



# Junior Ranger's Notebook

Written by Kristin D Barbieri, WFTA Trustee, September 2020



*College Pond Conservation Area*

THIS NOTEBOOK IS PROPERTY OF

Weston Forest and Trail Association, Inc.

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Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Weston Forest & Trail Association Junior Ranger Program Details



The [Weston Forest and Trail Association](#) (WFTA) Junior Ranger program is an activity-based program meant to bring a new generation into the unparalleled beauty of Weston's conservation lands. Weston Conservation Land includes over 2,000 acres of land and nearly 100 miles of trails. As part of being a Junior Ranger, we would like you to explore at least some of those places.

Interested children may complete a series of activities around some of the trails and open spaces of Weston's Conservation land, share a completed Junior Ranger Notebook with the program director, and receive an official Junior Ranger pin and certificate. Junior Rangers are typically between the ages of 4 to 11, although all ages including grown ups can participate. For children aged 4-7, you may want to complete the *Ranger* program. If you are 8 years or older, give yourself an extra challenge with *Ranger Plus*.

When you have completed your notebook, ask your grown up to send a photo of the signature page including your address to us at [wftatrails@gmail.com](mailto:wftatrails@gmail.com). We will be excited to send your Junior Ranger pin and certificate!

**Thank you for taking care of Weston's trails, woods and fields!**



## Explore the Trails

Welcome to Weston's more than 2,000 acres of conservation lands and 90+ miles of trails! This notebook will help you notice what is around you, and hopefully encourage you to take care of our natural environment. We're lucky to have so much open space here in Weston. Let's go outside and see some of it!

To best explore our lands, you may want to use our online maps, or a printed map. Weston's online maps are free and you can order a printed map through the Weston Forest & Trail Association's website. Sometimes we like to use a highlighter on the printed maps and mark off all the trails we do in Weston--who knows, maybe one day you will have been on them all!

## Getting ready

What do you need to have a great day on the trails? Here's what we like to bring with us:

- ☐ A comfortable backpack
- ☐ Bug spray and/or sunblock
- ☐ Water
- ☐ Snack
- ☐ Map and/or cell phone (preferably both!)
- ☐ Plastic bag to tote out any trash you find on the trails (thanks for your help!)

Remember that our woods are places of **"Leave No Trace"**--what you bring into the woods, you should take out again, including wrappers, bottles and the dog poop bag if you've brought your dog with you!

Now, let's go have some fun and get all of our senses in play!

## Poison Ivy and Ticks

Two things you might find on the trails which will not be your favorites are poison ivy and ticks.
























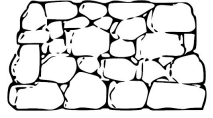


Poison ivy is a plant with three leaves--in the early spring and late fall, the leaves will be red--otherwise they are green. Some people are very allergic to poison ivy: a good rule to follow is "leaves of three, let it be." Poison ivy is a native plant, and the birds actually like to eat its berries--to each their own :)

Ticks are also sometimes around on the trails, they are carried by rodents and deer and often hide in long grasses. They are particularly prevalent when the woods are wet. Some ticks carry bad sicknesses. When you get home from your walk, do a tick check, and take a shower. Your clothes should be thrown in the wash.



## TRAIL WALK BINGO

*How many ways can you get BINGO?!*

 <p>Acorn</p>	 <p>Fallen Leaf</p>	 <p>Scat from Animal</p>	 <p>Chipmunk</p>	 <p>Pinecone</p>
 <p>Squirrel</p>	 <p>Ant</p>	 <p>Bird</p>	 <p>Poison Ivy</p>	 <p>Flowering Plant</p>
 <p>Animal Tracks</p>	 <p>Butterfly or Moth</p>	<p><b>FREE</b></p>  <p><b>SPACE</b></p>	 <p>Fern</p>	 <p>Feel Tree Bark</p>
 <p>Clouds</p>	 <p>Fallen Tree or Log</p>	 <p>Bridge (Bog Bridge or Footbridge)</p>	 <p>Dog</p>	 <p>Earthworm</p>
 <p>Body of Water Stream ,Pond or Vernal Pool</p>	 <p>Rock Wall</p>	<p>Draw the best thing you saw!</p>	 <p>Say "Hello" to a fellow trail hiker!</p>	 <p>Trail Marker</p>



