

NATURE

The Birchbank Nature Trail is home to many native plants and animals. As you hike the trail, observe the nature around you. Can you identify them all?

Red Oak

Quercus rubra



Red oaks grow around Quaboag. Identify these tall trees by their brown acorns and dark green leaves with pointy lobed edges.

Sugar Maple

Acer saccharum



Look for leaves with 5 pointed lobes that grow in opposite pairs and seeds called "samaras" that spin like helicopters as they fall.

White Birch

Betula papyrifera



White birch have small spade-shaped leaves and white bark that peels off the trunk like paper. Broken twigs smell like root beer.

White Pine

Pinus strobus



Look for the tallest trees around Quaboag with whorled branches, brown-grey trunks, evergreen needles, pinecones, and sap.

Bog Fern

Thelypteris simulata



Bright green fern. Slender stalk with opposite pinnate leaves that resemble feathers. Look for this plant growing in moist spongy soil.

Pipsissewa

Chimaphila umbellata



Glossy evergreen leaves with tiny drooping pink-white flowers. Look for this rare plant in cool shady spots back from the water.

Red Chanterelle

Cantharellus cinnabarinus



Small pink-orange mushroom that grows in late summer. Look close to the ground for this fungi growing in clusters in shady moist areas.

Indian Pipe

Monotropa uniflora



Look for ghost-white stalks with a single flower. Look low in areas with wet leaves and fallen trees. These plants are often mistaken for fungi.

Fowler's Toad

Anaxyrus fowleri



Small gray-olive lumpy toad with dark spots and white belly. Look for them hopping after they emerge from their burrows in spring.

White Tail Deer

Odocoileus virginianus



Tawny brown deer with a white tail that travel in herds of 3-5. You may cross paths at dusk or dawn when they return to the water to drink.

HISTORY

This property has belonged to the Poland family for over 100 years. As you hike the Birchbank Nature Trail, take a moment to learn the history of camp.

Lake Quaboag

Lake Quaboag is a pond in East Brookfield, MA. Water flows into the lake from Lake Lashaway to the north and Quacumquasit Pond to the south. The area was once home to the Quaboag Indians and site of the Quaboag Plantation, one of the earliest settlements in central Massachusetts, established in 1660. Today, Lake Quaboag is home to many seasonal and year-round cottages. The western shore is a Massachusetts State Wildlife Management Area protected from development.

Poland Family

In 1914, Hattie Lyons Poland purchased Birchbank to be a summer camp for her family. Since then, over five generations of Polands have traveled to East Brookfield to spend their summers at Lake Quaboag. The property has changed in many ways over the past 100 years, but many original structures are preserved including Birchbank cottage, Barn and Gashouse.

Birchbank Nature Trail

The Birchbank Nature Trail was constructed in 2024 by Nancy Poland Samela and her family. Together, they routed and cleared over 0.25 miles of trail so hikers can enjoy exploring the property for many summers to come. When you see Nancy, say "Thank you for building this wonderful trail!"



Birchbank, 1915

BIRCHBANK NATURE TRAIL

A guide to the natural, recreational and historical points of interest on the Birchbank Nature Trail. Established in 2024 in East Brookfield, MA thanks to the work of Nancy Poland Samela and her family.



Trailhead, 2024

POINTS OF INTEREST

As you hike the Birchbank Nature Trail you will pass interesting structures and landmarks. As you enjoy your hike, take a moment to learn about their history.

① Birchbank

Cottage purchased 1914. Owned by the Poland family for over 100 years. Named for the white birch trees that grow along the shore.

② Gashouse

Small building on the hill. Original outhouse before Birchbank had plumbing. Storage for gasoline. Rebuilt by George Poland in 2023.

③ Barn

Today the barn contains a workshop and stores boats in the winter. It once stabled horses when family rode from North Brookfield.

④ Greenhouse

Cottage purchased 1997. Previously owned by the Whitman family. Named for its exterior painted Benjamin Moore Chrome Green.

⑤ Trailhead

Sign marking trail start. Located across Stone Rd. by the parking area. Design by Elizabeth Poland. Manufactured by John Poland.

⑥ Gravel Pit

From the trail, look down into the gravel pit. The Doe family dug this area in the 1960s for gravel that was sold by the dump truck load.

