



## **Hurricane Hill Winter Woods Walk**

(come spring, a Vernal Pool Quest)

Hartford, Vermont

**Difficulty:** Medium

**Walking Conditions:** Paths

**Type of Quest:** Natural

To get there: From White River Junction, turn from Route 5 onto Route 4 west. Follow Route 4 west for 2.1 miles, and then turn left onto Center of Town Road. After traveling up hill 0.7 miles, turn left onto Kings Highway. Follow for 0.6 miles, and then turn right onto Reservoir Rd. Proceed 0.7 miles until the road ends at the Hurricane Town Forest parking area. Your Quest begins on the right side of the parking area, at a "welcome" sign.

### **Clues:**

Walk down to the reservoir not covered in ice.

(The reservoir is now dry, it has been drained for repairs.)

Why the view from here, it sure is nice!

A few steps further, an earthen bank holding back water find.

The seepage you should cross; as the water downhill winds.

Keep on the trail, surrounded by birch & beech galore.

The red oak and maple tree, just try to ID,

But without the leaves, which have dropped,

And lie under snow-covered forest floor!

On your left you'll pass a sign for "Wright,"

Do NOT go there: you must stay to the right!

Further along, "West Side Loop" leads wrong by going right:

YOU must keep straight on the path, your goal out of sight.

More simply put, do not leave this trail 'til you see

The post (with many signs) that is colored dark green!

This forested path starts to climb,

Through Eastern Hemlock trees this time.

A quiet (or huffing) hike you will take

Until the green post which will perform its function.

Have you found the sign? A marker for snowmobiles?

Please take a right turn at this very junction!

Walk up to the crest, to a White Pine 6ft round.  
Then down 35 steps to the young hemlock grove.  
Here, turn left: and a small clearing is found.  
You have finally found the place that we love!

Now, straight into the forest is where we'll go.  
You're looking for the pancake-flat frozen vernal pool...  
Which is now completely covered with ice and snow!  
Look carefully for "flat." Found it, eh? Way cool!

Come spring this special place is really neat.  
It's a place where salamanders love to meet.  
Lots of frogs come here to lay their eggs, too.  
There so much to see...in April come and view!

But back to now: Is there much snow on the ground?  
Is the pool's soft edge hard to be found?  
Stay right. Past tiny hemlocks a stump rises up:  
It's twin trunks, sunken, did not have much luck!

16 steps further to a dead woodpecker tree. Then turn right.  
25 more steps to a great bowed trunk, sweeping out of sight.  
Turn left and follow along the pools frozen lip,  
Take care where you tread, be careful, please don't slip!

Hidden roots and holes...they can bring you right down!  
Duck under branches 'til the woven root mass is found.  
Eleven more steps and then old barbed wire you may spy.  
Turn left, 'tween 2 trees, 12 steps: find orange bulls eye!

From here, diagonally left, 22 steps to see  
A second sort-of bulls eye painted on a tree.  
Now, can you see the great slant of a leaning tree?  
You're getting close to the end of this Quest mystery!

You've found a "hurricane tree" that was blown awry.  
It points in a great angle across the winter sky.  
The work of the Great Hurricane of '38! My, oh my!  
A clue from the past: can you find it? Please try!

Walk under this giant leaning oak.  
Bent in youth by a great storm...but not broke.  
This tell-tale sign, why it points the way  
The hurricane winds were blowing that day.

Stand in this lovely place. Take in the view.  
Turn in a circle round. See what surrounds you.  
Rising nearby and quite staggeringly tall  
A lovely beech tree, it's "eyes" look out on all.

Beech's smooth bark sometimes shows signs of bear.  
Traces of when they've climbed for the nuts they desire.  
No signs of such claw marks are found just here...  
But what do you see on a dead tree quite near?

The end of this quest is that plaque on the tree:  
Take a rubbing of it...you've solved this mystery!  
You've learned to blow down; leaning trees; signs of storm.  
And you've found that a winter walk can keep you warm!

The plaque rubbed and copied, your mission is done.  
We hope this Hurricane Hill walk has been fun.  
So now you should turn and follow your tracks:  
These marking in the snow are sure to lead you back!

If you enjoyed this Quest, in springtime, try "Sally's Salamander Meander" found in  
Valley Quest II: 75 MORE Treasure Hunts in the Upper Valley.