


A Guide to Franklin Nature Trail



For more information:
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**Chequamegon
 Nicolet
 National
 Forest**



Welcome

A sampling of Northwoods beauty awaits you on the Franklin Nature Trail. The trail is a 1-1/4 mile loop which will take about one hour to complete. It leads you over gently rolling terrain through northern hardwood, pine and hemlock forest, and includes an overlook on Butternut Lake, a visit to a bog, and one short hill climb, before returning to the parking lot.

Numbered posts along the trail indicate points described in this booklet. *Caution:* You will cross roads three times. Please be alert for traffic.

At the beginning of the trail is a section that is accessible for persons using wheelchairs. It is a 1/5 mile loop which turns off after Stop 4 and returns to the trailhead. After Stop 4, the terrain of the trail becomes too uneven and steep for wheelchair use.

You may also take the Franklin Nature Trail to reach the Hidden Lakes Trail (which starts between Stops 12 and 13). It is a 13-mile loop trail which winds its way back to the Franklin Lake campground and ends at the boat landing area.

History

The earliest known inhabitants of this area lived along the lakeshores as early as 10,000 years ago. Loggers, resort owners and summer residents came in the late 1800's, settlers in the early 1900's.



This area became part of the Nicolet National Forest in 1933. It has been managed as a recreation area since the Franklin Lake campground and picnic area were developed with the help of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the late 1930's. The Franklin Nature Trail has been enjoyed by many for over thirty years.

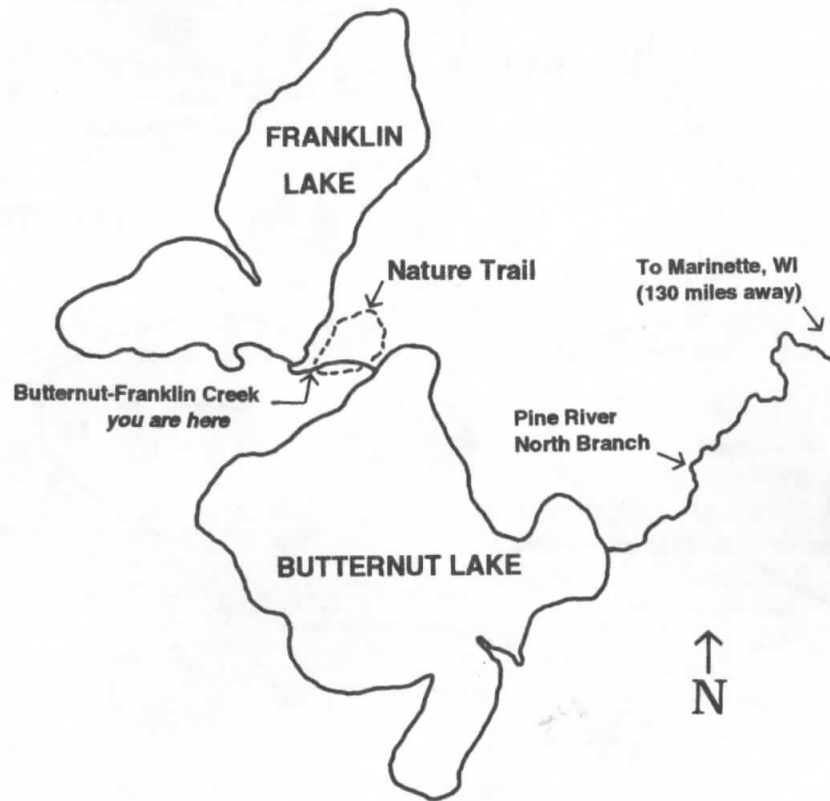
You follow a rich natural and human heritage of this place. We hope that every time you visit you will discover something new that will enrich your life. Enjoy your adventure.

