

Fitchburg Trail Guide

Detailed Trail Descriptions, June 2018

Prepared by the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee, a volunteer group working with the City of Fitchburg

Northern Watershed (1st of 9 trails)

Note: As of June 2018, although several of these trails have been blazed (*as indicated below*), the colors shown on the accompanying detailed trail map have not yet been used in the blazing, nor is there as yet any signage marking these trails.

TRAIL NAME: **Main Path**

OWNER: City of Fitchburg

TRAILHEAD LOCATION: Un-numbered steel gate located on the east side of Ashby West Rd., 0.20 mi. north of its jct. with Ashburnham Hill Rd. This trailhead is also 0.14 mi. south of the bridge along Ashby West Rd. that crosses Scott Reservoir's upper outlet, which is just above the Scott Reservoir dam. Note: This is not to be confused with the lower outlet of Scott Reservoir, which lies in a low point along Ashby West Rd. ~240 ft. south of the trailhead.

PARKING: To either side of Ashby West Rd. above the steel gate, there is room for approximately six vehicles to park on the roadside. Do not block the gate.

DISTANCE: ~0.5 Mile

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: EASY

ACCESSIBILITY LEVEL: This is not an accessible trail.

SURFACE: Level, firm, and stable woods road.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION: The Main Path is a short linear trail that begins at the above-mentioned gate. It is an old road, marked by *triangular blazes*. At its easterly end, signs are posted where it enters the Mass Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary. The trail offers very pleasant views of woods and Scott Brook.

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Northern Watershed (2nd of 9 trails)

Note: As of June 2018, although several of these trails have been blazed (*as indicated below*), the colors shown on the accompanying detailed trail map have not yet been used in the blazing, nor is there as yet any signage marking these trails.

TRAIL NAME: **Upper Scott Brook Loop**

OWNER: City of Fitchburg

TRAILHEAD LOCATION: Approx. 0.1 mile east of the Main Path trailhead, a day-glo orange-and-white plastic 55-gal drum currently marks where this trail leaves the Main Path.

PARKING: Park at the Main Path trailhead (see Main Path, above).

DISTANCE: ~0.25 Mile (the loop is 0.4 mi. including Main Path portion)

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: EASY to MODERATE

ACCESSIBILITY LEVEL: This is not an accessible trail.

SURFACE: Natural woodland surface.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION: This is a short loop trail that begins at a day-glo orange-and-white plastic 55-gal drum. It is currently *not blazed*. Within ~50 ft., the trail crosses Scott Brook at a point where the brook appears to emerge from underground, making the stream crossing easy. The trail then bears left (E) along the north side of Scott Brook (don't try to recross Scott Brook at the old, fallen-down bridge!) Within 650 ft. the trail meets the Thurston-Scott Brook Connector Trail at a Tee. Turn right (ESE), following *single-dot blazes* for a short distance (170 ft.) to another Tee. Then bear right (S) onto a trail marked by *two-dot blazes*. This trail soon crosses Scott Brook over a wooden bridge built ~2010, and then climbs steeply for a short distance up to the Main Path. To return to the parking area, turn right (W) onto the Main Path. This easy-to-reach loop trail offers very pleasant views of woods and Scott Brook.

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Northern Watershed (3rd of 9 trails)

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TRAIL NAME: **Lower Scott Brook Loop**

OWNER: City of Fitchburg

TRAILHEAD LOCATION: Approx. 0.25 mile east of the Main Path trailhead.

PARKING: Park at the Main Path trailhead (see Main Path, above).

DISTANCE: 0.3 mile (loop is 0.5 mi. including Main Path portion)

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: EASY to MODERATE

ACCESSIBILITY LEVEL: Not accessible

SURFACE: Mostly firm natural surface tread, with some stones/rocks and roots

TRAIL DESCRIPTION: This is a relatively short loop trail that begins on the Main Path 0.25 mi. from the Main Path trailhead. Take a left (N) onto a smaller trail (*marked with two-dot blazes*) down a steep bank. Within ~100 ft. this trail crosses Scott Brook over a wooden plank bridge with a railing, built ~2010. Immediately after crossing Scott Brook, the trail turns briefly to the left and climbs the other bank. Within ~250 ft, the trail meets the Thurston Rd-Scott Brook Connector Trail at a Tee. Turn right (ENE), continuing to follow the *two-dot blazes*. Trail is interesting, irregular up-and-down terrain, with large hemlocks, beech, red maple, red oak and white pine. As it draws nearer to Scott Brook, it crosses an old stone wall and soon comes to a second wooden plank bridge with railing across Scott Brook, also built ~2010. Just below this bridge is Scott Brook Falls (also known as simply Scott Falls, “The Chasm” or “The Gorge”), one of the most interesting geologic features within all of Fitchburg. At Scott Falls, the brook plunges through a right-angle cleft between two house-sized ledges – **CAUTION:** dangerous drops and icy rocks in the winter! Take care while climbing to the various overlooks. The *two-dot* trail climbs up from the brook and meets the *one-dot* trail within ~50 ft. Take a right (S) and follow the *one-dot* trail uphill along a service road to the Main Path. To return to the parking area, turn right (W) onto the Main Path, marked by *triangular blazes*, back to the point of origin. This loop trail offers very pleasant views of woods and Scott Brook. The mix of older, mature trees, irregular terrain, and dramatic, rocky Scott Falls makes this a very rewarding short trail.

