

## Take Your Own Trail Walk: Governor Thomas Dudley Park and Great Meadows Trails in Billerica, by Jerry Harris

**“Great Meadows: Billerica Unit.** In 2000, a new trail and parking area were added to the refuge through efforts with the Sudbury Valley Trustees.

**Great Meadows’ History.** Many relics of early people found in the vicinity date back to 5500 B.C. River meadows and plains were burned over by natives to provide cropland and pasture for game while the waters provided fish in great quantity. The river provided transportation for the Native American’s annual summer movement to the sea, where the greater portion of their winter food was gathered and dried. Settlers named the grasslands the “Great River Meadows.”

In the early 19th century industrialization period, a mill dam was built in Billerica. The dam caused the water level to rise and to extend into the Meadows. The newly created habitat became increasingly attractive to waterfowl. In fact, the wetlands became highly valued for hunting and fishing, and today are considered primary habitat for wildlife.”

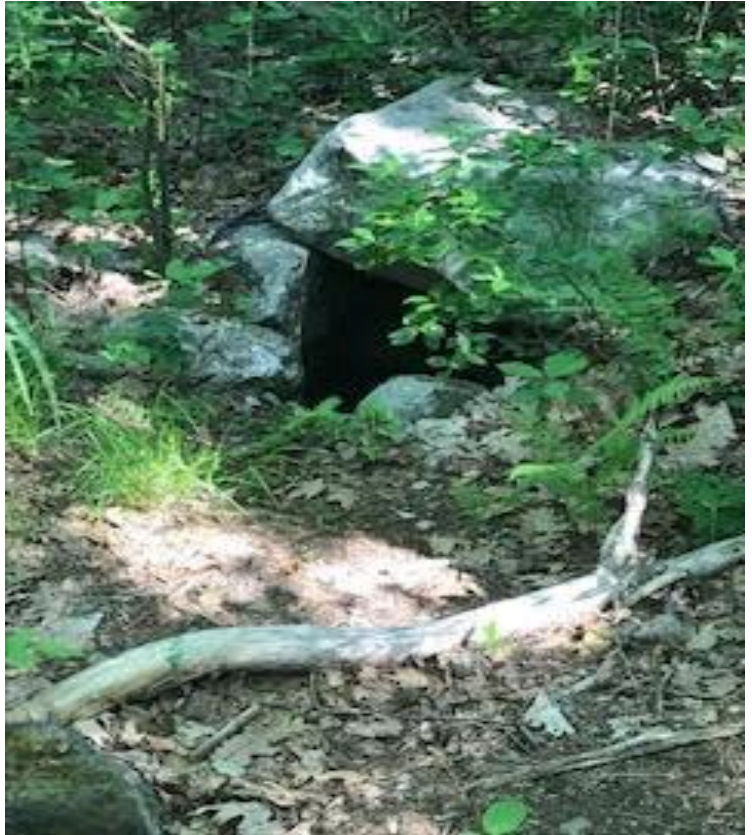
(from U.S. Fish & Wildlife brochure)

According to [Wikipedia](#)--

“Thomas Dudley (12 October 1576 – 31 July 1653) was a colonial magistrate who served several terms as governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Dudley was the chief founder of Newtowne, later Cambridge, Massachusetts, and built the town's first home. He provided land and funds to establish the Roxbury Latin School, and signed Harvard College's new charter during his 1650 term as governor.”

**Difficulty Level:** **Moderate:** The trail is somewhat hilly with roots as well some low branches. It meanders along the Concord River through some areas that are muddy after rainfall. The walk is 1 to 1-1/2 miles and takes about an hour.