FRANKLIN NATURE TRAIL



1 Let 'er Rip

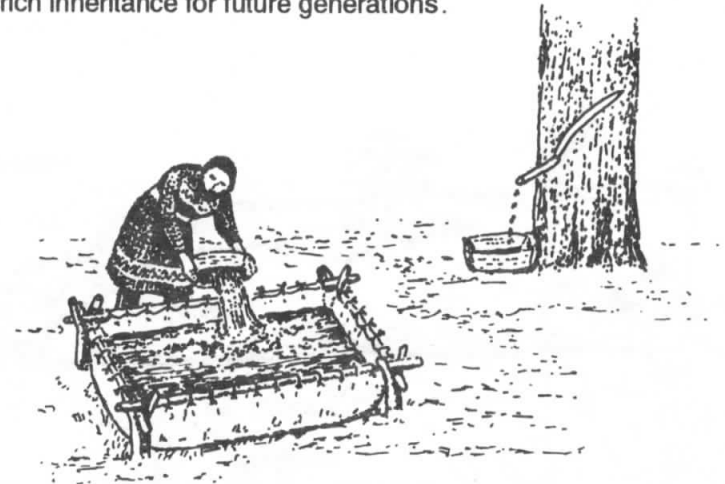
What you see isn't always what it seems to be. This small creek looks natural doesn't it? Actually, it was dug during the great pine logging era of the late 1800's when rivers were used as "water highways" to transport logs to sawmills. This creek wasn't used to float logs, but to add extra water from Franklin Lake to Butternut Lake. Small dams held back the lake water until just the right moment. Then a blast of dynamite ripped open the dams allowing logs to start the long trip down the Pine River to the Menominee River, then on to sawmills at Marinette, Wisconsin, on Lake Michigan.



2 Sweet Trees

This small grove of sugar maples, along with yellow birch and basswood trees, typifies the Northern Hardwood forest. The sweet sap of sugar maples supplied sugar for the Indians. Women gathered the watery maple sap in birch bark containers in early spring, and poured it into moose-hide vats. Water in the sap froze during the cold nights. The ice was skimmed off. Hot rocks, dropped into the vats, boiled away the rest of the water.

Each family tapped the same trees year after year. Mothers passed down "ownership" of the trees to their daughters as an inheritance. In the same way, careful use of our resources today can allow us to pass on a rich inheritance for future generations.



3 Getting in Touch

Just as athletes need to warm up before competing, you can "warm up" your senses for this woods walk. Stop for a moment. Listen... try to block out all human noise, and hear only nature's sounds. Then breathe deeply . . . see if you can recognize scents of the forest. What do you hear? bird songs? squirrels? wind in the leaves? What do you smell? earth? rain? plants?

Listen, watch, touch and the forest will teach you something new each time you visit.

4 Down, But Not Out

Windstorms, in 1985 and earlier, threw knockout punches at these two giant trees. They may be down, but they're certainly not "out". As they slowly decay, they act as "nurse logs" to nourish sprouting seeds, mosses and even new giants!

Decaying logs play an important part in bringing new life to the forest. Tree seeds get a good start in the rich, moist environment of a rotting old log or stump. They wrap their roots around the log as they grow and when the log rots away, the tree roots look like stilts. See if you can find some "stilt trees", or rows of trees that got a start on a common nurse log.



5 Lightning Rods

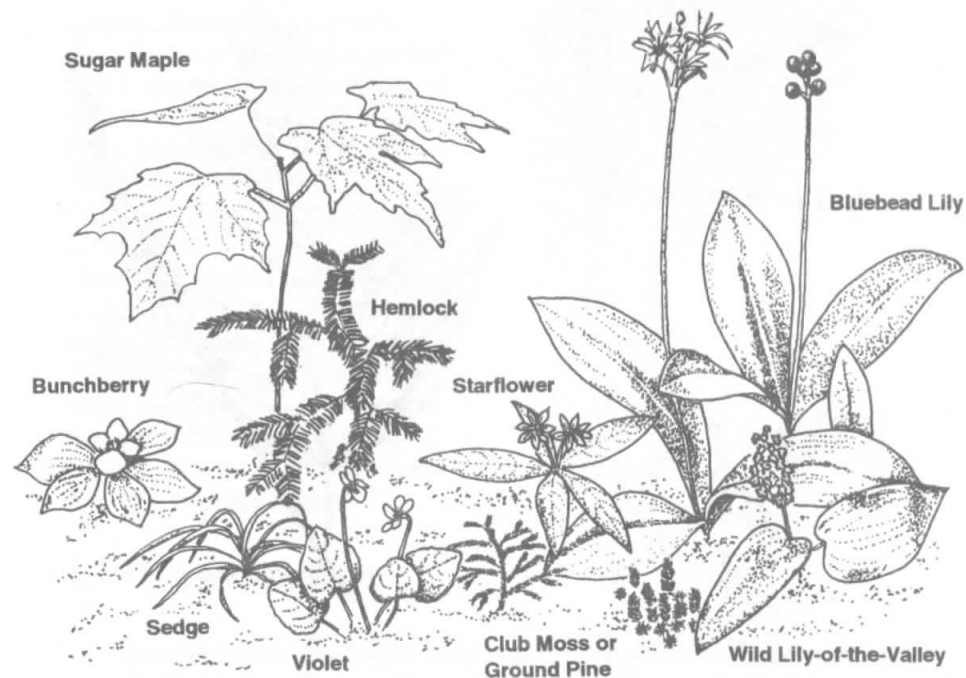
Towering pines, with their tops above other trees, invite bald eagles to nest. But, as high-rise abodes they present a unique danger to their potential occupants. Lightning struck these two trees, causing the sap to boil and the trunks to split open. Let's hope no eagles were at home when the storm hit!