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Northern Watershed (4th of 9 trails)

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TRAIL NAME: **Falulah Brook Loop Trail**

OWNER: City of Fitchburg, MA Audubon

TRAILHEAD LOCATION: Begins on the Main Path, ~200 ft west of the entrance to the MA Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary.

PARKING: Refer to either the Main Path or Hartwell Cemetery Loop Trail

DISTANCE: 1.25 mi. including Main Path portion

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: EASY to MODERATE

ACCESSIBILITY LEVEL: Not accessible

SURFACE: Natural surface, firm soil with some minor rock and stone protrusions, but relatively level except for the portion immediately below Scott Falls.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION: This is a relatively easy woodland loop trail that begins on the Northern Watershed lands, follows Scott Brook to Falulah Brook, and then along Falulah Brook past a series of cascades and rocky pools, and returns via the MA Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary. The trail begins on the Main Path, just to the west of the MA Audubon gate. Follow the *one-dot blazes*, beginning along a service road and entering the woods to the north to Scott Falls. Without crossing Scott Brook, take a right downstream (NE), continuing to follow the *one-dot blazes* to where the Lovell Reservoir Loop Trail departs on the left. A few feet below this point, Scott Brook empties into Falulah Brook, which immediately flows into the small Falulah Reservoir. The City of Fitchburg Water Treatment Plant complex is visible just across Falulah Reservoir. Continue downstream to the right (E), following the very well-marked *one-dot blazes* along the south and west bank of Falulah Brook. Note: Water Dept. signage prohibits crossing Falulah Brook here. Stay on the south/southwest bank. The *one-dot blazes* continue down the brook for ~0.5 mi. Near a rocky pool, at an old Cub Scout camp (concrete piers still evident), the trail turns sharp right (W) and uphill (away from the brook) and within ~200 ft converges onto the power line. Take a left (SE) and follow the *one-dot blazes* along the power line to the SE for ~250 ft, to where a side trail marked by *one-dot blazes* climbs up to the right (S) onto a short, unnamed MA Audubon trail. This trail proceeds ~0.1 mi. to an intersection with the White Birch Trail (on the right). Take the White Birch Trail ~1/2 mi. WNW to its end, then bear right (W) onto the Main Path to the point of origin.

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Northern Watershed (5th of 9 trails)

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TRAIL NAME: Hartwell Cemetery Loop Trail

OWNER: City of Fitchburg, MA Audubon Society (adjoins trail along one stretch)

TRAILHEAD LOCATION: End of Scott Rd., which crosses Ashby West Rd. just north of its junction with Ashburnham Hill Rd. Note: There are other roads named Scott Rd. in Fitchburg, so avoid reliance on GPS to find this location.

DISTANCE: ~0.75 miles

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: EASY to MODERATE

ACCESSIBILITY LEVEL: Not accessible

SURFACE: Natural surface.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION AND PARKING: This wooded loop trail begins at the end of the paved portion of Scott Rd., just past the last (most easterly) house, where there is one parking space on the left – do not block the residents' access. Follow former Scott Rd., which is an old woods road, downhill to the east. In ~0.15 mi., signs are encountered showing the boundary with the MA Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary land, which lies ahead (to the east). There, at a 4-way trail intersection (with signed Flat Rock Rd. continuing straight ahead and signed Scott Rd. to the left), an old stone well is visible a few feet to the right of the trail. Take Scott Rd. to the left (ENE) – it is currently marked with blue tags. At this point, MA Audubon land is on the right, and the City's Northern Watershed lands are on the left. In a very short distance, the Scott Rd. trail crosses the Pipeline Path. Turn sharp left (NW) onto the Pipeline Path, re-entering the Northern Watershed lands. Follow this trail NW ~0.3 mi. The trail bears to the left (W), and comes to a Tee. Note: If one were to take a right (NE), the Northern Watershed Main Path would be encountered within a few hundred feet. Instead, take the left (S) uphill. Hartwell Cemetery, which is bordered by stone walls, is located on the top of a small knoll on the left (east side) of the trail. It has only 3 gravestones (1806-1850), in good condition. Continue uphill (S) ~0.1 mi. to paved Scott Rd. Turn left (E) on Scott Rd. ~0.1 mi. to the starting point (the end of the paved portion of Scott Rd.)

