a few trees are removed. The remaining trees become a natural seed source for the next generation of trees. Sprouts from the stumps of the trees cut provide browse for deer and snowshoe hare.
- **Cavity Trees:** Snags and live trees with cavities are used as nesting and denning sites by more than 50 species of wildlife in New Hampshire. The general rule is to leave 4-5 large cavity trees per acre.



- **Fallen Logs:** Dead wood, from small branches to large tree trunks, lying on the forest floor are an important part of the forest. Many small animals live in, hide under, or travel across these fallen logs.
- **Fruiting Shrubs:** Highbush blueberries, dogwoods, raspberries, and other fruiting plants are maintained in the forest clearings and along woods trails as important food sources for wildlife.



- **Wetlands Protection:** Wetlands purify water, control floods, and support wildlife. Preserving wetland areas is essential.



Private landowners can incorporate many of these same management practices on their own land. The protection and management of our open spaces is important for wildlife, forestry, recreation, and perhaps most importantly, for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.

For help with forest and wildlife management, contact the UNH Cooperative Extension office in your county.

South

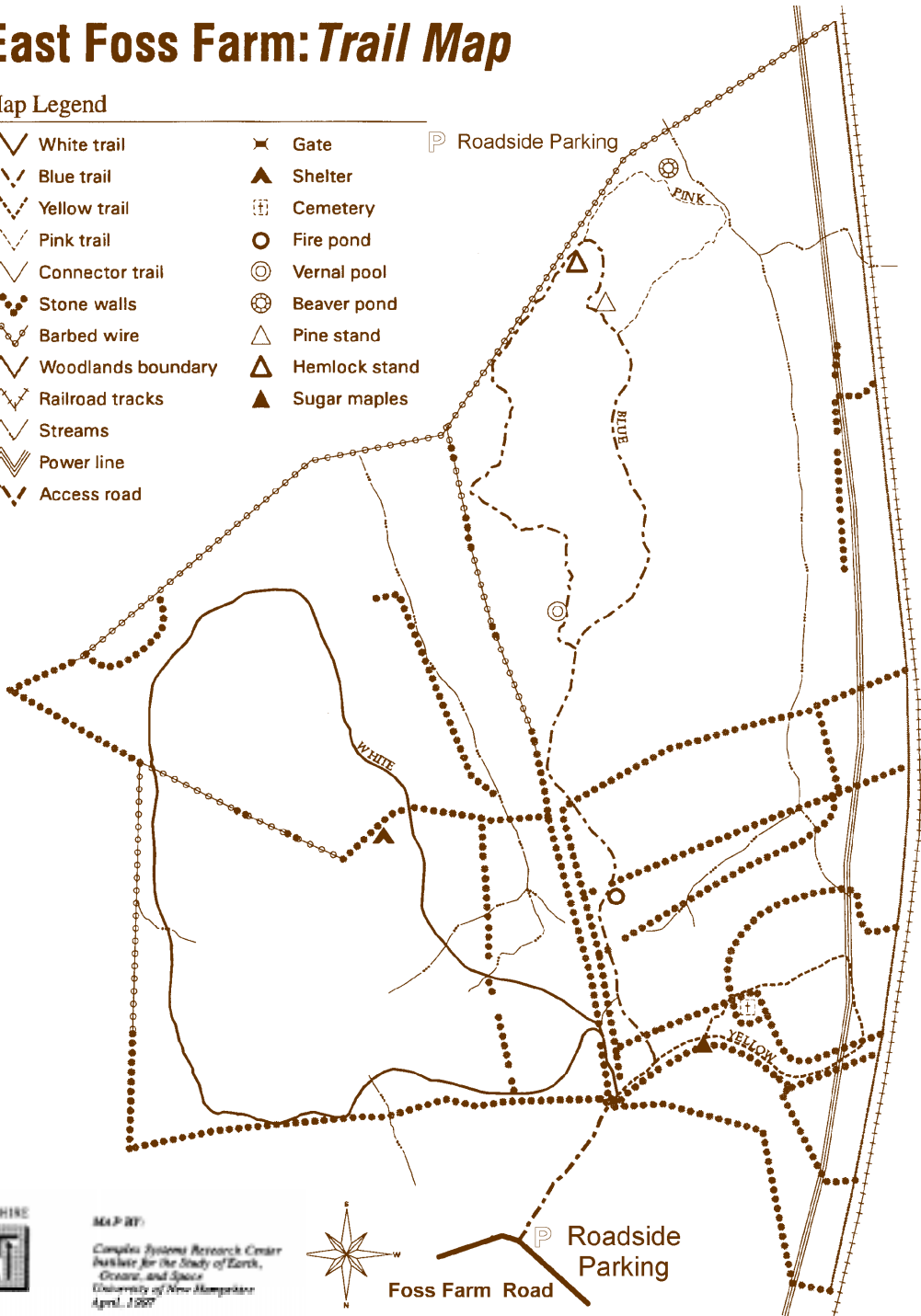
East Foss Farm: Trail Map

Map Legend

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East

West



MAP BY:
Complex Systems Research Center
Institute for the Study of Earth,
Climate, and Space
University of New Hampshire
April, 1997



Roadside Parking
Foss Farm Road

North

The Wildlife Trail

(The Blue Trail)

An old farm road defined by a double stone wall runs parallel to this logging road built on higher and drier ground. Reforested pasture surrounds you.

A fire pond was put in to pump water to sections of forest burned to provide openings for regrowth. It was intentionally made shallow on one end for easy use by wildlife.

The clearcut at the top of the hill is now a young, regenerating forest bordered by a mature woodland area. Ruffed grouse, chestnut-sided warblers and other song-birds live here.

Turn left just past the top of the hill. The terrain of this trail inspired UNH mountain bikers to create a twisting-turning-up-and-down loop through the forest. It quickly re-routes around a vernal pool. Although the wetland may appear dry a good portion of the year, it is an essential spring-time breeding area for woodfrogs and salamanders.

