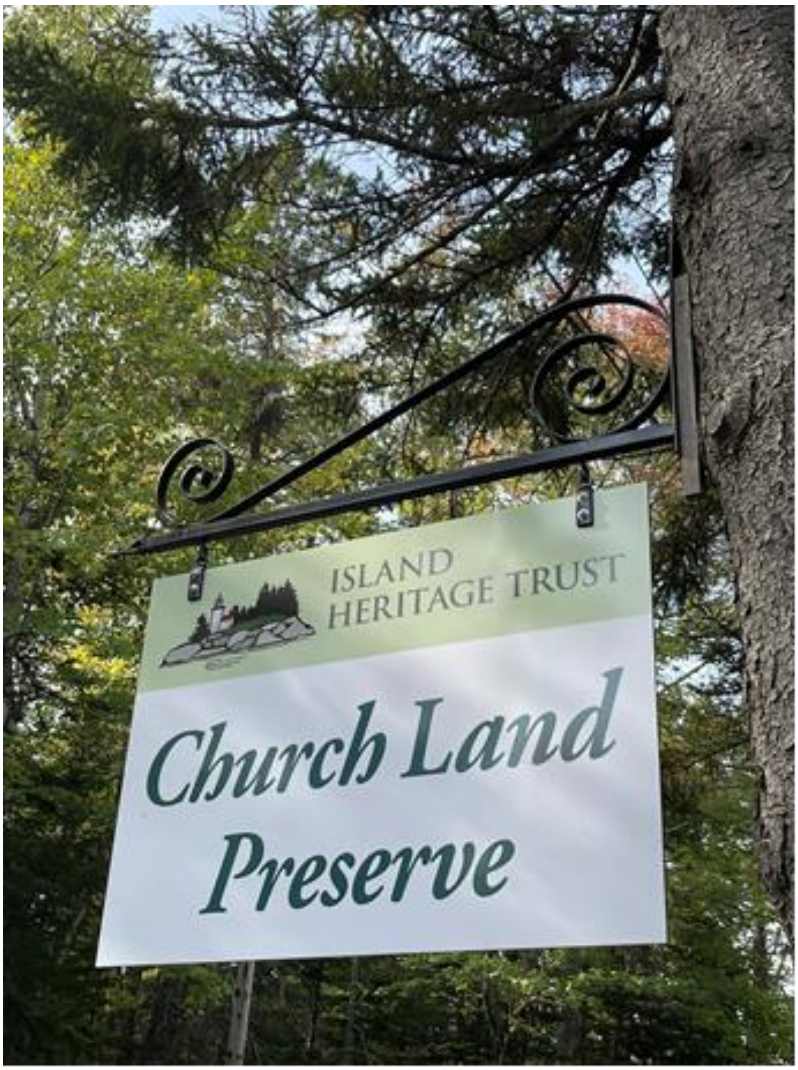
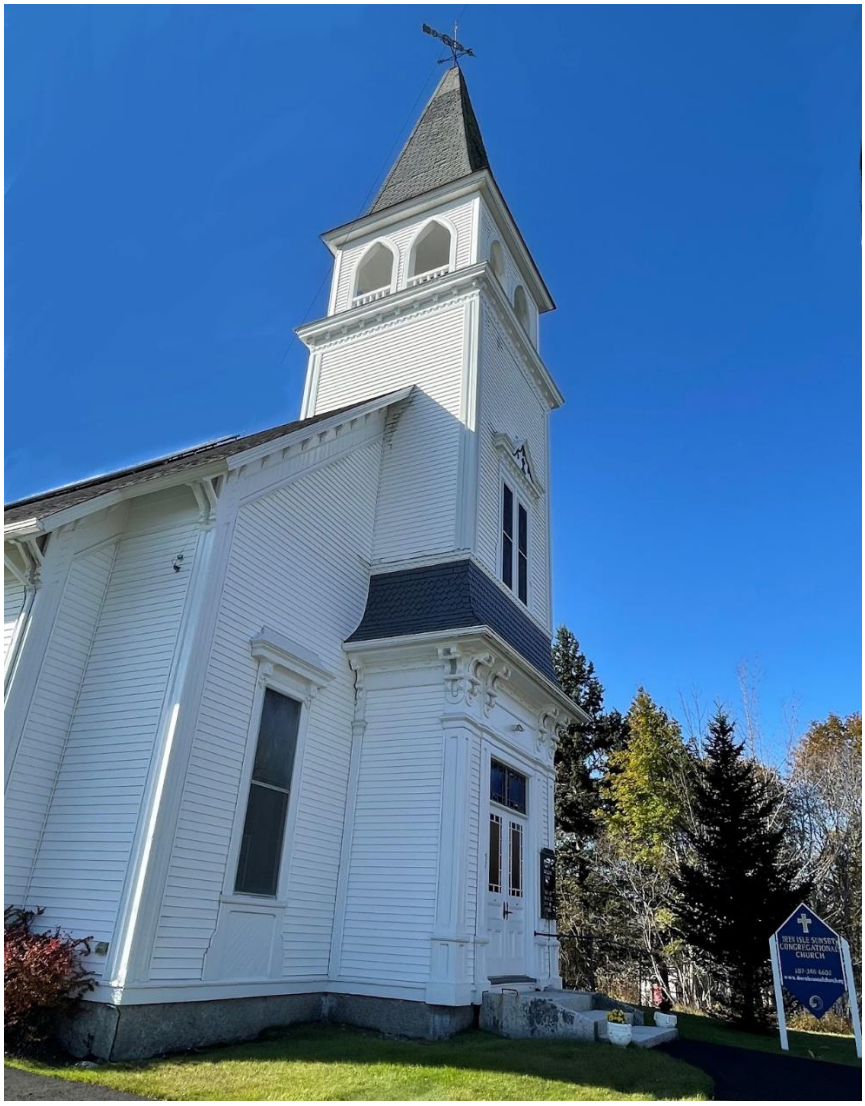
VIRTUAL GUIDED NATURE WALK