Alternatively, one can begin this trail from Ashby West Rd. From the Main Gate, proceed E ~0.1 mi., and take a right onto a smaller trail to the SE. The Tee described in the loop above is encountered within a few hundred feet.

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Northern Watershed (6th of 9 trails)

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TRAIL NAME: **Thurston Rd-Scott Brook Connector**

OWNER: City of Fitchburg

TRAILHEAD LOCATION: This trail begins at an unnumbered gate on the east side of Ashby West Rd., next to the Scott Reservoir dam and bridge. A City of Fitchburg road sign designates this former road as "Thurston Rd." There are spaces for two cars, one on either side of the gate. Do not block the gate, as it is used by the Water Department to access the large water storage tank.

SURFACE: Natural surface.

DISTANCE: ~0.4 mi.

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: MODERATE

ACCESSIBILITY LEVEL: Not handicapped accessible: challenging for someone with mobility impairments

SURFACE: Natural surface tread, except for the short distance across an old field

TRAIL DESCRIPTION: This is a connector trail that is located primarily in the mixed pine/hardwood woodlands to the east of Scott Reservoir. It begins at the above-mentioned gate. In several hundred feet, a little north of where an access road (access prohibited) leads SE to a Water Dept. Storage Tank, the trail crosses a small, currently unmowed grassy field to the right (East). Immediately, the trail enters the woods along an old woods road bordered by a stone wall, past an old cellar hole on the left. As the road begins to plunge downhill, turn onto the side trail on the right. Note: The trail that goes straight ahead is a logging road growing up to brambles, a confusing route with many offshoots, that is not a hiking trail. Instead, take the side trail, which is blazed with *single-dots*, and follow it gently downhill until it ends at a Tee, at which point it intersects with the Lower Scott Brook Trail (*double-dot blazes*).

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Northern Watershed (7th of 9 trails)

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TRAIL NAME: **Lovell Reservoir-Thurston Rd. Loop Trail**

OWNER: City of Fitchburg

TRAILHEAD LOCATION: Ashby West Rd. at the gate to "Thurston Rd.", across from the Scott Reservoir Dam

DISTANCE: 2.5 miles

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: MODERATE due to grade of trail and a few rough stretches of the trail.

ACCESSIBILITY LEVEL: Not handicapped accessible; difficult for those with mobility impairments

SURFACE: Mostly natural surface conditions.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION: This loop trail begins at a steel gate with a street sign, "Thurston Rd." Follow the entire Thurston-Scott Brook Connector Trail (described above) to its end, then turn left onto the Lower Scott Brook Trail (*two-dot blazes*) to Scott Falls. From Scott Falls, follow the Falulah Brook Trail (*one-dot blazes*) downstream along Scott Brook. Immediately before Scott Brook empties into Falulah Brook, step across rocks to cross Scott Brook (there is no bridge there anymore) and climb a small side trail uphill (to the NW). As the trail ascends, it follows roughly parallel and to the west of the prominent Lovell Reservoir spillway outlet channel. The main Lovell Reservoir dam has a 78-ft long concrete spillway, with a 450-ft long concrete and stone channel serving as the outlet. The falls over the concrete portion of the spillway stream are dramatic during high water. Once the trail has ascended above the level of the top of the spillway, much of Lovell Reservoir's earthfill dam, which is 800 ft long and 80 ft high, and is oriented east-west is visible looking south across the water. Follow the trail north about 500 ft until it diverges, with the right branch (that closer to the reservoir) dropping steeply downhill, and the left branch remaining fairly level. Avoid the right branch, as its steep drop is often slippery. The two branches reconverge soon anyway. The trail soon approaches and runs north along the western shoreline of the reservoir, affording nice views. Along the eastern side of the reservoir (across the water from the trail), a 1,600-ft long earthen dike extends north of the dam for approximately the entire southern half of the reservoir. The trail crosses several small streams that empty into the reservoir, but the unbridged crossings are not difficult. As one proceeds north, the views across Lovell Reservoir and looking south toward the knob of Hemlock Hill (which lies within the MA Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary) are increasingly beautiful and give this trail a rather remote feel to it. After passing the northern end of Lovell Reservoir, the trail veers uphill to the NW, soon turns to the SW, and arrives at a

Tee with Thurston Rd. This is the northern terminus of the loop trail. Turn left (south) on Thurston Rd., which soon crosses a sizeable stream that runs through a nice small gorge. South of the stream, Thurston Rd., which is a fairly wide and unmistakable old woods road, has an abandoned cast iron waterline buried beneath much of its length. Along a few stretches the trail can become ponded due to poor drainage. Continuing south, one arrives at the former Thurston Homestead, with cellar holes for both the former barn and house. Continuing past the former homestead, the trail terminates at the starting point on Ashby West Rd.

