

# I Spy Game

# Greenbelt

## HOW TO:

Take this document with you either printed out or just bring it up on your phone while you walk. When you find any two of the items listed below, snap a photo and post to Instagram with the hashtag: **#ispygreenbelt**

We'll pick three random winners and mail you a prize!

If you don't use Instagram, you can email us your two photos ([ecga@ecga.org](mailto:ecga@ecga.org)) or just complete the list on your own for fun! One entry per family, please!

NOTE: We don't want you to actually take anything from the property. Keep in mind the principle: Take only pictures, leave only footprints!

On the next pages, you'll find Beginner and Advanced sections. The beginner items are things you will find at this reservation all year, in abundance. The advanced items are a little harder to find, may move around, or might only be there during certain times of the year. This scavenger hunt was prepared for Castle Neck River Reservation, Ipswich in early spring 2020, but could be used at any reservation in Essex County. Enjoy!



**Greenbelt**  
Essex County's Land Trust

## **Beginner / Spy**

### **Greenbelt trail marker**

Before you start your hike, look for the Greenbelt trail markers on the trees or signposts. If you follow these, you will know that you are on the right path!



### **Cedar Trees**

Cedar trees are easy to identify by their peeling, reddish bark. Much like humans who store clothing in cedar chests to keep insects away, squirrels line their nests with curls of cedar bark to keep away pests like fleas! Cedar trees often grow in open fields that are left alone, but over time they will be crowded out by other tree species. Can you spot any cedar trees on your walk today?



## Split Rail Fences

Today, landowners install split rail fences to mark property lines or to separate different parts of a single property, including grazing pastures, gardens, wetlands and yards. The Caste Neck reservation contains a number of separate fences. Take a look at the rails and posts. What characteristics of them might be clues into how old each fence is?



## Stone Walls

Many properties on the North Shore include old stone walls. Landowners for centuries used stone walls to mark property lines, as opposed to building wooden fences, since stone walls were seen as being much more permanent. In fact, stone walls were originally referred to as stone fences. Some of the stone walls in the Greenbelt properties are hidden deep in the woods. However, those walls were most likely originally constructed in land that was clear of trees, and was used for livestock pastures or crop fields. More recently, as farms shut down, the once-cleared land reverted to forested form, and in doing so, the stone walls became less visible, hidden in among the trees.



### **Eastern White Pine Trees**

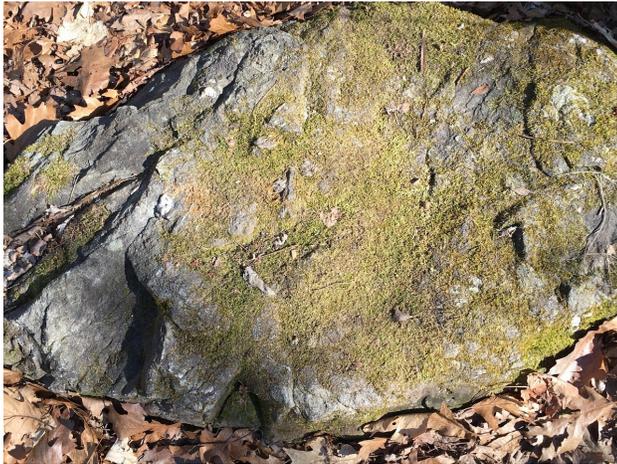
New England forests include a wide variety of tree species. One of the most prevalent species is the eastern white pine, a cone- and needle-bearing tree that has been a valuable resource since colonial times, when the trunks of the tallest and straightest trees were used as masts for sailing ships. While pines can be recognized by their needles, which are about three inches long and attach to the branches in groups of five. Other varieties of pine tree in New England have different numbers of needles in each cluster. For example, red pines have clusters of two needles, while pitch pines have three needle clusters.



## **Advanced / Spy**

### **Scat**

Animal droppings, or "scat," can tell you a lot about what an animal eats, what kinds of animals are in your area, and what those animals are doing at this time of year. Sometimes, wild animal scat is hard to find, but many animals deliberately place their scat in prominent places. Coyotes and fox are two of these animals. They will often deposit the scat on a log, a large rock, or right in the middle of the trail to mark their territory. Coyote and fox scat often contain fur from their main foods: rabbits, mice, and other small animals. Both types of scat have tapered ends. Fox scat may have berries, insects, bird feathers, and plant remains in it. Coyote scat may be dark or may be mostly fur, slightly larger than fox scat, around 3". Can you spot any scat on the trail or along nearby logs or rocks?



