

Town of Sprague Letterboxes

Mukluk Series

#3: I ♥ Mukluk

Distance: Long (about 3 miles round trip; but most can be done on a mountain bike if you don't like walking)

Terrain: 2 miles flat, one mile (up and back down) very steep and rocky. Wear appropriate shoes!

Placed: August 6, 2007; edited with help from Flutterby, August 15, 2007

Maintenance performed: December 8, 2007, thanks to letterboxer "bbbagins"

To get to the Mukluk Preserve: From Rt. 207 in Baltic going towards Franklin, take Holton Road which is a dead end road, and go 8/10 mile to the old sign on the right that says "Mukluk Skeet Club." This is the entrance to the Mukluk Preserve, owned by the Town of Sprague and maintained by the Sprague Conservation Commission. Go down this dirt road, which is fine and passable most of the year; in muddy or snow conditions you will need a 4x4. (Please use common sense in bad conditions—people HAVE gotten stuck here!) You will see a big sign that notifies visitors that we are conducting lead remediation (removal) on the property, and to stay out of the 16-acre area in which we will be working. This area is clearly marked by a yellow fence and signs.

The dirt road you are on is a right of way to other property beyond ours; the Mukluk Preserve begins in 7/10 of a mile at a fork in the road. Keep right/straight at this fork and go up a hill. You will see yellow fencing to your left as well as an old skeet range, and a small cabin on the right. Park here off the road by the small cabin..

Start: Walk back down the road until you get to the fork, and go down the road around the big green gate. At this point you will be walking on a dirt road that is the main access road to the Preserve. You will notice that there are signs posted warning of lead contamination, and for about 200 feet you will have a plastic yellow fence on both sides of the road. You are passing through the contaminated area, so don't dawdle. This little section of road has been "cleaned" for public use with funds from EPA and is safe to walk and bike on. Looking on your left you will see a little silt pond where you'll hear some bullfrogs and maybe see a beaver or two in the afternoon.

You will pass an abandoned gravel quarry on your left, and eventually you will be able to see the Shetucket River on your right. In about a 15 minutes' walk you will see an old picnic table on the right by the side of the access road. (This is also part of the Chipmunk Picnic Letterbox route.)

Continue on this road for about 1,500 feet (5 minutes) and you will see a left fork going uphill. Take this fork—it's an old stone cart path from the 18th century and is lined with laurel trees. This is pretty steep and if you have a bike you should walk it up; the road will level out shortly and head gently uphill and you can get on the bike again. In about 10 minutes (walking) you will see a large tree on your right with an orange arrow pointing left; right *before* this tree is a path going left up the hill. (The arrow is partially obscured by a little tree and you might not see it till you're right on top of it, so keep your eyes peeled.) If you have a bike, leave it here. Take this path to the left; it's steep and rocky but has passed the "11-year-old-boy test," however, and he did it cheerfully and without incident.

Stay as straight as you can on the path—there will be other paths leading in other directions—and you will come to the top at a "T" intersection where there will be a large stump and a fallen tree where the trail goes left or right. Go left.

In 30 paces (60 steps), take a right between 2 trees—a white oak on the right and a birch on the left—and bushwack in about 20 paces (44 steps) to a stone wall (you can see this wall from the path, so keep an eye out). From the corner of the stone wall, walk in front of it 13 paces to a tree with a yellow mark on it. In a little cave in front of the wall between two trees the letterbox is *well hidden*, under fallen stones.

This was a tricky letterbox to plot out, so we'd like to hear your comments on how to improve the clues. Please write to grants@ctsprague.org if you have any questions or suggestions.