Further along the trail, a windblown white pine, split from its trunk, once blocked the path. Now, the trunk portion of the tree lies on one side and the tree top rests on the other.

A hemlock haven runs along the wire fence that identifies the property line. In winter deer huddle under the snow-covered branches, blanketed warmly away from wind, rain, and snow.

(The Blue Trail continues)

OPTION: The pink trail follows along the fence straight ahead to a beaver pond then loops back to the blue trail, but the way is wet and narrow.

White pines point skyward in the thickets that line the trail, as you turn right, away from the wire fence.

Red pines stand tall as the blue trail winds and, eventually, reconnects with the pink trail. Compare the size of the needles and the shape of the cones. The seeds hiding inside are a source of food for a variety of woodland animals.

At the top of the hill, the beginnings of regrowth after a recent prescribed burn are evident. This attracts new species to the area providing a diversity that better balances and supports nature as a whole.

Watch for an occasional apple tree that has been released from the shaded woodland. It will bear fruit to feed deer, squirrels, and birds.

This narrow path widens and becomes a sometimes-muddy dip in the road. Here, you may flush a ruffed grouse.

A white pine grove encloses the road creating a dark tunnel to walk through. Look deeply into the forest. Any new discoveries?

A red cedar stand completes the trail back to the lone pine amidst the clear cut “at the top of the hill”. Walking back to the trailhead, consider how humans have impacted nature and how you can contribute to a balanced ecosystem.

Directions to East Foss Farm

From Route 4 take the 155A - University of New Hampshire - Durham exit. At the bottom of the exit ramp follow Main Street towards the University and downtown Durham. Take a right onto Mill Road in the center of town.

Continue on Mill road for 0.6 miles, then turn left onto Foss Farm road. Follow Foss Farm Road 0.3 miles to an unmarked dirt road on the right. This is a right of way that brings you to the orange entry gate on the property. Please park on the right along Foss Farm Road before reaching the right of way as a courtesy to the neighbors.



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Agriculture and N.H. counties cooperating. 8/97