

"20 years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than the ones you did do. So, throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover"

- Mark Twain, *Autobiography*

With its steep terrain and high ledge overlooking a working farmer's field, Fern Ledge has a unique place among the parks in Essex. Trails wind through woodlands and among old stone walls, offering glimpses of Birch Millpond below. In winter, it affords distant, sweeping views of the surrounding countryside. Note that the trails leading up to the ledge are steep.

History: The property sits astride the Essex-Westbrook town line. When the 10-acre parcel was purchased in 2005, from the estate of August Neidlinger and Catherine Doane, it had lain idle for many years. The 2022 purchase of three acres in Westbrook connects Fern Ledge to the four-acre Farm Hill estates development set aside deeded to the land trust in 2001.

Flora and Fauna: The yellow trail crosses one of the small streams feeding Birch Millpond, vital habitat for turtles, salamanders, and frogs along with ferns, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, and skunk cabbage. Rare plants include dwarf ginseng, May apple, and wild leek. Look for a beaver dam in the pond. The upper reaches at Fern Ledge are home to maple, oaks, and birch trees along with mammals from fox to deer.

Location: Alongside the Middlesex Hospital Occupational & Environmental Services facility off Route 153.



Our Vision and Mission

The Essex Land Trust is an independent nonprofit organization supported by generous donations and managed by a dedicated group of volunteers. Our vision is to provide the Essex community with a network of permanently protected preserves that give residents of all ages ample opportunities to enjoy the beauty of nature while safeguarding our waterways, wetlands, and supporting healthy wildlife habitats.

Our Mission is to acquire, preserve, and manage open space to protect the environment and small-town character of the villages of Centerbrook, Essex, and Ivoryton for current and future generations and to provide our community with recreational and educational opportunities through strategic acquisitions and responsible stewardship of properties with significant environmental value. To fulfill these objectives the land trust conserves wildlife habitats, forests, fields, rivers, wetlands, and scenic views by maintaining properties in a natural state.

Become an Essex Land Trust Member

Members receive our newsletter, *Woods & Waters*, and are invited to our Annual Meeting. Members also receive eblasts of upcoming land trust events. Conservators for Life are members who make a one-time donation of \$1500. Their names are placed on the bronze Conservators Plaque located at Cross Lots.

Giving to the Essex Land Trust

Membership dues enable the land trust to maintain its preserves, schedule informative and educational programs, and cover operating expenses. Memberships are per family, paid annually or one time as a Conservator for Life.

We encourage restricted donations for land acquisitions or toward stewardship expenses. Unrestricted gifts for the general land trust purposes can be made at any time. Memorial gifts are always appreciated.

As a 501(c)(3) Corporation, the land trust is a qualified recipient of conservation land donations and easements. Gifts to the Essex Land Trust are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Essex Land Trust • P.O. Box 373
Essex CT 06426 • EssexLandTrust.Org



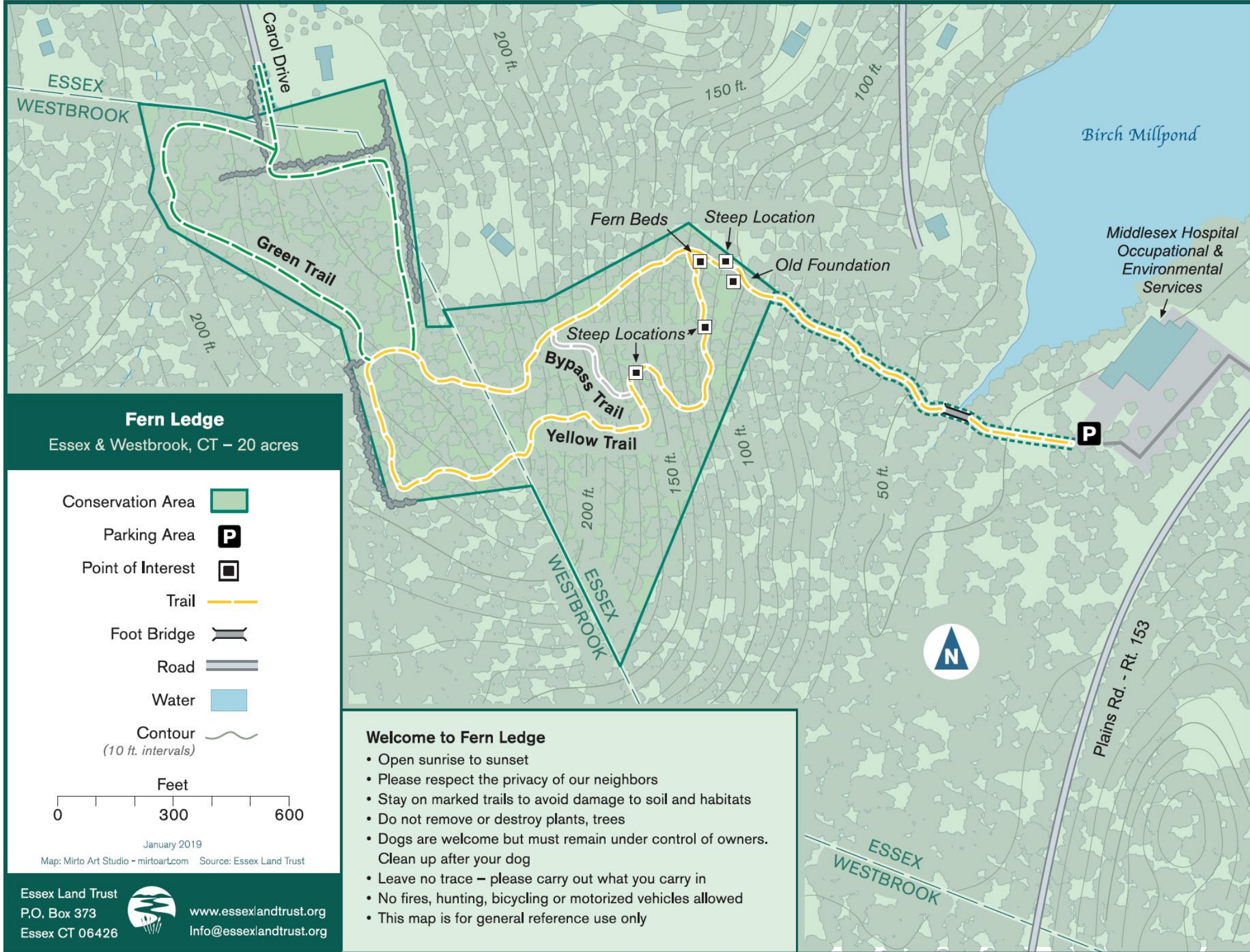
Essex Land Trust
Caring for Our World Here at Home



TRAIL MAPS

Fern Ledge

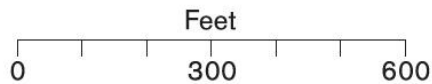




Fern Ledge

Essex & Westbrook, CT – 20 acres

- Conservation Area
- Parking Area
- Point of Interest
- Trail
- Foot Bridge
- Road
- Water
- Contour
(10 ft. intervals)



January 2019

Map: Mirto Art Studio - mirtoart.com Source: Essex Land Trust

Welcome to Fern Ledge

- Open sunrise to sunset
- Please respect the privacy of our neighbors
- Stay on marked trails to avoid damage to soil and habitats
- Do not remove or destroy plants, trees
- Dogs are welcome but must remain under control of owners.
Clean up after your dog
- Leave no trace – please carry out what you carry in
- No fires, hunting, bicycling or motorized vehicles allowed
- This map is for general reference use only

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