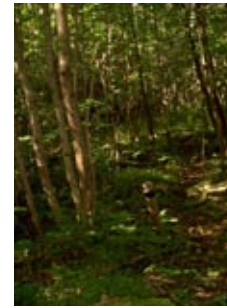




A Walk on the Black Trail

Walking time: 35 - 50 minutes.
Some steep climbs.

The Black Trail begins and ends at the Leonard Woods parking area. Take the right hand branch through the meadow, which is very slowly reverting to forest as early succession shrubs and trees seed in from the edges, and you enter a young forest. Many of the young trees are poplar; red maple and white birch are also present, as is white ash. In some areas the young white ash are the dominant species, giving a hint of the ultimate mature forest which is re-developing here.



As the trail passes deeper into the woods, it moves in and out of an old harvest area. Larger trees, both hardwood and softwood, are scattered throughout. Some of the typical rare AHF flowering plants and ferns are visible along the trail, including small patches of wild ginger, occasional wild coffee plants, and one clump of maidenhair fern.

Approaching the upriver boundary of the Preserve, the trail enters a stand of almost pure hemlock, mature trees – the oldest perhaps 150 years old (hemlock can reach at least 400) – with many seedlings in the understorey.

At the summit of the hill, high above the river, a bench offers a view up the Meduxnekeag, and a bronze plaque remembers Heather Leonard, donations in whose memory helped purchase Phase Two of the Preserve.

From here the trail heads back along the river, briefly passing through the harvested area, where more wild coffee grows in the understorey, before descending a set of steps and entering a steep rocky slope with mature conifers on either side. The trail passes across the slope within view of the river.

Soon after this, the trail forks: taking the left hand option avoids poison ivy which flourishes on the flat near the river in summer. Following the right hand option, the trail continues through mature conifers and descends to the river level.

After the trail comes down to the flat by the river, it passes several black cherry trees, an uncommon species locally, and one of the three largest white pines on the Preserve. It then intersects with the Orange trail in

an area where bloodroot flowers profusely, and returns with it up a very steep climb on an old woods road where black raspberry, an uncommon AHF species, flourishes on the banks at forest edge. The 'poison-ivy-detour' comes back in part-way up and the trails return to the meadow and parking area.

A Walk on the Orange Trail

Walking time: 45 - 60 minutes.
Some steep climbs.



The Orange Trail also begins and ends at the Leonard Woods parking area. A considerable part of it lies along the Meduxnekeag, and should be walked as a loop only from late October to late May when poison ivy is not a problem. In those seasons, from the parking area go straight ahead through the meadow and enter the woods on the old access road (the Black Trail shares this part of the route). This goes steeply downhill, through mature mixed forest. Many early spring flowers bloom on the margins of this road, and black raspberry is also present. At the bottom of the slope, the Orange and Black trails split. A number of large butternut trees grow on this bottom land.

Take the Orange trail to the left, passing through a rich bottom intervale. Bloodroot and dutchman's breeches flourish here, as do fiddleheads, wild ginger, and many of the more common spring flowers such as red trillium and dogtooth violet. Further downstream, large cedar trees are common, the trail skirts several seasonally wet lagoons, and offers numerous scenic views of the river.

As it reaches the foot of the steep wooded hill called Wilson Mountain, the trail curves inland through the bottomland forest at the base of the mountain and crosses a bridge. This is about the mid-point on the trail. It then joins the Yellow Trail briefly, crosses yet another bridge, and soon passes the standing remnant of a huge tree, probably an elm, which appears to have been between four and five feet in diameter before it died several decades ago. The trail now returns inland and begins to climb. It passes through mixed forest of different ages, skirts the edges of old farmland, passes beside another rocky cliff, and winds its way back toward the parking area. Several flights of steps and handrails assist in steeper spots.

A Walk on the Yellow Trail

Walking time: 20 - 30 minutes. One steep climb.

The Yellow Trail begins at the Wilson Mountain end of the Preserve, approximately 100 metres along the NB Trail from the Preserve sign. Yellow and Red trails coincide initially; one branch of the Yellow forks to the right about ten metres into the woods, curving past large poplar and white spruce trees which mark the boundary of the old railroad right-of-way, and then descending a set of steps to the edge of one of the two primary tributary brooks flowing through the Preserve, which here emerges from a concrete culvert built when the railway - now a branch of the NB Trail - was constructed circa 1915.



