

History of the Green Hills

Long ago, the Green Hills were town “common land” where settlers had rights to hunt, graze their farm animals and cut firewood. In the 1800s, the town sold the land to private owners, but fortunately for those interested in conservation, most of the Green Hills remained wild.

The idea of establishing a preserve on the Green Hills began in 1966 when Katherine Billings, a summer resident of New Hampshire, led Anna B. Stearns of Randolph and two other friends on a bushwhack up Peaked Mountain. They were delighted to see a variety of forest types, fascinating geological formations and spectacular views. They resolved to protect the Green Hills from development and to enlist others in their campaign.

Anna B. Stearns visited the Green Hills often, even in winter. She and Katherine Billings shared their hopes for protection with many others, including The Nature Conservancy. TNC negotiated with the landowner and ultimately purchased the entire 2,822 acres in 1990. Although Anna B. Stearns died before the purchase was finalized, she lived to learn of TNC’s agreement to purchase the land and she provided funding for the acquisition as a memorial for her mother and father. Since then, The Anna B. Stearns Foundation, individuals, businesses and other foundations have contributed to support TNC’s work at Green Hills.

Natural History

The Green Hills Preserve includes a string of small summits east of North Conway. They consist of Conway Granite, a durable, volcanic

bedrock formed roughly 200 million years ago. Redstone Ledge, Rattlesnake, Middle and Peaked Mountains show a distinctive “stoss-and-lee” topography. In profile, the northwestern slopes of these peaks gradually ascend to their summits then precipitously drop on the southeast side. This feature formed as the last continental glacier gently scoured the northwestern slopes on its approach, then removed extensive amounts of bedrock as it crested over the summits. On the exposed bedrock on Peaked Mountain, there are also many examples of glacial polish, chatter marks and striations. Polish is a smooth surface resembling marble, while chatter marks and striations are grooves and scratches cut into the bedrock by debris lodged in the bottom of the ice.

The Green Hills are home to unique red pine rocky ridge forest communities and four rare plants, including White Mountain silverling (*Paronychia argyrocoma* var. *albimontana*), smooth sandwort (*Minuartia glabra*), green adder’s mouth (*Malaxis unifolia*), and Douglas’ knotweed (*Polygonum douglasii*).

Disturbance from fire, drought, wind and ice-scouring in winter likely contribute to the presence and maintenance of these hardy plants and red pine forests. White Mountain silverling and smooth sandwort thrive in disturbed soils where few others plants are capable of growing. They are often found in barren isolation amongst large bedrock slabs. Red pine forests are home to a number of hardy plants adapted to fire and drought.

The preserve’s lower elevations are largely covered with hardwood forests in different stages of succession. Red maple, red oak, American beech and paper birch dominate these forests. Moist, cool ravines separating the western peaks are home to beautiful, mature stands of eastern hemlock.

The Preserve

Originally 2,822 acres, the Green Hills Preserve grew substantially in 1999 with the generous donation of 1,400 adjacent acres. The preserve is part of a large block of conservation land owned by the Town of Conway and the State of New Hampshire, and adjacent to the White Mountain National Forest.

Because of its proximity to the busy town of Conway, the preserve is popular with outdoor enthusiasts and offers many opportunities for hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, mountain biking and snowmobiling.