⑦ Pine Bluff

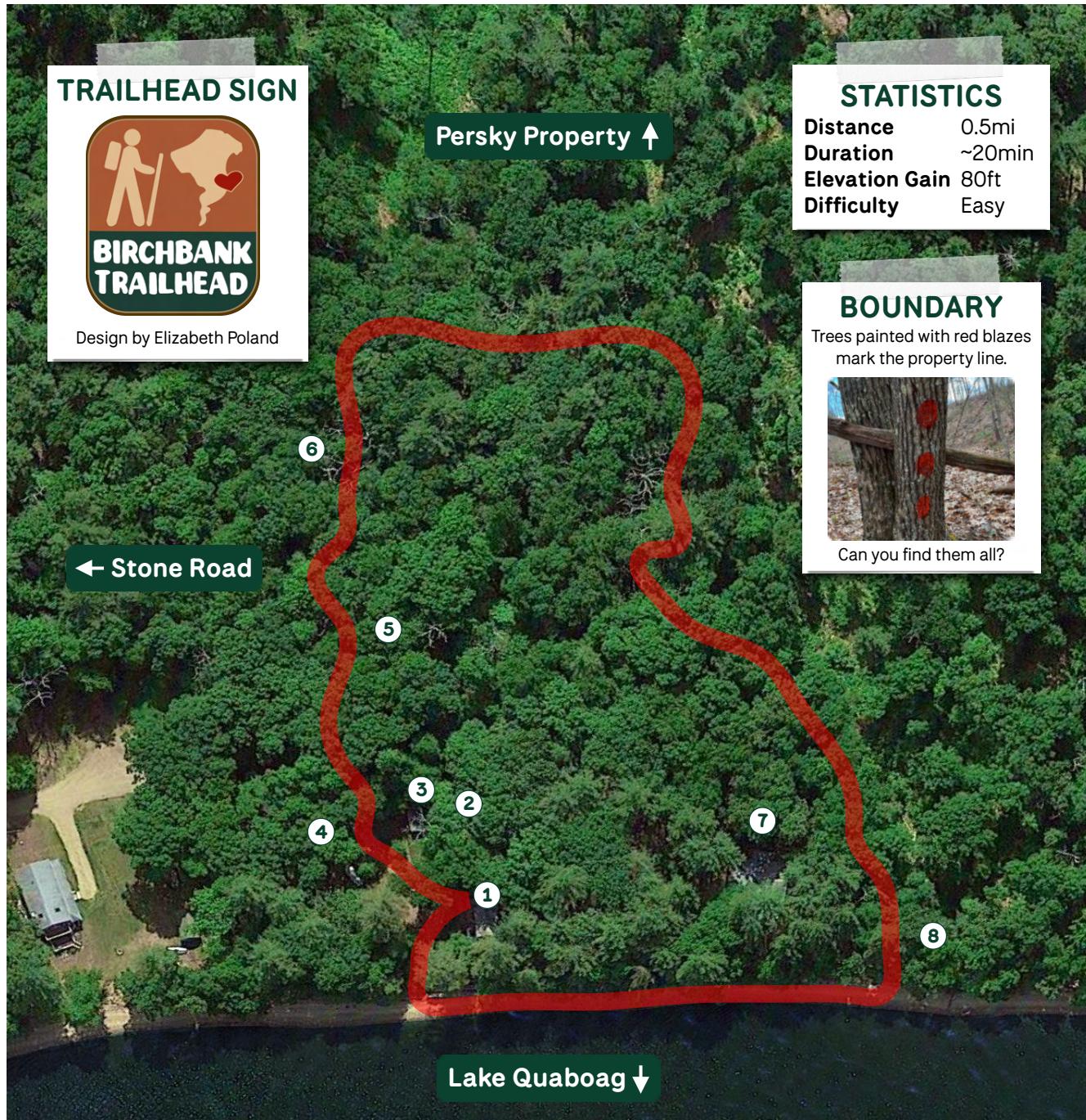
Cottage purchased 2011. Previously owned by the Prokus family. Named for its location on a bluff shaded by large white pine trees.

⑧ Boathouse

Boat storage. Flooded by Hurricane Diane in 1955. Look up from the beach and imagine how high the water must have been!



Boathouse, 1955



Birchbank Nature Trail. Start at Birchbank ①. Cross Stone Road to the trailhead ⑤. Follow the trail through the woods to Pine Bluff ⑦. Descend the stairs by the boathouse ⑧ and follow the beach back to complete the loop.

STATISTICS

Distance	0.5mi
Duration	~20min
Elevation Gain	80ft
Difficulty	Easy

BOUNDARY

Trees painted with red blazes mark the property line.



Can you find them all?