

COOK INTERPRETIVE LOOP TRAIL

Follow orange trapezoid + pink dot marking. Map on back.

This 1.3 mile loop trail (CIL) is located on the 69-acre Cook ASLPT conservation easement #49 at Whitney Brook Rd. in Elkins, on property gifted in 2007 by David and Celeste Cook to the Town of New London. The trail features a panoramic Overlook of Ragged, Kearsarge and Sunapee mountains, geologic bedrock of Kinsman Quartz Monzonite, century-old sugar maples, a "Teddy Bear Cave," giant hollow ash tree, 900-foot of juniper bush (dead or alive), and a magical walk beside Whitney Brook's small waterfalls.

www.ausbonsargent.org/protected-properties/trails

Rated: easy to moderate, with estimated walking time under 1.5 hours and an elevation gain of 370 feet.

Parking: on the west side of Whitney Brook Road below the power line at ASLPT easement sign #49.

Foot traffic only. No bikes, ATV's, cars, other vehicles. Use snowshoes in winter. Dogs welcome. Children, too.

Forest: Northern hardwoods. White Pine. Hemlock.

Wildlife: Evidence of deer, moose, black bear, coyote, fox, turkey, grouse, pileated woodpecker, brook trout.

Hunters may be active during season as the property is not posted. Wear vivid orange or red colors.

SAFETY: Suitable footwear and clothing is advised. Bring drinking water, first aid kit, map, compass, whistle and (if late in the day) flashlight or headlamp. Use caution on ledge and stepping stones if wet or icy.

Litter: Anything you carry in, carry out. *Please leave trail, natural features, and wildlife undisturbed.*

Special thanks to Tom Remmers (Colby-Sawyer student project), Debbie Stanley, Sue Andrews, Peter Stanley, Laura Alexander, Sean and Darragh Rooney, Stefan Olson, Jay Hartwell, John Clough, Sandy Brenner, Nancy Lyon, David and Celeste Cook.

Trail Directions/Features

The CIL trail starts at ASLPT sign #49 on the west side of Whitney Brook Road in Elkins (below the power line). Walk left into the woods. Follow orange trapezoid + pink dot markings. This section is shared with the *Pleasant Lake High Trail* (PLHT, green dot).

#1: *Glacial erratics* — Due to the great number of glacially-deposited boulders on this pine/hemlock-shaded hillside, the area below the stone wall was never farmed — the rocks remaining undisturbed since deposited by the glacier 10,000 years ago.

#2: *Stone wall* — Built in the early 1800's during the heyday of New England sheep farming. By the mid-1900's all efforts to farm were abandoned. Thereafter the property was used for occasional logging (now prohibited by conservation easement).

INTERSECTION A. The lower leg of the Elkins Erratics Loop trail (EEL, blue dot) crosses CIL from right to left, which the PLHT (green dot) now joins. Fifteen feet straight ahead, at #3, the *Power Line Parallel trail* (PLP, orange dot) begins (right) as a connector to the upper leg of the Elkins Erratic Loop Trail (EEL, blue dot), to the *1830 Spring Trail* (1830, white dot) and to the PLHT (green dot) far off on the Deming Easement.

#3: *Old farm/logging road* — The CIL turns left here onto a logging road last used about 1992. Note how saplings have grown up and obscured the abandoned road on the right.

#4: *White Pine* (Pinus Strobus) — Largest of the Eastern evergreens (over 100 ft. tall, 3 feet in diameter). New pines cannot grow in its shade. The abandoned logging road goes to the right of the tree; the CIL to the left — rejoined shortly by the PLHT (green dot).

#5: INTERSECTION B. The CIL turns left (on the logging road).

The PLHT (green dot) continues straight, merging with the *Overlook Shortcut Trail* (OST, orange dot, .2 mi. to CIL #18.)

#6: *Gap in the stone wall.* The stones were moved to accommodate the logging road. The wall follows the 1773 "LOTT plan" survey boundary between historic "Lotts" 35 (near side) and 34 (far side). The standard size for a LOTT was 150 acres. The CIL turns right here, up hill.

#7: *White Ash* (Fraxinus Americana). Ash, a valuable hardwood, grows to 80 ft. high. It seldom comprises more than 5% of the forest canopy. Those at CIL #27 and #29 still thrive.

#8: *"Teddy Bear" Cave.* Turn right 100 feet on TB side trail (yellow dot) to small cave (too wet for real bears). At far end, TB trail links to PLHT, EEL.

Return here to continue (left) on CIL.

#9: *Grove of Hop Hornbeam trees* (Ostrya Virginiana). Called ironwood because of its great density and strength. A member of the birch family, hornbeam is short (max. height 30 ft). The trees here appear well adapted to the north side ridge climate.