Trails of the Green Hills Preserve

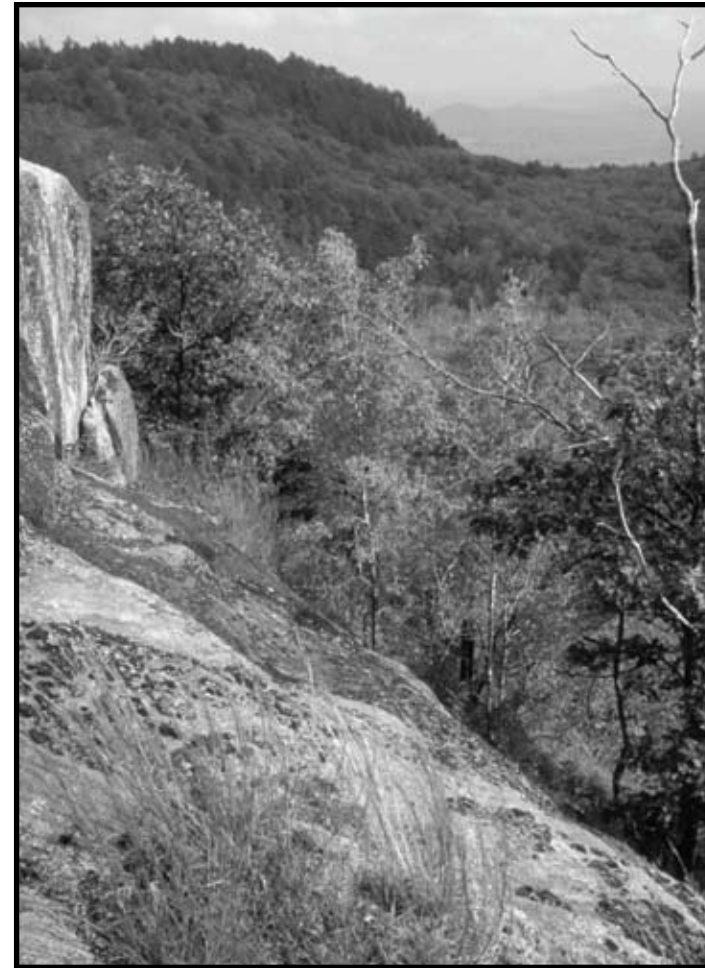
Peaked Mountain Trail – 2.1 miles. This trail begins on Thompson Road and climbs 1,100 feet to the summit of Peaked Mountain. From the parking area at Pudding Pond, hike parallel to the power line until you reach an information kiosk. Turn left, walk under the power lines and enter the woods again beyond a snow fence. Hike 0.5 miles to a junction with the Middle Mountain Trail (also the southerly terminus of Black Cap Connector Trail). Bear left and continue 0.5 miles along an old snowmobile trail blazed in yellow to a second information kiosk. The Black Cap Connector Trail goes straight ahead to the summit of Black Cap in 3.3 miles, while a trail to the left reaches Thompson Road in 0.4 miles. Turn right for the Peaked Mountain



Eastern Towhee

Trail, which is blazed in blue. At 0.4 miles, the Peaked Mountain Connector Trail, a means to access the Black Cap Connector Trail, diverges left. From here, bear right and continue up exposed granite slabs with intermittent stands of red pine and pitch pine, eventually reaching a false summit and past a junction with the Peaked-Middle Mountain Connector Trail. A steep climb for 0.2 miles east ends on the summit with excellent views of Middle Mountain, Black Cap, Mt. Chocorua and the Moat Mountain Range.

Peaked Mountain/Middle Mountain Connector – 0.3 miles. This trail begins on the false summit of Peaked Mountain and



From the summit of Peaked Mountain you get great views of the Mount Washington Valley and the Presientials. ©Harold Malde

connects to the Middle Mountain trail. It follows orange blazes and switchbacks to the junction with the Middle Mountain trail.

