



HANOVER CONSERVANCY

*Protecting land & water
in our community*

HANOVER HIKE OF THE MONTH

FEBRUARY - Mill Pond Forest & Dana Pastures

*Two options for a gentle walk through excellent wildlife habitat,
offering extraordinary views*

Two options:

- ½ hour visit to the pond, pastures, and views, retracing your steps
- 1-hour loop, with visit to the three Dana pastures, exceptional views, and tour around the pond

Driving directions:

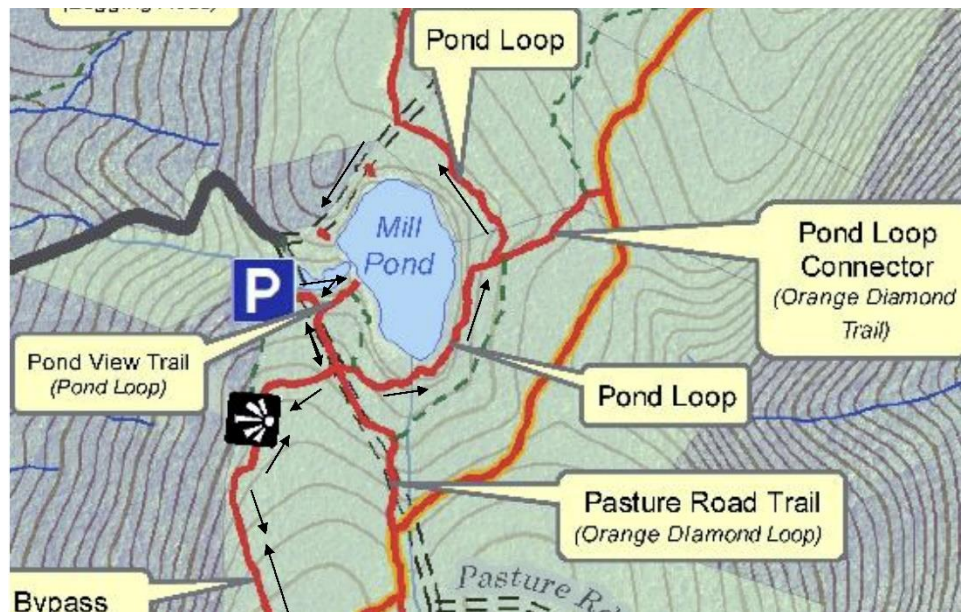
- From Etna village, turn R onto Ruddsboro Road.
- Follow Mink Brook as the road curves up its narrow valley.
- Pass Three Mile Road.
- At 2.0 miles, turn L onto Old Dana Road.
- At 2.4 miles from Etna, turn R onto Moose Mtn. Lodge Road just past the historic Dana Barn.
- Head up Moose Mtn. Lodge Road for 0.9 miles to its end.
- Bear R at a fork and park at the marked trailhead parking area. Please do not block driveways to the neighboring homes.

What you should know:

- Hiking times are approximate.
- Foot travel only. If there are ski tracks in the path, please walk beside rather than in them.
- Dogs are welcome if under your close control; please pick up after your pet and do not allow it to chase wildlife. Porcupines are active.
- Hunting is permitted in season.
- You will visit both the 18-acre Mill Pond Forest, privately owned and protected with a conservation easement held by the Hanover Conservancy, and the 66-acre Dana Forest and Pasture Natural Area, owned jointly by the Town of Hanover and a private citizen and managed for conservation purposes.

HIKING DIRECTIONS

For both options: Begin at the trailhead sign for Mill Pond Forest and Huggins Trail Access. In 2015, the Shumway and Huggins families generously donated a conservation easement on this area to the Hanover Conservancy, to



ensure that the public would always have access to the trails you are about to visit and to protect water quality and an early mill site on Mink Brook.

