

Lamoille River Walk



About half of this trail is on property that was retained by the Town of Milton through open space set aside from Checkerberry developments. The other half of the trail is on Green Mountain Power (GMP) land provided through a generous license agreement. This allowed the Town to establish, maintain and use this recreational foot path. In addition, the Hurkes Corporation generously provided the Town with an easement for a short stretch of land on the eastern portion of the trail.

History

At the Ritchie Avenue end of the trail, at the foot of the Milton Falls, you are looking at what remains of the **International Paper Pulp Mill**, built in 1898. The mill provided a boon to Milton’s economy as many men were employed to build the plant. The large steel penstock was necessary to funnel the water from the dam down to the powerhouse. The plant employed 75 to 80 men who processed spruce pulp, which came mostly by rail from Canada. The business was abruptly closed by a strike in 1925 and never reopened. The lower Lamoille River is the last stretch of an 85-mile waterway that flows west into Lake Champlain. Descending Ritchie Avenue, you

can see the first dam that was built on the lower Lamoille. The second dam that was built is above **Clark’s Falls**, forming **Lake Arrowhead**. The last dam, built in 1948, is the **Peterson Dam** which is located down river. Since the early Native Americans roamed its shores, the river basin has offered us an abundance of nature and a wealth of cultural history. Cross the little bridge into the woods and experience a wonderland of ferns, wildflowers and wildlife as you follow the trail along the Lamoille River.

Stations

1. **Horsetails**: The straight, green stems that form the primary groundcover here are **Rough Horsetails** (*Equisetum hiemale*.) The plant’s durable, silica-ridged stems were used as a natural sandpaper by tinsmiths and woodworkers who called it the **Scouring Rush**. Rough horsetails reproduce by spores or running, underground stems called **rhizomes**.

2. **Riverview**: This section of the Lamoille River below Milton Falls is a popular fishing and canoeing site. Flood-tolerant **Speckled Alder** (*Alnus rugosa*), a native shrub, has warty stems and cone-like female catkins. **Spotted Touch-me-not** (*Impatiens capensis*) a.k.a. **Jewelweed**, with orange flowers (July – Aug.) and spring-loaded seeds, has juicy stems that can be used to relieve bites and stings. **Spotted Joe Pye Weed** (*Eupatorium maculatum*), with a speckled, six-foot stem, produces purple flowers in flat-topped clusters (July – Sept.)

3. **Partridgeberry** (*Mitchella repens*), a creeping, evergreen vine with paired,



Partridgeberry

Mitchella repens

Courtesy of Dorothy Martinez

rounded leaves, prefers moist pine woods and sandy knolls. This slow-growing native plant is named for Virginia botanist **Dr. John Mitchell** who identified “new” species as he mapped the American colonies. Red berries nourish grouse, wild turkeys and foxes in winter.

4. The **American Beech** (*Fagus grandifolia*) is related to American chestnuts and oaks. It has smooth, gray bark and leaves with parallel veins, each leading to a marginal tooth. Starting at about age 10, beech trees produce triangular nutlets in prickly burs, with an abundant “mast” (accumulation) every three to five years. Rubbery **Beechdrops** (*Epifagus virginiana*), a snapdragon relative that bears two-lipped, reddish flowers in the fall, is a beech-root parasite.

5. **The Cathedral**: This grove of **Eastern Hemlock** (*Tsuga canadensis*) was named for its towering “ceiling” and quiet, needle-strewn undercover. The flat sprays of these evergreens bear half-inch needles with white lines called **lenticels** (breathing holes) on the underside. At about age 20, mature hemlocks begin producing pollen and small cones. The enclosed nutlets provide food for squirrels, rabbits and deer.

6. **Stream Crossing**: The **Ermine** (*Mustela erminea*) is a reddish-brown member of the Weasel Family that turns white in the winter. Weasel tracks with an 11-inch stride have been seen here in light snow. The green, grass-like **Sedges** (*Carex* species) on this stream bank may serve as a scent-mark site for many animals. Unlike rounded, knobby grass stems, sedges have solid, triangular stems. Sedge seeds are eaten by grouse.

7. **YYCC Bridge & Yellow Birches**: This footbridge, originally constructed in 2006 and reconstructed in 2018 by the VT Youth Conservation Corps*, spans one stream near its convergence with another.

From here you can see several **Yellow (or “Silver”) Birches** (*Betula allegheniensis*) trees that are well suited to moist, northern woods. The horizontal lines in the bark are lenticels that stretch as the tree grows, causing the bark to peel. Yellow birch twigs contain wintergreen aroma (methyl salicylate.)



