

Northampton Conservation Greenway Suggested Hikes Saw Mill Hills South – Beaver Pond and Summit Loop Trails

Beaver Pond - ½ mile out and back

Parking Area and trailhead across the street from 1054 Ryan Road

Saw Mill Hills South offers a leisurely ¼ mile walk to a beaver dam and pond teeming with wildlife. Thanks to a 2022 land addition purchased with CPA funds, the Greenway's trails now include the Summit Loop Trail with views of the Ryan Road neighborhood and Mt. Tom.

Beaver Pond Trail – ½ mile out and back to Beaver Pond.

With winter approaching and after-school light at a premium, the Beaver Pond Trail is a great place to take children on a short hike where they can see a beaver dam on Parsons Brook up close and look for signs of beaver activities.



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From the signed parking lot on Ryan Road, take the trail for about 500 feet until you reach a fork in the path. Take the left fork of the trail that heads straight and slightly to the west. After a very short walk you'll come to a large beaver pond and dam right off the trail. Great Blue Herons are a common sight here as are northern water snakes (timid and non-venomous) in the early summer.



The above photo is of their main dam. Beaver dams and the ponds they create provide habitat for hundreds of plant and animal species, from wetland wildflowers, dragonflies, and amphibians to otters and moose. The beavers have recently started a new dam down river (about half way from the trailhead and their main pond) and have been cutting trees close to the trail.



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Summit Loop Trail – 2 miles out and back with a forested loop to the summit

The Summit Loop Trail winds up through a mixed chestnut oak and hickory forest and offers stunning views of Mt. Tom. At the trail fork, if you head right (east), the trail takes you through an area of white pine saplings and then through a small wet grassy sedge area with a wooden boardwalk. The trail then continues uphill into a mature forest and then heads right (south) back towards Ryan Road. The trail is blazed blue and has Northampton One Trail signs. As you approach the Ryan Road houses, the trail then veers to the left (east) parallel to Ryan Road. After another 1/8 of mile, you'll see a "Summit" sign with an arrow. Follow the arrow uphill to the north. The trail meanders uphill and then crests before descending to the south, where you'll soon find a short 200-foot blazed trail spur off to the left (east). Take this short spur to the summit view. To make your return, go back to the main trail and head left back downhill. When you reach the bottom of the trail and an old woods road, head right (west) to complete the loop and return to the trailhead.



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City Hall • 210 Main Street, Second Floor • Northampton, MA 01060 • NorthamptonMA.gov/plan

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Data: City of Northampton, Open Street Map, MassGIS. Map by Kent S Johnson.

If you see anything at Saw Mill Hills South or in any other Northampton Conservation Areas that needs our attention, please email Tom Annese at tannese@northamptonma.gov