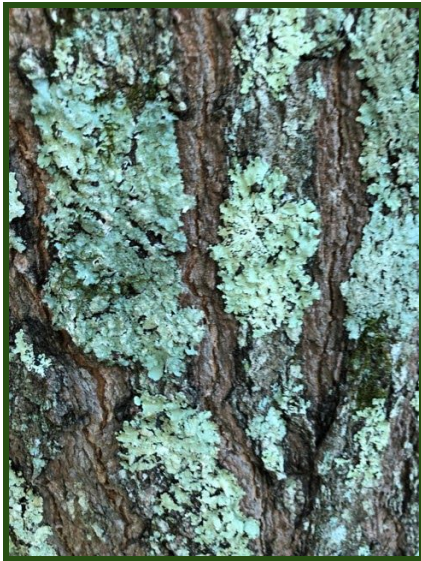
## Woodland Study Scavenger Hunt

Read on to learn more about these common features of a woodland habitat and check them off as you discover them for yourself on the trails.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Lichen	<input type="checkbox"/>	Woodpecker Hole	Invasive Plants:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fungus	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fairy House	<input type="checkbox"/>	Buckthorn
<input type="checkbox"/>	White Oak	<input type="checkbox"/>	Man Made Structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Japanese Knotweed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Red Oak	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dryad Hole	<input type="checkbox"/>	Multiflora Rose
<input type="checkbox"/>	Birch Tree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wetlands	<input type="checkbox"/>	Garlic Mustard
<input type="checkbox"/>	White Pine				

### LICHEN & FUNGUS

What differences do you notice between lichen and a fungus? Take a look. Can you see any on the trails?



*Shelf Fungus*

**Lichens** are not actually plants! They don't have roots and they like to use trees and rocks to just hang out on and absorb nutrients.

There are many different types of **fungus** (what many of us call mushrooms) in the woods. Most of the time if you see one on a tree, that means the tree is dying--fungus likes dead organic matter. Other fungi grow from the woodland floor and look just like fairy chairs! Don't pick or eat them please--some are poisonous.

## OAK TREES

Most of our woodland trees are white oaks, but you can find red oaks and birches among other trees. What differences do you see between a white oak leaf and a red oak leaf?



Red Oak Leaf



White Oak Leaf

Did you notice how the red oak leaves look almost sharp, rather than the rounded edges of the white oak leaves? That's a great way to remember how to tell them apart! Sharp leaves could give you a scratch (not really!) so they are red oaks. White oaks are soft like clouds.



## BIRCH TREE

Here's a beautiful birch. Can you find one in the woods?

Birches and oaks all lose their leaves in the winter--they are called *deciduous* trees. The other major group of trees is called *coniferous* or evergreen. They have needles and they don't lose them in the fall.

## WHITE PINE TREES

Most of Weston's evergreen trees are white pines. You can identify them best by looking at a branch with the pine needles. If the needles are in groups of five, that's a white pine!





## What else can you find that's special in Weston's trees?

Can you find a woodpecker hole? Or even a fairy entrance to a tree? Tree fairies are called dryads--do you believe they really exist?



Woodpecker Holes



Fairy House?



