Stepping back in time, 90 years of Bear Brook State Park

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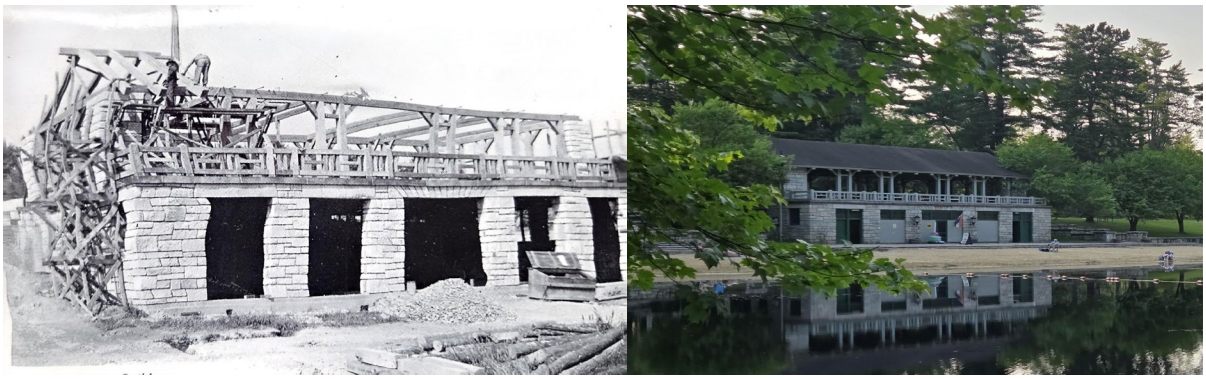
Bear Brook State Park, with over 10,000 acres, is the largest developed state park in New Hampshire. Located in the southeast region of the state, there is plenty to do and see for everyone. Camping, hiking, biking, archery, swimming and fishing are a few of the outdoor activities you can do at the park. Forty miles of trails through the heavily forested park, leading to seldom visited marshes, bogs, summits and ponds, offer a variety of options for hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. These amenities are available thanks to the Civilian Conservation Corps, who were instrumental in developing the park in the 1930's and 40's. The work they put into the park can still be seen today, in the many structures and trails they built at Bear Brook.



Left: Bear Brook State Park entrance sign on Deerfield Road, 1930's. Image Credit James Lane
Right: Bear Brook State Park entrance sign on Deerfield Road, 2026. Image Credit Logan Spatola

One popular area of the park is Catamount Pond, also known as the day-use area. This section of the park includes a playground, swimming beach, picnic tables, and a large pavilion for group use. The park operates a small store, and offers rentals of kayaks, canoes, and stand up

paddleboards. During the summer the beach can become quite crowded, but several short trails on the opposite side of the pond offer a quiet place for reflection. The CCC built the pavilion, the beach, the dam, and many, many picnic tables.

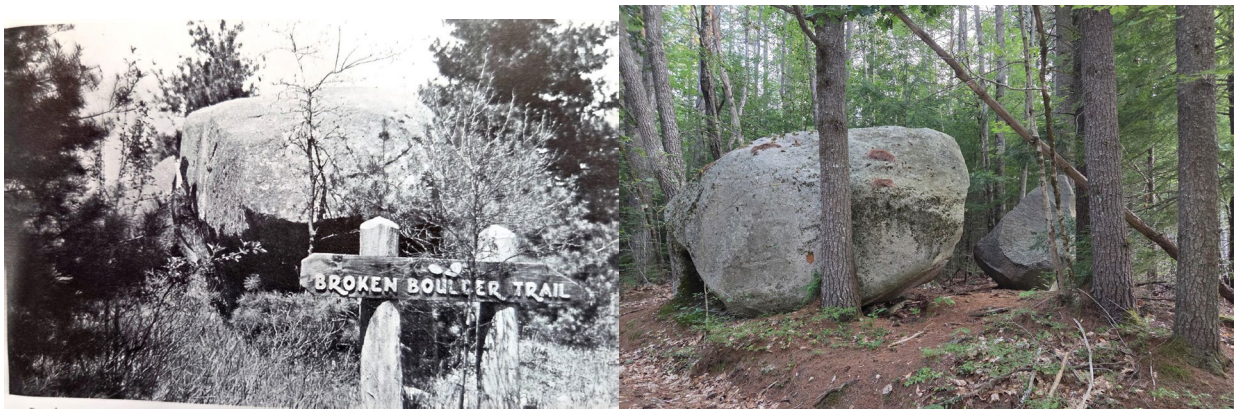


Left: Catamount Pond picnic shelter under construction, 1930's. Image Credit James Lane.
Right: Catamount Pond picnic shelter, 2026. Image Credit Logan Spatola.



Left: Catamount Brook Vehicle Bridge, 1930's. Image Credit James Lane.
Right: Deerfield Road bridge over Catamount Brook, 2026. Image Credit Logan Spatola.

With over 40 miles of trails for hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and snowmobiling, it can be easy to get turned around. The trails at Bear Brook often intersect each other, making maps and clear trail signs necessary. Trails are typically named after a geographical feature, and some are named after animals common to the area. Those using the trails can plan out routes using the trail maps found online and in the park. Maintaining the trails is always an ongoing project, and trails are periodically added or removed during various projects. During the 7 years they had a camp at Bear Brook, the CCC worked on many of the trails that we still use today.



Left: Broken Boulder and Trail Sign, 1930's. Image Credit James Lane
Right: Broken Boulder, 2026. Image Credit Logan Spatola



Left: Smith Pond Trail Sign, 1930's. Image Credit James Lane
Right: Smith Pond and Broken Boulder Trail Sign, 2026. Image Credit Logan Spatola

The Civilian Conservation Corps had a camp at Bear Brook from 1935-1942. This camp was the last one in New Hampshire to close down, and therefore one of the most well-preserved camps. Aside from the many amenities in the park these young men helped to build, there are still several buildings from the camp remaining, including the mess hall, which now houses a CCC museum. If you would like to learn more about the impact the CCC had, both here in New Hampshire and nationally, the museum is open Sunday 1-3 or by appointment.

The Discover the Power of Parks Program is a collaboration between the New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources – Division of Parks and Recreation, Student Conservation Association's New Hampshire Conservation Corps, AmeriCorps, and Volunteer NH.