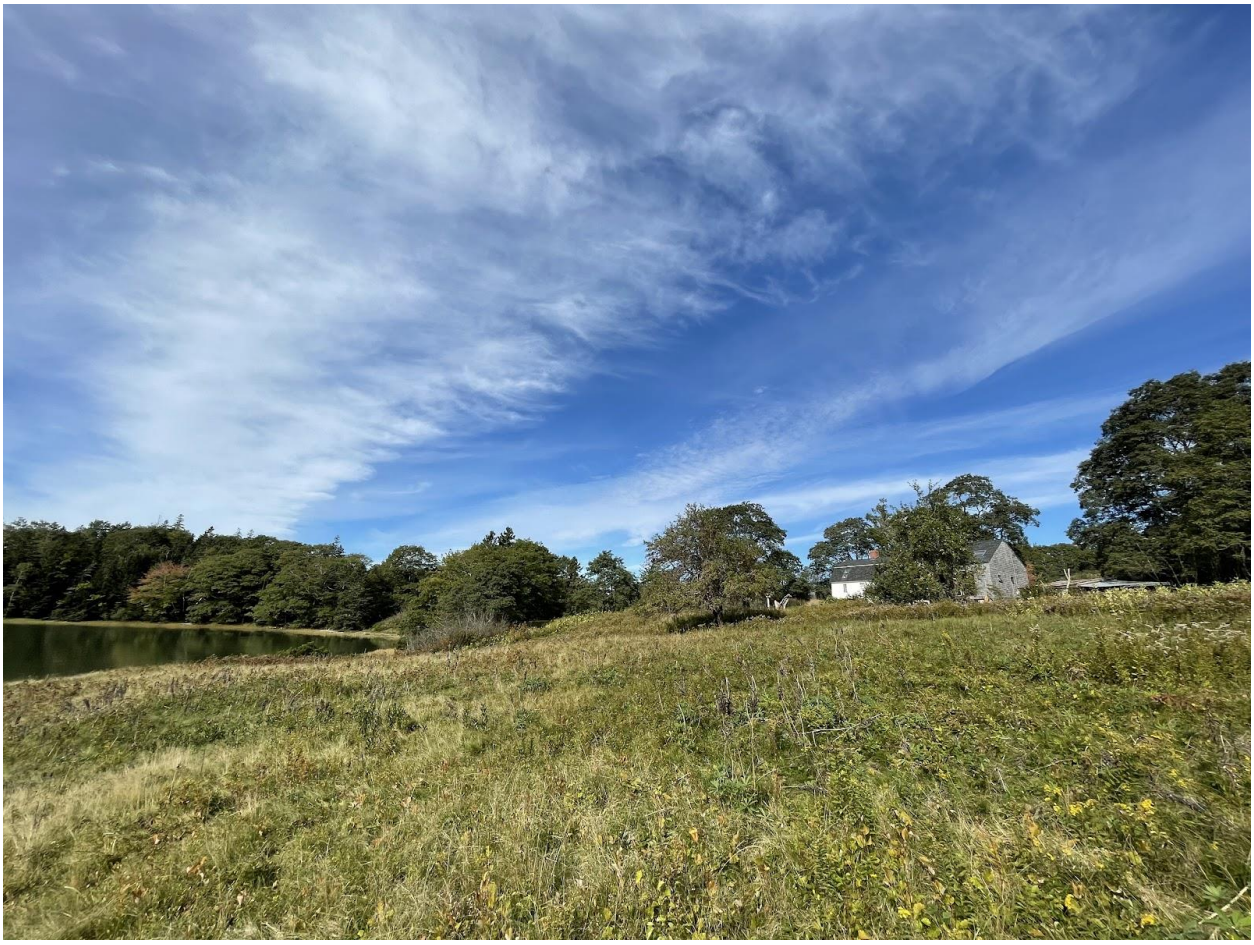
CHURCH LAND PRESERVE



On King Row just past the cemetery you will see this sign welcoming you to an interesting preserve with an intriguing back story.



The church from which the preserve takes its name is the Congregational Church on the hill just outside the village.



At the head of Long Cove sits the Cape style Powers house built in 1785, the oldest on Deer Isle. Reverend Peter Powers was the first settled minister here.

Born in 1728 Powers was educated at Harvard. With his colleague Eleazar Wheelock, he was one of the founders of Dartmouth College in 1769. The years of the American Revolution, 1795-1783, found Powers pastoring in Tory-sympathetic Newbury, Vermont. His rousing sermons in the cause of independence earned him gunshots, death threats, a price on his head and eventual dismissal. He was only too glad to accept the call to Deer Isle in 1785. He was given the house and 100 acres of what is called glebe land in the parish to help support him. Farm land, fishing and firewood were his.