Death, destruction, and decay actually keep forest communities vital. The loss of these large trees created an opening for sunlight for new plants, and as the trees decay they enrich the soil. We may have lost the beauty of living giants, but have gained a forest for the future.

6 Who's the Boss?

If you look at the forest floor you may see some of the plants below. Why do you suppose these plants are here? Who's the boss that determines what happens in this forest?

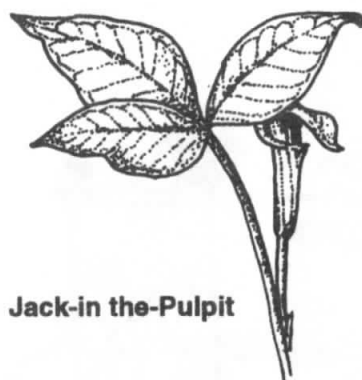
You might think it's the weather, or amount of sunlight, or long term climate that's in control. You're right, but there's something else. It's right under your feet -- soil. Along with climate soil determines which plants and animals can live in a particular place. The plants you see here indicate that the soil is fairly rich, acidic, and well drained. Yellow birch, sugar maple, and hemlock should grow well here. Look up--is the prediction right?



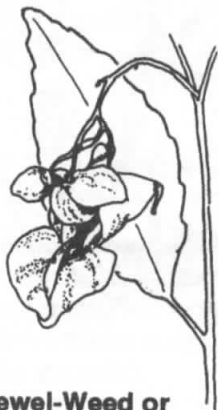
7 Up Again - Down Again

The stream bed to your left hosts a unique association of plants. The stream may flow during the Spring thaw and Fall rains, but during the Summer, it is often dry. Plants living here must adapt to a variety of wet and dry conditions. That's why the dominant plants sometimes vary from year to year depending upon the amount of rain or snow. Which plants look most prominent to you this year?

As you walk on, keep your eye on the stream bed to see where it goes.



Jack-in-the-Pulpit



Jewel-Weed or
Touch-Me-Not



Sensitive Fern

8 Please Do Not Disturb

Ssh! You're in bald eagle territory. This area between Butternut and Franklin Lakes has all the essentials of ideal eagle habitat--skyscraper home sites, food, water, and solitude. Bald eagles construct huge nests of sticks in the tallest white pine trees, like the ones you can spot from here. Nests can weigh up to 4000 pounds! Eagles usually return to the same nest and hatch one to three eaglets each year. They perch in big trees overlooking lakes and fish for their food.

This area has been home to bald eagles for many years, yet they have produced very few young. The main reason? Probably the noise and movements of humans, causing unintentional disruption to nesting eagles. Sometimes parents abandon their eggs, or even their flightless young, when disturbed.

How can we help? Please follow only the marked trail. The Forest Service recently rerouted the trail to avoid getting too close to nest sites. Be careful not to make loud noises while hiking. If you're lucky enough to spot an eagle, enjoy watching from a distance. Don't jeopardize a future generation by getting too close and scaring an anxious parent. The most critical times are May through August 15.



