

Overbrook Trail

What to look for on the Overbrook Trail

This trail is a complex of several loops. Consequently, there are several places where decisions will need to be made about which route, or trail branch, to take. The trail is described as traveling counterclockwise along the peripheral trails. From Trailhead 2 (Overbrook Rd.), enter and turn right. The forest here was once farmland (note the old stone walls on the right). Old fields have reverted to forests whose composition is determined in large part by available soil moisture. Large tulip-poplar trees are common in the moist forest first encountered. Note the thicket created by the viney growths of poison ivy, bittersweet, greenbriar, honeysuckle, multiflora rose and grape. While many of these plants are invasive exotics, the thicket does provide great cover for birds.

Continue west through an area that drains this side of the forest, and then gradually ascend into the forest dominated by birch, oak and hickory. The path splits—the right fork goes west and eventually loops back to join the other. Take the right option. Note the scattering of rocks, reminders that glaciers once moved across our region. At the top of the rise, where the trail bends sharply left, the soil is thinner and drier. Drought-tolerant chestnut oaks, with their deeply fissured bark, are common here.

Follow the trail to where the “cross-over” trail enters on the left.

(The trail straight ahead, to the east, follows an old woods road about 500 feet before turning southward to join the trail along the State Forest/MLCT boundary near the southeast corner of the State Forest.) Turn right and proceed south; note the many dogwoods that are dead or in poor condition. Dogwood anthracnose disease, caused by a fungus believed to have originated in Asia, appeared first in the late 1970s and nearly eliminated understory dogwoods in Connecticut and elsewhere.

Continue to where stone walls mark the corner of four former fields or pastures. Here, the choice is to either turn left, following the State Forest boundary east, or pass through the walls onto MLCT land. The ‘eastern’ trail joins the longer, western loop later. Pass through the stone wall and follow the winding trail over the slight rise and then down to an overlook. Here, choose either to turn sharp left (east) along the overlook, or descend the steep bank to the pond.

Descend to pondside and bear left along the old road. A short walk on the trail permits close views of aquatic life along the south side of this beautiful pond, excellent breeding habitat for salamanders and frogs. It drains into an extensive wetland to the south.

Continue eastward from the pond along the old road bordering the wetland. In spring, a yellow haze of spice bush flowers overtops bright green masses of skunk cabbage; in the fall, witchazel flowers create a similar effect. Where the trail diverges temporarily from the wetland, the “overlook” trail joins from the left. Note the many rocky “stream tracks” leading down from the high ground to the north. Centuries of water-flow have washed away the soil, exposing rocks whose rounded shapes reflect the grinding by glaciers 10 millenia ago. Along the way, near laurel thickets, the path is crossed by several ‘seeps,’ one of which is fed by an active spring nearby.

(Where the trail turns northward (left), the trail along the State Forest boundary heads left, .25 mile back to the “four-fields corner.”)

Continue across a small stream and then sharply north close to the eastern State Forest border, marked by stone walls. The trail bends right and then left, marking the short spur trail to Trailhead 1 on Colonial Rd. Exit here or continue the short distance (about 800 feet) to Trailhead 2. The path between the trailheads passes by a wetland to the west and, once again, through a stand of large tulip poplar.

Madison Land Conservation Trust

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Permitted Activities:

The trails areas in the MLCT properties are for hiking only. Dogs are allowed, but must be leashed. Please pick up all animal waste. Contact the State Forest HQ for other activities allowed on their sites.



Photo by Thomas Bollinger of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Overbrook Trail is a complex trail offering a good opportunity to explore several different forest settings. It passes through both wet-mesic and dry areas, visits a beautiful small pond, and runs by an extensive wetland. A network of stone walls attests to an active agricultural history.

GPS Directions: 81 Overbrook Rd, Madison, CT 06443

Category: An easy walk with one optional

Start: Trailhead at the cul-de-sac on Riverside Terrace

Distance: Perimeter distance is 1.1 miles

Approximate Time: About 1.5 hours; more if interior trails are explored

Parking: Near the trailheads on Colonial Drive and Overbrook Road

For more information about this walk contact:

Madison Land Conservation Trust
www.madisonlandtrust.org



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MLCT

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