



2015 Take A Hike Series-Hetzel Refuge

506 Breakneck Hill Rd., Middlebury

Planted by Two Adventuring Ladies

Hike time: 1 hour

Hike length: 1 mile

Introduction:

A map of Hetzel Refuge and its location can be downloaded at:

http://www.flandersnaturecenter.org/flanders_places/hiking_trail_maps.html

The Take a Hike series is a set of four letterboxing trails created to continue to lure people to the family friendly properties with trails at Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust. Since we expect families to be hiking with children, we have added a checklist and included observations and information about what you might see as you hike in order to keep everyone engaged. One of the letterboxes on each trail will contain a rubber stamp for one of the letters: H, I, K or E.

Flanders has also created a passport to use when hiking the trails planted by the Two Adventuring Ladies. Anyone who hikes twelve of Flanders' letterboxing trails should go to the Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust office, present their passport with the twelve letter stamps from those trails and sign their Trail Name on our poster of Successful Flanders Letterboxers. They will receive a prize. The office is open Monday-Friday from 9 until 4.

The Flanders Passport and all the trails with hidden letter stamps can be downloaded at:

<http://www.flandersnaturecenter.org/letterboxing.html>

Dogs are allowed on the trails but must be leashed.

You may not see all the plants and animals that we mention. You will see many things that the Two Adventuring Ladies have not mentioned. The observations for the Take a Hike Series were made during the fall.

Clues:

Park in the field next to the Flanders Nature Center & Land Trust kiosk.

Before you begin your hike, take a moment and look at the evergreens behind the kiosk. There are several kinds of evergreens along the road and the property line. The ones closest to the entrance to the parking field are

Eastern White Pines. Their needles are long and are in clusters of 5. Note: If the needles come off the twigs in clusters, the tree is a pine. In the case of the Eastern White Pine, those clusters each contain 5 needles. W –H-I-T-E, five letters and five needles.

In the corner of this group of trees (way in the back) there is a tall Norway Spruce. This tree is recognizable because its branchlets hang down dramatically. Like all other spruces, its needles are square and sharp at the end. If there are cones, they will sag downward.

As you turn to the right, you will come to an evergreen with flat needles. Roll a needle between your fingers – it is flat, not square like the spruce, This is a fir. If there are cones, they will point upward or “fly”. Firs have single flat needles and cones that “fly”. Remember: FIRS FLY.

The next few trees are again spruces, but not a Norway Spruce. Roll a needle between your fingers. You will feel the difference. They are square, not flat like the firs. If they have cones, those cones will sag downward not fly like the fir. However, these spruces do not have the Norway Spruce’s dangling branchlets.

Now you are ready to hike and watch the pines, spruces and firs as you go.

Go to the road, turn left and pass the red barn and house. After the house, turn left and walk down the path between stone walls.

You will come to a set of offset red blazes that look like this:



This is telling you that the trail turns to the left. Follow it.

After this turn you will see another kind of evergreen on your right. These are Eastern Hemlocks. The needles come off the twig singly (not in clusters). The needles are flat. On these trees, the top of the needle is green but the underneath side of the needle is whitish. Use your magnifying glass.

Amidst these hemlocks there is a tree with a tremendous burl protruding from its trunk. The burl looks like a rounded outgrowth of the tree’s trunk. In this case, the burl goes all the way around the tree. In a burl the grain of the wood will be wildly contorted. Some burls are valuable to artisans for making bowls and trays.

When you identify this tree, climb behind it. You will find a letterbox. After you stamp your logbook and our logbook, return to the trail.

Soon you will turn right on the green trail. Watch for the green blaze on a tree on your right. It is easy to miss.

After your turn on to the green trail you will be walking past a stand of hemlocks on your left. Walk until you come to a pond. Watch for nests high in the trees. You will pass more Eastern White Pines. Notice how their

branches come out in whorls around the trunk. The distance from one whorl to the next is one years' growth of the tree.

As you go through the woods, the trail makes a left turn marked by off -set green blazes. Stay on the trail.

Turn left by the pond. There is a paper birch tree hanging over the pond. When the Two Adventuring Ladies walked here there was a bees' nest hanging from the tree's branches way out over the water. **The tree and the nest may both fall into the pond soon.**

At the end of the pond the green trail ends. You turn right on the orange trail.

Look at the oak leaves and acorns at your feet. Are the leaves the same? Are all the acorns the same? The leaves may vary in size as well as how deeply lobed they are or how pointed the edges are. Acorns may vary a great deal. How much of the nut is covered by the cap(the cupule)? Is the cap shaped like a plate or a bowl? How scaly is the cap? Does it have a hairy fringe? Is the nut itself pointed at the end? Does it have stripes or ridges?

The leaves and acorns here may or may not all look the same to you. Keep looking as you walk the Flanders trails. Connecticut has several kinds of oaks. Each type has unique leaves and acorns.

When there is a driveway on your right and a house in front of you, turn left through an opening in the stone wall.

Keep looking at those acorns.

You will come to a split in the trail. The orange trail goes left and right. Check your map. Take the left branch.

Before you cross the next stonewall, go off the trail to your right. Walk beside the wall. This is an intriguing stone wall. It zigs and zags. Look at it. In the second indentation of the wall after you left the trail you will find a letterbox. Do your stamping (including your passport), replace the letterbox and return to the orange trail.

Continue up the hill until the orange trail ends. The red trail goes to your left and to your right. You will turn left on the red trail.

As you walk, you will be surrounded by Burning Bush – *Euonymus atropurpureus* or Winged Euonymus. The bright red leaves may be gone, but you can still see the ridges or wings in the bark on the branches. This bush is invasive. Its thick matted roots prevent other plants from growing. Years ago it was planted as an ornamental bush. We now know that this is a bad idea.

You will pass a pond on your right and boulder with a plaque on it on your left. This lists the people who were instrumental in creating the trails and the ponds in the 1950's.

As you continue on the red trail, you will pass the entrance to the green trail on your left. Opposite this you will see that Flanders volunteers have cut an opening in the brush so that you can turn right and enter the parking field. Turn and return to your car.



CHECK LIST FOR THE HETZEL REFUGE AND TRAILS TAKE A HIKE SERIES

Did you see:

Eastern White Pine _____

Firs _____

A Norway Spruce _____

Other Spruce _____

Hemlock _____

Burls _____

Nests high in the trees _____

A bee's nest hanging from a tree over the water _____

A stone wall that zigs and zags _____

Burning Bush (*Euonymus atropurpureus*) _____

A plaque honoring the people who created these trails _____

Did all the acorns look the same? _____