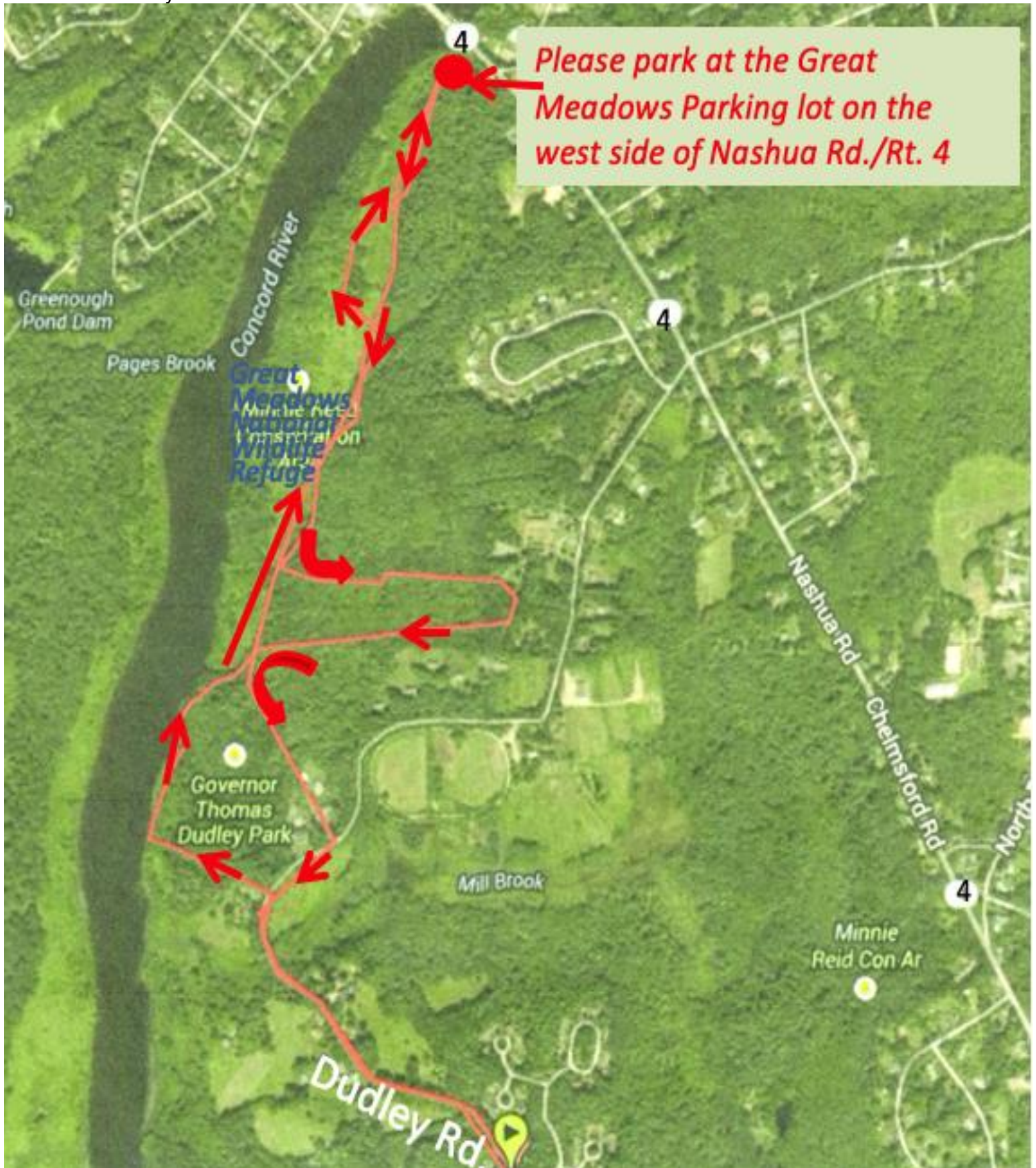
**Driving Directions:** From the Bedford Library at 7 Mudge Way, turn left on The Great Road (Routes 4/225/62). Follow North Rd. (Rt. 4) for 5.1 miles; the Great Meadows parking lot is on the left (see *map*).





**Parking:** Please park at the Great Meadows parking lot on the west side of Nashua Rd./Rt. 4 (see map).

**Walking Directions:** (see map below) From the Gov. Dudley parking lot, follow the trail directions, where you will have excellent views of the Concord River.



**Note:** Note that all walks at your own risk. Depending on the time of the year, ticks may be out, and poison ivy may be active. Please wear comfortable, closed-toe walking shoes or boots that can handle wet or mud, and ice and snow in the winter. Children and dogs on leash are welcome.

*Please follow the latest [Bedford COVID-19 Data, News and Announcements](#)*

*Please observe [Massachusetts "Governor's COVID-19 Order . . . requiring all persons to wear face-coverings in all public places, even where they are able to maintain 6 feet of distance from others"](#)*

**Click Here for: [Prior "Take Your Own" Trail Walks](#)**

**To Join:** Go to the [Bedford Trails page](#)

If you already have a Google account, click "Join Group to Post"

If you don't have a Google account, please send an email to [BedfordMA.trailwalks@gmail.com](mailto:BedfordMA.trailwalks@gmail.com) and you'll be added to the Group.

*Bedford MA Trails is on **Facebook**, just click here*