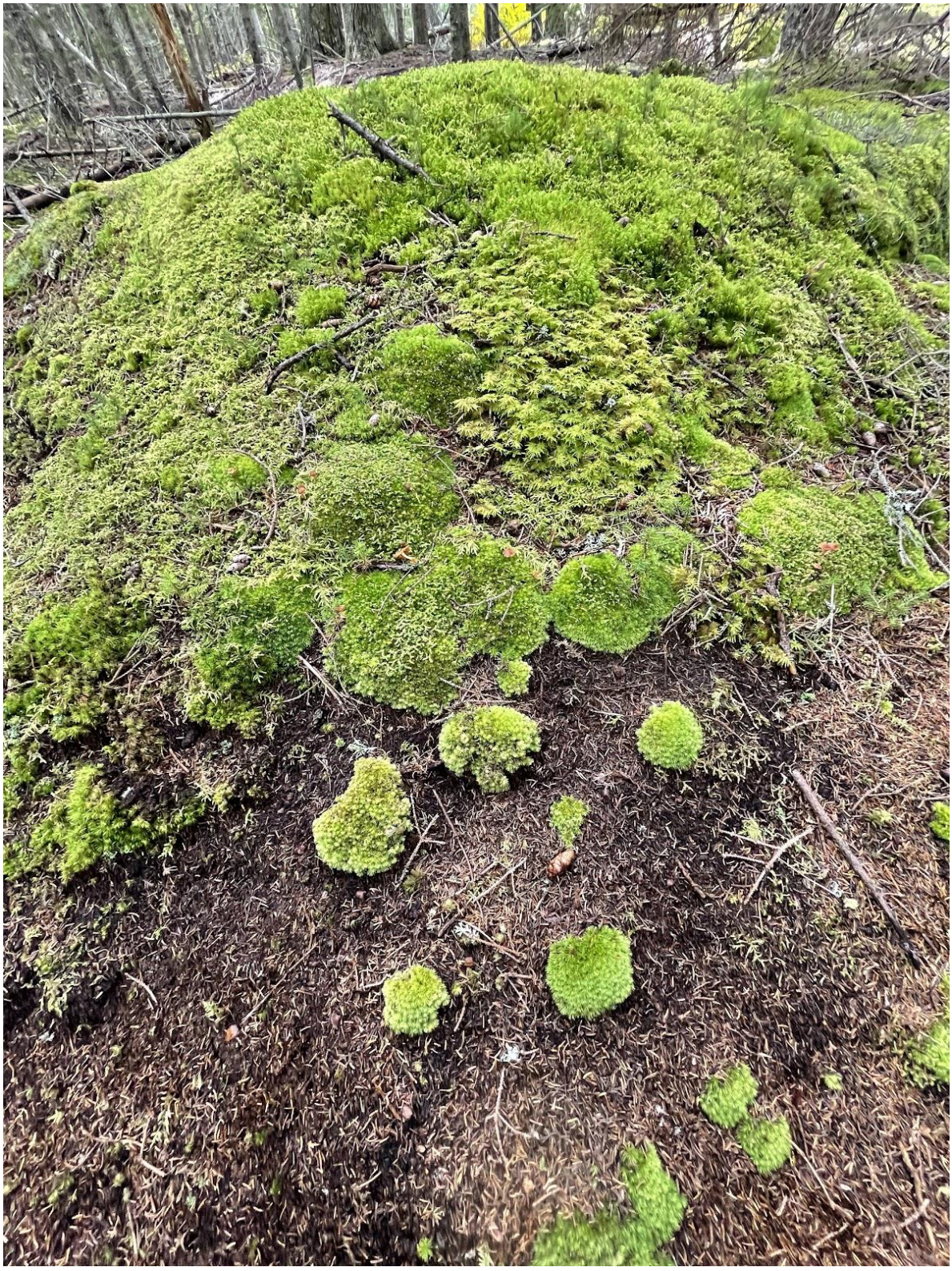
The landscape itself reveals the story of its use.

Trees like this are called wolf trees for the sizable branches extending all the way up and down the trunk. They show that this tree grew up in full sunlight. This was certainly not good farmland but Powers and subsequent ministers were able to harvest timber.

This tree with the split top probably was damaged in a lumbering operation.

The long vertical crack on this tree trunk may suggest a lightning strike but the tree is still alive so it is more likely a frost crack. This happens when there is fluctuation between warm sunny days and cold winter nights. The tissue inside of the tree expands more slowly than the outer bark so the wood is still expanding when the night starts to cool. The outer bark rapidly

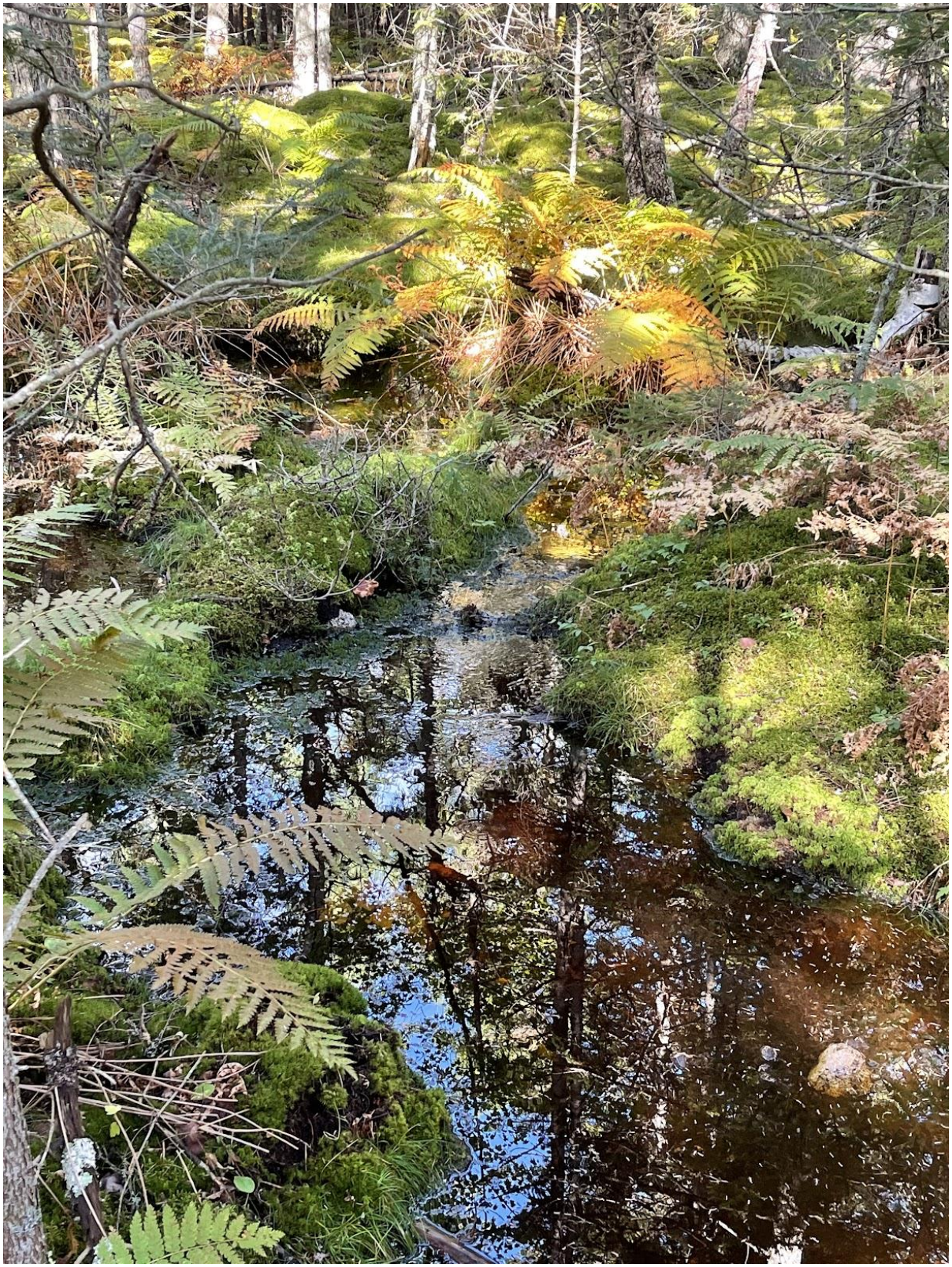
contacting in the cold gets stretched to its limit and splits with a loud crack. Such cracks appear more often on the west and south side of trees because that is where most hours of warming had occurred before night-time temperatures dropped.



