

This Natural Area is managed by the Balch Hill Stewardship Committee. We welcome volunteers to help monitor and care for trails, maintain views, control invasive plants, and plan community activities. Thank you to our partners — Dartmouth College, Town of Hanover, Upper Valley Land Trust — and to the many dedicated neighbors who help to make Balch Hill a wonderful place for all.

The Hanover Conservancy is a private, non-profit membership organization dedicated to the conservation of land and water in our community. Your support keeps our natural areas open for all to enjoy, and allows us to offer guided trips here and elsewhere in Hanover. Please consider becoming a member and making a gift to the Balch Hill Stewardship Fund.



Hanover Conservancy

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www.hanoverconservancy.org

This publication was made possible by a grant from Wells Fargo Capital Finance and a gift from Rob and Jan Chapman, longtime Balch Hill neighbors. January 2019

Photo credits: Cover photo of Baker Library viewed from Balch Hill by Kent Dahlberg. Fall maple, Rob Chapman; all other photos Hanover Conservancy staff and archives.

1871 – Balch Hill, a nearly open pasture, appears at center left. East Wheelock Street, a dirt track, leads up the south side among the Balch farms.



Balch Hill Natural Area

Map and Guide



**HANOVER
CONSERVANCY**
Hanover, New Hampshire



The 85-acre **Balch Hill Natural Area** includes land owned by the Hanover Conservancy (including the 947-foot-high summit), Town of Hanover, and Dartmouth College. The Upper Valley Land Trust holds a conservation easement on 10 acres northwest of the summit. Balch Hill's high meadow and orchard are rare reminders of a once-familiar land use in Hanover. Stone walls and fragments of fencing are relics of the 1800s, when 11,000 sheep pastured in Hanover, including here at Balch Hill.

Adna Perkins Balch (1817-1889), a prominent citizen who owned six large farms nearby, served in the state legislature and was responsible for extending the Connecticut and Passumpsic Railroad to Quebec. The Dartmouth Alpine Ski Team raced on Balch Hill before the Oak Hill area opened in 1935; Hanover High School ski meets continued here into the 1940s. The Garipay Farm's dairy herd grazed here in summer, and a fire pond, once used for livestock watering, now provides amphibian habitat near the Maple Trail.

The hill was a favorite for walking, berry picking, and skiing by the 1950s. When a New York developer proposed first 126 condominiums and then 49 luxury homes in the 1970s, the community came together to conserve this special place, with the Hanover Conservancy (then known as the Hanover Conservation Council) leading the way. Today, Upper Valley residents and visitors continue to enjoy the gentle breezes and sweeping views from the summit.



Balch Hill Natural Area Trails



Map revised for the Hanover Conservancy by Stonehouse Mtn Mapping.
 Map data Sources: NH GRANIT digital topographic, orthophoto, and vector layers (edited); deets, surveys, previous trail map; GPS data.
 Acknowledgment: Original map created in 2007 in the Dartmouth College Dept. of Earth Sciences Applied Spatial Analysis Lab, courtesy of Richard W. Birnie.



- P** Parking
- i** Information Kiosk
- Balch Hill Natural Area Foot Trails:**
 - Blazed Trail (color indicated on map)
 - Wide, Unblazed Trails
 - Other Trails
 - Former Trails
 - 👁 View
- 🌳 Large Oak Tree
- 🐝 Pollinator Patch
- Property Boundary
- Stone Wall
- 🌲 Forest
- 🟡 Open
- 💧 Wetland

Foot Travel Only

(Bicycles permitted on Dot Strong Trail)

Directions and Parking:
 From the Dartmouth College Green: Proceed 1.6 miles on East Wheelock Street to parking at junction of Grasse and Trescott Roads.
 Or follow Route 10 north, turn right on Reservoir Road, then right on Hemlock Road. Park before private drive near end (2.5 mi from Green).
 Contour interval: 20 ft

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Balch Hill Natural Area Guidelines

