

ACTIVEfamily

MAGAZINE

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Been There, Love That!

Pachaug State Forest Letter Box Hike North Stonington

My first letterbox hike! I've read about letterboxing for years but never quite got around to it until one steamy hot Sunday in mid-August. Looking for a quick drive and more time in the cool forest, I consulted the Connecticut DEP's excellent letterboxing page. There I discovered that Pachaug State Forest in North Stonington has a letterbox hidden atop High Ledge.

The largest of Connecticut's 32 public forests, Pachaug has more than 27,000 acres spread throughout Voluntown, Griswold, Plainfield, Sterling, North Stonington and Preston. Most of the land was purchased with federal and state funds during the Great Depression and today you can fish, hunt, swim, hike, camp, dog sled race, horseback ride and letterbox to your heart's content.

Armed with detailed trail notes printed from the DEP site, water, snacks, lots of bug spray and high anticipation off we went. The trail head is located on Wyassup Lake Road at the second gate on the left side of the road and just past the Wyassup Lake boat launch. The trail starts up a logging road and then you pick up the well-marked blue trail. Once on the trail you meander through pretty green fern as well as abundant beech and maple trees, which ought to make a splendid foliage display a bit later in the season.

The trail first winds through fairly level terrain then starts to rise a bit as you get closer to High Ledge. Along the way you cross a couple of small streams, one with a sturdy half-log bridge courtesy of trail maintenance volunteers. The other stream is easy to cross upon flat stepping stones. A gracefully balanced stone wall accompanies your path; built sometime in the 1700's or 1800's, it was likely used as a field boundary.

Once you reach the bottom of High Ledge, the trail winds up and around the left side to an open plateau that's grassy underneath shady beech trees. Then you come to a smooth ledge outcropping and at an elevation of about 135', you have a satisfying view of Wyassup Lake and the surrounding hills. Though a short hike (just 35 minutes to the top), the plateau is so pretty, and the breeze and bird song so delightful, spending a good portion of the day picnicking, reading or snoozing would be a lovely treat.

This is important! For some unknown reason the DEP letterbox is missing. But! Some kind soul replaced it with a new letterbox, complete with log, stamp and ink pad. You can find the letterbox discretely placed in the top of an old trunk that stands about 3' high,



The gorgeous view atop High Ledge in Pachaug State Forest.

right near the ledge outcropping...you can't miss it. Add your stamp, nom de plume or your John Hancock...which ever you please...plus the date and perhaps a few words about your trip; all such details are welcome reading for future letterbox seekers.

When You Go

- Check out the page 12 article: *How Do I...Letterbox?*
- Bring your letterbox stamp, pen & a notepad or journal.
- Wear sturdy shoes.
- Bring water, snacks, bug spray and sunblock.
- Carry-in, carry-out!
- Visit www.ct.gov/ and type "letterboxing" in the search window. Click on the link to go to DEP's well-organized, comprehensive listing of all state forest letterbox sites. Follow the links to retrieve detailed hiking trail descriptions, clues to each letterbox site and driving directions.