Mosses grow wonderfully in these woods. The pincushion mosses here are easy to identify. (You can learn to identify our common mosses – see *Learning Mosses*).

The moss which carpets the forest floor is also quite easy to identify. It is most likely called Schreber’s or Red Feather moss. Schreber was a contemporary of Linnaeus and sent him

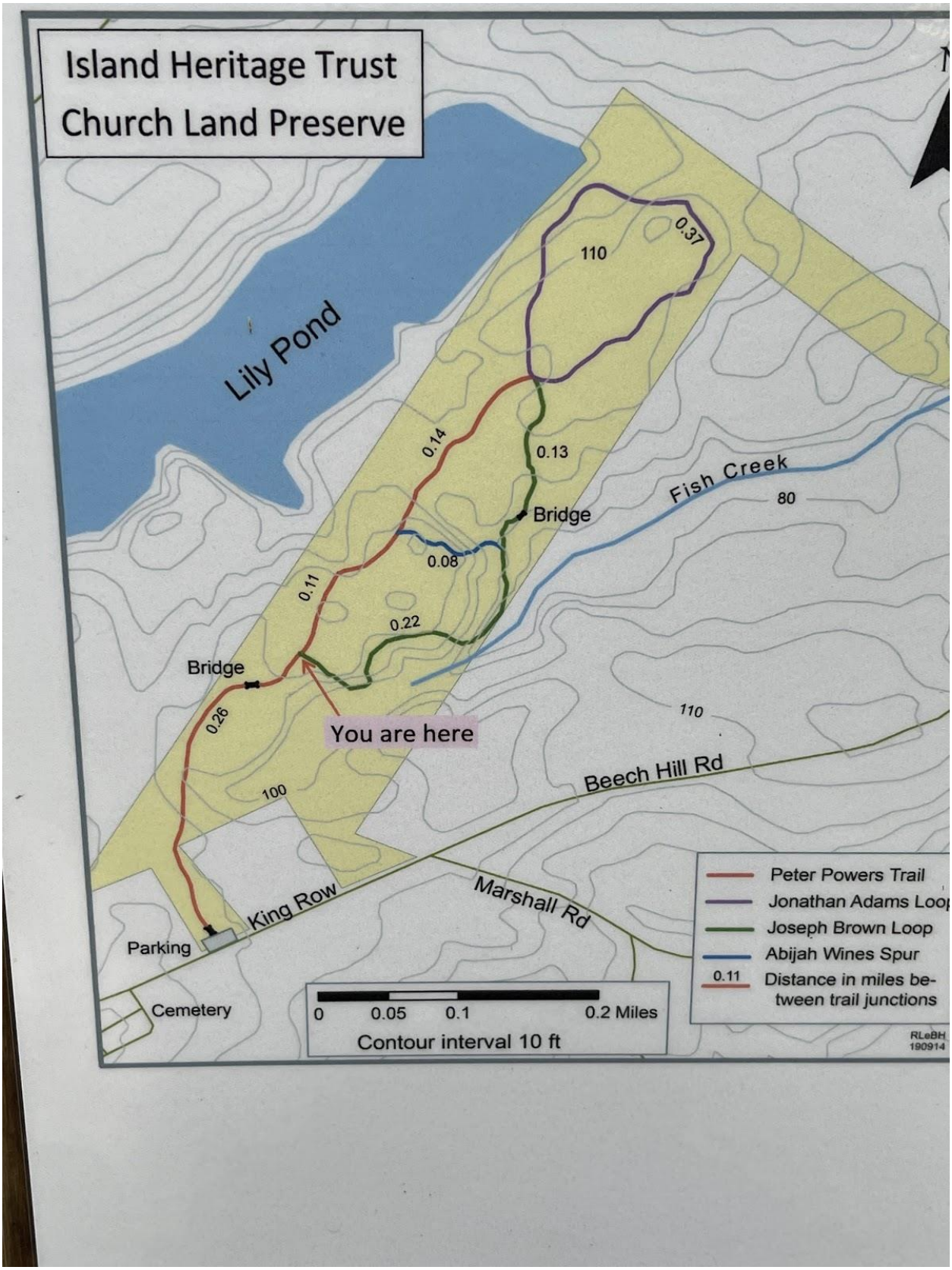
specimens. The moss is also called Red Feather because you can see a red central line if you look closely.



Surprisingly, this pool is part of where Fish Creek begins. It looks especially lovely in autumn when the cinnamon ferns begin to turn color.

Another fern easily identified is bracken fern with its threesome of fronds. (See IHT *Learning Ferns*)

