

Preface for 53 With a Tree: Family Friendly Hikes in New Hampshire's Town Forests

Being outdoors energizes me.

Simple tasks such as mowing the grass, tending the garden, or strolling through the neighborhood are good for my soul. Hikes along the coastline, through meadows, and into the mountains strengthen my spirit.

My curiosity and enthusiasm of the environment began at a young age. My care for the environment began with scouting. An important principle of scouting is to “leave no trace” while being outdoors. I took this to heart. It instilled in me a permanent ethic for respecting nature, minimizing impact, and non-disruptive observation.

Through scouting, I was able to learn and develop a stronger understanding and enjoyment of the outdoors. My two favorite merit badges were Nature and Environmental Science. Scouting helped me understand how all living things are related and share common networks. It taught me that if I look, I will find.

We all belong to nature—nature does not belong to us. We must respect and see nature as an overall community in which we participate and not something to dominate. We all have relationships with nature that must be nurtured and encouraged in a sustainable manner.

The “seed” for this guide “grew” from my interest in forests, forestry, and ecology. Starting in 2015 and for several years, I served on the town of Winchester, Massachusetts’ Town Forest committee (my residence at the time). From January through December 2020, my teenage daughter and I made monthly visits to this forest, cataloguing the flora and fauna. From this year-long study, my daughter created an almanac of her findings. The times we enjoyed in the field I will always cherish.

I wrote this book so that others can be inspired and refreshed through visits to local town forests. I provide an initial overview of the town and community forests of New Hampshire, their key types of softwoods and hardwoods trees, the most common ecosystems, and how to understand why ecosystems develop, how landscapes sculpt floral growth, and how and where trees and forests grow.

With these fundamentals, I describe 53 town forests and their hikes, covering all 10 of New Hampshire’s counties. The appendices provide additional information on New Hampshire’s more than 200 communities with town forests as well as the importance of trees to our health. A glossary includes information on some lesser-known topics. The bibliography provides important books and on-line content for reference and further investigation. Pictures throughout the book are from New Hampshire locales that I have visited, hiked, enjoyed, and photographed from October 2020 to April 2021.

Section I: The Fundamentals of New Hampshire's Town Forests and Conservation Lands

The first two chapters provide the basics to help explain and understand the composition of our forests. In Chapter 1, common softwoods and hardwoods are identified as well as 13

forest ecosystems. Chapter 2 focuses on how a forest can develop over time, based on the topography, soil, and nature-based and human-induced disturbances. Information is provided on types of rocks, glacial erratics, the unique growth capabilities of lichens, tree shape, their growth characteristics, and preferred living areas:

Chapter 1: Trees In Your Communities: Flora and Fauna in New Hampshire's Town Forests and Conservation Lands

Chapter 2: Understanding Forests and Tree Growth: Disturbance, Substrate, Soil, and Topography

Section II: 53 Town Forests and Conservation Lands in New Hampshire

Each of New Hampshire's 10 counties is represented with 5 town forest and conservation area profiles. 3 additional profiles are provided for the southern part of the state.

Section III: Appendices and Bibliography

A full listing of New Hampshire's town and community forests, alphabetically and forest acreage, is provided in Appendix A. Appendix B provides a short overview on the importance of trees to our health. The Glossary has information to spark your interest for further research and discovery. The Bibliography has websites, organizations, and favorite books that are used for this book.

When outdoors, let your senses come alive. Partake of the aromas of flowers and trees, especially after a gentle rain. Feel the softness of a conifer forest floor. Listen to the birds and insects; hear the winds in the canopies. Taste blueberries and wintergreen. Revel in the vibrancy of colors, from the morning dew and snow crystal prisms to the first shoots of spring to autumn's rainbow hues.

Experience all kinds of environments and seasons. Develop a deeper connection with, and appreciation of, nature. Explore, foray, hike, meander, ramble, saunter, stroll, and wander New Hampshire's woodlands. Our forests and their trees are a sanctuary for the mind. Enjoy them and seek renewal. Partake of 53 With A Tree.

May the forest be with you.

Tom Eid, Nottingham, NH