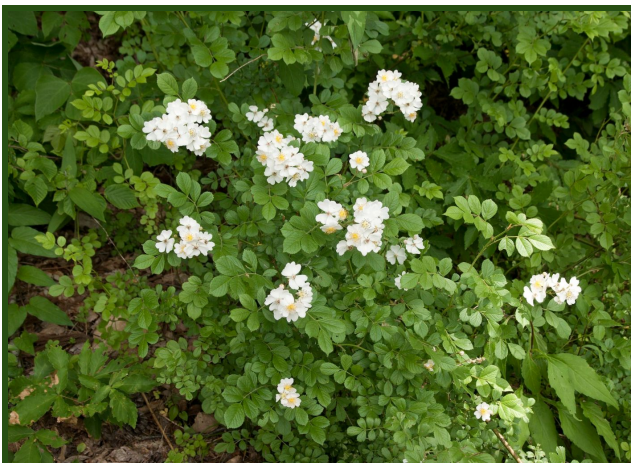
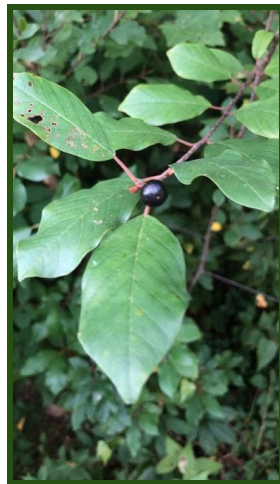
Dryad House?

## INVASIVE PLANTS

What's an Invasive Plant? These are plants harmful to New England's native forests and meadows. They can crowd out trees and important plants on the forest floors, in the woodlands and the fields.

The most common invasive plants are:

- Japanese Knotweed (Top Left)
- Buckthorn (spotted trunks, black berries in fall, Right)
- Multiflora Rose (bottom left)
- Garlic Mustard (looks like this April - June, bottom right)



## Stop, Look and Listen

Don't forget to use your senses while enjoying our trails! Look up; what do you notice? Stop and listen, what do you hear? What about the smells? Anything stand out to you?

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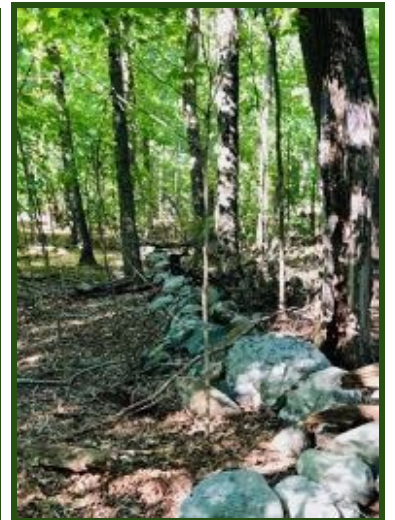
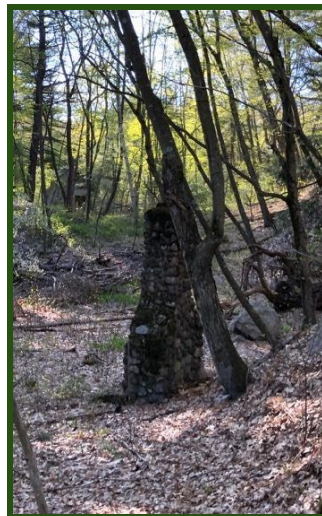
Did you know Weston's most common owl is the barred owl? If you don't see one, you might hear it off in the distance...it makes a call like it's saying "who cooks for you?" If you do see one, you are *very* lucky!



## Human-made Structures

Weston was founded as a town in 1713, and has a lot of colonial history for you to discover on what is now Conservation land. Some of our woods were actually agricultural fields with very few trees. It can be hard to imagine as they look very different now. You may be able to see some of that history when you look around. Can you see any signs of Weston's past?

- ☐ Stone walls, built by farmers as they pulled stones out of fields
- ☐ Foundations of old farm houses or root cellars
- ☐ Chimneys that once warmed houses





## Wetlands

Wetlands are lands where the soil is either saturated or covered with shallow water. Wetlands are important for preventing floods and even improving water quality. They also host different and important plants and animals. Even wetlands that appear dry at times for significant parts of the year -- such as vernal pools-- provide habitat for wildlife adapted to breeding in these areas. Weston has an abundance of wetlands and they need our special care.