9 Life Signs

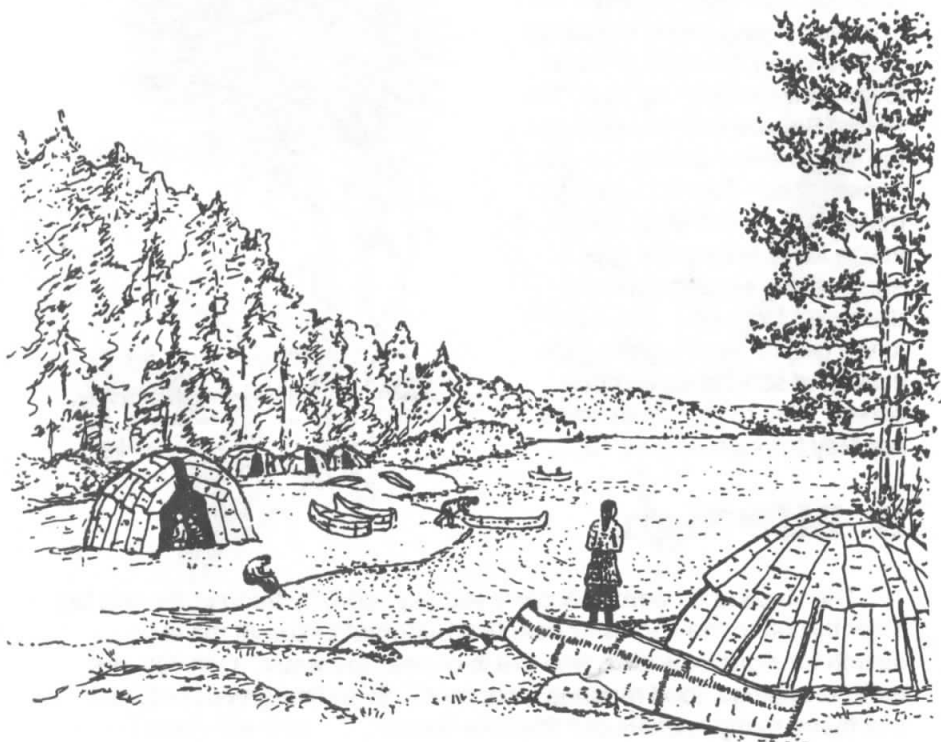
The steps and boardwalk carry you high and dry through the wet tag alder thicket to the shores of beautiful Butternut Lake. At the lake, search for signs of wildlife who live in or near the water. Can you see trails, droppings, food remains, or homes? Even though you may not see them, many animals call this lake "home".

10 Civilization on Parade

To capture the spirit of this spot, you're invited to relax on the bench, enjoy the lake vista, and ponder. Many before you have also been attracted to these waters.

Archaeologists have discovered evidence of thousands of years of human life around Butternut Lake. Paleo-Indians camped, hunted and fished here 10,000 years ago. Archaic Indians lived permanently in villages nearby, beginning about 3,500 years before present. Later, the ancestors of modern American Indian tribes chose the area to live. And today, many still live and recreate here.

As you ponder, can you imagine the reasons for this parade of civilizations? Is this an ideal place to live? Could it provide your survival needs?



11 Hemlock Cathedral

Here, the stately old hemlocks with their deep green needles, and the bronze-barked yellow birches greet you with sweeping branches. They are the most prominent trees in this part of the forest, but by no means the only residents.

Be alert for other inhabitants of this old-growth forest as you wander amidst its shadows.

Long Beech Fern



The lush green carpet on the forest floor is wood sorrel.

CROSS THE ROAD (carefully).

Continue the trail through more hemlocks.

12 Housekeeper Wanted?

This old forest looks messy -- fallen trees and logs litter the floor, and tree cavities seem to abound. Is this good? Should it be cleaned up?

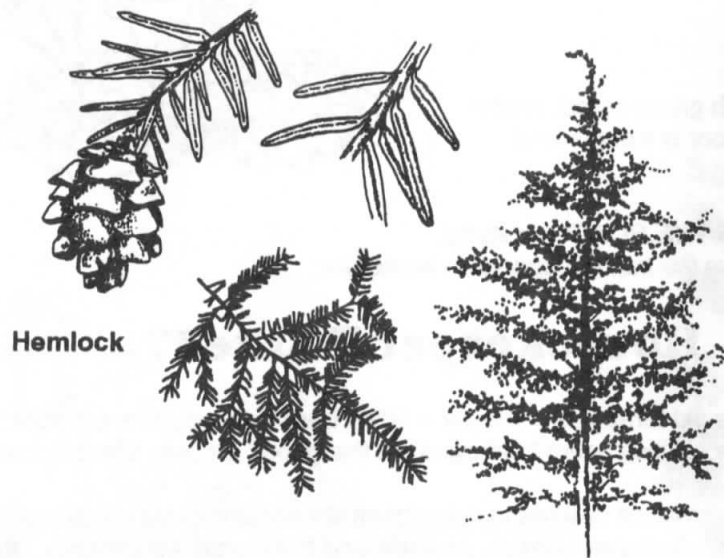
The smallest hollows in dying trees shelter chickadees, nuthatches, and bats. As holes enlarge, squirrels and flying squirrels move in, later pushed out by raccoons, porcupines and owls as cavities get bigger. After hollow trees fall, they provide snug dens for bobcats, coyotes and bears. Look up to find entrance holes into the center of the tall sugar maple to your right. Who lives in the hollow middle? Be on the lookout for other animal homes as you walk.