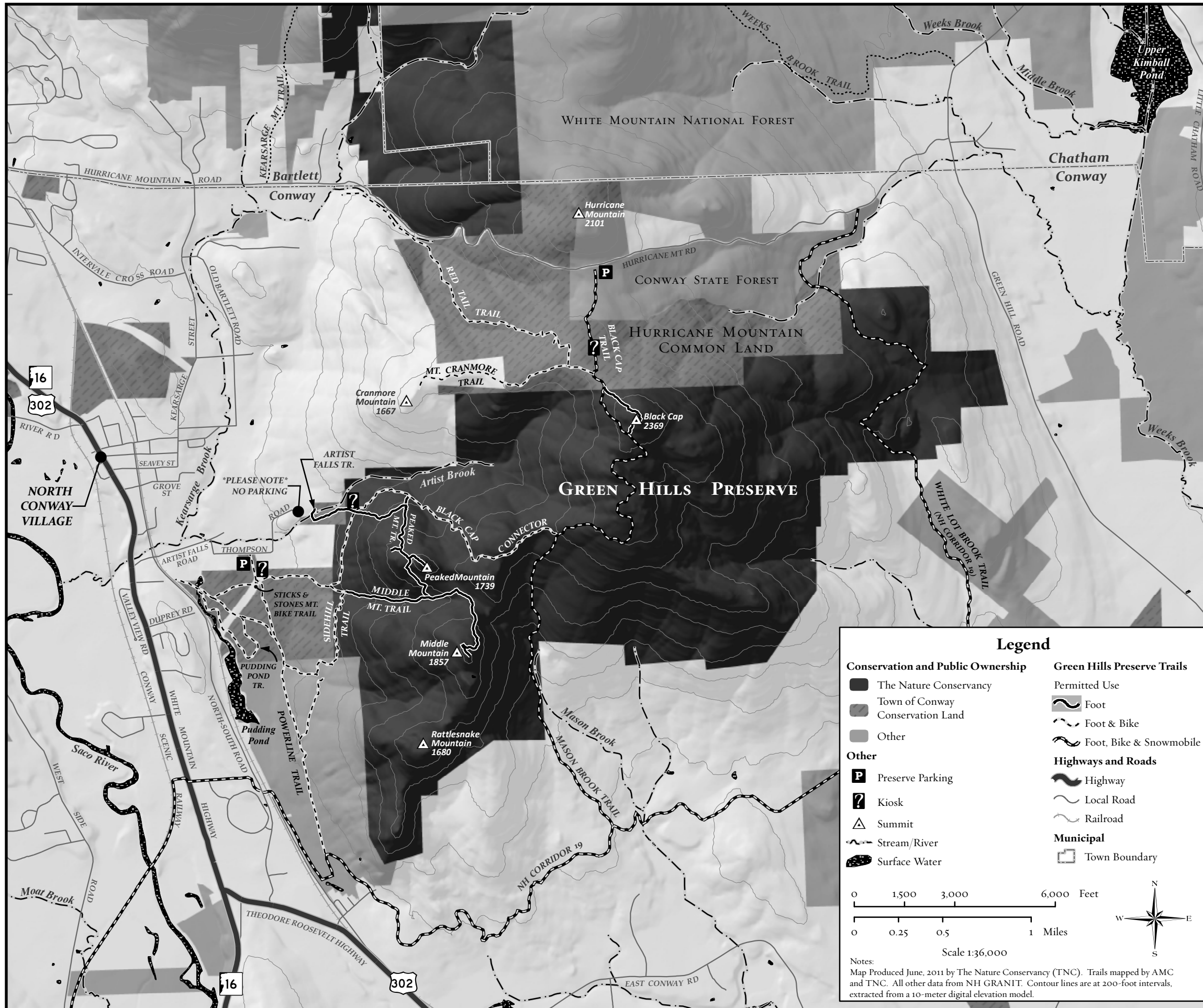
Middle Mountain Trail – 2 miles. This trail begins on Thompson Road and climbs 1,200 feet to the summit of Middle Mountain. From the parking area at Pudding Pond, hike parallel to the power line until you reach an information kiosk. Turn left, walk under the power line and enter the woods beyond a snow fence. In 0.5 miles, the Peaked Mountain and Black Cap Connector trails diverge left. The Middle Mountain trail, blazed in red, bears right following a seasonal brook and climbs steeply to a saddle at 0.6 miles. At the saddle, the connector trail to Peaked Mountain goes left. The Middle Mountain trail continues straight, crosses the brook and climbs steeply to open forests. At 1.9 miles, the trail bears sharply left to gain the summit. There are excellent views to the south, east and west.

Black Cap Connector Trail – 4 miles. This trail connects the trails of Black Cap, Peaked and Middle Mountains. Blazed in yellow, it begins at a junction with the Black Cap trail 0.8 miles from Hurricane Mountain Road and ends at the junction of the Middle Mountain/Pudding Pond trails. At 0.3 miles, the Black Cap Connector Trail (0.2 miles) goes left to the summit of Black Cap. At 1.9 miles, the Mason Brook snowmobile trail diverges left. From this junction, the trail descends steeply and crosses a small brook, then reaches the blue blazed connector to Peaked Mountain at 3.1 miles. The trail continues to the Peaked Mountain trail at 3.5 miles (also blazed in blue). At 4 miles, the junction with the Middle Mountain/Pudding Pond trails is reached.

