

CROOKED POND, BOXFORD, MA



Crooked Pond is located within the Bald Hill Preserve with trailhead access along Middleton Road in Boxford. The Bald Hill properties were once home to as many as 200 members of the Agawam tribe. In the mid 17th century colonial settlers moved into the area, cutting down most of the trees to create farmland as was the common practice throughout the Northeast. Much of the farmland later reverted to forest in the 1800s as other industry and altered farming practices prevailed. In the late 1800s and early 1900s the forests were again logged. In the 1920s and 1930s much of the Bald Hill Preserve became under state ownership. Two large properties that were acquired now make up Boxford State Forest. In the 1950s residents fought against having the land developed. Now the state and Essex County Greenbelt Association own the land that surrounds Crooked Pond. The Attached map indicates the tracts of land that were contributed or acquired over the years at and near Crooked Pond.

The Crooked Pond area is believed to be the site of ancient volcanic activity. This area contains lime-based rock. These rocks are not commonly found in this area and favorably affect the Ph of the soil and water. Since wetlands form around these rocks, they provide ideal conditions for plants like spice brush, maidenhair ferns, silky and red osier dogwoods, wild roses, marsh marigolds, and other plants not commonly found in more acidic wetlands. Crooked Pond is brown water because of large quantities of dissolved organic acids. The largest bog in the Preserve is on the edge of Crooked Pond. Beaver activity has been enlarging the Pond and wetlands in recent years, sometimes flooding the section of the Bay Circuit Trail that runs alongside the northern edge of the Pond.

Crooked Pond is actually two ponded areas connected by an intersecting stream. Total water surface area is approximately 15 acres. There is no significant inlet stream into Crooked Pond. Water is accumulated through spring runoff, rain and groundwater contributions. The Pond probably does not exceed ten feet in any location, although no known depth assessment has been taken. Fish observed in

Crooked Pond include bass and pickerel. It is not, however, regarded as a productive fishing site. The swampy features of this watersource are not inviting to kayakers or anyone bold enough to lug a canoe up the trail to Pond's edge.

Crooked Pond and in particular its outlet, Crooked Pond Brook, has been the site of water testing by both state and federal agencies as the water quality here is regarded as a gold standard against which other state water resources are measured. This watersource has also been of interest to researchers, including PhD candidates as an evaluative site for unusual concentrations of flora and fauna. Birders are frequent visitors to the Pond area due to the presence of unusual species such as the Louisiana water thrush and several hard-to-find owl and hawk species. Efforts are underway by several not-for-profit groups to further preserve and protect this watershed by improved fish passage from Fish Brook, into Crooked Pond Brook and on into Crooked Pond.

