

# BLUE HILLS RESERVATION

dcrc MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

Mass Audubon  
Protecting the Nature of Massachusetts

DEDHAM

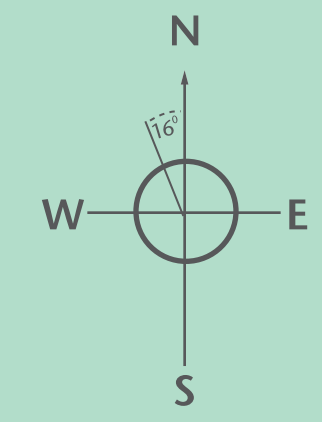
QUINCY

MILTON

BRAINTREE

CANTON

RANDOLPH



**RULES AND REGULATIONS**  
Park open dawn to dusk.

For the protection and enjoyment of the Blue Hills, the following are **prohibited**:

- Littering
- Open fires
- Metal detectors
- Alcoholic beverages
- Pets, except on a leash
- Hunting or trapping
- Posting or distributing leaflets
- Camping except at AMC Camp with permit
- Motorized vehicles, except on public roads
- Disruptive conduct, including public nudity
- Group use of 25 or more, except with a DCR permit
- Destruction or removal of vegetation, animals, structures, artifacts or other State property
- Off trail use without a permit

In addition, the following activities are **allowed in designated areas only**:

- Parking
- Sporting activities
- Mountain bicycling
- Charcoal grills or fuel stoves
- Non-motorized boating at Ponkapoag Pond
- Swimming at Houghton's Pond with lifeguard supervision

All visitors must follow directions of Park personnel or Police. Any violations of these regulations may result in arrest and/or fine per order of 302 Commonwealth of Massachusetts Regulations 12.00

**LEGEND**

**DESTINATION TRAILS** are marked with rectangles and are designed for much longer and more strenuous day hikes. These are not loop trails so plan transportation back to your starting point.

- Blue rectangles mark the popular Skyline which traverses the entire Blue Hills Range with many fantastic views. Note the north and south branches in the western part of the reservation.  
Length: 9 miles Hiking Time: 4 to 7 hours

**LOOP TRAILS** are marked with dots. Loop trails begin and end at the same point at designated parking areas as marked on the map.

- Green dots mark several woodland loops which allow you to enjoy the natural beauty of the reservation.  
Length: 2.4 to 4 miles Hiking Time: 2 to 2.25 hours
- Red dots mark rugged, rocky loops over hilly terrain providing a more challenging hike.  
Length: 1 to 3 miles Hiking Time: 1 to 2.25 hours
- Yellow dots mark short loops which enable you to enjoy parts of the reservation in a small amount of time.  
Length: 0.5 to 1 mile Hiking Time: 1 hour

**DIRECTIONAL LOOP TRAILS** are marked with triangles and both loops begin and end at the Houghton's Pond main parking lot. These are designed as rolling routes for a fun mountain bike ride or long woodland hike. The trails are marked in one direction only and are to be followed counter-clockwise.

- White triangles mark the Forest Path loop in the Houghton's Pond section. This rambling 6-mile loop creates a long woodland hike or novice to intermediate mountain bike ride.  
Length: 6 miles
- Yellow triangles mark the Breakneck Ledge loop in the Great Blue Hill section. This 4.5 mile loop provides a rocky, rugged and hilly experience for the advanced mountain biker or avid hiker.  
Length: 4.5 miles