Black Cap Trail – 1.1 miles. Being a relatively easy hike that offers excellent views, this is one of the most popular short walks in the area. The trail, blazed in red, begins at the parking area at the summit of Hurricane Mountain Road and climbs 600 feet to the top of Black Cap Mountain. From the parking area, the trail initially goes through Conway State Forest and the Conway Common Land Town Forest and reaches an information kiosk at 0.5 miles. From here the trail continues uphill to a junction with the Cranmore Trail at 0.7 miles. Bearing left, the trail comes to a junction with the northern terminus of the Black Cap Connector trail at 0.8 miles. This is the preserve’s boundary. The Black Cap Trail bears left again and reaches open ledge at 0.95 miles. Following these granite slabs, the trail arrives at the rocky summit (elevation 2,369 feet) and offers superb views including the Presidential Range. A spur of the Black Cap Connector Trail leads south from Black Cap’s summit and offers an alternative route looping back to Hurricane Mountain Road.

Peaked Mountain Connector Trail – 0.1 miles. This short trail connects the Peaked Mountain Trail to the Black Cap Connector Trail on the north side of Peaked Mountain. The trail climbs moderately uphill to reach the open ledges of the Peaked Mountain Trail.

Pudding Pond Trail – 2 miles round trip. From the parking area on Thompson Road (Pudding Pond Parking), hike parallel to the power line 0.1 miles until you reach an information kiosk. Here you will turn right and proceed 0.3 miles along a trail which winds through mature mixed hardwood and pine forest to a junction. Turn right at this junction (return loop enters from left) and continue straight to another junction near a foot bridge where a 0.2 mile access trail enters in the opposite direction from Locust Lane (limited parking available) after crossing both the North-South Road and railroad tracks. From here, turn left (before the bridge) and continue left along the east side of the brook through spruce, fir and hemlock stands. Evidence of beaver activity becomes increasingly apparent as you approach the main body of Pudding Pond. At 0.6 miles, a spur diverges right for 200 feet, affording the best southerly view of the pond. Pudding Pond is glacial in origin and considered to be a prime wetland. Continue for 0.2 miles over bog bridges, eventually closing the loop and reaching the return trail back to the Thompson Road kiosk shortly after leaving the pond’s shore.



Enjoy The Preserve Responsibly

This area is open to the public for recreation and education. Please, for the protection of this area and its inhabitants:

- No camping or open fires allowed.
- Motorized use (except snowmobiles) is prohibited. Snowmobile use is allowed only on designated multi-use trails. The Black Cap Connector trail from the Mason Brook trail to Thompson road is closed to snowmobile use.
- Dogs must be under owner's verbal control or on a leash; respect wildlife and others using the trails.
- Mountain biking is prohibited anywhere on "foot travel only" portions of the trail system. Off-trail mountain biking is strictly prohibited anywhere on the preserve.
- No removal or destruction of plants, wildlife, minerals or cultural items.
- Carry in/carry out trash (and any you find).

DIRECTIONS TO THE GREEN HILLS PRESERVE

Thompson Road - From N.H. Route 16, turn left 0.5 miles south of the North Conway village onto Artist Falls Road.

Turn right onto Thompson Road in 0.3 miles and reach the parking area for Pudding Pond and the Green Hills in 0.4 miles (just before the power lines.) PLEASE DO NOT PARK AT THE END OF THOMPSON ROAD!

Hurricane Mountain Road - From N.H. Route 16 and 2 miles north of North Conway Village, turn right onto Hurricane Mountain Road just north of the scenic vista at the North Conway/Bartlett town line (this is a steep winding road that's closed in winter). At the height of land, a parking area is on the right.

The Nature Conservancy

Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

Since establishing its first preserve here in 1961, the New Hampshire Chapter has helped protect more than 270,000 acres of ecologically significant land and currently owns and manages 28 preserves across the state.

For more information on the Green Hills, our work or our preserves, please contact us:

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