The trail follows the course of the brook, through a mixed forest where cedar dominates. Understorey plants include wild ginger, purple trillium and bloodroot. Jack-in-the-pulpit occurs near the stream in several locations. There are three plank bridges and several flights of steps. Further down the brook, the trail crosses a miniature flood plain in a predominantly hardwood area, where natural slope erosion continues to re-shape the immediate valley.

Toward the lower part of the brook, the trail joins the Orange trail briefly, in bottomland forest rich in wild ginger and bloodroot, then climbs steps up the dinosaur's tail - a narrow ridge separating the watersheds of the two tributary brooks. There is a patch of maidenhair fern on the slope to the right of the trail.

At the top of the slope, a bench provides a place to rest and view a large white pine, at just over a metre in diameter, one of the largest trees on the Preserve. The trail then returns up the valley of the brook which it had descended, but now toward the top of the slope rather than at brook level. After passing through a dry slope area, it joins the Red trail, and the two continue up the valley, returning to the starting point. They pass through an area of former pasture, now grown very thickly with small white spruce.

A Walk on the Red Trail

Walking time: 30 - 40 minutes. No steep climbs.

The Red Trail begins, like the Yellow, about 100 metres down the NB Trail from the Preserve sign. Take the left hand branch, through an area where forest has regenerated on former farmland, with trees now several decades old. The understorey is sparse, although wild ginger occurs as single plants and small clusters. Pass a large multi-stemmed white pine and a decaying century-old cedar rail fence which marks a former field boundary. The trail winds down into and up out of a shallow valley with a seasonal seepage streamlet at the bottom, then passes up through an area of mature conifers, dominated by 75 to 100 year old white pine.



The trail then descends to Delaney Brook, the largest – and only named – of the Preserve's small tributary brooks, and follows upstream along its bank, crossing on a plank bridge just below the culvert at the old railway embankment. It then rises above the brook, passing between two clumps of maidenhair fern, and rising slowly into a dry hardwood forest where it briefly joins the Blue Trail on the slope of Wilson Mountain. A fox den is near the trail. Club mosses luxuriate on the forest floor here. Separating from the Blue trail, the Red trail descends again to Delaney Brook through a mostly hardwood forest where common understorey plants include blue bead lily and wood sorrel. After crossing the brook beside a rocky outcrop, the trail passes a very large white pine, then follows the course of the brook at stream level, through a mature lowland conifer forest with large pine and cedar dominating, and where standing snags offer food opportunities for woodpeckers. Across the brook, the hardwood slope of Wilson Mountain offers a contrasting habitat, while the two merge in mixed forest at the brook. Deer and moose are regular visitors here.

Soon the trail begins to rise above the stream level, and follows the edge of the steep bank downstream, along what was once the margin of the cleared land, past several large white birch, one of which shows claw marks where a bear climbed it. The trail passes the edge of a regenerating field, then returns through a young white spruce stand to the edge of Delaney Brook's ravine. An old barrel once used as a bear bait has been left here. Past this, the trail turns away from the brook, and winds through a dense stand of young conifers, mostly "pasture" spruce, where mushrooms carpet sections on the forest floor in early fall, before joining the Yellow trail and accompanying it back to the starting point.

A Walk on the Blue Trail

Walking time: 25 - 35 minutes. No steep climbs.

The Blue Trail is accessed from the Red trail. From the junction, the Blue trail winds uphill through the shady hardwood forest of Wilson Mountain. About 100 metres from the junction, the trail splits, forming a rough circle around the top of the hill. The left fork passes through hardwoods, emerging to a lookout with a bench at the edge of a very steep drop to a hardwood terrace.

Beyond the lookout, the trail passes along the side hill, where numerous dead and dying beech trees have been excavated by pileated woodpeckers. These crow-sized largest native woodpeckers are often seen or heard in this part of the Preserve. In 2004, a pair nested adjacent to the Blue trail near where a second bench looks out over the river.

The Blue Trail continues around the hill top, passing some mature hemlock, and rising gently into the mature hardwoods which dominate here. Large sugar maple are common, and old metal utensils on a rock pile suggest there may have been a sugary here. This part of the Preserve supports many migratory songbirds which thrive in the hardwood canopy. Deer are frequently seen on the trail, a large beech shows bear claw marks, and a bear den on the slope above Delaney Brook is occupied some winters.

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