- Foot travel only, except on Dot Strong Trail
- Leave no trace — please carry out your own trash and pick up after your pet
- Dogs under close control of their owners are welcome
- No hunting without special permission
- Leave wildflowers and wildlife undisturbed
- No camping or fires
- No motorized vehicles without special permission



The Trails

Balch Hill's many trails vary from easy to steep. All lead to the summit for views (especially in winter) of Mount Ascutney, downtown Hanover, Gile Mountain, and Killington Peak. Dedicated volunteers help maintain trails, signs and much more year-round. Look for informative kiosks at the Grasse Road trailhead and at the summit.

- ▶ **Chapman Trail** – 0.15 mile link from Grasse Rd Loop to Hunter East Trail with bench overlooking Moose Mountain; named for longtime neighbors with deep ties to the Natural Area; **easy**
- ▶ **Dot Strong Trail** – 0.3 mile from Reservoir Road to MacDonald Drive; named for a neighborhood humanitarian; open to bicycles; **easy**
- ▶ **Fire Trail** – 0.4 mile to summit from end of Hemlock Road; provides emergency and maintenance access; shares private driveway up to the Natural Area; **easy**
- ▶ **Garipay Trail** – 0.1 mile link from Morrison Road to Maple Trail; named for last family to farm the land; **moderate**
- ▶ **Grasse Road Loop Trail** – 0.6 miles round trip. Wheelock Street intersection; (parking across Grasse Road from trailhead); **moderate**
- ▶ **Hemlock Trail** – 0.2 mile to summit from end of Hemlock Road (parking at trailhead); **steep at the bottom**
- ▶ **Hunter East Trail** – 0.3 mile to summit from Morrison Road; **easy**
- ▶ **Hunter West Trail** – 0.3 mile to summit from Plane Trail; easier alternative to Plane Trail; named for donor of land
- ▶ **Maple Trail** – 0.6 mile to Fire Trail from Dot Strong Trail; named for ancient maples along trail; **moderate**
- ▶ **Piane Trail** – 0.3 mile to summit from Rip Road over former ski trail (upper section not maintained), named for donor of land; **very steep**

Natural Features: What to Look For

Birds: The mix of hilltop meadow, shrubby margins, and diverse forest attracts seasonal songbirds as well as year-round residents who find winter shelter in the woods. In summer, you may see a broad-winged hawk, ruby-throated hummingbird, pileated woodpecker, or blue-headed vireo. Throughout the year you may find ruffed grouse, turkey, brown creeper, white-breasted nuthatch, and barred owl. Balch Hill is a wonderful place to watch for spring warblers and hawks migrating in fall.

Mammals: Mammals such as short-tailed weasel, red fox, red squirrel, white-tailed deer, fisher, shrews, moles, voles, and mice make their homes at Balch Hill. Visitors include the occasional bobcat, moose, gray fox, and black bear.

Trees: Common trees along the trails are hemlock, white pine, red oak, and sugar maple, including some impressive old-timers that have witnessed several centuries of Hanover history. See map for location of the Grafton County Champion Northern Red Oak. Black cherry, white birch, ash and bitternut hickory also enrich the forest. A fine sugar maple crowns the summit.

Flowers and Ferns: Look for wood fern, Christmas fern, marsh fern, maidenhair fern, and oak fern in the wooded understory, and hay-scented fern in sunny openings. Spring wildflowers include Canada mayflower, starflower, and Jack-in-the-pulpit. Later in the season, look for fragrant pink blossoms of common milkweed, with bluestem goldenrod and whorled aster. You may see small cages where Trillium, Hanover's official town flower, is monitored for deer browse. A pollinator patch was planted east of the summit maple in 2018 with assistance from the Vermont Center for Ecostudies.

Insects: Balch Hill's milkweed meadow provides important habitat for monarch butterflies and is a registered Monarch Waystation. 2017 surveys revealed a diverse array of bumblebees, butterflies and more; view the complete list on our website.

