

# Mass Audubon Quests

## Boston Nature Center Winter Quest

Mattapan

Welcome to the BNC Winter Quest,

We're pleased to have you as our guest.

In case you are wondering what this is about,

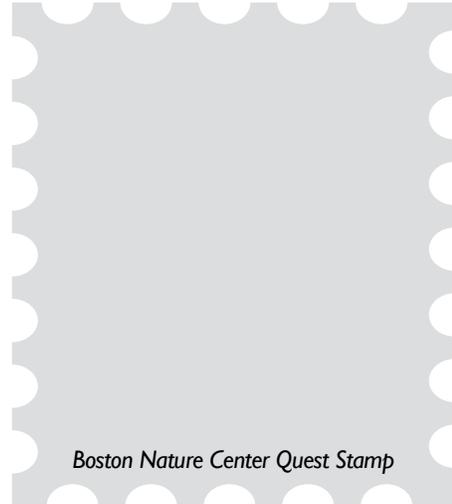
A quest is a search, you're sure to find out.

It's an outdoor treasure hunt, so bundle up and let's go!

But first, there are some things that you should know.

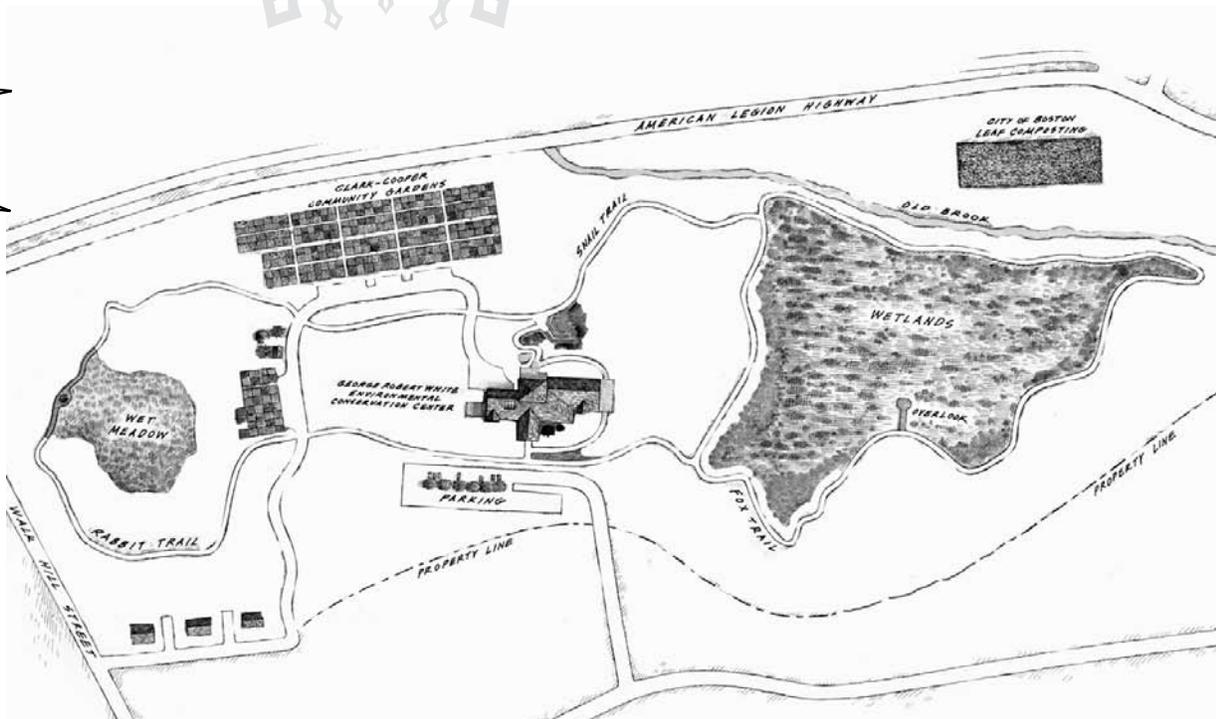
Be kind to our wildlife, birds, plants, and trees,  
Leave plants where you find them, and walk, if you please.

