



## White Mountain National Forest Patte Brook Auto Tour



The Patte Brook Auto Tour winds through four miles of the White Mountain National Forest in the mountains of western Maine. The tour is self-guided with 11 stops that highlight the history, natural resources, and multiple uses of the land. Each stop has a numbered marker and most have a turnout for your car. From Bethel travel almost five miles south on Route 5, passing Songo Pond on the left. Turn right on Patte Brook Road, which becomes Forest Road 7 as you enter the national forest. The tour begins at the kiosk at the junction of Forest Road 7 and 59.

**A Little History:** Small farms once dotted the lower slopes and rocky soils in the area. Homesteaders survived by farming, logging, and milling. Moses Patte owned and operated a mill on the banks of Patte Brook from the early 1800s to his death in 1830. Cellar holes --- stone foundations from barns, homes, and mill structures --- are scattered through the woods and along the brook, reminding us of former residents and changing land uses through time. Heavy use of the land in



the late 1800s and early 1900s led to the formation of the national forest with a primary mission of restoring damaged lands and watersheds. Most of this area became part of the White Mountain National Forest in the 1930s and is now managed for a variety of uses including recreation, timber production, and wildlife habitat.

**Things to See and Do:** There's something to do year-round in the Patte Brook area. Summer brings campers to Crocker Pond Campground, hikers to local trails (day-hikes on the Albany Notch, Albany Brook, and Albany Mountain trails), and canoeists and anglers to Broken Bridge, Crocker, and Round Ponds. The area is popular in fall for hiking and hunting, or just enjoying the brilliant foliage of the hardwood forest. Groomed snowmobile trails are busy on winter weekends, and cross-county skiers and snowshoers find the trails and unplowed roads perfect for some quiet time in the sparkling winter woods. Any season of the year is great for watching wildlife, photography, or just enjoying the great outdoors. The Patte Marsh Overlook gives a bird's eye view of the marsh for wildlife viewing or quiet contemplation.

**Stop #1 – Patte Brook:** The water you see babbling by is making its way to the Crooked River, then to Sebago Lake, then on to the faucets in Portland to provide our city neighbors with clear, clean,

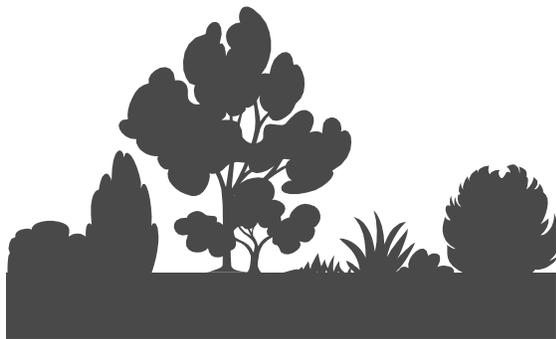
mountain water. Much of northern New England's water supply flows from headwaters on national forest lands.



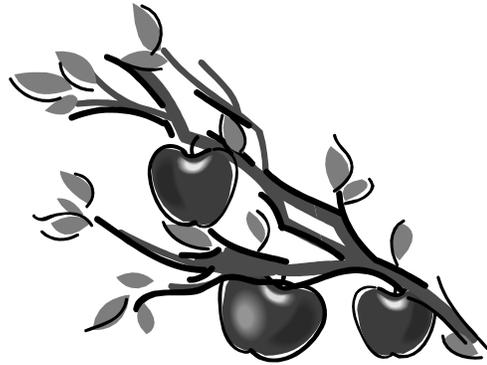
Protecting water quality for plants, wildlife, and people is a critical mission for the U.S. Forest Service. Management practices designed to protect water quality are part of every project in the national forest. Water sources like Patte Brook are focal points in history

and ecology -- Patte Brook served as a power source for Moses Patte's mill in the 1800s, and more recently was called home by a beaver family that dammed the brook just downstream from this stop.

**Stop #2 – Openings in the Forest:** Take a couple of minutes to stroll down the road on your right to Donahue Field. Look for signs of the area's original settlers as you pass through the forest. The wildlife opening at the end of the road was once part of a field devoted to crops, but is now maintained for the benefit of upland bird species such as ruffed grouse and woodcock. Here young grouse chicks and other birds find the cover and insects essential to their growth and survival. Areas like this also provide important food species such as hobblebush, aspen, witch



hazel, and alder. In the spring, grassy areas near alder stands are used as a courting "arena" in which the male woodcock performs his sky dance. Look around carefully and you may see a broad-winged hawk hunting small mammals in the field. Can you tell how land managers prevent forest trees from taking over this open grassy field?



**Stop #3 – An Apple Crop For Wildlife:**

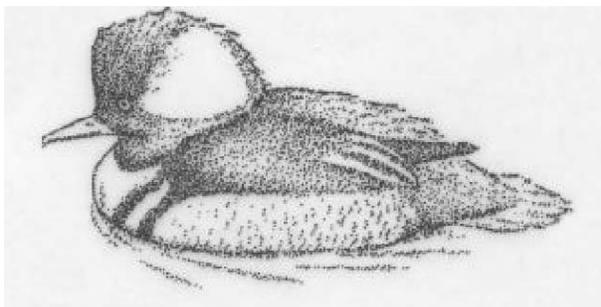
Like many homeowners today, the early settlers enjoyed apples from their own trees. Trees planted on homesteads in the 1800s have more than 300 descendants in the Patte Brook area. Wildlife managers prune and weed around these apple trees to encourage healthy crops for the resident wildlife.