Note: If you turn right at the Tee with Thurston Rd. mentioned above, the trail (denoted on the map as the “Thurston Road Extension” continues to the north for almost a half a mile until it meets the Shattuck Sawmill Trail.

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Northern Watershed (8th of 9 trails)

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TRAIL NAME: **Shattuck Sawmill Trail**

OWNER: City of Fitchburg

TRAILHEAD LOCATIONS AND PARKING: West end: Ashby West Rd. and "Shattuck Rd.", at Gate #7. There is parking for a single car without blocking the gate. East end: Rindge Rd., at Gate #14. There is sufficient parking on the side of Rindge Rd. for several cars. Do not block the gate.

DISTANCE: 0.6 miles

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: MODERATE, due to steep sections.

ACCESSIBILITY LEVEL: Not handicapped accessible and difficult for those with mobility impairments

SURFACE: Woods road and natural tread trail

TRAIL DESCRIPTION: The west end of this trail begins on Ashby West Rd. at Gate #7. Follow the old woods road (known as Shattuck Rd.), due east. The trail, which is bordered by stone walls and woods on both sides, drops down, crosses an intermittent stream, and rises again, passing an old cellar hole on the left, which marks a home that was destroyed by fire in the 1940s. At about 0.4 mi from the starting point, the trail narrows and descends to a Tee. The left turn onto a woods road drops downhill, quickly arriving at the former Shattuck Sawmill location. (Note: The right turn follows south along the waterline trail, denoted on the trail map as the "Thurston Rd. Extension", which becomes "Thurston Rd." and joins the Lovell Reservoir-Thurston Rd. Loop Trail.) At the former Shattuck Sawmill site, carefully cross Falulah Brook on a light footbridge recently built by runners or mountain bikers. Falulah Brook descends towards the SE from this point through a relatively steep-walled valley. Falulah Brook is one of two cold-water streams in Fitchburg. The trail climbs the NE bank above Falulah Brook, bears to the right (east), and soon ends at Rindge Rd at Gate #14.

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Northern Watershed (9th of 9 trails)

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TRAIL NAME: **Billings Rd. Trail**

OWNER: City of Fitchburg

TRAILHEAD LOCATIONS AND PARKING: West end: Rindge Rd., at Gate #3. There is parking for two vehicles without blocking the gate. East end: NW end of Billings Rd. Park along the west side of Billings Rd., without blocking residents' access.

DISTANCE: 1.1 miles

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: MODERATE, due to a few somewhat steep sections.

ACCESSIBILITY LEVEL: Not handicapped accessible and difficult for those with mobility impairments

SURFACE: Woods road and natural tread trail

TRAIL DESCRIPTION: This is a very attractive trail with interesting hilly topography. The west end of the trail begins on Rindge Rd. at Gate #3. Follow the old woods road, initially to the NNE. In about 800 ft, the trail forks. Note: The trail that goes straight ahead continues N to the Ashby town line, coming out behind an active, privately owned farm at the end of Scott Rd. in Ashby, and is thus not recommended. The trail to the right (initially to the East) bears gradually to the left (to the North) and crosses a small stream. There, the trail forks. Note: The trail that continues straight ahead and uphill (to the N) has been degraded by recent unauthorized All Terrain Vehicle use, and is not recommended. Take the fork to the right, downhill (SE), which is in better condition. It initially follows the east side of the small stream valley, to the SE and E, and then switches sharply back to the NW and climbs uphill to a Tee. Take the trail to the right, which descends gradually. Bear right at another Tee. The trail passes two old foundations, one on either side of the trail. At a major trail intersection, the trail to the left (heading toward the NE) is not recommended as it soon enters a large wetland with poor tread. Take the main trail to the right (to the East), which climbs gradually up to high, glacially-scoured ledges with low-bush blueberries. Continuing to the SE, the trail descends and ends at a gate next to the last house at the end of Billings Rd. A sign at this (eastern) trailhead indicates that the trail is on "Forest Legacy Conservation Land", which is owned by the City of Fitchburg.