### **Basal/Fire scars**

As you walk through the reservation, you might notice that some of the trees have elongated “holes” near the bottom of their trunks. These holes are called basal scars, since they occur at the base of the tree. Basal scars are caused by a number of different factors, including forest fires, disease or damage caused by livestock, humans or equipment. In fact, one source of human-caused basal scars is snowplows. The next time you are driving around the North Shore, look carefully at the trunks of trees that are growing close to the side of the road. You may see that some of those trees have scars that were caused by snowplow blades that accidentally hit the trees during the winter.



### **Tree burls/tumors**

If you look up at the trunks and limbs of trees, you may see odd-looking growths that are different colors than the tree bark and bigger around than the surrounding tree part. These growths are called burls, and are caused by some type of stress to the tree, including injury, virus or fungus.



### **Multi-trunk trees**

Sometimes, young trees that are damaged by animals, storms, fire or disease can form multiple primary shoots, and as the tree grows larger, more than one of these shoots may survive.

These multi-trunk trees are most likely to survive if they are not closely surrounded by other trees and therefore can access plenty of sunlight. In some cases, multi-trunk trees are actually a cluster of single trees which grew very close to each other, and now share a common root system.



### **Pileated woodpeckers and holes**

Pileated woodpeckers are birds that feed on insects and grubs living in the trunks of dead trees. These red-headed birds with black and white-feathers use their long, hard beaks to gouge holes in trees in search of the bugs. As you walk through the woods, you may hear the rapid knock-knock-knock noise that they make. See if you can find examples of the holes, which are about 1-2 inches across. There will likely be many such holes on a single tree, usually bunched together in the same area of the trunk. Extra points if you can get a picture of a woodpecker in action!



**Black Cherry tree**

A common fruiting tree in the northeast United States is the black cherry. This tree has pretty white blossoms in the late spring and clusters of purple fruit in the summer and fall.



### **Horse Jumping fence**

The North Shore is home to many horse lovers, including riders (“equestrians”) who train their horses to run through circuits of jumps and obstacles. The fields in the Castle Neck reservation have previously been used by equestrians, who built wooden jumps for training purposes. The jumps have not been used in many years, and the forest has grown around them. However, they remain close to the trails on the property, and can be seen if you look carefully into the woods.



### **Deer rubbed tree**

Deer will often damage saplings and other small trees, by chewing the thin, young bark for food. Also, male deer, known as bucks, will rub their antlers against the tree to leave their scent, which is also a way for the deer to mark its territory. If the damage to the tree is severe enough, the tree may ultimately die. The sapling in the picture below had most of its bark rubbed off.



### **Shagbark Hickory tree**

One of the more interesting looking trees in the Castle Neck reservation is the shagbark hickory. This tree's light gray bark separates into loose vertical strips that appear to be peeling off the tree. The strips give the tree a "shaggy" look.



### **“Pasture” or “Wolf” Tree**

When you are in the woods, look up at the tops of the trees, which is called the canopy. When trees are close together, their shape tends to be tall and narrow, instead of squat and spread out. This happens because the trees put all their effort into growing tall so that their leaves can get maximum exposure to the sun. For trees that are located by themselves, out in the open, they don't need to grow as tall and skinny, since they have no competition for sunlight. These trees, often seen in fields or pastures, grow to a much broader shape, with limbs and leaves that spread wide. These trees are called pasture trees, since farmers often left single trees in their pastures to offer shade for their livestock. The trees are also referred to as “wolf” trees, since like a wolf, they stand alone. Can you locate any wolf trees on your walk?



### **Tree fungus**

Some trees, especially old, sick or weak trees, will have fungi growing on them. Fungi (plural form; singular is “fungus”) are living organisms that grow and propagate via the release of spores. Mushrooms and toadstools are examples of fungi. One of the most common tree fungi is called bracket fungi. This fungus grows on the bark of host trees, and takes nutrients from the tree. The fungus gets its name from its appearance—it looks like a bracket that was hung on the side of the tree. It can be smaller than an inch in size, but can grow to be over a foot across. The tree in the photo has hundreds of small fungi on its trunk.



## Bibliography

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