

## Trail Guide

### Sucker Brook Cove Wildlife Sanctuary

Nelson, New Hampshire



Audubon Society of New Hampshire

#### The Audubon Society of New Hampshire

3 Silk Farm Road, Concord, NH 03301

PH (603) 224-9909, FAX (603) 226-0902

EMAIL [asn@nhaudubon.org](mailto:asn@nhaudubon.org)

[www.nhaudubon.org](http://www.nhaudubon.org)

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

Printed on  recycled paper.

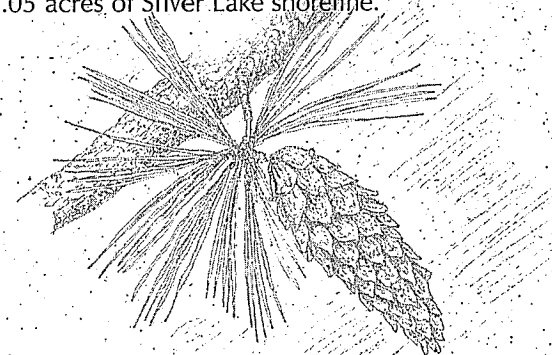
Text, map, and cover art (of a red squirrel) by Mike Milligan

## About the Sanctuary

Within the hilly, rocky terrain of the Monadnock region, the 21.35-acre Sucker Brook Cove Wildlife Sanctuary occupies a portion of the northwest shore of the picturesque, 333-acre Silver Lake. From the Sanctuary, one can get an impressive view of Mt. Monadnock, which is about seven air miles to the south.

The Sanctuary consists of closed-canopy, mixed forest of northern hardwoods, red oak, white pine, and eastern hemlock growing on and among the ample glacial erratics (boulders) typical of the area. Most of the shoreline area of the Sanctuary encompasses Sucker Brook Cove, a shallow, sandy bay of Silver Lake where a woodland creek, Sucker Brook, enters. Smaller woodland creeks and seeps also enter the cove, and much of the cove's shoreline is an ecologically interesting gradation of habitat types, from forest to wetland shrubs to open water with emergent and floating aquatic plants. The cove is home to many forms of wildlife, including the Common Loon and Great Blue Heron.

The original 20.3 acres of the Sanctuary came to Audubon in 1979 as a gift from Elizabeth M. Shepard and W. Hardie Shepard. In 1991, Elizabeth M. Shepard donated an additional 1.05 acres of Silver Lake shoreline.



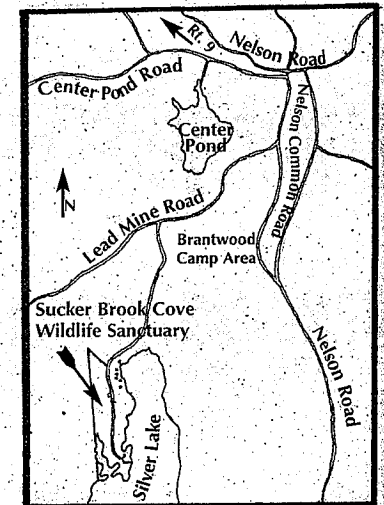
## Visitor Information

Sucker Brook Cove Wildlife Sanctuary is open throughout the year during daylight hours. Although there are trails for your enjoyment, this sanctuary's primary purpose is to provide habitat for wildlife. In order to minimize disturbance to the plants and animals here, we ask that you observe the following rules:

1. Only foot travel is permitted.
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.
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 the Sanctuary

Take Route 9 to the Nelson/Harrisville exit and follow signs to Nelson. In Nelson, turn right onto the road (Nelson Common



Road) that passes the library and Town Hall. Drive up the hill; whereupon (0.3 mile) the road becomes Lead Mine Road. After another 0.7 mile, veer right at the fork just after the cemetery. Drive 0.9 mile; then turn left onto the private dirt access road for Brantwood Camp. Drive 0.8 mile to find the trailhead parking area on the right. This access road is not plowed in the winter.