If you like what you see, we hope you'll return,  
For each season offers more fun things to learn!



Boston Nature Center Quest Stamp

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**1 Walk out the front doors and turn left. Follow the path into the garden and stand by the bench.**

Find a butterfly garden, where flowers once bloomed,  
They left behind seeds for next season...stay tuned.  
Stay at the bench and imagine the scene,  
In the heart of August, when butterflies teem!

But don't cry too much for the summer, my dear,  
For this garden has secrets in winter, it's clear.  
Those seeds! Those seeds! Those fabulous seeds!

Find the ones pictured here, like Joe-Pye weed.



Black-Eyed Susan



Joe Pye-Weed

Sedum and butterfly bush are there, too.  
And fennel and chives, for young caterpillars to chew.  
Have a seat on the bench, if you don't mind:    
How many recycled plastic slats can you find?

**2 Continue to the end of the butterfly path and turn right. Look for a white sign near the driveway. Follow the Snail Trail.**

Since we're speaking of seeds, keep your eyes peeled.  
You'll see all kinds of seeds as you walk through this field.  
Fluffy seeds that fly every time the wind blows,  
And sticky seeds, like Velcro, that catch on your clothes.  
Who's eating these seeds in this cold time of year?  
There is evidence of many critters near here.  
Look down in the dead grass for tunnels and holes:  
These are highways for mammals, like mice, shrews,  
and voles.

**3 Follow the Snail Trail until you get to the intersection with another trail.**

Before you go further, find a tree on the right  
With a hairy vine climbing up to a great height.  
Poison ivy! Watch out – stay out of that ditch.  
In winter, its oils can still make you itch.

And now it's time to draw a sound map.  
Stop and listen for a minute or two, and perhaps  
For every sound heard, you can draw and/or write,  
This will sharpen your sense of hearing, not sight.

Human and animal sounds count the same,  
After all, we're all part of nature's big game.  
You can even record sounds of wind, rain, and snow,  
Whatever you hear, your sound map will show.



Snail Trail/Fox Trail Sound Map

X



The X marks your location. The example shows what you might record if you heard a bird to your right.

**4 Here at the crossroads you'll come to a trail intersection. Take the furry animal's path (not the animal with a shell.)**

Now deep in the woods, imagine you were  
An animal in a cold snowstorm – brrrr!  
Where would you go to stay safe, warm, and dry?  
Look around – find one of many shelters – it's easy  
if you try!

Maybe you found a snug hole in a tree,  
A spot under a rock always looks good to me.  
Left over from springtime there might be a nest  
For some birds in tall trees, re-using is best.

On this wintertime quest, you're doing just fine.  
Near the bench you will find a memorial sign.  
When did we dedicate this wonderful place?  
Write the month's number right here, in this space:

**5 Continue past the sign and keep going until the path makes a sharp left.**

The purple stems of blackberries here can be found,  
And other colors, too, in the wetland abound!  
How many colors can you find on this wintry day?  
It's not true, what they say, that winter's all gray!

**6 Continue down the trail to the left past some gnarled locust trees with thickly ridged bark, it looks like this:**

These locust trees are gnarly,  
these locust trees are cool,  
In spring their fragrant, showy  
flowers will make you feel  
a fool!

Just remember this spot and  
come back in the spring,  
And you'll smell a sweet smell  
as you hear the birds sing.



**7 Continue down the path to the sign for the wetland overlook, and on the way notice the stands of tall cottonwood trees on your right.**

These cottonwood trees are much taller than the locusts,  
For fast growth, you see, is exactly their focus.  
But their wood is weaker, they fall quite often,  
Is there value in these logs as their wood starts  
to soften?

