

TRAIL DESCRIPTION:

The total hiking distance of this loop is 8.5 miles (it's a 4-mile round trip to the first open ledges on Pisgah Mtn.). Leaving the parking area, walk east along Kilburn Rd for about a mile. This wide, dirt woods road passes through a pleasant **hemlock - beech - oak - pine forest**.

At the first junction with the Kilburn Loop hiking trail (a 5-mile round trip through mixed forest, passing numerous beaver ponds and marshes), stay left on the trail and skirt the northern end of Kilburn Pond. Soon after, bear right at an unofficial trail junction in a shady **hemlock forest**, and cross a wooden bridge over a creek. Stay left again at the second junction with the Kilburn Loop trail, heading east on the Pisgah Mtn. Trail. Eventually you will pass an open marsh on your left, with thickets of mountain laurel on your right. The laurel blooms can be especially striking in late spring.

Just past this marsh, the trail re-enters the woods and climbs a small rise, passing just north of one of Pisgah State Park's patches of old-growth forest on the western slope of Pisgah Mtn. A major hurricane in 1938 toppled most of the trees in this forest, but a few old individuals remain. Look for scattered, large hemlock trees and old fallen trunks lying on the forest floor.

At the next junction with the Pisgah Ridge Trail, go right (a full loop will return you to this point later). The trail steadily climbs to an open ledge on Pisgah Mtn. With scenic views in either direction, (Mt. Monadnock rises dramatically to the east) this spot makes an excellent final destination for a shorter, out-and-back version of this hike. The rare piled-up sedge (*Carex cumulata*) grows in thin soil here, so be careful to stay on the open rock.

From the Pisgah Mtn. vista, follow the trail southeast over the wooded main summit to the ledges at the next vista which overlooks Pisgah Reservoir and the eastern part of the park. The trail then continues south along the ridge and then descends east

to the northern end of Pisgah Reservoir. Follow the trail to the junction with Reservoir Trail, passing a short spur path down to the marshy edge of the pond along the way.

Take Reservoir Trail north, passing between several open wetlands. Beavers are active throughout Pisgah State Park, constantly building new dams and changing the water levels of the many wetland basins. As a result, **aquatic bed, emergent marsh, shrub swamp, and forested swamp communities** occur in varying stages of ecological succession. Go left at the junction with Parker Trail. Take care to follow the trail in this section as portions may be very wet, especially at the edges of a few fern-filled **red maple - Sphagnum basin swamps**. Stay left at the junctions with North Ponds Trail and the

Round Pond spur. Bear left onto Baker Pond Trail, at one point passing by a very large, sloping rock slab on your left.

At the next junction, go left on the Pisgah Ridge Trail. The trail meanders back and forth for about a mile, passing through more **hemlock - beech - oak - pine forest** and over a rocky ridge with several small expressions of **red oak - pine rocky ridge** community. The lichen-encrusted rock outcrops here offer fine views to the east. Look for plentiful blueberry bushes in the open areas.

The trail then descends via switchbacks to a small, rocky ravine before returning to the junction with the Pisgah Mtn. Trail. Here, take a right and return to the parking area the way you came in.

