



## Lonesome Pine Quest

### Thetford, Vermont

Physical Difficulty: Moderate

Special Features: Natural

Walking Conditions: Trail

Duration: 1:00

Bring: Field Guide, Binoculars, Swimsuit

*To get there: From Exit 14 off I-91 travel west on Rt. 113 two miles toward Thetford Center. Just as you enter Thetford Center – at the foot of Thetford Hill – turn left onto Buzzell Bridge Road and proceed to Union Village Recreation Area. Travel 0.4 miles and then park in the large lot on your left.*

**Overview:** The Mystery Trail at Union Village Dam is an Army Corps of Engineers facility. It encompasses approximately 1,400 acres situated on the Ompompanoosuc River, four miles above its confluence with the Connecticut River. The Dam provides flood protection for Thetford, Norwich, White River Junction, Wilder—and countless spots downstream, too.

### Clues:

Walk to your west along this peaceful country road.  
 The east branch of the Ompompanoosuc may be good for a toad!  
 After a while look for a snowmobile bridge to the right  
 Then follow my lead with all of your might.  
 Pick up a Mystery Trail map guide in the box.  
 We are on our way, so pull up your socks!

The mystery clues do abound—they just need to be found.  
 Whether it is human history or giving nature a chance.  
 This Quest will do part of the loop; look deep and give more than a glance.  
 Before the bridge with buds alternate and red brown,  
 Look for an American Basswood, the carver's tree.  
 It has heart-shaped leaves, and coppice wood  
 (four big stump sprouts) for you to see.  
 Let's cross the river. Be sure to notice its sparkle and quiver.  
 Kingbird may be chief, but it is the Blue Jay who cries "thief, thief."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> During the late spring and summer, the Blue Jay's diet includes baby birds and eggs. In no way, however, are they a threat to the survival of other songbirds. They are a principal planter of acorns.

At the fork we will bear right. Look for the Red Oaks, sturdy with might.  
Having flat-topped ridges and salmon colored grooves in the bark  
The leaves are big and pointy. Acorns are clues to this tree in the park.  
You will pass Hemlock, with needles so tiny and green  
Maybe a Red Squirrel will chatter—begging to be seen.  
Thriving in soil so poor, find one that reproduces by spore,  
It likes lots of sun: find this fern for fun!  
It can be up to three feet high, and has 3 branching parts the same.  
With fronds widest at the base it is “Bracken” by name.

From the days of yore, an old town road you roam  
Look and see if you can find a few fence posts made of stone.  
The quacking and peeping you may hear, may be frog’s music reaching your ear.<sup>2</sup>  
Bear right at the fork for treasures are near. What could they be? Look and see!  
Can you hear the “laugh” of a Robin?<sup>3</sup> Or the “wrock” of a Raven?<sup>4</sup>  
Both of these birds inhabit this haven.

Follow the path and you shall see a specimen from days of olde—  
If only this lofty White Pine’s stories could be told!  
Be they natural or human, mysteries and wonders are abundant.  
Just how was the old stone farm gatepost relevant?  
There are old cellar holes, a silo pad, foundations.  
Being a history sleuth you will have many investigations!

Now find yourself nearing the pond’s soft edge  
Graced with alders, with cattails and sedge.  
Listen for the bubbly Song Sparrow’s  
“Madge. Madge, please put on the teakettle” song.<sup>5</sup>  
Or the “wicity, wicity” of the Common Yellowthroat (a warbler)<sup>6</sup>.  
You just can’t go wrong!

Dragonflies dart and zoom. Do the milkweed dance and spin?  
We have a wetland with lots of room—and Wood Duck boxes ready to go in.  
Look close, for there may be a painted turtle, heron—even a migrating Green-wing Teal.  
Were it me that was here, Aye, I’d surely give a squeal!  
Butterflies do flutter and yearn, and have nary a care.  
Tree Swallows bank and turn—the acrobats of the air.<sup>7</sup>  
Perhaps you might find a berm built of twigs, sticks and mud?

---

<sup>2</sup> Spring peepers can be heard here from late April until early June.

<sup>3</sup> Robin arrives in late march, has 2 nesting cycles and departs by fall.

<sup>4</sup> Ravens enjoy this setting year-round.

<sup>5</sup> Season: Late march through October.

<sup>6</sup> Season: May through July.

<sup>7</sup> Springtime visitors

Keep an eye & ear for the beaver, which whacks his tail with a thud.

Ah...there is so much more to this story,  
Like the hillside in fall in all its glory.  
So many mysteries waiting to be solved  
In a place so far away from the maddening crowd.  
Let the peace feel its way in... 'cause there's so little that is loud.  
Spring, summer, fall—which time is the best?  
Come again and again, and experience the rest.  
And for the last mystery: find your treasure chest.  
Remember how you looked for the "Lonesome Pine."  
Make your way to that tall tree  
To where your treasure box will be!

*This Quest was created by Bill Shepard in 2000.*

**Species checklist:**

- American Basswood
- Eastern Hemlock
- Locust
- Red Oak
- White Pine
- Bracken Fern
- Kingbird
- Blue Jay
- Robin
- Raven
- Song Sparrow
- Common Yellowthroat
- Wood Duck
- Painted Turtle
- Blue Heron
- Green-wing Teal
- Tree Swallow
- Red Squirrel
- Beaver

***Other things to do nearby:***

**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)