HIDDEN LAKES TRAIL: You will see a sign between Stops 12 and 13 designating the Hidden Lakes Trail. The trail leaves the Franklin Nature Trail here and loops south around Butternut Lake and ends at the boat landing in the Franklin Lake campground. It is a long-distance trail of about 13 miles. To stay on the Franklin Nature Trail, continue straight ahead (left).

13 A Tree for All Seasons

The lacy branches of the tall hemlock trees catch the sunlight, creating deep shade required by some plants to live. Indians used hemlock bark to tan animal skins. Pioneers made tea from the needles and fashioned brooms from the branches. Loggers cut the huge hemlocks for lumber.

In winter, the thick branches hold the snow and protect animals below from the deep snow and cold winds. Porcupines cut and drop cones, providing winter food for other wildlife. A tree for all seasons, the hemlock is one of the few which grow in such deep shade, creating a mossy, park-like "enchanted forest."



Hemlock

14 Linger Longer

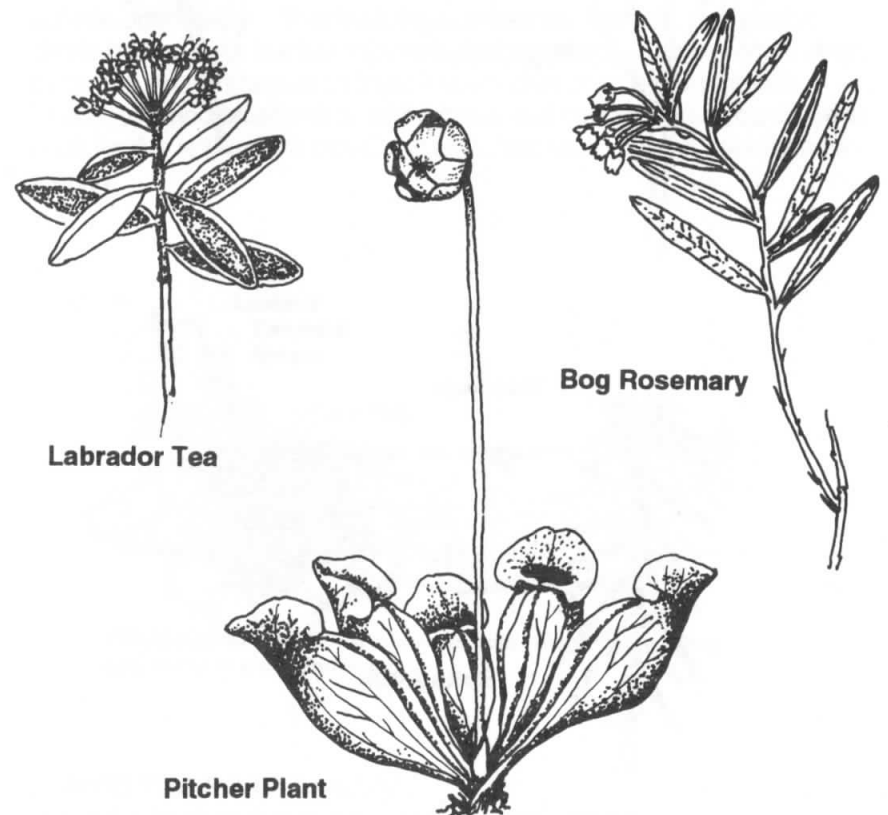
Turn, and look back. You have been strolling through a beautiful forest of hemlocks and yellow birches. The tree trunks seem to blend into the gray distance. You can perhaps smell the rich aroma of the forest. The ground feels soft and springy. Even on a hot day the shaded forest floor stays cool. Somehow this stand of old-growth trees escaped the sharp axes and saws of turn of the century loggers. Now it remains for hikers to enjoy the beauty of the "deep woods". (The drawing on the cover was sketched from this spot.)