- The trail moves past a series of pools in Mink Brook. Depending on whether beavers are active, this area can be some of the best evidence in town of a beaver's construction skills. Cross a small drainage to reach the Dana Pasture Natural Area, jointly owned by the Town of Hanover and a private heir of the Dana family.
- After two minutes' walk, you'll arrive at a fork. Bear L for a quick visit to the pond shore.
- Just past the fork, you'll see the c. 1800 cellar hole of the Woodward home at L. David Woodward was a miller who built a stone dam at Mill Pond and a saw and gristmill on Mink Brook as it tumbles down the mountainside beyond where you parked.
- Continue on this short path to the shore, where you'll find a bench at the water's edge. At this season, little seems to move, but it's a great place to look for waterfowl when the pond is clear of ice. Woodward's stone dam is just out of sight at L. Across the pond, a low mound indicates the location of a large beaver lodge that was occupied until 2018.
- Return to the cellar hole and trail junction, turning L onto what becomes Pasture Road, a very old Class VI road. You'll see a wooden sign posted on a pine, with a green moose nailed below.
- Follow Pasture Road for about 2 minutes, following a handsome stone wall.
- Two minutes from the cellar hole, look for a break in the wall and trail at R, marked just beyond the break with wooden signs reading "Baboon Bypass" and a green moose. Watch for real moose sign as you venture out today –there's a reason for Moose Mountain's name! You may also see tracks of wild turkey, grouse, bobcat, porcupine, fisher, fox, coyote, and of course, deer.
- Turn R, head up the path; cross a small drainage, and bear L as the trail swings toward an opening. Here, the promise of views lures you off the path. Walk about 35 paces to the edge of a drop-off and an old fencepost silhouetted against the sky.
- Suddenly the world opens up to a stunning vista that reaches to the spine of the Green Mountains of Vermont. Killington and Pico peaks dominate the horizon. At your feet once stood Moose Mountain Lodge. Built in 1937-8 for skiers, the Lodge had a long and colorful history until it was demolished in 2019 by new owners. Learn more at www.hanoverconservancy.org/lands/easements/mill-pond-forest/
- Please do not go beyond the fence posts and remnants of barbed wire on the property boundary; they remind you that this was one of the Dana family's summer pastures for young cattle.
- After you've inhaled the view, return to the trail and continue gently up the hill toward a second pasture, following occasional orange flagging.
- Continue uphill toward the third and highest pasture.
- Note barbed wire fencing and clumps of juniper on L, more signs of the land's grazing history.
- Head up the gentle slope to a line of white birches that marks the southern boundary of the Dana Pasture Natural Area. After cattle were no longer pastured here, these meadows were kept open for years by Elisha Huggins, who mowed them with a hand scythe. Today, these openings offer fine wildlife habitat, especially in early summer when lowbush blueberries offer food for bears and many kinds of birds.
- At the top of this pasture, you can extend your hike by continuing south on the orange-blazed Ridge Trail to ledges that offer remarkable eastern views. Today, we'll return to Mill Pond.



- Retrace your steps for 10 minutes through the three pastures and back to Pasture Road, all the way to the stone wall. (A path to the L after the last pasture, well before you reach the wall lining the road, leads to a private home).
- At Pasture Road, turn L to return to your car (5 minutes) or take the ½ hour loop around Mill Pond.

For the pond loop:

- Turn R on Pasture Road and immediately L onto the Pond Loop [trail names are being updated in 2021].
- Follow this path as it meanders among the spruce a short distance from the pond, keeping the pond on your left. You'll cross small drainages that feed the pond; step carefully.
- In about 10 minutes, a short spur to the left leads to the shore; bear R up the hill to a junction marked "Orange Diamond Trail" just visible ahead. A short distance above the pond, northern hardwoods take over for the red spruce and hemlock that cling to the water's edge where cold air settles.
- Turn L near the Orange Diamond Trail sign to continue on the Pond Loop. In a few yards you'll step off the Dana Pasture Natural Area and onto the privately-owned Shumway Forest. The Shumway family conveyed a conservation easement to the Hanover Conservancy on 313 acres in 2017 in order to protect wildlife habitat and public access to the network of trails on Moose Mountain, many of which they maintained for the guests at their Moose Mountain Lodge. The Forest is now under new ownership, but the conservation protections will remain in place forever.
- Follow the Pond Loop Trail N for about 7 minutes to the gravel road that serves a nearby communications tower. The trail is not frequently blazed in this area. Keep the pond on your left.
- Turn L on the tower road and walk down it along the north shore of the pond. Other than vehicles servicing the tower or those involved in forestry, no vehicles are permitted on this road.
- After 5 minutes, reach a gate and turn L onto Moose Mtn. Lodge Road to return to your car.
- Send a silent message of thanks to the generous landowners who made your visit possible!



Peter Shumway, former owner of Moose Mountain Lodge, skis near Mill Pond

February 2016, revised January 2021



The Hanover Conservancy, New Hampshire's oldest local land trust, is a private, non-profit membership organization independent of the Town of Hanover. Find more Hanover Hikes of the Month on our website at www.hanoverconservancy.org.