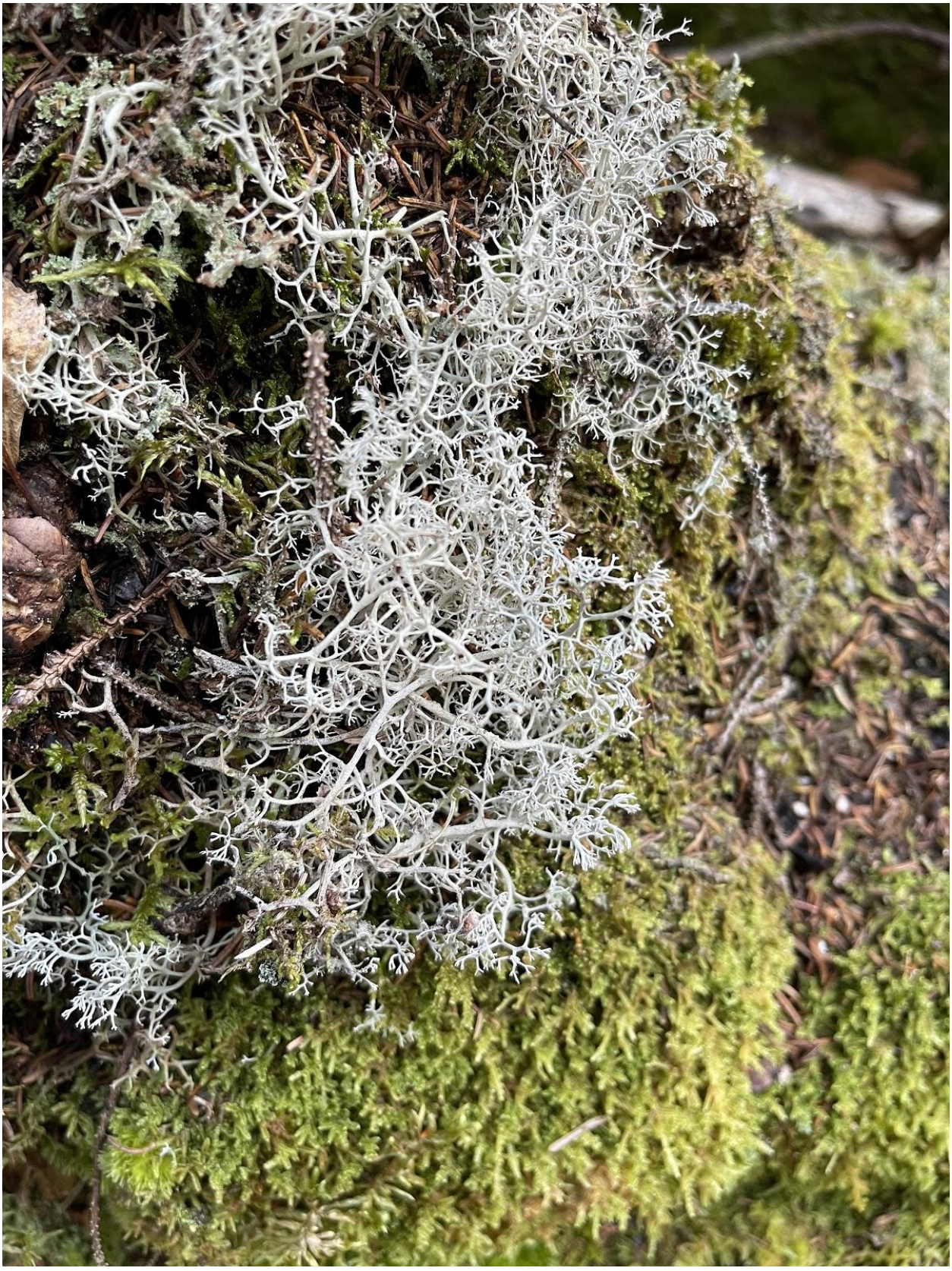
By now you will certainly have noticed the bumpy pattern of the geology here. Not only are there rocks left here by receding glaciers, but there are boulders which look more as if they have been burped up by past flows of molten granite.



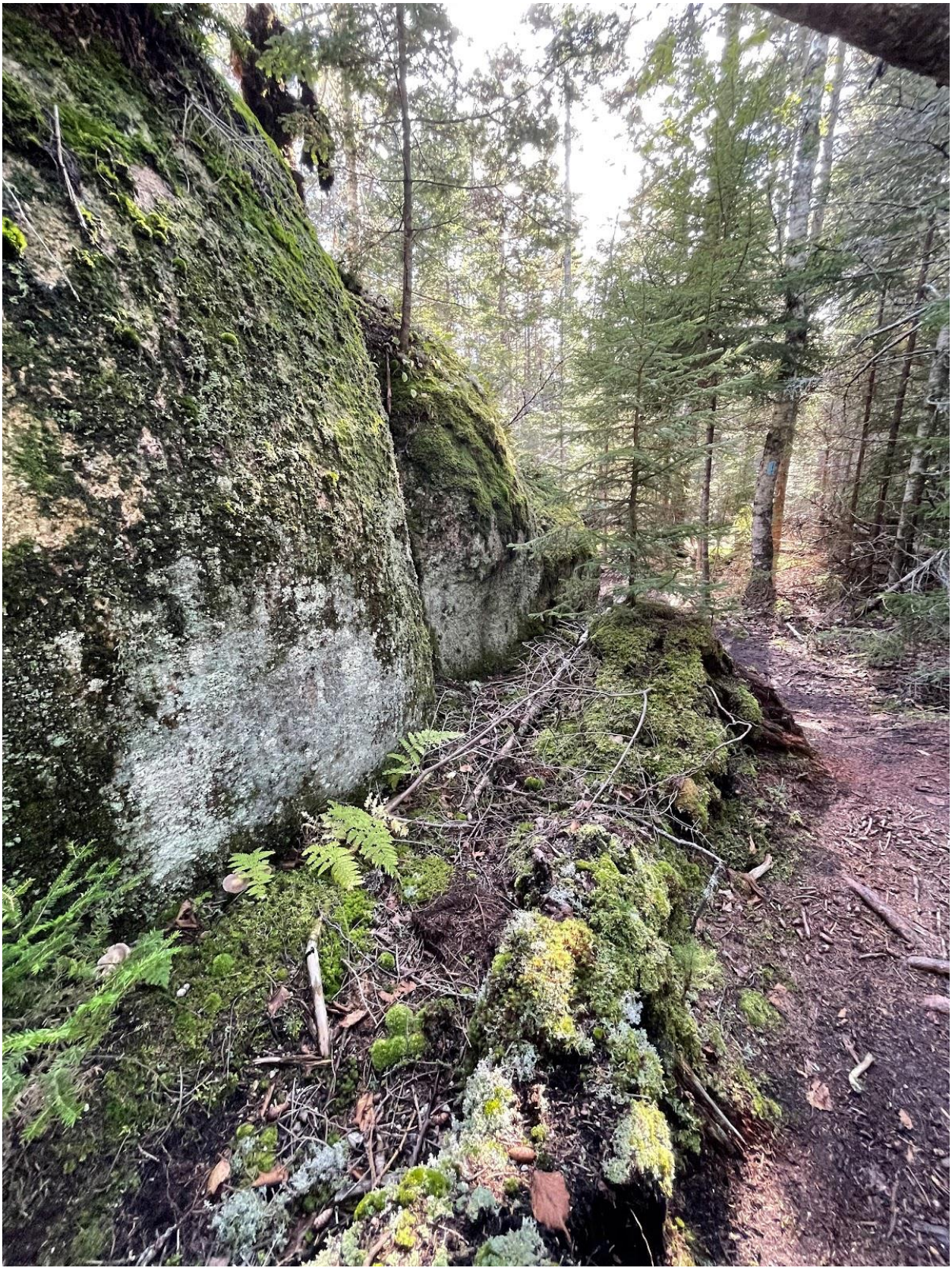
Here you have a choice. The route marked in red, straight ahead, parallels the Lily Pond and we will follow it all the way to a lovely view of the pond. The right turn path is an interesting route but a bit of a scramble, in places for the spry only.