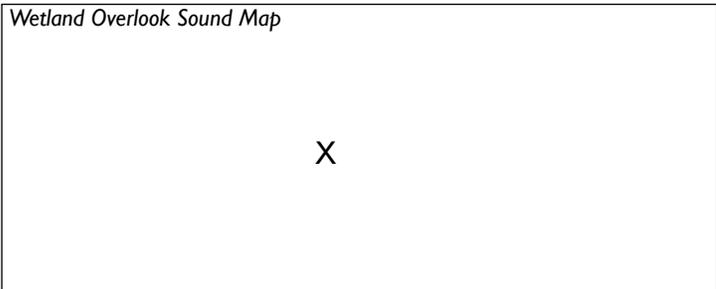
**8 Follow the wetland overlook boardwalk to the end.**

You've now reached the place where the cattails grow thickly  
Look for their hot-dog shape, and very quickly  
Please write down the year of this spot's dedication,

And then get ready for some quiet meditation.

Some say it's a calm spot, this wetland before you,  
If you're silent awhile, the animals ignore you.  
For your second sound map, let your voice disappear,  
'Cause you never know what exciting sounds you might hear.

Wetland Overlook Sound Map



**9 Turn around and walk back to the beginning of the boardwalk. Turn right and retrace your steps all the way back to the intersection of the Fox and Snail Trails.**

On your way back to here, did you see any poo?  
Oops – we should say “scat” like the scientists do.  
Do you know what might have left these lumps behind?  
If not, we can't tell you – it's a mystery to unwind.

**10 At the intersection where you saw the poison ivy, turn right to follow the Snail Trail. Stop when you see trees with white bark.**

These trees are amazing in how they can bend,  
Though thirty feet tall, to the ground they'll descend  
When heavy snow weighs them down, and if there's snow,  
Look for fallen seeds shaped like angels – gray birches, you know.

As you walk further down, look off to the right,  
Pause briefly, look up and around, and you might  
See some winter birds looking for nice things to eat.  
What else are they doing? Do you hear them tweet?

**11 Keep walking until you see some tree stumps to the left.**

You've found some old stumps, all rotting and brown,  
Can you guess why we cut these Norway maples down?  
It's because they were dying, and not only that,  
We wanted to make more meadow habitat.

You see, diversity's good for both people and birds,  
We'll now attract critters who like the following words:  
Forest and wetland and meadow and pond,  
Of meadow in particular, the bluebirds are fond.

Not to mention that stumps and logs tend to play host  
To a wealth of cool animals (we like worms the most).  
Can you find an odd fungus on this stumpy trail,  
Named for a common Thanksgiving bird's tail?



Turkey Tail Fungus

**12 At the next intersection, bear left to stay on the Snail Trail.**

You're back in the forest, and your Quest's almost done,  
Walk until you find a bunch of vines, and focus on one.  
Where does it start, and where does it stop?

Did it bring down a tree on its way to the top?

Winter's the time to see bittersweet damage;  
This vine is more than some trees can manage.  
Can you blame the vine for being a sunlight hog?  
Now go left around the bend and look for a big log.

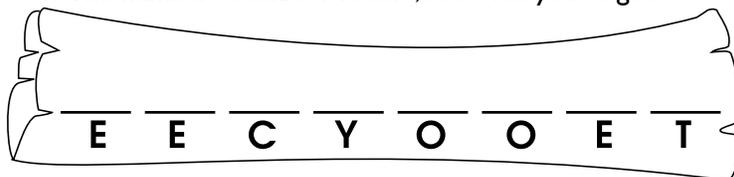
Look up to the right for a big “holey” tree.  
Who made all these holes? Do you see more than three?  
Remember how cold it is, and think, if you would:  
Does a dead tree in woods like this do any good?

**13 Continue up the trail, out of the forest and up the hill. Stop at the bright green trees to the left.**

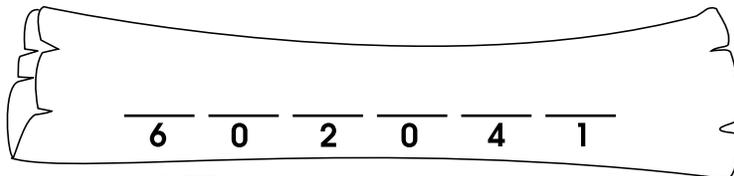
Now here's a tree with a fresh forest smell.  
Which tree is this? Crush the needles – can you tell?  
Great shelter for birds – you've discovered white pine!

