



Chaffee Sanctuary Quest

Lyme, New Hampshire

Physical Difficulty: Easy

Special Features: Natural

Walking Conditions: Trail

Duration: 0:20

Bring: Binoculars, Boots, Field Guide

To get there: Take the Thetford Exit (14) from I-91 and follow 113 east to Lyme. From Lyme Village (just beyond the green) follow Route 10 north for 1.7 miles. The entrance to the Chaffee Sanctuary is on the left, beyond the entrance to the Post Pond boat launch/beach/rec area, immediately after the bridge guard railing. Park in the grass lot where this Quest begins.

Overview:

This Quest takes you on an in-depth exploration of an alder swamp and wildlife sanctuary. The Alder swamp is a common shrub-dominated wetland found in every town in the Upper Valley region. Alder swamps often occur alongside lakes, ponds, rivers and streams. Because they are often flooded—and their soils are saturated with water—these swamps favor plant species that can tolerate submerged roots, like speckled alder, a variety of willows, and red-osier dogwood. These swamps are important habitat for a variety of insects, birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. The Chaffee Wildlife Sanctuary, named for the first director of the Montshire Museum, is managed by the Lyme Conservation Commission to: protect wildlife habitat and native riparian vegetation, particularly for birds; guard water quality in the brooks and pond; and provide low-impact public recreational access to wetlands and trails.

Clues:

A sign, "Robert G. Chaffee Wildlife Sanctuary", says this is the place.

Proceed to the trail marker and to the right you will face.

As you walk along this mowed, grassy trail,

Look to the open field, for it offers a tale.

Can you spy the common milkweed plant?

In this meadow, it is anything but scant.

The monarch butterfly relies specifically on its leaves,

Where it lays its eggs and on which the larvae then feed.

Now approach a curve, and you can plainly see,
 Something tall and wooden that is not a tree.
 Follow under lines that are attached up high,
 Listen carefully for running water, if it's not too dry.

As you're lured by the sound, cross a two-plank bog bridge, then look for a small sign.
 To Clay Brook you will go, to behold an ingenious design.
 Beavers built this dam with limbs and sticks,
 Creating this pond where many species now mix.

180-degree turn, onward, let the journey continue,
 Notice thickets of shrubs and the signs of beaver chew.
 These are speckled alder, which designate this wetland community,
 Food and shelter for grouse and woodcock, it provides necessity.

Now approach a bridge made of wooden planks,
 Nineteen and a half sections in all and for these we give thanks,
 To the hands whose effort put them here;
 Because of their work, soggy boots are no fear.

The wet ground reminds us of the habitat we're in,
 Since it's near a stream, we call it riparian.
 A great place to find a diversity of lives,
 This ecosystem provides all the elements in which they thrive.

Keep a watchful eye and keen ears as you follow along,
 And you may be treated to a variety of song.
 Many birds nest here or pay a visit to this marsh,
 Where they find food, water, and shelter from the harsh.

Some species that are common for you to hear or see,
 Include the yellow-rumped warbler, catbird, and black-capped chickadee.
 And perhaps—if you visit as the day fades into the night—
 You may be treated to the display of a male woodcock in flight.

When you come to yet another sign for Clay Brook,
 Follow the arrow and go have a look.
 Several wooden boxes appear along the water's edge,
 To entice the handsome wood duck to nest among the sedge.

Take in the view and then about-face,
 And onward to where the sign is in place.
 From here we continue our journey down the trail;
 Next stop, "Little Post Pond," will soon avail.

Gaze out from the boardwalk at this lush wetland site,
 For many kinds of wildlife, the conditions are just right.
 Raccoon, otter, beaver, and deer:
 If you are watchful and quiet, their presence is near.

Yes, you guessed it, to the main drag you go,
 For our Quest has so much more for you to know.

As you approach a stand of tall pine,
Look for its needles, which reveal the kind.

Count five in a bundle; that means it's an eastern white-
They provide shade, yet let in enough light.
For the ferns you see thriving in the soil below,
It is a moist, protected niche they require to grow.

Now look about you for small trees other than pine;
What you seek has opposite branching, straight across in line.
The red maple has simple leaves, three points, and edges with teeth;
Where these trees thrive there is usually poor soil underneath.

Look ahead towards the light, the field plainly in view,
In its direction you'll travel, your Quest nearly through.
But first you must find the location of the treasure,
In doing so, I know you will find such pleasure.

It is a pine whose trunk branches thrice that you seek
Once you spot it, look to its crotch for a peek.
Take a moment to sign in, sketch, or write.
I hope this Quest has provided some useful insight.

And now, as you undoubtedly know,
It is back to the parking area you will go.
Admire the old field as you make your way back,
It's managed so wildlife will feel less impact.

Chaffee Sanctuary Species Checklist:

What did you see?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Milkweed | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Monarch Butterfly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> American Beaver | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Speckled Alder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Ruffed Grouse | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> American Woodcock |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow-rumped Warbler | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Catbird |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Black-capped Chickadee | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Duck |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Raccoon | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> American Bittern |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> White-tailed Deer | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> White Pine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Red Maple | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Otter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Did you know?

Lyme has protected and conserved 21 acres of land along this brook that then feeds into Post Pond! Source: lymenh.gov

The Chaffee Sanctuary Quest and the Wellborn Ecology Fund Natural Communities Quest Series were made possible by generous support from the Wellborn Ecology Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, Upper Valley region. For more information: www.nhcf.org

This Quest was created by Andrea Lewis with assistance from Bill Shepard and the Connecticut River Birding Trail in 2003.

Please be a good steward of the land: leave it better than you found it and pack out any trash you find.



Valley Quest is a collection of 100+ treasure hunts that share and teach the natural gems and cultural heritage of the Upper Valley with children, families, adults, and visitors. It is a program of Vital Communities, a regional nonprofit working to engage citizens, organizations, and communities in creating solutions to our region's challenges. Learn more at vitalcommunities.org.

Have a suggestion, question, comment, or idea for us? We'd love to hear from you. Reach us at valleyquest@vitalcommunities.org or 802-291-9100.