Each boulder along the way is a new lesson in moss and fern and lichen appreciation if not identification.

Polypody ferns crown the heights



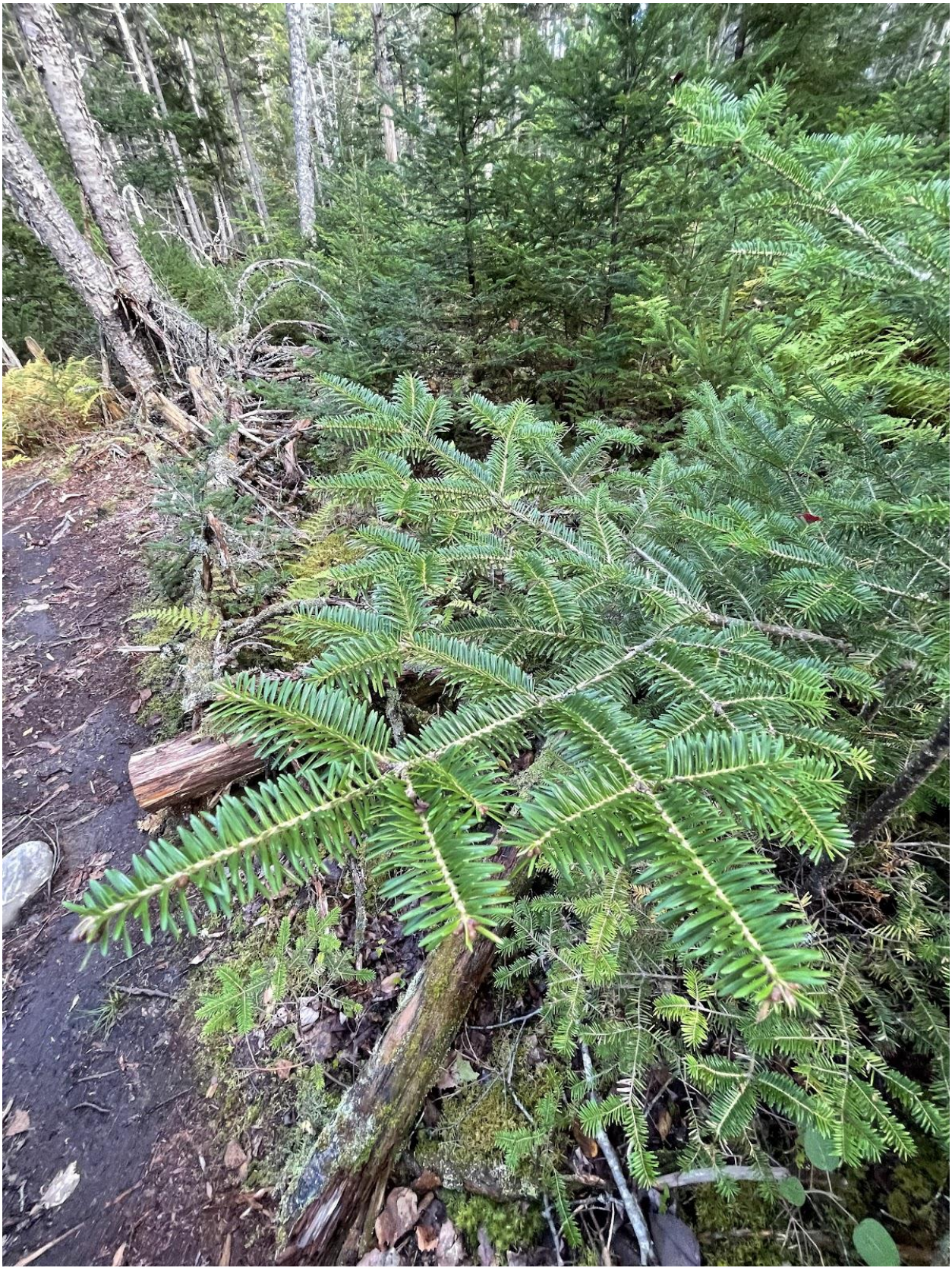
and grey lichens mingle with the green mosses