How many white pines did we plant in this line?

You might see a bird fly from here to the feeders,  
And now as your last thing to do, dear readers,  
Write the DIGITS from all the clues – each one in its spot,  
The numbers stand for letters; see what you've got.



**Use this code to figure out the name of the animal whose scat (poop) you might have seen:**



**HINT:** These animals have such amazing hearing they can hear a mouse moving beneath a foot of snow! Wow, those are some powerful ears!

**At the front desk, whisper this animal's name  
And the staff person will give you the prize for this game.**

**From now on, wherever you happen to be,  
Keep your eyes and ears open –  
you never know what you'll see!**

## Boston Nature Center

500 Walk Hill Street  
Mattapan, MA 02126  
617-983-8500  
email: [bnc@massaudubon.org](mailto:bnc@massaudubon.org)  
[www.massaudubon.org](http://www.massaudubon.org)

### Nature Center Hours:

Monday - Friday, 9 am - 5 pm  
Saturday, Sunday and Monday Holidays,  
10 am - 4 pm

Parking and bike racks available.

**Trails:** Open every day, dawn to dusk

Welcome to the Boston Nature Center

As a community education center, we strive to welcome everyone and to provide a place that is safe, inclusive, and enriching for people and for wildlife.

### Use Your Senses

There's always something new to see, hear, and experience at the Boston Nature Center. We encourage you to keep your eyes and ears open, and to visit during different seasons to observe changes. Children are naturally curious, and an outdoor adventure is a great chance to develop respect for living things and to practice such skills as describing, comparing and contrasting. Most importantly, have fun!

## Mass Audubon Quests



There are Quests at these Mass Audubon sanctuaries. For more information, visit our website [www.massaudubon.org/Quests](http://www.massaudubon.org/Quests)

Quest is a trade name of the Valley Quest program, and is used with permission from [www.valleyquest.org](http://www.valleyquest.org)

## About Questing

Questing was born out of a 150-year old tradition in the region surrounding Dartmoor National Park in southwest England. "Letterboxing," as this tradition is called, is a popular past time, with thousands of boxes hidden in both natural and cultural locations. Vital Communities, a regional non-profit organization based in Vermont, built on this tradition in the United States by developing the Valley Quest program. In the early 1990s, Vital Communities was concerned about the future of the Upper Valley region of New Hampshire and Vermont, and was hoping to develop a program that would foster sense of place, strengthen relationships between schools and communities, and build bridges across the generations. The result was Valley Quest, with "Valley" referring to the place and "Quest" referring to a treasure hunt—made by children and adults working together—leading to the community's special places. Over time, the Valley Quest program has grown. More than 2,000 children, adults, families, scouts, students and historical society members have contributed to the creation of the 200+ Quests found in the Valley Quest books; and communities across the country are beginning to replicate Valley Quest's success.

Quest is a trade name of the Valley Quest program, and is used with permission. For more information, visit [www.valleyquest.org](http://www.valleyquest.org)

Mass Audubon works to protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife. Together with more than 100,000 members, we care for 34,000 acres of conservation land, provide educational programs for 225,000 children and adults annually, and advocate for sound environmental policies at local, state, and federal levels. Mass Audubon's mission and actions have expanded since our beginning in 1896 when our founders set out to stop the slaughter of birds for use on women's fashions. Today we are the largest conservation organization in New England. Our statewide network of wildlife sanctuaries, in 90 Massachusetts communities, welcomes visitors of all ages and serves as the base for our work. To support these important efforts, call 800-AUDUBON (283-8266) or visit [www.massaudubon.org](http://www.massaudubon.org).