15 A Wet Desert?

You are entering a new world . . . that of the forest bog. Oddly, it is more like a desert than a wetland, even though the ground is always saturated with water.

A bog is a spongy mat of wet sphagnum on top of nutrient-poor, acidic peat, with a variety of hardy plants and shrubs. Around the edge you commonly find black spruce and tamarack.

Because the water under the peat is so cold, plants have a hard time absorbing it. Even though they're on top of water they suffer desert like conditions. Plants in the bog have special leaves, some waxy or leathery, to reduce water evaporation, and spongy plants soak up and store water. Look and feel for these characteristics in the bog plants here. Touch the plants carefully and with respect. They live in a hostile environment.



Labrador Tea

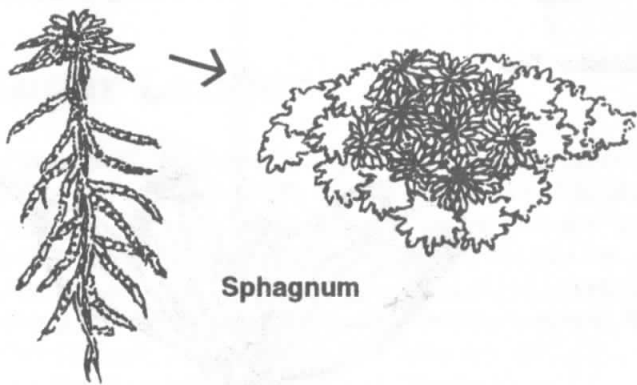
Bog Rosemary

Pitcher Plant



Bog Laurel

Leatherleaf



Sphagnum

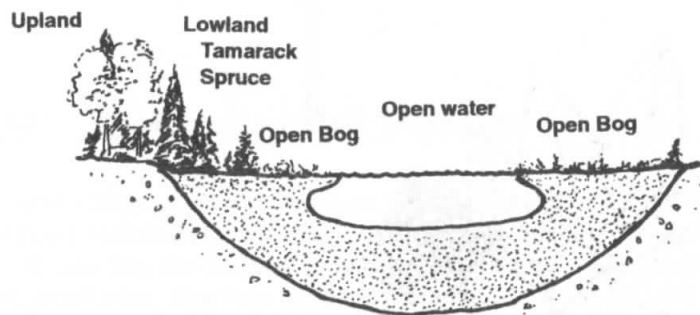
16 Sphagnum Sponges

Sphagnum moss thrives here in the acidic bog water. The thick, cushiony mat of green moss gives the bog a lush appearance. Sphagnum is so absorbent it can hold 25 times its own weight in water. Indians realized this and dried it and placed it in animal skins to use for diapers. As recently as World War II it was used for bandages. Today it's used in floral arrangements, or to keep fruit fresh.

When sphagnum dies and sinks to the bottom of the bog it becomes peat. So, when you buy peat for your garden, you're actually purchasing millions of partially decomposed sphagnum leaves and stems.

17 Given Enough Time

In a bog, a succession of different plants over a long time can transform water into land. First sedges, leatherleaf, and sphagnum grow out into open water. Then shrubs, cranberries, orchids, and pitcher plants help solidify the floating mat. As the rooting area becomes drier, black spruce and tamarack trees have a chance to get a foothold. Finally, you find blueberries, white pines and hemlocks, as you do here. Look for the sphagnum moss, the bog plant that's always making new ground.



This illustrates how a lake succeeds from open water to a bog and finally to a wooded swamp.

[**CROSS THE ROAD** (carefully).

Climb the bank and continue into the young forest.]

18 Isn't This the Berries!

You've entered a mini-jungle of berry plants. This very young forest is just getting started again. When strong light enters a rich forest, red-berried elders (don't eat them) reach up about eight feet tall. Just ahead, you'll see raspberry bushes and many small plants in the open, sunny area.

