The Audubon Society of New Hampshire is an independent statewide membership organization. It operates nature centers throughout the state that provide educational programs for children and adults. It also protects thousands of acres of wildlife habitat through its sanctuaries program and monitors many of the state's endangered species. For information on the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, membership, programs, and publications, contact:

The Audubon Society of New Hampshire
3 Silk Farm Road, Concord, NH 03301
Tel (603) 224-9909, FAX (603) 226-0902
email ash@nhaudubon.org, www.nhaudubon.org

If you do not want to keep this guide, please return it to the mailbox at the trailhead.

Text, map, and illustrations by Mike Milligan.

Understory plants found in the Sanctuary include:

shining staghorn, and tree clubmoss
Canada mayflower
ground cedar
sessile-leaved bellwort
starflower
wintergreen
Indian cucumber-root
goldthread
bluehead-lily
wild asparagi
interrupted fern
hay-scented fern
lady fern
New York fern
beaked hazelnut
striped maple
witch-hazel
common juniper
highbush and lowbush blueberry

Popple Island Wildlife Sanctuary
Epsom, New Hampshire

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Visitor Information

Popple Island Wildlife Sanctuary is open throughout the year during daylight hours.
1. Only foot travel is permitted in the Sanctuary.
2. Smoking, swimming, camping, fires, hunting, and trapping are prohibited.
3. Please keep to the marked trails and do not collect or in any way disturb any plants or animals in the Sanctuary.
4. Pets must be kept on leash.
5. Please carry out all trash and litter.
6. Be prepared for country walking.

How to get to Popple Island:

From Route 28, drive 4.35 miles north of the junction of Route 4 and Route 28 (Epsom traffic circle) and turn east onto Websters Mill Road. Drive on Websters Mill Road for 2.3 miles and turn right (south) onto Lockes Hill Road. After 0.65 miles, Lockes Hill Road is not maintained; park alongside the road at this point. Continue on foot down Lockes Hill Road for about 500 feet; the trailhead is to your left (east).
Loop Trail
Yellow markers
1.5 miles, 1 1/2 hours

This trail, over half of which is the remains of old dirt roads, meanders around gentle slopes through the forest.

Beginning at the trail head off Lockes Hill Road, the forest is typical of most of the Sanctuary, with large red oak, red maple, and white pine being the dominant trees. Other large trees in this closed-canopy forest include white ash, sugar maple, black cherry, beech, white oak, black birch, white birch, yellow birch, and hemlock.

Three hundred and sixty feet up the trail from the trail head is the crossing of Lockes Brook, the drainage of Odiorne Pond. There are stepping stones to help you to cross (carefully!) during high water. Plants here include elm, cinnamon, and sensitive fern; maleberry; and Virginia creeper.

Just past Lockes Brook is the loop trail junction. Proceeding left (east) at the junction, the trail goes gently uphill. To the left can be seen an old beaver meadow. About 380 feet from the trail junction is a short (350 feet long), red-blazed spur trail on the left, which leads to the edge of one of the Lockes Brook beaver dams. From here you can see the beaver meadows and extensive open water and emergent, fen, and shrubby wetlands of grasses, sedges, rushes, pickelweeds, royal fern, white and yellow water lily, arrowwood, wild raisin, winterberry and mountain holly, and heath plants, such as leatherleaf, all of which continue all the way upstream to border the western and northern sides of Odiorne Pond.

Continuing up the loop trail, the trail veers left for another view of the drainage wetland. Also here are some red pine and sprouts of chestnut trees. The trail then follows the hillside through a red oak-dominated forest, and the old road becomes a footpath through the woods. A short while later, the trail nears the southwest shore of Odiorne Pond and offers the best view of it from the trail.

Past Odiorne Pond, the trail follows a hemlock-dominated drainage and then ascends back into the red oak-dominated forest. The trail eventually (one-third mile past the Odiorne Pond overlook) crosses one of the Sanctuary’s many small woodland brooks over a bridge that consists simply of many rocks that were piled there long ago. Shortly after this stone bridge, as the trail begins to descend into the Lockes Brook valley, it passes between two stone walls that are curiously parallel to each other. A patch of forest to the north of these walls is dominated by white pine. The trail turns sharply right over one of the stone walls to return to the loop trail junction, where a left turn leads back to Lockes Hill Road.

Lockes Brook may also be viewed by walking further down Lockes Hill Road past the trailhead. Along the way is the site of the old Ames farmhouse; please do not go near its dangerous remains.