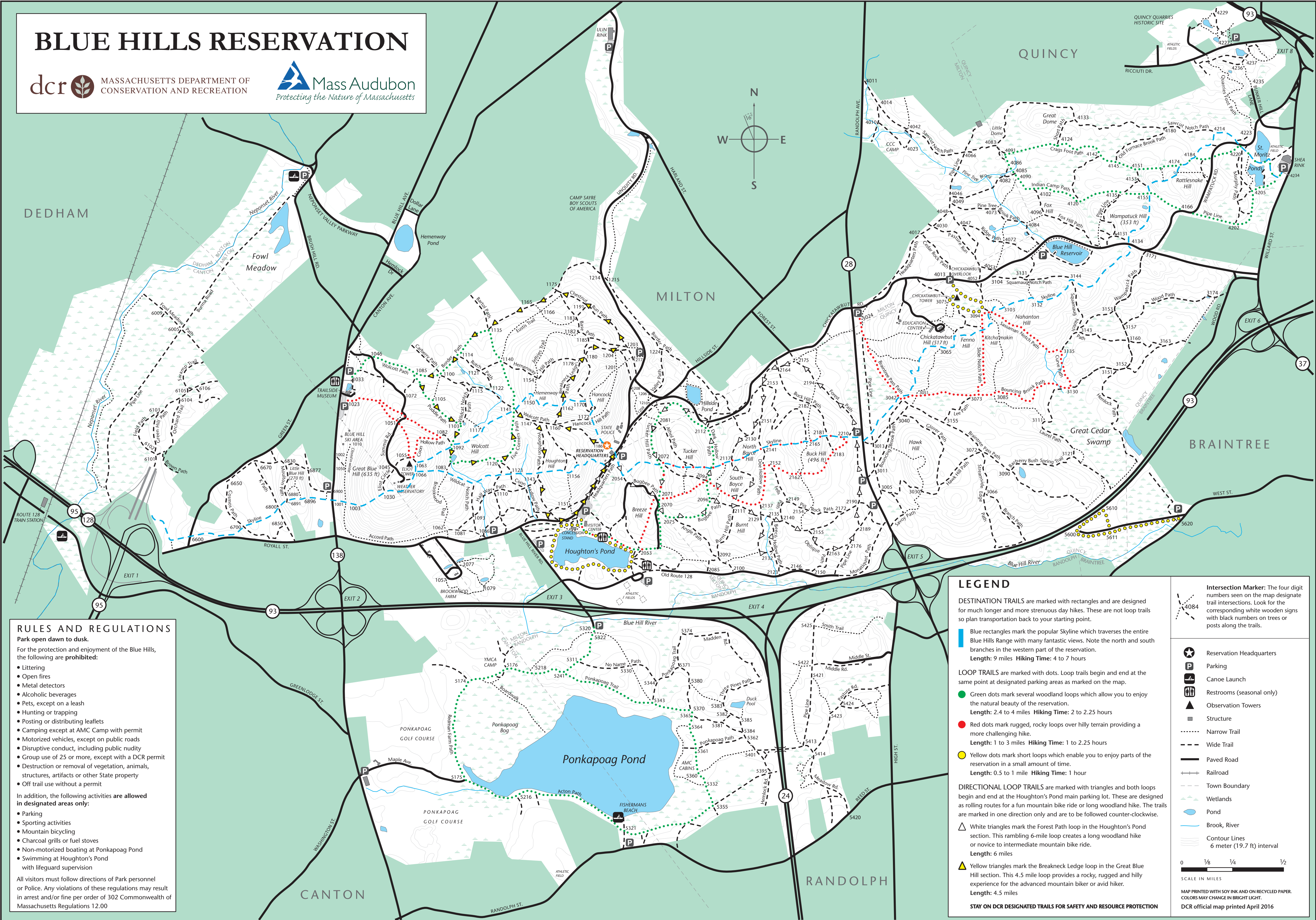
**STAY ON DCR DESIGNATED TRAILS FOR SAFETY AND RESOURCE PROTECTION**

**Intersection Marker:** The four digit numbers seen on the map designate trail intersections. Look for the corresponding white wooden signs with black numbers on trees or posts along the trails.

- ★ Reservation Headquarters
- P Parking
- Canoe Launch
- Restrooms (seasonal only)
- ▲ Observation Towers
- Structure
- - - Narrow Trail
- - - Wide Trail
- Paved Road
- Railroad
- - - Town Boundary
- Wetlands
- Pond
- Brook, River
- Contour Lines 6 meter (19.7 ft) interval

0 1/8 1/4 1/2  
SCALE IN MILES

MAP PRINTED WITH SOY INK AND ON RECYCLED PAPER. COLORS MAY CHANGE IN BRIGHT LIGHT.  
DCR official map printed April 2016



# DCR Blue Hills Reservation Trail Map and Guide



Printed courtesy of  
Trailside Museum  
Charitable Trust.  
Proceeds to benefit  
Blue Hills Trailside  
Museum.



## We invite you to discover... the Blue Hills Reservation.

Stretching from Dedham to Quincy, Milton to Randolph, the Blue Hills Reservation encompasses over 7000 acres, providing the largest open space within 35 miles of Boston. More than 125 miles of trails weave through the natural fabric of forest and ponds, hilltops and wetlands. Hikers can count 22 hills in the Blue Hills chain with Great Blue Hill noted as the highest landmark at 635 feet above sea level.

The trails of the Blue Hills lead to the park's most beautiful areas, inviting you to explore the subtlety and richness of the woodlands. Park visitors may enjoy numerous outdoor activities including hiking, biking, horseback riding, skiing and savoring nature. We share a fragile green oasis amidst the bustle of the city. It is a legacy we can hand to our children – if we care for it today.