What animals might live or breed in wetland areas? How can you help protect wetlands?

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### Wetlands Word Search

C T Z D S I T O A D L O Y I J  
R O F M N N W W K C C F K K B  
D E N H K H I N P H B C I L Q  
W H F S N D R A G O N F L Y V  
M O S Z E Z H R T X Y B F O T  
V M U C W R N L I U D U Q H C  
F K W A G E V W I V R K Y Q Y  
R C A T A F T A L L O T J H J  
O V T T K J L L T P Y I L X V  
G P E A F L Y O A I J U E E Q  
F S R I J Y H A O N O L O R M  
L M V L J S E A T D D N G I D  
V Y G P O E R W V W I Y Y K P  
J X O W I W O T X S G N K W H  
E R D W O I N C F N J H G Z N

conservation  
turtle  
lily

dragonfly  
cattail  
heron

flooding  
water  
frog

wetland  
toad

## Stewardship

Stewardship means taking care of what can't take care of itself--so everyone can enjoy it. Weston Forest & Trail asks all of its trail users to respect the natural places and clean up after themselves. As a Junior Ranger, we hope you will help us. Here's your task!

- ★ When you head into the forest, bring a bag and gloves with you to pick up any trash you find--take it home and put it into your own household trash.
- ★ If you see a tree down and blocking a trail, please report it to us by asking your parents to email [westonforesttrail@gmail.com](mailto:westonforesttrail@gmail.com), or send us a message on Facebook. It may help to take a picture of the trail so we can get there to clean it up.
- ★ In the spring, WFTA forest edges may be filled with a weed called Garlic Mustard. This weed is killing off native species, and we are asking for your help in pulling it out, bagging it, and throwing it away. Don't leave it trailside as the seeds will get out and re-planted!



- ★ If you walk a dog on our trails, make sure you clean up after that dog, and bring the dog poop bag back out with you. No one likes poop on their shoes. No one.
- ★ While bicycles are allowed on most Weston trails, they are not allowed when the trails are mucky and muddy. Do you know why that is?

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- ★ Become a Member of the Weston Forest & Trail Association, dues and fundraising efforts help support the maintenance and preservation of our beloved trails.

- ★ Share another way to protect and preserve our forests and trails:

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## You did it!

Tell us what you think about your experiences?

My favorite thing in the woods:

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I want to learn more about...

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## Weston Forest & Trail Junior Ranger Pledge

*As a Junior Ranger, I promise to practice what it means to be a good steward of our forests and trails. I will protect the flowers, plants, trees, animals and man made structures in Weston's forests and trails by not disturbing them. I will collect litter whenever possible while I am exploring. I promise to continue to explore, learn about and share the trails with my fellow Westonians and visitors.*

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_ Ranger in Training      \_\_\_\_\_ Age

\_\_\_\_\_ Grown-Up      \_\_\_\_\_ Date

Address for Certificate and Pin:

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# Weston Forest & Trail Association

## Junior Rangers Guide *Plus*

(Additional Activities for Ages 8+)

### The Weston Trails & Woods

Please choose at least two of these properties, visit them with an adult and a trail map.

Sources for Trail Maps:

- WFTA Website: [www.westonforesttrail.org](http://www.westonforesttrail.org)
- AllTrails app on your phone
- Paper trail map available from WFTA
- Elmer Jones' book Walks on Weston Conservation Land.

