

Middlesex Town Forest

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Hermit thrush

The Middlesex Town Forest is 440 acres and ranges from approximately 1,050 to 2,250 feet in elevation. Because of the property's proximity to other conserved land, including the State of

Vermont's Middlesex Notch Wildlife Management Area and the CC Putnam State Forest, the Town Forest has important conservation value, particularly increasing habitat connectivity between the Interstate 89 corridor and Mt. Elmore. The Worcester Range is important forest land for wildlife habitat and natural resource conservation, recreational use, and scenic beauty. The Town Forest was previously privately owned and used as farm and forest land since Middlesex was settled. The property was offered to Vermont Land Trust for permanent conservation, and with the help of both public and private donations, was acquired and subsequently conveyed to the Town of Middlesex in 2009. The Town purchased an additional 40 acres in 2016 to improve recreational access and conserve additional land.

Chases Mountain Trail

Since the Town Forest initially had no marked trails, the creation of an official footpath greatly increased accessibility. The Chases Mountain Trail is a 2.2 mile footpath that slowly climbs to the summit of

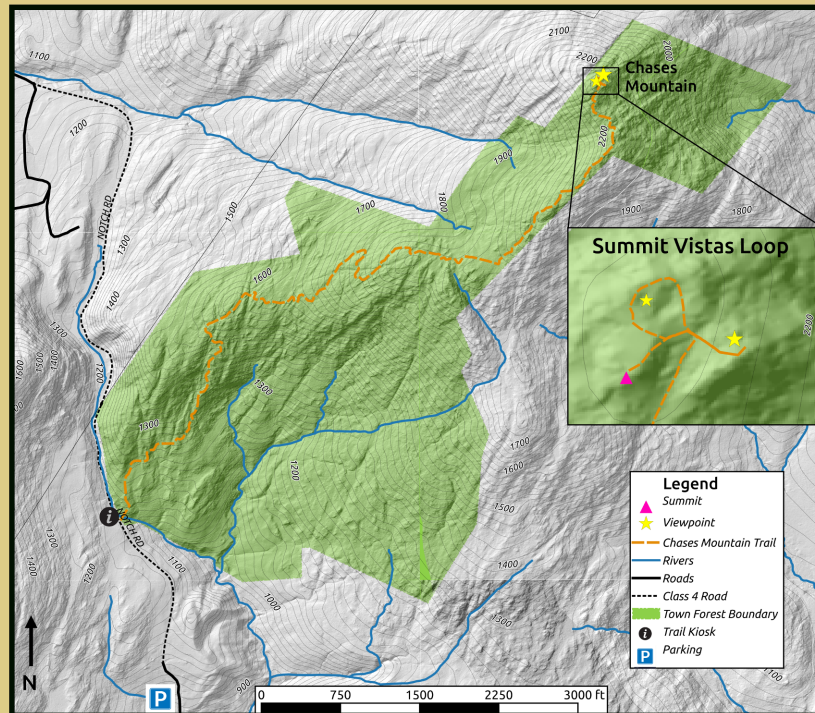


View from summit vista

Chases Mountain at 2,257 feet, where visitors are rewarded with two scenic vistas with views to the north and east. Initial scouting of the trail began in 2012, with cutting occurring between 2017 and 2018. The path was blazed in 2019 and final trail work was completed in 2020.

CC Putnam State Forest

The C.C. Putnam State Forest is the fifth largest State Forest in Vermont. Most of the 13,633-acre forest consists of one contiguous parcel 12,855 acres in size. C.C. Putnam State Forest is primarily mountainous terrain extending over nine miles along the Worcester Mountains. The forest spreads into the towns of Elmore and Stowe in Lamoille County, and the towns of Middlesex, Waterbury and Worcester in Washington County. Elevations range from 500 to 3,642 feet above sea level, creating a diversity of cover types including northern hardwoods, white birch, spruce fir, white and red pine plantations, and a variety of sub-alpine conditions on five major peaks. These peaks are the so-called third range of the Green Mountains.