#10: "*Wolf or Witch" Tree.* One glance at the ugly white pine beyond the stone wall explains the name. Growing up in sunlit pasture, this 36" diameter tree escaped logging because of its stag-like lower limbs, crooked trunks and deep barbed wire scars. On private property, the tree is not reached by trail. Turn right for the CIL.

#11: *Tree-form Juniper.* One of the few junipers here to grow vertically (the rest are bushes with horizontal branches). As the forest returns and shades them out, the juniper die — their "skeletons" a stark reminder that here was once a farm.

#12: *Juniper Ridge.* A 900 ft. stand of junipers (Juniperus Communis), some alive, more dead, along the spine of this unnamed Elkins ridge. Sunlight dependent, the bush flourishes on rocky out-crops and overgrazed pasture. In due course, it became a nursery for white pine, cherry, birch and red maple, which, when grown, shade and kill their host. The bedrock beneath is Kinsman Quartz Monzonite, a metamorphic intrusion similar to granite, and characterized by thousand-year slow-baked rectangular white potash feldspar crystals. The CIL turns right, up the ridge.

INTERSECTION C. The PLHT (green dot), paired with the upper leg of the *Elkins Erratics Loop* trail (EEL, blue dot), crosses from right to left.

#13: *Yellow Birch.* (Betula Alleghanensis). A full-grown yellow birch can grow up to 60 ft. tall and 3 ft. in diameter. A prized commercial hardwood, its venturesome bark-covered roots allow it to survive on bare rock. The multiple trunks probably came from sprouts on a logged stump.

#14: *High-bush blueberry* (Vaccinium Corymbosum) (to left of trail). Blueberries require sun to ripen (in late July). Birds and bears come here to dine when we are not around.

#15: INTERSECTION D. The PLHT rejoins the CIL beneath this hemlock tree. Forty feet to the left (on the PLHT) is a red pine (Pinus Resinosa) and, just beyond, three northern white cedar (arborvitae) (Thuja Occidentalis). Next to them, the icy/wet weather *Ridge Safety Trail* (RST, yellow trapezoid, yellow dot) links to CIL #19 on the ridge crest. Back at and to the right of Intersection D, the *White Spruce Loop* (yellow dot) visits three White Spruce trees (Picea Glauca), uncommon this far south), and a large erratic, before rejoining the CIL at #16, where the main trail proceeds up hill to the Overlook.

#16: *Out-cropping amidst the juniper.* The roughness of this dramatic 30 ft. stretch of exposed bed rock (Kinsman Quartz Monzonite) was created by the glacier's rearward "pluck" when moving down hill. The out-cropping is friendly to snowshoes when snow-covered in winter. CAUTION: in icy or wet weather (and little snow cover), use the *Ridge Safety Trail* (yellow trapezoid, yellow dot) from the PLHT to CIL #19 (see #15 above).

#17: *The Overlook.* A dramatic 180° panorama (left to right) of Ragged Mountain, the Belknap Hills (distance), Moose Mountains, Mt. Kearsarge, the Mink Hills (in Warner), Bradford Hills, Rowell Hill, King Hill, Pleasant Lake (in winter) and Mt. Sunapee.

#18: INTERSECTION E. Twenty feet past the Overlook, on the right, the *Overlook Shortcut trail* (OST, orange dot) (.2 mi.) descends to CIL #5. So, too, does the historic *1830 Spring Trail* (white dot) (.2 mi.) descend to CIL Intersection I between CIL #29 and #30. The 1830 spring was the sole source of water for the sheep that then grazed on the ridge. The CIL, however, continues along the ridge crest (being spectacular under a full moon when snow shod in winter).

#19: INTERSECTION F. The icy/wet weather *Ridge Safety Trail* (RST, yellow trapezoid, yellow dot) (.05mi.) descends to the PLHT (sixty feet from CIL #15/Intersection D). The split rock boulder here is the highest erratic still perched at this end of the ridge crest.

#20: *Gray Reindeer lichen/Haircap green moss.* Please do not enter this fragile natural area. Bears periodically turn over the area's boundary rocks, searching for grubs and insects.

#21: *Short side trail* (yellow dot) to glacier-scraped ridge top. The scraped smooth surface of this ridge top outcropping contrasts with the "plucked" downhill roughness at CIL# 16.

#22: *Cliff* (but no stone wall?). The stone wall crossed by the CIL here is part of the historic 1773 LOTT line (see CIL #6), which is why the *1773 LOTT Line* trail (1773, yellow dot) goes to the right, where it also provides bail-out access via the *Overlook Shortcut Trail* (OST, orange dot). The CIL, however, turns left. Ahead, a large yellow birch trunk straddles the stone wall (its top fell in 2006). Beyond, steep cliff made stone walls unnecessary for containing sheep. Logging being awkward, oaks/maples grew large.

#23: *INTERSECTION G*. The CIL turns right, downhill, while the PHLT continues straight to the Deming easement via the ridge crest, paralleling the historic 1773 LOTT line. Freeze/thaw cycles caused a big flake of granite cliff to break off.