Properties (Select 2 or more)

- ☐ Cat Rock (Elmer Jones, Walk 1)
- ☐ Highland Forest (Elmer Jones, Walk 12)
- ☐ Jericho Town Forest (Elmer Jones, Walk 16)
- ☐ Ogilvie Town Forest (Elmer Jones, Walk 18)

Work through these questions as you walk or take notes and work on it when you get home:

#### Animal Sense Observation

Animals rely on their senses to survive. Observe the forest by using your deer ears! What do you see, hear, and wonder about this place? Write or draw your observations: What do you think lives in this forest? Attach more pages if you need more space. *Ranger Tip: The quieter you are in a forest, the more things you will get to see and hear.*

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## Trail Markers

Weston's trail markers were designed in 1980 by Tom Selldorf, WFTA Trustee Emeritus. You will see them marking the way down the trail. Sometimes you'll see them on their sides or upside down. What do these mean?



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## Trees

Many of the trees in our conservation lands are more than 100 years old!! Native trees to Weston are white and red oak, red maples and white pines, among others.

You can tell how old a fallen tree is by looking at the rings of the cross sections. A cross section is a big round slice from the trunk of a fallen tree, like when carrots are sliced into circles. Each ring is one year of a tree's life.

**Walk along the trail and find a fallen tree then count the rings.**

How old do you think the tree was when it fell? \_\_\_\_\_

*Ranger tip: Don't be sad about the downed trees. We leave them on the forest floor because they make great habitats for wildlife.*

## Flora

Did you know? Woodlands often have just one kind of tree. Woodlands that have more oak trees tend to have more flowers on the forest floor than other types of woodlands. That's because oak trees have many gaps in leaf coverage, and leaf out later than other varieties--allowing more light to reach the forest floor and encouraging woodland flowers. (Source: Elmer Jones' book.)

Do you see any woodland flowers on the trail today? Describe them, draw them, and if you can, name them!

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Meadow plants and flowers are often different but just as beautiful!

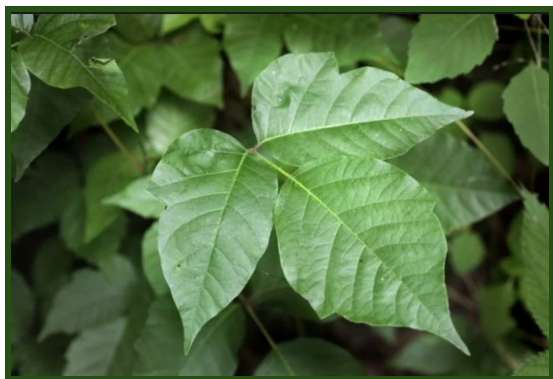
Have you seen these two flowers in the fields? What are they?



*Ranger tip: Ladyslippers come out in early spring (May-June) and are unusual to see, and delicate. They are in fact protected plants under state law so should never be picked.*



Can you find a fallen leaf? Pick it up, draw it here (or tape it here later) and tell us what tree it is from.



*Ranger tip: If you see a three-leaved plant that looks like this. That's poison ivy! Leave it alone--many people suffer an allergic reaction that makes them itch for a long long time. Remember: leaves of three, let it be!*

## Fauna

For this part of the program, we encourage you to visit Ogilvie Town Forest, one of the largest properties in the WFTA with 196 acres. This area has been wildlife enhanced by projects that provide good conditions for wildlife--for example, thinning the forest to let in more light and encourage berry bush growth. More food means more wildlife. What are other things we can do to encourage wildlife to return and thrive in the woodlands?

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What kind of wildlife did you see today? Did you see a special bird, a squirrel or chipmunk or even a fox? Can you describe it and what it was doing?

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*Ranger tip: after any walk in the woods, you should take a shower or bath to make sure you don't have any "riders" or ticks on you. Ticks can carry some sicknesses so you don't want to invite them home.*

## Glimpse of History

Weston used to be mostly farmland. There are still remnants of that period of time in the woods and fields, like stone walls, old chimneys and foundations. Then in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Town became a place for large estates for wealthy Bostonians to get away from the heat of the City in the summer. There are lots of reminders of that period, too. See if you can find an example of past stone walls, a chimney, or a mysterious field. Tell us what you saw and where:

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