



## CREA Natural Communities Quest

### Cornish, New Hampshire

Natural

Easy

:45

Please bring boots and a field guide!

*To get there: From I-91 take exit 9 toward Hartland/Windsor; turn left onto US-5/VT-12. After 4.1 miles, turn left onto Bridge Street and cross over into New Hampshire – enjoy the bridge! Turn right onto NH-12A. From Route 12A in Cornish—just south of the Cornish-Windsor Covered Bridge—travel east on Town House Road. You will pass the Dingleton Covered Bridge and the Blacksmith Covered Bridge, both on your right. Beyond Parsonage Road, you will see the Cornish Fair Grounds on your left, along with the Old Town Hall and Schoolhouse #9. Park by the Old Town Hall. The Quest begins at the trail head across the street. If you reach the new Elementary School you’ve gone a bit too far.*

### Super Quest 2019: Gateway to Summer Fun



This quest is one of 25 featured in this year’s Super Quest challenge to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vital Communities. For the rest of your adventure: [vitalcommunities.org/superquest](http://vitalcommunities.org/superquest)

Now that you’re here...

Check out another Cornish Quest such as the home, studios and gardens of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, one of America’s greatest sculptors. This National Historic Park is open daily, late May through late October, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is \$5.00 per person; children 15 and under are free.

For information: <https://www.nps.gov/saga/planyourvisit/index.htm>

**Clues:**

With the Town Hall just behind,  
A large boulder your eyes will find.  
Cross the road towards the sign that reads  
"Rodney Palmer Environmental Study Area" amidst the weeds.

To the right of the sign, a trail you will see.  
Take 50ish steps to a leaning oak tree.  
The tree has been growing since it was small,  
This tree likes swamps, but it might fall.

Be very quiet and animals you might spy:  
Rabbit, snake, wood frog, chickadee and butterfly.  
Here flies the monarch of orange and black;  
Birds avoid this poisonous snack!

Up to the double trees (pine and oak) you should go  
But not into the water with your toe!  
A snapping turtle lives there all year long,  
This C.R.E.A. land is where he belongs.

Two pink worm-like wrigglers on its tongue  
Lure its prey in where it's no fun!  
On your left, red oak, white pine, and white birch you'll see.  
White birch is the official New Hampshire state tree.

Here the land is low and flat.  
Pine needles make a lovely mat.  
The hemlock forest is there if you seek.  
All it takes is just a little peek.

All of these trees have many uses  
But the maple is the one with the edible juices.  
The others are great for building and timber  
And white birch paper makes good tinder.

Along the path twin pines mark your way.  
You wish you could linger there all day.  
Take 22 steps to the start of a high mushroom trail.  
Look to your left for the path, you can't fail.

Here at the "Y," head up the hill.  
Keep following the trail and observe as you will.  
You'll see holes in trees that are called cavities  
And fungus growing, too, on the trees that are diseased.

As you approach the stone steps, look to the right.  
I used to be a tall tree...now I'm shortened in height.  
Insects and fungus eat me for food.  
They need me for nourishment when in the mood.

Nearby the steps find another tree.  
With this one what is the mystery?  
Its roots are eroded and show off like bones.  
These make ideal spots for chipmunk homes.

The sign at the top of the hill has a digit that stands  
For the same number of fingers you have on one hand.  
The downed white birch marks the last hilltop tale.  
Look closer! It's covered with lots of turkey tails.

Turn yourself around and go back down  
To where there was a fork on the ground.  
Now walk left to the rock past mushroom hill.  
See the snapping turtle? Perhaps you will.

Look for three stumps cut by beavers with ease,  
Right next to two trees that might be home to bees.

Find five needles per bunch on a nearby white pine.  
Hanging on a limb, a rope you will find.  
Go next to a rotten balance beam held up by two trees.  
This is a good spot for squirrels to eat seeds.

You'll find a baby hemlock in the middle of 3 big trees.  
Maybe someday it will grow to be as tall as these.  
Now look for the place where dirt makes a small mound.  
To hear chickadees and blue jays, make not a sound.

Walk a while to the "seat stump" where you can lunch.  
Nearby are musclewood trees the beavers love to munch.  
All along the right is a soggy wetland  
Born from the stream and the beaver's teeth and hands.

From the path see a bridge under which the beaver swim.  
But don't jump in!  
Look left and see stumps with pointed and chewed tips  
Feasted on by beaver teeth and graced by beaver lips.

Stay on the path; don't cross the bridge

No time to get lost on the ridge!  
Safety first on Quests or hikes  
Don't play on beaver ponds in winter or you might fall through thin ice!

Walk by aging birch trees sprouting hoof-like fungus  
Also known as birch polypore mushroom to us.  
Mushrooms and other fungus are decomposers,  
So are worms and microscopic creatures.

Beyond the birches only a stone wall remains of the farm from days  
gone by  
Upon this spot a Cornish Farmer's field used to lie  
And in New England if the farmer doesn't mow  
The life cycles will change and a forest will grow.

Ahead a "cradle and pillow" upon the ground to rest your head  
Or for a tiny chipmunk it could make a cozy bed.  
This mound grew in the spot where a giant tree once stood,  
The roots ripped up, made a hole, and left a mound of rotting wood.

Pass two logs with hollow centers  
Home to a mole escaping hunting owl dangers?  
Daddy mole, watch out!  
You better protect your little mole sprout.

Continue to the wild field past goldenrod and milkweed  
Replenished every year by many dispersed seeds.  
Alive with busy insects on a hot summer day  
Dragonflies, wasps and crickets go along their way.

Walk to the mowed grass and feel the sun shining on your face  
An open space where children love to race  
Survey the land where mouse eats seeds and fox eats mouse  
Up and down the food chain sun and water matter most.

Backtrack to the large flat rock; a perfect place to rest and roost  
Scan the woods to your left, until you see a web of roots.  
Break trail to this mysterious place  
Walk gently and look down; you may find an orange newt's face.

Creep quietly, with stealth, just like a fox.  
You've almost found the Quest box!  
When you reach the root-statue explore all the nooks  
Then follow the trunk...it points to where you should look.

Keep on hunting, your eyes wide and round.  
Where trunk meets ground the box will be found.  
Sign into our box, then re-hide it once more  
You've learned of this place, now it's time to explore!

This Quest was created by Ros Seidel and the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Cornish Elementary School in 2003. Special thanks to the Wellborn Ecology Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation / Upper Valley region for support of this project.

### **Did you know?**

As the Quest states, you can see an area that used to be farmland but is now forest! When farmers leave their farms and don't tend to them, the native species of plants will start to take over. First, mostly shrub plants and weeds will take over fields, but slowly tree seedlings will even start to appear.

Source: foresthistory.org

**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 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](http://vitalcommunities.org).

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