#24: *Moose activity*. Still evident on the maples are several-years-old jaw scrapes made by moose approx. 5-6 feet above ground.

#25: *Sugar Maple* (*Acer Saccharum*). A short side trail (yellow dot) goes to one of nearly two dozen large sugar maples on the easement (see CIL #28). Forest understory is chiefly young sugar maple.

#26: *Small Quarry loop trail* (yellow dot). Almost every N.H. farm needed a place to quarry granite for local use (foundations, etc.) Star-drilled by hand, the stones were split with wooden wedges, as evidenced by drill marks every few inches on several stones here. (A smaller quarry is at CIL Intersection H.)

#27: *Hollow Ash*. This giant tree (over 200 years old?) has a diameter of 48 in. — shelter for small animals (but not bear).

#28: *Sugar Bush*. A grove of nine large sugar maples — dead, dying, thriving. At one time they were tapped (in February/March) for sap (which ideally had a sugar/ brix content of 5% or more). Buckets of sap were collected daily and boiled down by wood-fired stoves: 20 gallons of sap per gallon of syrup.

INTERSECTION H. The *Power Line Parallel* trail (PLP, orange dot) connector from the Deming Easement, joins the CIL from the left at the large double-trunk White Pine. Thirty feet downhill, a second small quarry is accessed by a short side trail (yellow dot). The CIL turns right.

#29: *Fallen Red Oak* (*Quercus Rubra*). When this red oak fell in 2000, it was cross-sectioned by Jay Hartwell at 4.5 ft. above ground level — standard height at which foresters measure trunk diameter (and age). The oval-shaped diameter varies between 25 and 29 in. The ring count is 87 years. Check out the thriving large ash tree.

INTERSECTION I. The CIL (pink dot) turns left. The historic *1830 Spring Trail* (1830, white dot) begins on the right (.2 mi. to the Overlook). The *Power Line Parallel* trail (PLP, orange dot) leaves the CIL and, continuing straight, provides a short-cut, bail-out to the CIL trail start/finish via CIL #3.

#30: *Power Line*. A 200 ft. wide easement granted to PSNH in 1948. Trees are cut and chipped by mobile mechanized equipment every 5 years (most recently in 2009) to keep the line clear and expedite needed line maintenance.

#31: *Yellow Birch*. Perched dramatically atop bare boulder (like CIL #13).

#32: *Eastern Hemlock* (*Tsuga Canadensis*). Largest hemlock on the Cook Easement, this tree has a diameter of 33 in. and is probably 150+ years old. Very shade tolerant, hemlocks are a climax forest species and can live for 600 years. They love brooks.

#33: *Whitney Brook*. The CIL follows this brook for 500 ft — crossing it six times (four by bridge, twice by stepping stone), to provide a delightful view of many small pools and waterfalls. It is especially lovely after winter snows and freezing (use snow shoes). During spring melt or severe storms, the brook may rise as much as three feet, a time to be cautious. The brook's headwaters are two beaver-supervised ponds on the adjoining Deming Easement. Occasional brook trout are seen. Notice: THE BROOK environment is FRAGILE. PLEASE DO NOT PUT ANYTHING IN OR TAKE ANYTHING OUT that would change its natural condition.

#34: *Fern Rings* (Marsh Fern?) These appear to grow around the perimeter of fully-decayed tree stumps. Not evergreen.

INTERSECTION J. The CIL is joined by the upper leg of the *Elkins Erratics Loop* Trail (EEL, blue dot) at the middle bridge (just above the waterfalls). The two remain paired until the trail emerges at Whitney Brook Road.

#35: *The Seven Sisters*. Thread your way through seven split-apart glacial erratics. In Greek mythology, the original seven sisters were the daughters of Atlas, placed in the Pleiades star cluster by Zeus.

Turn right on Whitney Brook Road and walk 250 feet — past the Power Line and over Whitney Brook — to the Trail start/finish.

Thank you for being part of our mile-and-a quarter adventure on the Cook Interpretive Loop. In other seasons, even at other times of day, this trail has a very different look and feel. Please come again.



Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust

"Preserving the rural landscape of the Mt. Kearsarge/Ragged/Lake Sunapee region"

71 Pleasant Street, New London, NH 03257 603-526-6555
www.ausbonsargent.org

For maps showing the entire Cook and adjoining Deming easement trails go to the Ausbon Sargent web site at: www.ausbonsargent.org and you will find them under [Protected Properties>Trails](#) in New London.

Pink Trail is the Cook Interpretive Loop (CIL); Blue Trail is the Elkins Erratics Loop (EEL); Orange Trail (northern) is Power Line Parallel (PLP); Orange Trail (southern) is the shortcut to the Overlook; Green Trail is the Pleasant Lake High Trail (PLHT); Yellow Trails are shortcuts or scenic loops.