### A World of Nature



The reservation boasts a rich variety of plants and animals, including several rare and endangered species, such as the Timber rattlesnake and Eastern copperhead found nowhere else in the Boston area. Trails traverse a diversity of habitats, upland and bottomland forests, swamp and pond edges, meadows and an Atlantic white cedar bog.

The scenery before you is a product of a variety of forces. Geology, climate, soil, fires, lumbering, and farming have all shaped the delicate harmony of land and life you see today.

A diversity of wildlife find suitable habitat-food, water, shelter and space-among the mix of trees, shrubs and flowers of the reservation. The habitat and the season of the year play a large role in determining where you may best find wildlife. Nature has its patterns. Note how plant and animal life change as you travel from the moist lowlands to the drier, rocky hilltops.

### Ponds and Marshes

#### The Wet and Wild

The freshwater wetlands of the reservation are teeming with life. Treat yourself to a dazzling display of pink and white pond lilies at St. Moritz Pond in July or watch patiently as a great blue heron stalks sunfish fingerlings at Marigold Marsh near Houghton's Pond.

### Ponkapoag Bog

#### A Quaking Experience



Ponkapoag Bog is a unique and mysterious world. Neither solid land nor water, the bog is a realm in between. A cedar boardwalk at the northwest corner of Ponkapoag Pond allows safe entrance into an Atlantic white cedar bog. Look for the carnivorous pitcher plants and sundews which capture insects to supplement their diet in this acidic and sterile environment.

### The Meadow

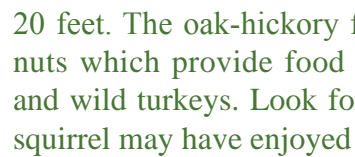
#### A Pioneer

Imagine the Blue Hills Reservation cleared for fields and pastures with an occasional wooded area or small orchard. Such was the scene in the mid-1800's. Red fox could be seen feeding on wild grapes and brambles. White-tailed deer frequented the apple orchards. Since Colonial times, much of the Blue Hills has reforested, although open fields and meadows remain an important habitat for fox, deer, turkey, mice and songbirds.

### The Forests

#### Of Oak and Hickories

Today, oaks and hickories abound throughout the Blue Hills, particularly on south facing slopes. Prior to the 1940's, the once mighty American chestnut dominated the woodland canopy. The chestnut blight, a damaging fungus from China, reduced the American chestnut population to sprouting trees, usually able to grow no taller than 20 feet. The oak-hickory forest produces a wealth of acorns and nuts which provide food for hungry gray squirrels, chipmunks and wild turkeys. Look for the broken shells identifying where a squirrel may have enjoyed a meal.



### Rocky Hilltops

#### A Windswept World

Lowbush blueberry and huckleberry can tolerate the dry acidic soils of the wind-swept hilltops. Snack on wild blueberries in late July while enjoying the sun-baked vista atop Buck Hill or Houghton's Hill. Early spring and fall are great times to watch for hawks, falcons and other birds winging over the hilltops on their seasonal migration. Over 160 bird species may be seen in the Blue Hills during the year.

### The Faces and Places

Early European settlers encountered Native Americans living off the rich resources of the Blue Hills. The natives referred to themselves as Massachusett, or "people living near the great hills." Close proximity to the Neponset River, the seacoast and Boston, high vantage points and an abundance of quarry materials have made the reservation lands an attraction throughout history. Today, the reservation is rich in both archaeological and historical resources. Interesting structures and other traces of our past include observation towers built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, old homesteads and legacies of the granite industry at the Quincy quarries. Enriching the reservation are more than 50 prehistoric sites, 15 historic structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and a National Historic Landmark- the Blue Hills Meteorological Observatory.



### Native Americans

#### The People of the Great Hills

For more the 9,000 years before Europeans arrived, Native Americans quarried in the Blue Hills, seeking brown volcanic rock or hornfels which they crafted into tools, spearheads and arrowheads. Note the many Native American place names throughout the Blue Hills, a tribute to the first people of this land.

### The Colonists

#### Of Axes and Ploughs

Seventeenth century Europeans and their descendants settled in the Blue Hills, introducing orchards and honeybees, houses and barns. They logged the hillsides for lumber while clearing fields for pasture. Look for the stone walls, which once separated these fields, still winding throughout the Blue Hills.

