

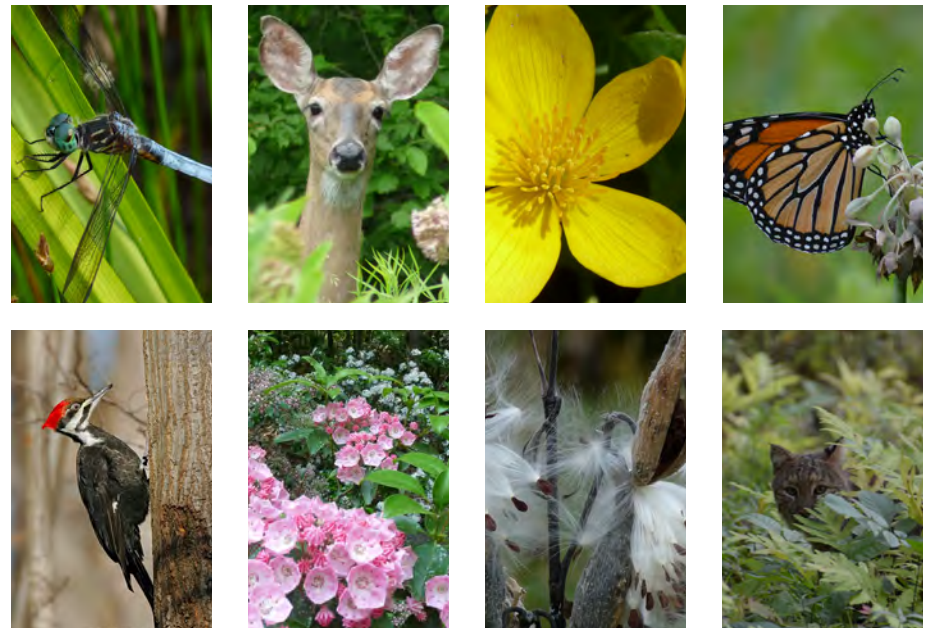
Welcome



Explore over two miles of undulating trails winding through 50 acres of forest, wetland, ledge, and meadow – a mosaic of habitats preserved for the study and appreciation of plants and animals in their natural environment. Special features include native plant communities and collections, woodland deer exclosures, a dry-footed swamp walk, and a three-acre man-made pond. Bench seating along the trails invites you to rest in quiet contemplation.

Self-guided tour brochures, available at the Barn, provide opportunities to get better acquainted with Highstead's plants and wildlife, landscape history, ecological research, and stewardship activities.

Enjoy your walk!



Trails

A

Located west of Highstead's pond, three color-coded trails – **Green**, **Blue**, and **Red** – form three concentric loop trails.

Each trail begins and ends at the Barn and passes through woodland, wetland, and meadow habitats – but differ in distance, level of difficulty, points of interest, and time to complete.

Posts at the trail junctions feature color-coded directional arrows and a letter symbol that correspond to the trail colors and location letters on the map.

Trail descriptions combined with using the map and signposts will help you choose a route to your liking and follow it with confidence.

Swamp-Meadow Trail



Beginning with a short uphill climb, this trail then slopes downhill through an oak forest to the base of a rocky ravine. It becomes flat and narrow as the woodland transitions to a wetland. Emerging from the woods, the trail skirts a pond and proceeds uphill through a wildflower meadow.

Highlights:

- Mature stands of mountain laurel flower in early June.
- A boardwalk passes through a swamp habitat, home to spring ephemerals like marsh marigold and marsh blue violet. A natural stand of sweet pepperbush fills the air with its fragrance in midsummer.
- Expansive views of the pond (via side trail at post L) reveal cattails and purple-blooming pickerelweed in July.
- A wildflower meadow that attracts songbirds, bees, butterflies, and other pollinating insects is at peak beauty in the summer and fall.

Ridge-Ravine Trail



This route begins with a moderate ascent to the top of a bedrock hill. It briefly travels a ridge, descends a steep-sided ledge to the base of a rocky ravine, and merges with the Swamp-Meadow Trail.

Highlights:

- Rugged terrain typical of southern New England uplands features bedrock hills, ledge outcroppings, and lichen-covered boulders scattered about on slopes and lowlands.
- This route crosses the highest point on the trail system. Highstead's geological setting and topography account in part for its diverse plant and animal communities as well as the overall appearance of the landscape.

Oak-Laurel Trail

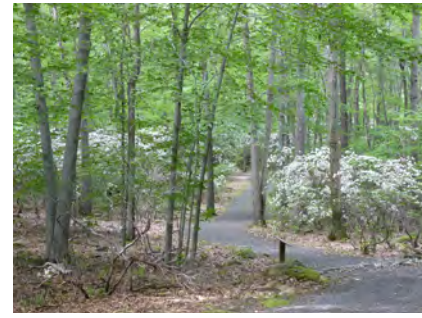


The first part of this trail is a wide, undulating gravel road through the oak forest. It then connects with the Ridge-Ravine Trail (at Post H) and joins the Swamp-Meadow Trail.

Highlights:

- Fifty-five acres of oak forest spread out across rocky, dry ridgetops and slopes. Mountain laurel blooms in early June.
- The Laurel Collection features numerous cultivated varieties of our state flower.
- A vernal pool (via side trail southeast of post F) offers habitat for spotted salamanders and frogs; their egg masses can be seen in early spring.
- The Azalea Area, fenced from deer, has 13 eastern species that bloom sequentially from late April through July.

About the Highstead Trails



> Swamp-Meadow Trail

Distance: 0.6 miles
Time: 25 minutes
Difficulty: Fairly easy, some hills

> Ridge-Ravine Trail

Distance: 0.7 miles
Time: 30 minutes
Difficulty: Easy to moderate, one steep section

> Oak-Laurel Trail

Distance: 1.4 miles
Time: 1 hour
Difficulty: Moderate, steep sections











Trail Use and Safety Guidelines

For your safety and for the protection of our fragile plant environment, please note:

- Dogs and smoking are not permitted.
- Please refrain from picking plants and flowers.
- Foot travel only – no bicycles.
- Kindly stay on the paths and boardwalk.
- Be aware that trails have loose gravel and exposed roots. Some sections are steep, narrow, and rocky, and may be muddy. Rock and wood surfaces are slippery when wet.
- Appropriate footwear is recommended.

Trails close promptly at 4 p.m.

Map Legend

	Highstead Barn		Swamp-Meadow Trail		Forest
	Parking		Ridge-Ravine Trail		Open Areas
	Signpost		Oak-Laurel Trail		Swamp
	Bench		Boardwalk		Contour Interval (5')
	Stream		Pond		