**Stop #4 -- The Changing Land:** Once part of a settler's farm, the "old field" habitat to your right is now a thriving pine forest. By pruning the lower branches of selected trees, the quality of wood is improved for use by future generations. More sunlight reaching the ground along the roadsides and in light gaps in the pine forest promote growth of new young trees.

*Turn at next left for Stops #5 and #6.*

**Stop #5 – Sprout Clearing:** This roadside opening provides sprout growth for deer, hares, and other critters. Openings like this are maintained throughout the forest to

provide habitat for some species of wildlife that rely on shrubby and grassy areas for food, breeding, or cover. Did you just miss the wildlife diners? Walk through the



shrubby to discover signs of moose browsing on the tasty sprouts, or of bear tearing on the berry bushes. Caution—do not approach any wild animal. They may appear tame but are unpredictable and dangerous when approached by people.

#### **Stop #6 – Patte Brook Waterfowl Marsh**

**Dam:** This dam, maintained in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, once provided power to a sawmill downstream. It now supports this 45-acre wetland. Water levels fluctuate from season to season and may be brought very low at times to allow sunlight and oxygen to reach the marsh floor and rejuvenate aquatic plants. Aquatic ecosystems provide valuable habitat for many types of wildlife including moose, ducks, turtles, snakes, frogs, and many other creatures.

*Return to Patte Brook Road, continue west, the turn left toward Crocker Pond Campground.*

**Stop #7 – Glacial Bog:** This bog was formed thousands of years ago when a glacier moved through the area. Few animals live here, and only a few plant species can survive in the acidic soil. The ground is spongy and marshy most of the year.



**Stop #8 – Pingree Homesite:** The Pingree family once claimed this land as their homesite. Imagine the Pingree home perched near the road, livestock heading to the barn, and the Pingree children playing in the yard. The family left in 1930 but stone walls, old cellar hole foundations, and apple trees remind us that this was once a busy homestead. The forest invaded when the farm was abandoned, but the area is now maintained as an opening for wildlife habitat. Where are the stumps from the former forest?

#### **Stop #9 – A Short Walk Will Take You To The Overlook:**

Tiptoe to the viewpoint, quietly settle on a bench and become part of the scenery of Waterfowl Marsh. Peek through the screen of trees to study the upper end of the marsh formed by Patte Brook Waterfowl Marsh Dam (Stop #6). Look for moose along the shore, waterfowl drifting by, or perhaps a great blue heron winging from here to



there. Wooden nest boxes are hung throughout the marsh for flying squirrels and cavity-nesting birds such as wood ducks and hooded mergansers.

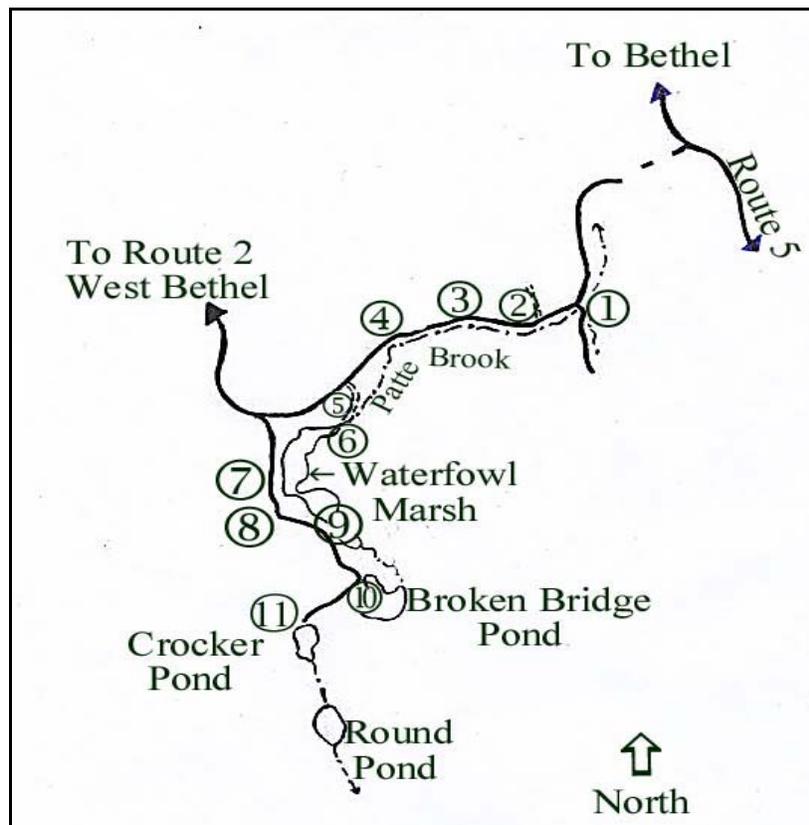
**Stop #10 – Broken Bridge Pond:** Broken Bridge Pond is part of a chain of ponds draining into Waterfowl Marsh. This is an ideal spot to canoe for peaceful fishing, or to just enjoy the scenery from the shore. A primitive campsite provides no amenities — just the sense of getting away from it all.

**Stop #11 – Crocker Pond:** Crocker Pond attracts anglers, canoeists, and folks looking for a peaceful pond-side picnic spot. The pond is part of the wetlands system connecting Broken Bridge Pond and Round Pond. Stretch your legs and discover more of the forest with an easy 1-mile hike to Round Pond on the Albany Brook Trail (2 miles round trip). Crocker Pond Campground, the smallest campground in the White Mountain National Forest, offers accessible and walk-in campsites from May – October.



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