O'Reilly-Fleetham Trail

Access to the trail:
From Penacook, take Washington Street and River Road. Turn right across the Contoocook River onto horse Hill Road, travel 0.3 miles to the parking area on your left.

The trail:
Hiking travel time: about 1 hour
Distance: about 0.75 miles

Cross the grassy area southward to an opening onto the woods road with a deep ravine on the right. Yellow blazes lead you down the hill. Bear left where you will cross over a snowmobile trail which can be used to bypass the trail along the river during times of high water. Many varieties of ferns and flowers decorate this path. Bring along your plant identification books to enhance your enjoyment.

Lush ferns edge an overflow area on your right and bunchberry plants on the ground lead you to a wooden bridge. Notice the snag full of holes made by pileated woodpeckers looking for insects. The holes shelter small birds and animals. A picnic lunch can be enjoyed at the tables.

Follow the river beneath towering white pines. Don't trip in the animal holes, probably made by bank beaver. Notice partridgeberry and Canada mayflowers along the way.

Cross a granite footbridge, reportedly weighing 4500 pounds, moved into place by the Boy Scouts, and go up the hill on the cinder path. At the top of the hill, turn left for a lunch break or snack overlooking the river and the steep abutments of the old railroad bridge.

Turn right to continue your walk on the abandoned rail bed. Those small round clumps of moss are called helmet moss by some, and there are also star flowers, goldthread and club mosses under foot.

Cross another wooden bridge and walk uphill into another pine grove. The trail bears right along the back of an ancient cemetery. Notice the tombstones now buried in the roots of the large white pine. Was the tree there when the stones were first placed?

Stroll back to the opening where you left your car, through a patch of clover, meadowsweet, goldenrod, evening primrose and toadflax.

History:
The O'Reilly-Fleetham Trail was cleared and blazed by Shawn Hartford and members of Boy Scout Troop # 81, as part of Shawn's Eagle Scout project. They also built the informational kiosk and the bridges on the trail.

The trail was named for George O'Reilly and Dan Fleetham, long time Scout Masters and mentors of Shawn. Both men have been awarded Scouting's Silver Beaver Award. Shawn was awarded his Eagle Scout Award.

Bridge abutments in the river and cinders on the path bear witness that parts of this trail are on the former Concord to Claremont rail bed. For 90 years, until 1961, the railroad carried freight and passengers. Today the trail has tall trees, a wealth of wildflowers, ferns, birds and riverside views.

Concord Conservation Commission
225-8515

Map 3

Concord Trail System

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Concord Conservation Commission
September 2010