

Bear Hill Nature Trail



Allis State Park

Vermont Agency of Natural Resources
Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation
www.vtstateparks.com

Welcome to the Bear Hill Nature Trail. The stops in this guide correspond to numbered sign posts along the trail. The 0.75 mile trail is marked with blue blazes and is moderate in difficulty. Average hiking time is about an hour.

1 Forest Succession

Compare this area with the meadow around the fire tower. If mowing or livestock grazing cease, a variety of plants begin to challenge the grasses. Here is an "old field" condition where woody plants such as chokecherry, spirea, blackberry, and red-osier dogwood have become established. Young trees like maple and birch are finding room to grow. This property belonged to Mr. Wallace Allis, who farmed the area until giving it to the State in 1931.

2 Vermont's Agricultural History

can be read in the stone walls that snake through the forests. Other clues that this

3 Red Spruce Stand

Note the different understory here. The lack of available sunlight and acid from decaying spruce needles make it difficult for small plants to grow beneath the spruce. Spruce have shallow roots and are easily toppled by the wind, which is why fallen trees are common in spruce stands.



club
moss

5 Habitat Transition

This area is mixed with hardwood and softwood forest. The light green fern is hay-scented fern and the large three-part fern is bracken fern. Both ferns are associated with poorer, drier forest sites and plenty of sunlight. They can delay the establishment of tree seedlings by shading, by the spreading of their rootstocks, and by chemicals released from their leaves that inhibit the growth of other plants. Notice the potential animal "homes" in standing dead trees in this area.



bracken fern

hayscented fern

6 Butternut

This lovely tree is famous for its tasty walnut-like nuts and rich-colored wood. Concentrations of these trees in New



7 Fungi

These primitive plants are an integral part of the cycle of life in the forest. They aid in recycling plant and animal matter by breaking them down into simpler forms. Some weaken or kill trees, while others live on dead or downed wood or fallen leaves.

8 Great Views from Great Storms

It was not possible to see North and South

9 Twisted Trees

Here on Bear Hill, many paper and yellow birch, red spruce, and balsam fir were affected by the ice storm. Paper birches were bent over, forcing their tops to the ground. Yellow birch didn't bend; instead, large branches in the crowns of trees broke off. Most of the yellow birches continued to live, despite some losing over half of their branches. Spruce and fir were uprooted or snapped in half, killing most of the damaged trees.

10 Bear's Den

The sign says it all!

11 White Ash

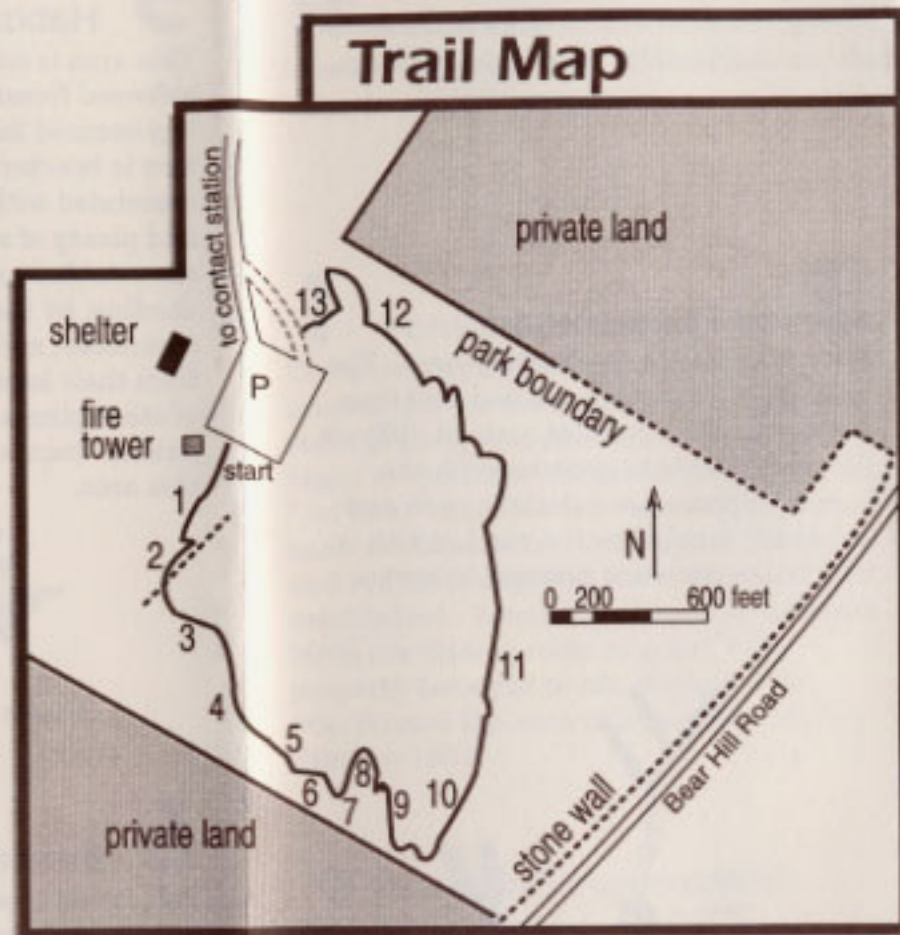
This tree can be identified by the graceful compound leaves and interwoven ridges in its bark. Valuable as both a timber tree and source of food for wildlife, white ash prefers to grow on drier soils containing limestone. Historically, white ash was used to make snowshoes because its straight-grained wood can be steamed and easily bent into shape.

12 American Beech

The smooth gray trunks of American Beech often show scars from bears who scale them to get at the prized beechnuts. Deer, turkeys, grouse, and squirrels also prefer the nuts, making this one of our most valuable wildlife trees.

13 CCC

These stone fireplaces are proof of the efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corps. This national works relief project put young men to work during the Great Depression of the 1930s and 1940s replanting forests, building recreational trails, beaches and campsites, and undertaking forest improvement projects. Even though not all of the fireplaces built here at Allis are still used, the workmanship evidenced in them and in the park buildings remains as a testament to the quality of the Corps' work.



Thanks for hiking the trail.

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Enjoy your visit to Allis State Park!



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