

Conservation Matters

A monthly column focused on conservation education, as the result of collaboration among several area conservation commissions and organizations. If your town's commission or conservation organization would like to contribute articles, please contact Jessica Tabolt Halm jesshalm78@gmail.com

Title: Take a (Local) Hike

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It is beautiful day, you have friends or family visiting, and you would like to get outside and enjoy the day. We are fortunate to have the White Mountain National Forest as our backyard, with thousands of miles of hiking trails. But did you know that many of our towns have short, interesting hikes of their own? Here are a few short hikes, close to home that just might be the ticket for a great day outdoors.

In Campton, the **Blair Woodland Natural Area** is owned by the Town of Campton. This 17 acre piece was given as a gift in 2002 to be kept as a natural area for wildlife and the general public for "low impact" uses such as nature study and enjoyment while walking, snowshoeing, or fishing. The land is totally forested with a variety of tree types and wildlife habitats. It has about 1000 feet of frontage on the Pemigewasset River and is accessible from Rt. 3, just south of the Blair Road intersection and The Red Sleigh. The Campton Conservation Commission has created public access to the property. For a map and more information: <http://camptonnh.org/docs/BWNAbrochure.pdf>

Plymouth has trails at the Walter-Newton Natural Area (WNNA), Fauver East and Plymouth Mountain. Wetlands, a waterfall, and wildlife make the WNNA's 163-acre sanctuary an ideal place to explore with children. Along the trail, search for signs of wildlife in the boggy areas —beaver, deer, and even a moose or occasional black bear have been spotted in this natural area, deeded to the town of Plymouth by conservationists Ruth and Henry Walter and Suzanne Newton. The 0.5 mile, flat hike leads to a 25 foot tall waterfall. There is a bench near the base of the falls where you can sit, relax and watch the water flow. The trailhead is located on Cummings Hill Road, which is a right turn off of Rt. 3 if you are going south from Plymouth. The other natural areas intersect with the WNNA, creating many, more rigorous loop hikes.

For a more challenging hike with a view, try Plymouth Mountain. It's one of few mountains in the Lakes Region/ White Mountains where solitude can be experienced almost every day. There are two named trails to the summit; the more popular is the **Plymouth Mountain/Ken Sutherland Trail**, which begins on the western side of the mountain at the Fauver Parking Lot on Old Hebron Road. This trail is 2.5 miles and maintains a moderate pitch to the rock outcrops near the summit of Plymouth Mountain with views of Tecumseh, the Tri-Pyramids, and Squam Lake. For maps and information: <http://www.plymouth-nh.org/boards-committees/plymouth-conservation-commission> or visit the trailhead kiosks.

For the history lovers, Ashland is the location of the **Homestead Forest**. In the mid-nineteenth century, this 604-acre property consisted of 13 separate lots. Miles of stonewalls and rusted wire fencing attest to an agricultural economy from long ago. Over a period of a century and a half, these lots were combined until, by 1995, they constituted one parcel. In 1999, the

land was given to the Lakes Region Conservation Trust (LRCT); at the same time a conservation easement on the property was donated to the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests. From the trailhead kiosk, Lambert Road continues straight ahead for a mile, where it meets an abandoned road that used to connect Coxboro Road in Holderness and Leavitt Hill Road in Ashland. Scattered throughout the forest are cellar holes and foundations, which identify the locations of four of five farms known to have existed in the 1800s. A sixth farmhouse, now owned by LRCT, dates from about 1825. These structures bear witness to a tradition of homestead agriculture in rural New Hampshire and to the transition from fields back to forestland after these farms were abandoned. In the center of the Homestead Forest is a network of trails. For more information and directions:

<http://lrct.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Homestead-Forest-Trail-Map.pdf>

Rumney is home of **Quincy Bog Natural Area**. The 43-acre property, consisting of a pond and associated wetlands surrounded by upland forest, supports a variety of plant and animal life, including typical bog/fen vegetation and an active beaver colony. The mostly level, mile-long trail around the pond is open to the public free of charge 365 days a year during daylight hours. <http://www.quincybog.org/images/TrailGuides/QbogTrailMap.pdf>

Also part of Quincy Bog Natural Area, are the trails at the **Quincy Pasture Forest**. These trails are located on the East Rumney Road. The lower loop is a moderately strenuous hike, about 1.1 miles in length. This trail encircles a forest management area where logging activities occurred to promote forest diversity and enhance wildlife habitat. Look for stone walls in a couple of places that are silent reminders of open fields and livestock grazing that once dominated even this relatively steep landscape. The Upper Loop is a strenuous hike. This 1.95 mile trail takes you to the uppermost elevations of the property where the management objective is to allow forest growth to proceed naturally. This loop is generally steeper, more rocky, and offers a more rugged hike. Not to be missed along this loop is a short side trail (150') to a scenic view overlooking Loon Lake to the east. <http://www.quincybog.org/images/TrailGuides/QPFTailMap.pdf>

So there you have it, now Go for A Hike!



Quincy Pasture Forest
Upper Loop



Blair Woodlands
Natural Area