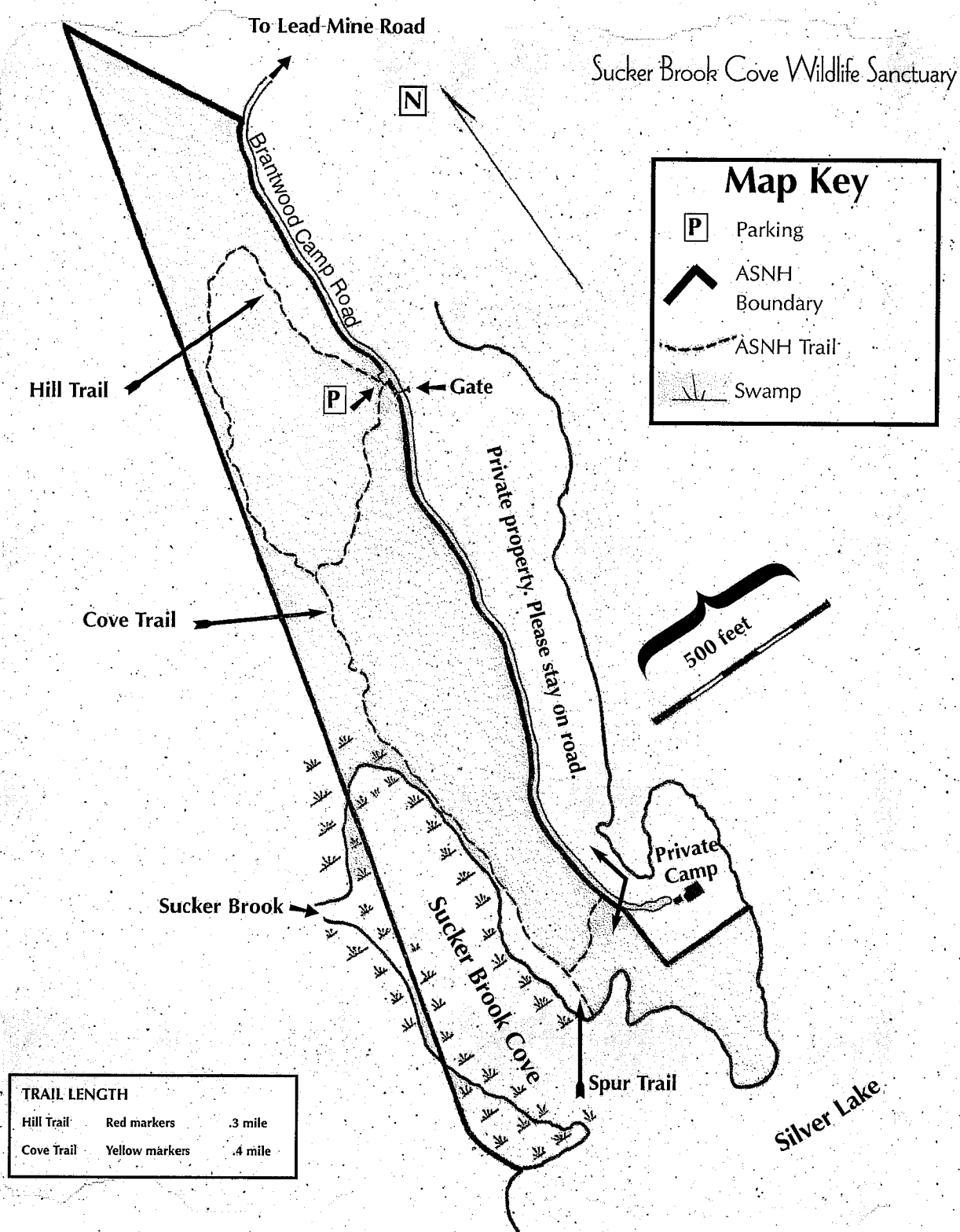
## Trail Information

There is approximately 0.67 mile of trail on the Sanctuary; plus approximately another quarter mile along the access road from the parking area to the Cove Trail's terminus near the lake. It takes about 1-1.5 hours to walk it all leisurely.

### Hill Trail

Red markers, 0.3 mile

This trail illustrates the effects that directional exposure can have on a forest community. As the trail meanders from the parking area along the eastern face of the hillside, the forest is dominated by red oak and northern hardwoods, such as beech, sugar maple, and white ash. There is also black, white, and yellow birch, black cherry, witch hazel, and white pine, with hobblebush in the understory. After about 500 feet, the trail begins to turn west as it follows the contour of the hill, and the generally cooler, shadier conditions of the northern exposure are evident in the noticeable change in forest type from hardwoods to the more shade-tolerant eastern hemlock. The cool, dark hemlock forest, which also contains yellow birch and some red spruce, remains dominant for most of the remainder of the Hill Trail because, although it is mainly on the hill's western side, the trail drops down into a small, shady valley created by woodland drainages that feed into Sucker Brook Cove. The sparse understory in this shady habitat includes wintergreen, goldthread, starflower, bunchberry, partridgeberry, moss, wood ferns, and, on the glacial erratics, polypody fern. Near its junction with the Cove Trail, the Hill Trail leaves the valley somewhat and gains more of a southern exposure, and the forest type becomes more white pine and hardwood-dominated again.



### Cove Trail

Yellow markers, 0.4 mile

From the parking area, this trail goes up a short slope through mixed forest, then gradually begins dropping back into the small valley where it meets the Hill Trail. The Cove Trail continues down the shady, hemlock-dominated valley to where the drainage of the valley meets Sucker Brook Cove. The trail follows the cove edge, although much of the cove is blocked from view at first because of the dense border of wetland shrubs such as winterberry holly, mountain holly, speckled alder, highbush blueberry, maleberry, wild raisin, buttonbush, leatherleaf, meadowsweet, steplebush, sweet gale, arrowwood, and glossy buckthorn.

The shallow, sandy cove and its edge supports an array of wetland plants in addition to the shrubs, such as blue flag, bur-reed, arrowhead, pipewort, marsh St. Johnswort, bladderwort, spatterdock, pondweed, swamp candles, turtlehead, water pennywort, water lobelia, sundew, jewelweed, sedges, rushes, and royal, sensitive, and cinnamon ferns. Included in the great variety of aquatic insects present is a good diversity of damselflies and dragonflies.

After following the cove's edge for about a tenth of a mile, the trail takes a sharp turn to the left. At this point, there is a red-blazed, short spur trail to the shore, from where there is a great view of Silver Lake and Mt. Monadnock. Shortly after the spur, the Cove Trail ends at the access road; turning left up this road will lead you to the parking area about a quarter of a mile away. Please do not turn right from the trail onto the road, as this leads to a private residence.