Permitted Uses

- ✔ Hiking and jogging
- ✔ Wildlife viewing and bird watching
- ✔ Skiing and snowshoeing
- ✔ Walking dogs
- ✔ Limited foraging and collection
- ✔ Hunting and trapping (with state license)
- ✔ Snowmobiling (on VAST trails only)

Prohibited Uses

- ✘ Mountain biking
- ✘ Horseback riding
- ✘ Motorized vehicles
- ✘ Camping
- ✘ Campfires
- ✘ Target shooting
- ✘ Killing of non-game animals
- ✘ Removal of nests or plants by the roots

Natural Communities

The Middlesex Town Forest is full of diversity with steep slopes, navigable ridgelines, stream-fed valleys and other topographic challenges. The plant cover, varied and at times lush, is a product of the resident topography influenced by bedrock, soils, climate and human activities past and present. The ubiquitous forest cover of the Town Forest consists of several natural community types, including Red Oak and Northern Hardwood Forest. Common hardwoods include red maple, sugar maple, yellow birch, white birch, white ash, black cherry, red oak, and beech. Scattered softwoods can also be found, including spruce, hemlock, and pine. Several open canopy community types are observed as occasional interspersed patches within the matrix forest cover. Near vertical rock pitches closer to the head of Middlesex Notch provide habitat for ravens and possibly other soaring birds. Where bedrock rises to the surface, temperate acidic outcrops can be found, providing homes to fragile lichen communities. High gradient streams, some with perennial flows and others running only intermittently, drain the upper reaches of the landscape, and provide aquatic and wetland communities. On flatter ground, particularly at higher elevations, seeps and vernal pools pockmark the forest offering episodic aquatic habitat for amphibians and other water critters. The natural communities encountered in the Town Forest exhibit both subtle and noteworthy changes across a myriad of spatial and temporal scales.

Geology

The Middlesex Town Forest is evidence for ancient mountain building and subsequent glacial scraping and melting. In Middlesex, over hundreds of millions of years, periods



Red oak leaves

of deep-ocean sediment deposition and continental collision formed the Town Forest bedrock known as the Stowe Formation – now exposed due to the uplift of the Green Mountains. The bedrock formed approximately 560 to 515 million years ago, and consists of green, grey, and black phyllites and schist, abundant quartz veins, and at Chases Mountain, thin layers of greenstone. More recent glacial history shaped Vermont's ridgelines and valleys. Much of the loose mixture of rock, gravel, sand and clay, known as till, covering the Town Forest came from melting ice around 14,000 years ago. The Town's gravel pit, situated to the southwest of the Property, indicates where sediments were deposited by the powerful meltwater flows meeting the still waters of Glacial Lake Winooski. Landscape wide deforestation in the 1800s caused soil erosion, increasing the slopes of the drainages and deepening sediment deposition in lower lying areas.

Wildlife



Black bear

The Town Forest provides homes for many wide-ranging species including black bear, moose, white-tailed deer, fisher, bobcat, and many others. The property also provides habitat for numerous bird species, including ruffed grouse, wild turkey, and migrant songbirds, that value its size and

location adjacent to other large blocks of conserved property. The beaver influenced wetlands along the edge of the property possess vital wildlife functions and values including resting, breeding and nesting habitat for ducks, geese, and other wetland dependent birds. The wetlands are a crucial resource for white-tailed deer, wild turkey, moose, black bear, and many other species as a source of food and water. They also provide a unique opportunity for wildlife viewing. Other important wildlife habitat features include vernal pools as breeding habitat for amphibians, potential raptor nesting sites, snags and large down woody debris, and mast trees. Importantly, the Town Forest supports an extensive component of red oak, which is unusual in north central Vermont. Red oak provides a significant food resource for turkeys, deer, bear, and many other animals. The nuts from the oak trees are high in nutritional value compared to many other sources of food.