

## **THE SKYLINE SCENIC AREA**

### **THE RULES**

Skyline is open to the general public for passive recreation every day all year during daylight hours. Campfires are prohibited as are wheeled and motorized vehicles such as mountain bikes, dirt bikes, ATVs and snowmobiles.

### **TRAILHEADS**

A small parking spot and the trailheads for the Skyline Scenic Area are in Somers, CT on the north side of Stafford Road about 0.2 mile west of the intersection with Root Road. It is identified as NCLT property by a large wood sign.

### **THE TRAILS**

The 1.5 mile loop trail visits the scenic lookout before returning to the parking area. It is well marked with yellow plastic diamonds and is maintained. The shortest way to the lookout is to the left from the parking area. This half mile section, known as the Ledge Trail, includes some steep, rocky sections that may be treacherous when wet, snow covered or icy. To the right from the parking spot is the much easier mile long section leading to the same lookout. You are also welcome to explore the other unmarked trails lying within the yellow loop.

A trail leaves the northeast corner of the nature preserve. It connects to a network of trails on the central and northern portions of Minnechaug Mountain in Massachusetts. These poorly defined, unmarked trails are primarily on private property. We discourage hiking there without permission from the landowners.

### **THE VIEW**

On clear days it's possible to see a broad panoramic view across the Connecticut River Valley. To the south (on your left) the highest buildings of Hartford rise above the horizon. To its left are the Hanging Hills in Meriden. The Hublein Tower is a recognizable projection on the southwestern horizon. Lights of Somers prison dominate the western scene in the evening. During the day the Silo Nursery on Hampden Road in Somers makes a picturesque scene. Mount Greylock, Massachusetts' highest peak, lies on the northwest horizon beyond Springfield. Further north the distinctive outlines of Mt. Tom and the Holyoke Range run across the Connecticut River Valley. The long buildings in front of them are on Westover Airforce Base. Mountains in Vermont are on the horizon beyond them.

### **AN ERRATIC BOULDER?**

A very large boulder sits beside the old tote road a hundred meters east of the lookout area. Though it looks like an "Erratic" left there by the receding glaciers long ago it probably isn't because it appears to be derived from the same rock formation beneath it.

The boulder is a biological delight since it carries a fine garden on its top and sides. Growing there are small birches, clusters of grasses, sparse flowers, blackberry vines, poison ivy, and a hanging garden of ferns. Next to the boulder is a curious oak whose trunk tightly grips its side.

### **THE MYSTERY PITS**

There are two groups of mystery pits near the scenic lookout. One group lies across the tote road from the boulder mentioned above. The yellow trail goes through the other group as it winds through the Hemlock grove northeast of the lookout. Thus far no one has satisfactorily explained their origin. Can you?

### **THE HEMLOCK STANDS**

The once lush, cool stands of Eastern Hemlock behind the lookout appear to be dying. They are heavily infested with woolly adelgids, invasive sap-sucking insects accidentally introduced from Asia. The toxin they inject while feeding is gradually killing the hemlocks here as well as throughout Southern New England. Ongoing research on integrated control of the pests shows some promise of eventually bringing them under control.