



Balch Hill Natural Area Trails Challenge Hike

84 acres, 3 owners: Hanover Conservancy, Town of Hanover, and Dartmouth College

Balch Hill is located just east of downtown Hanover. Park at the intersection of Grasse and Trescott Roads. From the kiosk, take the Grasse Road Trail to the Chapman Trail with its Moose Mountain overlook. Continue to the Hunter East and Garipay Trails and then hike the Maple Trail to the summit. Cross the field to find the trail connection to the Grasse Road Loop Trail and parking lot. Easy 1-mile loop; pack a picnic and enjoy the views from the summit!

Destination: Once you leave the field and get back on the Grasse Road Trail, look for the Grafton County champion red oak and the trails challenge marker nearby. This champion red oak is more than 200 years old! Its height is 114 feet with a circumference of 196 inches and an average crown spread of 80 feet.

Features and History: The summit meadow (937 ft.) offers scenic views of downtown Hanover and Vermont's mountains to the west, including Mt. Ascutney and Killington. Stone walls and orchard trees are evidence of the land's agricultural past. Most of Balch Hill was cleared for grazing and farming in the 19th and early 20th centuries but many large old trees remain. Today, the open summit and the surrounding forests provide diverse habitat for mammals, birds, and many other wildlife.

Conservation of Balch Hill began in 1970 with the Hanover Conservancy's purchase of the 10-acre summit to protect it from development. Over the decades more land was added and today the Natural Area includes 20 acres owned by the Conservancy, 46 acres owned by the Town of Hanover, and 18 acres owned by Dartmouth College. The Conservancy's Balch Hill Stewardship Committee manages the area in partnership with the Town and College.