### Quincy Granite

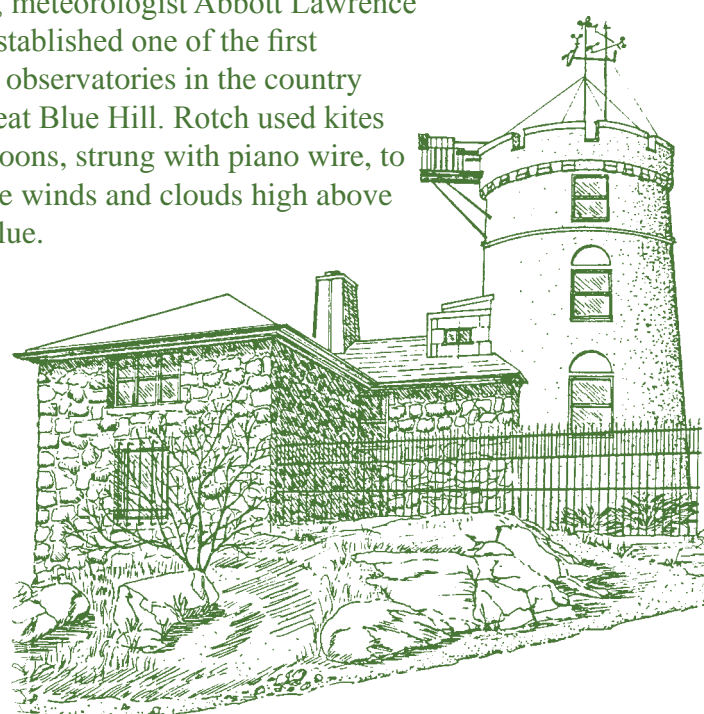
#### The Birth of Two Industries

The granite hills at the east end of the reservation launched the birth of two industries, large-scale granite quarrying in 1825 and the first commercial railroad in 1826. Quincy granite was used in the construction of some of the most impressive granite buildings, monuments, sculptures and fortifications across the nation, including customs houses in Boston, Savannah, New Orleans and San Francisco.

### The Blue Hill Weather Observatory

#### Of Kites and Clouds

In 1885, meteorologist Abbott Lawrence Rotch established one of the first weather observatories in the country atop Great Blue Hill. Rotch used kites and balloons, strung with piano wire, to study the winds and clouds high above Great Blue.



*"For crowded populations to live in health and happiness, they must have space for air, for light, for exercise, for rest, and for the enjoyment of that peaceful beauty of nature, which... is so refreshing to the tired souls of the townspeople."* Charles Eliot

### Charles Eliot

#### The Father of the Metropolitan Parks System

Visionary landscape architect, Charles Eliot was a major force behind the creation of the Blue Hills Reservation, one of the first acquisitions of the new Metropolitan Parks System, in 1893. Enjoy a panoramic view of the Boston skyline from the Eliot Tower atop Great Blue Hill, named in honor of one of the founding fathers of the Metropolitan Parks System.

### The Civilian Conservation Corps

#### Roosevelt's Tree Army

The Civilian Conservation Corps lived and labored in the Blue Hills from 1933 to 1937, adding two stone observation towers, miles of trails and numerous other features to the Reservation. Nature is rapidly overtaking the cement foundations and remains of the CCC camp located east of Randolph Avenue.

### The Blue Hills Today...

#### Preserving Open Space for Public Use

Today the Department of Conservation and Recreation preserves and maintains this living green museum for the use and enjoyment of the public.

Look for Park Rangers on the trails or stop by the Park Headquarters at 695 Hillside Street in Milton for more information.



### A Precious Resource...

The Blue Hills Reservation is a fragile ecosystem under heavy use. We ask you to extend special respect to the parkland, please:

- Carry out all trash.
- Stay on marked trails to prevent erosion.
- Leave plants and animals undisturbed.
- Keep pets on a leash at all times.
- Comply with all visitor regulations listed on the reverse side of this brochure.

#### Important Contacts:

DCR Blue Hills Reservation (617) 698-1802  
695 Hillside Street, Milton, MA 02186

DCR 24-hour Radio Dispatch (508) 820-1428  
Blue Hills Trailside Museum (617) 333-0690  
For accessibility details, call DCR at (617) 698-1802

Check DCR Website for updates: [www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr)

In case of emergency, call 911 or contact the State Police, Blue Hills Barracks at (617) 698-5840.

### Enjoying the Reservation

The Blue Hills Reservation Headquarters is located at 695 Hillside Street in Milton, 1/4 mile north of Houghton's Pond, beside the State Police Station. Please stop by, or call (617) 698-1802 for further information.

#### Athletic Fields

Three reservable athletic fields are available at Houghton's Pond. For reservations, call DCR Recreation at (617) 727-5290 Ext. 509.