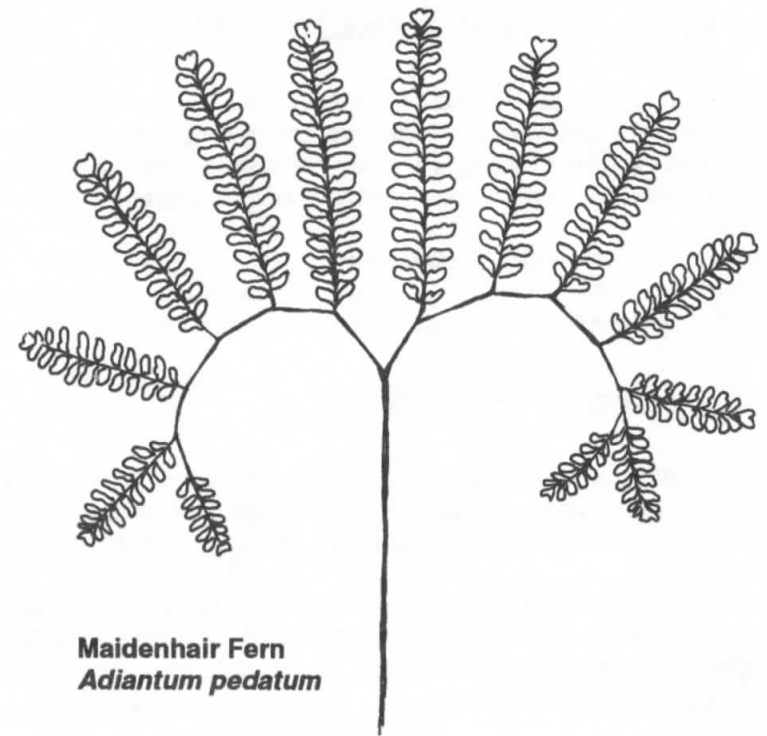
Many trees here are on the ground, or bent over with new sprouts growing up from their stumps. A big wind blew them down in 1985. Up popped berry bushes to use the sudden gift of sunshine. Savor the sweet, juicy raspberries in July and August.



Red Raspberry
Rubus strigosus



Red-Berried Elder
Sambucus pubens



Maidenhair Fern
Adiantum pedatum

19 A Forest of Ferns

Stroll through a knee-high fern forest! A spectacular show of shadowy spirals thrives in the gentle shade of the young sugar maples.

Notice how the leaflets of these maidenhair ferns are arranged in horizontal arcs. See how delicately attached they are so they can easily turn their faces to the sun. They tremble easily -- your breath can move them.

[**CROSS ROAD** (carefully) and start up the hill.]

20 Gift of the Glaciers

Have you noticed the ground becoming rocky as you climbed this narrow ridge? You are walking on land created by a glacier at least 10,000 years ago. It is probably an "esker" deposited when gravel filled a stream tunnel under the ice sheet. When the ice melted it left this rocky ridge.

Glaciers left us these high points and landforms where we often place things like water towers, antennae, and cemeteries, where they can remain high and dry. What other gifts did glaciers leave behind?

21 Mystery Building

Do you notice anything odd about this structure's design? Can you figure out what it was originally used for? Why might it be on a high spot on top of this ridge? It's no longer used now. Modern technology has replaced it.

This and several other historic buildings in the Franklin campground area were built in the 1930's by people out of work. They were hired by the Forest Service and other government agencies to plant trees, fight fires, and build recreation facilities.

TO COMPLETE THE TRAIL, hike down the ridge. You'll come to the starting place. If you entered the trail from the campground, continue by crossing the parking lot, and walking down the trail toward the little footbridge and Marker #1.

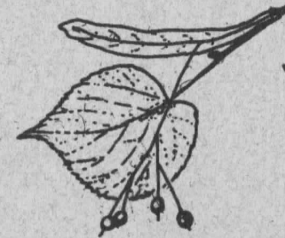
Trees on the Trail



Sugar maple, *Acer saccharum*



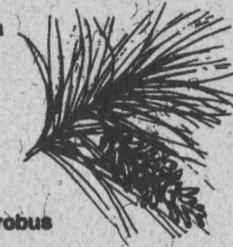
Yellow birch, *Betula lutea*



Basswood, *Tilia Americana*



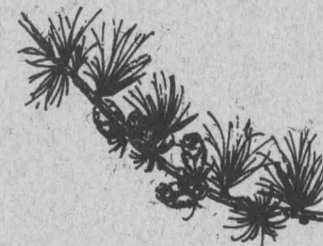
Paper birch, *Betula papyrifera*



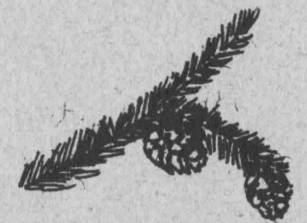
White pine, *Pinus strobus*



Eastern hemlock, *Tsuga canadensis*



Tamarack, *Larix laricina*



Black spruce, *Picea mariana*