Wintergreen

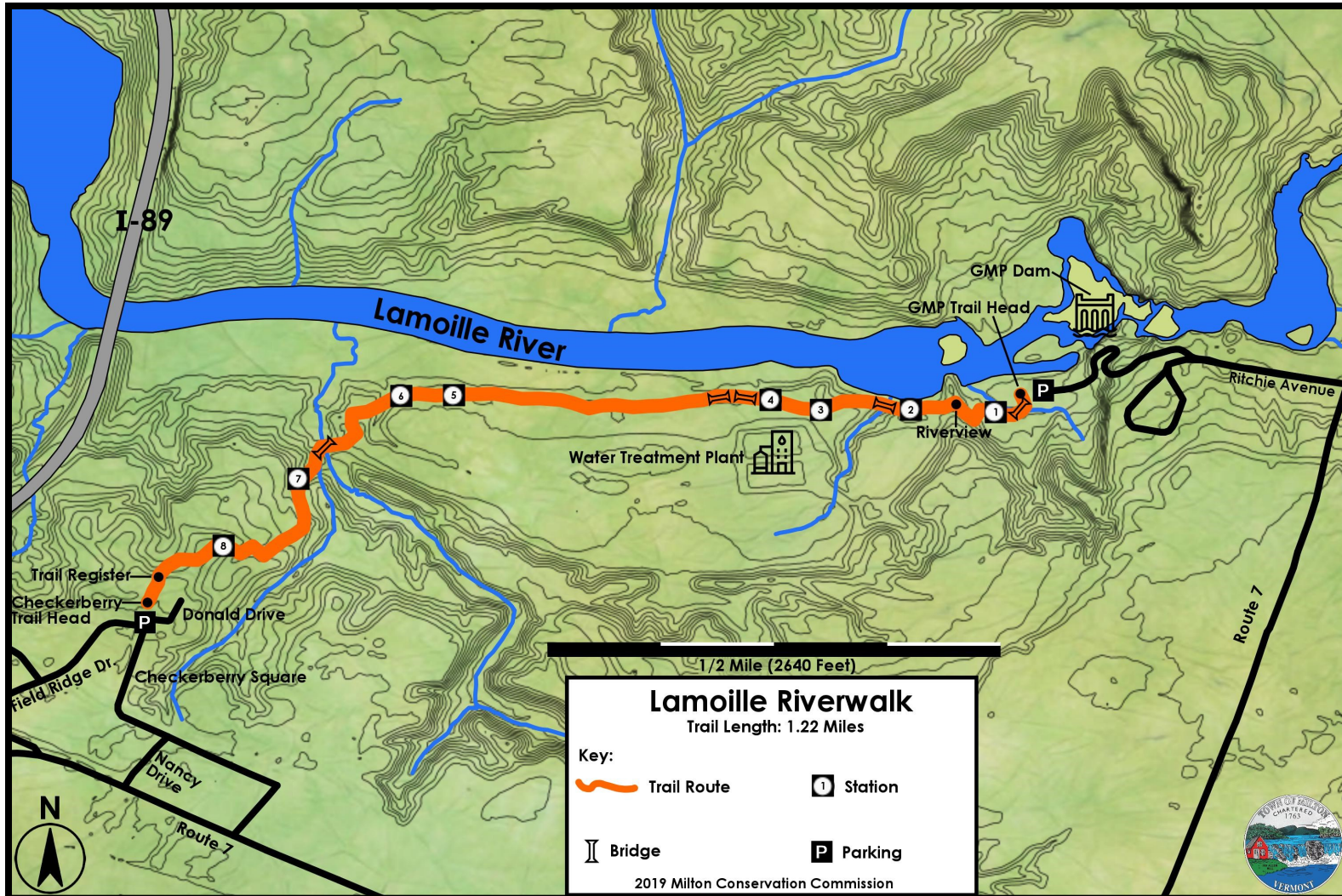
Gaultheria procumbens

Courtesy of Dorothy Martinez

Roughed grouse eat the buds; deer eat the twigs.

8. **Ferns**: “Fern” in Sanskrit means “wing” or “feather.” Several species of easily-identifiable ferns are visible in this area. The **Sensitive Fern** (*Onoclea sensibilis*) was named for its light-green, wavy-edged leaflets that die down with the first hard frost. Its bead-like spore cases are located on a separate, fertile frond. **Cinnamon Fern** (*Osmunda cinnamomea*) bears its spores on a cinnamon-brown stalk. **Woodferns** (*Dryopteris* species) have finely-cut leaves and rounded piles of spores (sori) on the underside of fertile leaflets. **Christmas Ferns** (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) have leathery, stocking-shaped leaflets that remain green all winter. Most fern fronds emerge from rhizomes in a “fiddlehead” shape that protects delicate leaflets from being torn.

* YYCC: “The VT Youth Conservation Corps is a non-profit youth leadership service, conservation and education organization that instills in individuals the values of personal responsibility, hard work, education and respect for the environment. This is accomplished by using conservation projects as the vehicle for learning in an intense environment.”



What to Know Before Starting Out

- Restroom facilities are not available.
- Pets must remain under control and/or leashed and shall not disturb natural communities or the experience of others.
- Respect neighbors and private property.
- The wetlands throughout the area contain sensitive habitat. Please remain on trails.

Directions

Checkerberry Trail Head: From Route 7, head north on Nancy Drive. At the end of Nancy Drive, take a left on to Checkerberry Square. Follow Checkerberry square to the end. Park at the very end of the road and walk north toward the trail head.

GMP Trail Head: From Route 7, head west on Ritchie Avenue to the GMP gate (sometimes closed). Beyond the gate, go down the switchback road, past the brick building and the old foundation. The trail head is along the tree line, south of the old foundation.

Permitted Uses

- Trail Hiking and Running
- Cross Country Skiing
- Snowshoeing
- Bird Watching
- Fishing (Licensed and Responsible)
- Hunting (Licensed and Responsible)