#### Blue Hills Trailside Museum

This DCR facility, managed by the Mass Audubon Society, features cultural, historical and natural history exhibits with a display of live wildlife of the Blue Hills. Trailside Museum is located at 1904 Canton Avenue (Route 138), 1/2 mile north of route 93 (Exit 2B) in Milton. An admission fee is charged. For more information and operating hours, call (617) 333-0690.

#### Boating

Non-motorized boats are permitted in Ponkapoag Pond and the Neponset River only.

#### Camping

Overnight camping is permitted only at the Appalachian Mountain Club cabins on Ponkapoag Pond. Call the AMC at (781) 961-7007 for reservations.

#### Fishing

Fishing is permitted at Houghton's Pond, Ponkapoag Pond, St. Moritz Pond, Hillside Pond, Blue Hill Reservoir and Pine Tree Brook. A state fishing license is required.

#### Friends of the Blue Hills

For over 30 years, the Friends of the Blue Hills, a non-profit volunteer organization has been dedicated to protecting and promoting the Blue Hills Reservation. Call (781) 828-1805 or visit [info@friendsofthebluehills.org](mailto:info@friendsofthebluehills.org) for more information.

#### Golfing

The 36 hole Ponkapoag Golf Course is located in Canton on Route 138, 1/2 mile south of Route 93. Call (781) 828-4242.

#### Hiking

The Blue Hills Reservation offers over 125 miles of scenic trails for hikers. Please refer to the map and legend on the reverse side for details of hikes. Remember to dress appropriately and carry water on all hikes.

#### Horseback Riding

A number of privately owned stables operate in the area of the Blue Hills Reservation. Many of the dirt roads through the park are former carriage roads and are suitable for trail riding.

#### Ice Skating

The DCR owns and leases three ice skating rinks in the Blue Hills Reservation. For Ulin Rink in Milton, Shea Rink in Quincy and Metropolis Rink in Canton, visit [www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr)

#### Mountain Bicycling

Mountain bicycling is allowed in certain areas of the reservation. Stop by headquarters at 695 Hillside Street in Milton to pick up a mountain bike brochure and map. Mountain bicycling is prohibited during the month of March.

#### Norman Smith Environmental Education Center

Located on Chickatawbut Hill and operated by the Mass Audubon Society, the center offers environmental education workshops, including overnight programs and summer camp. Call (617) 333-0690.

#### Observation Towers

Observation towers are located at Great Blue Hill and Chickatawbut Overlook. Both offer scenic views of the Boston skyline and surrounding area.

#### Picnicking

A limited number of picnic tables and charcoal grills are available at Houghton's Pond and Chickatawbut Overlook. Picnic sites at Houghton's Pond are in great demand during the summer. Plan accordingly. Please call the reservation headquarters at (617) 698-1802 for more information or to reserve a picnic site. Permits are required for group use of 25 or more persons.

#### Ranger Programs

DCR Park Rangers offer free educational and recreational programs throughout the year. Look for program schedules posted on park bulletin boards, call (617) 698-1802 or visit [www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr) for details.

#### Rock Climbing

Rock climbing is popular at the Quincy Quarries Historic Site off Ricciotti Drive in Quincy. Proper safety equipment is required. Special use permit required for groups. Visit [www.mass.gov/dcr](http://www.mass.gov/dcr)

#### Skiing, Cross-country

Cross-country skiing is permitted on trails throughout the reservation with sufficient snow cover. A free brochure of suggested Cross-Country Ski Routes is available at the reservation headquarters.

#### Skiing, Downhill

On the west side of Great Blue Hill, the William F. Rogers Ski Slopes offer the nearest downhill skiing to the metropolitan Boston area. Call (781) 828-5070.

#### Swimming

Swimming is allowed only at Houghton's Pond beach with DCR lifeguard supervision. Seasonal restrooms are provided.

#### TrailWatch

Blue Hills TrailWatch is an all-volunteer organization of concerned recreational trail users whose goal is to promote safe and cooperative trail use by acting as an educational liaison between reservation managers and the public. For more information, call (617) 698-1802.

#### Visitor Center

The Houghton's Pond Visitor Center features park information and exhibits highlighting the human history of the Blue Hills. Wheelchair accessible restroom facilities are provided.

#### Weather Observatory and Science Center

Perched atop the summit of Great Blue Hill, the Blue Hill Observatory and Science Center features continuous weather study from 1885 through today. Educational programs and tours are offered. A fee is charged. Call (617) 696-0562 or visit [www.bluehill.org](http://www.bluehill.org) for more information.