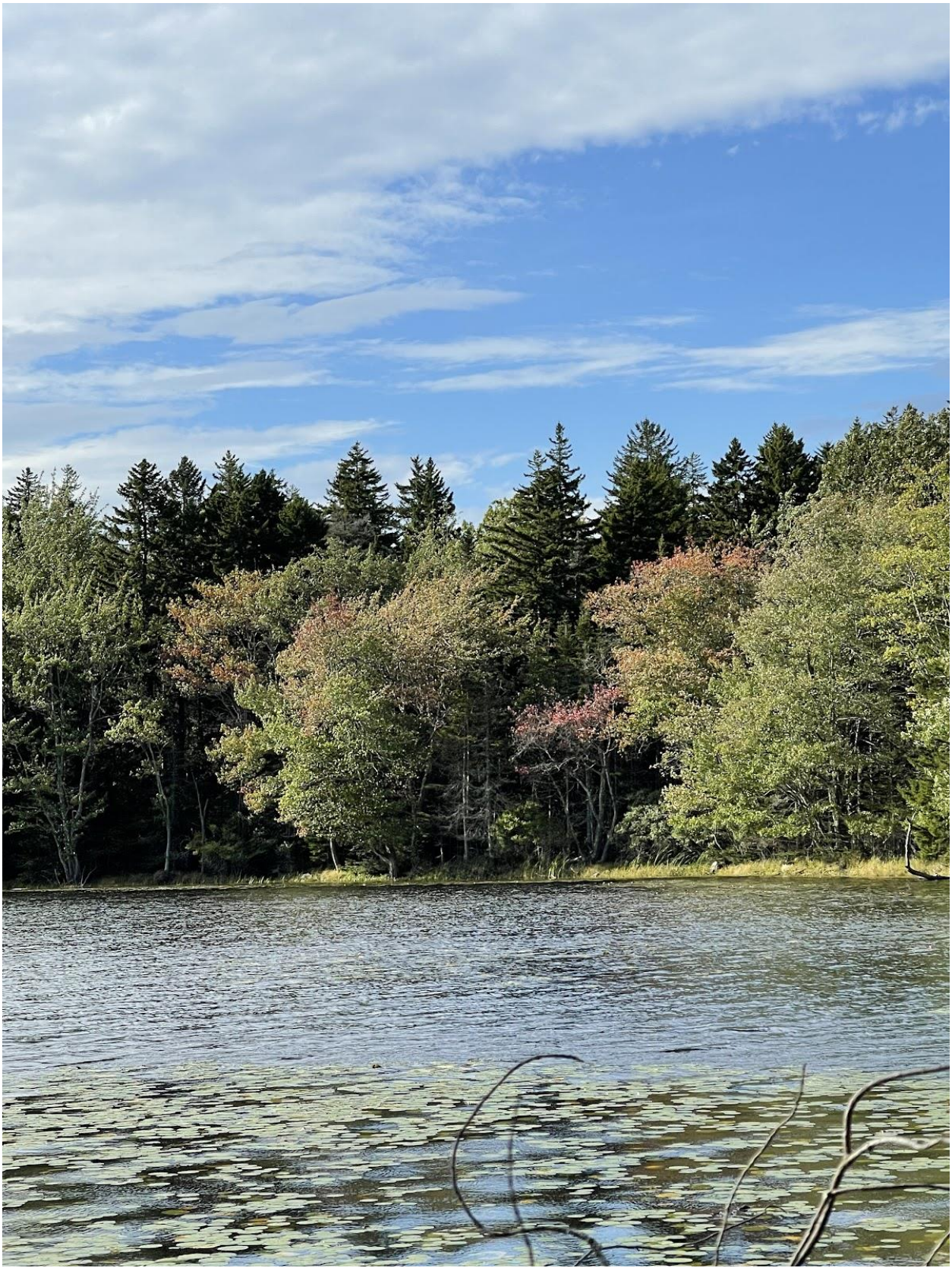
in delightful mosaics.

Clusters of Hay-scented Fern (above) indicate previous openings in the forest.

Where blowdowns have created light gaps in the tree canopy hardwoods such as birches, red maples and poplars grow.



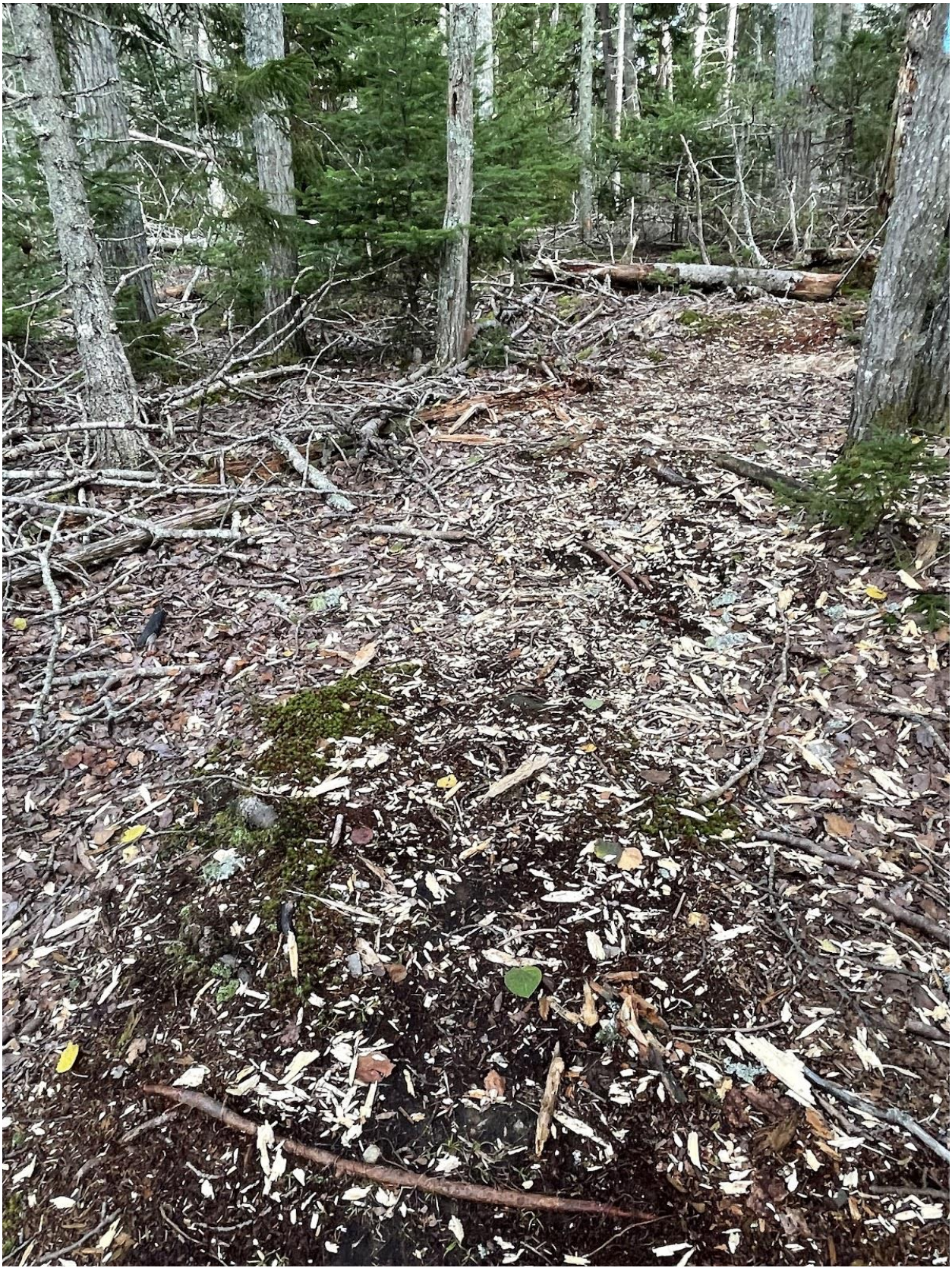
On either side of the trail you can reach out and touch flat firs or feel the sharp spines of red spruce.



