

Middlesex Fells Letterboxing and Passport Program

Long Pond Treasure Hunt

Trail head

Long Pond parking lot, Winchester

Directions to the letterbox

1. Starting from the parking lot, follow the stone steps into the forest and walk along the marked Nature Trail. You'll soon pass a three-trunked oak tree. *Trees sometimes develop multiple trunks like this when the original stem is damaged, causing multiple stems to grow from the same root mass.*
2. Continue straight and pass the first interpretive sign on your left, then follow the yellow blazes directing you to go left on Molly's Spring Rd. You will soon pass a lovely little meadow on your left.
3. After passing the meadow, veer right up the hill towards Long Pond, and on to Nature Trail. When the path appears to fork, go left to stay on the smoother trail, then turn right at the T.
4. Continue straight, and pass the sign for Cranberry Pool Path on your right.
5. Pass interpretive sign #12, then stop at sign #11. Look for the vernal pool behind the sign (it may be dry, depending on the season). *There are more than 100 vernal pools in the Fells. These are pools of water that usually dry out during the summer and fall. Since fish can't survive in them, vernal pools are critical habitats for many frog and salamander species during the breeding season (early spring).*
6. Continue along the trail until you arrive at interpretive sign #10. Looking around at the nearby trees and rocks, you'll see many are covered with lichen and moss (can you tell the difference? In this case, the lichen is a wintergreen color). *Lichen is composed of algae (or cyanobacteria) and fungus. Since it is sensitive to air pollution, its presence is an indicator of clean air. Different combination of algae and fungus produce different colors of lichen.*
7. Keep an eye out for a path that leads to Long Pond; take a sharp right down that path until you reach the water's edge. *Can you spot any water birds, like herons, egrets or ducks?*
8. Continue along the narrow trail that hugs the pond, always keeping the pond on your right side.
9. Take notice when the path slopes gently upwards and then step over a small decomposing log lying across the trail. From here, count 67 small steps to a 2nd fallen log lying on the left side of the trail. Step over the log and look under the tree near the roots to find the letterbox!
10. **Stamp your notepad and leave your mark (a signature or stamp of your own) in the notebook.**
11. **Please leave the box exactly as you found it for the next adventurer to find!**
12. To get back to the parking lot, you can return the way you came, or continue your hike around the pond for more beautiful views! The following directions will lead you around the pond via Cranberry Pool Path.
13. Continue along the narrow trail that hugs the pond (*a great place to look for frogs!*), keeping the pond on your right side.
14. You'll soon come to interpretive sign #6; follow the yellow blazes directing you to turn right along the Nature Trail, which continues to hug the pond.
15. Go left at the next fork, up a small hill, then left again at the T, keeping the pond on your right. You'll soon reach interpretive sign #7 where the trail comes to a T. Go right.
16. Go straight on the Nature Trail, then take your next 3 right turns to get on Cranberry Pool Path. After about 5 minutes, you should come to a rock clearing with bench facing the pond- a perfect place to stop for a snack and a rest.
17. After another 5-10 minutes, you'll come to another fork; go right.
18. At the next T you will see a sign posted to the tree on your right that says Cranberry Pool Path (the way from which you came) and a yellow blaze on the tree in front of you. Go left down the hill then make a quick right, and a left to go past the meadow. *This should look familiar!*
19. Continue along the path for 5 minutes, looking for the next yellow blaze directing you to turn right towards the parking lot. If you pass a set of wooden sign posts, you've gone (just a little) too far.