Where the view opens up you see the Lily pond with the plants which give it its name.

Here beaver have been at work.

This tree has been lying down for enough years that its trunk is now lined with a polypore fungus growth, oriented so that its spores will disperse by gravity and the wind.

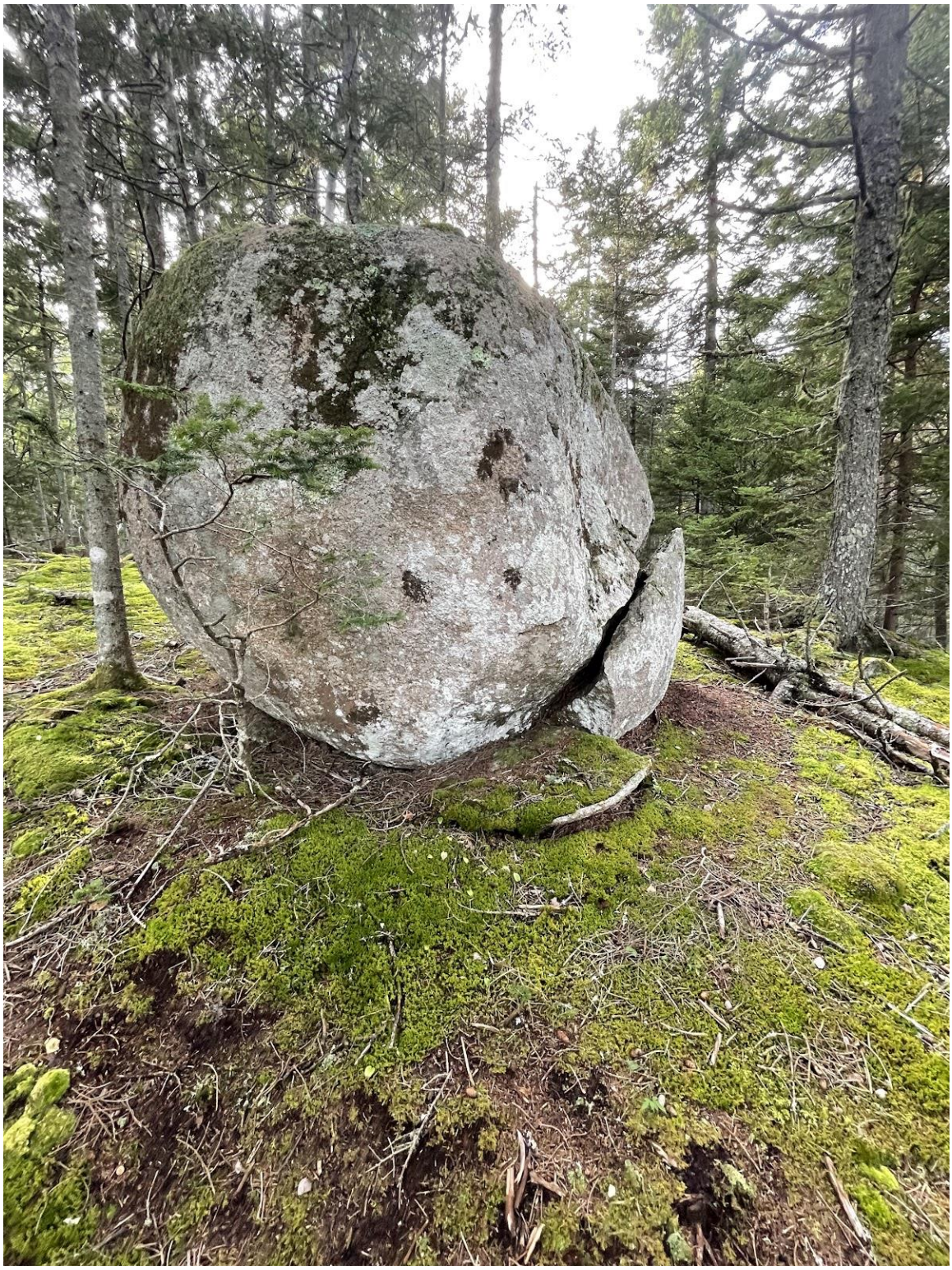


You have reached another decision point. Either you retrace your steps on the trail for the flat and easy way back or you follow the trail through the woods. If you choose the latter you will pass some mature birches and may find the path littered with wood shards where the pileated woodpecker has been at work.

On some tree trunks you may see the round grey-green circles of what has been jokingly called 40 mile an hour lichen. (see IHT *Learning Lichens*). The mysterious dark red liver-colored growths are the liverwort Frullania.

Deer trails are not likely to lead you astray but they are impressive. No wonder that the Native American trails and eventually our roads follow them. Deer always seem to know the most efficient routes.

Where this trail rejoins the way you came out, you will come to another choice: an easy trail which will rejoin the trail you took in or a more challenging route with a few bits of steep terrain.



Perhaps the highlight of the more challenging return route is this giant cracked hard boiled egg of a rock.

Any season of the year, whatever your interests, you will find this a rewarding adventure.

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By Dr. Kenneth L Crowell and his wife Marnie Reed Crowell