

Excerpted from *60 Hikes Within 60 Miles: Boston* published by Menasha Ridge Press, Birmingham, Al.

Wilson Mountain

Length: 3 miles

Configuration: Loop

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

Scenery: Woods, spring fed wetlands, and a meadow sown with wildflower species especially attractive to butterflies.

Traffic: Moderate to heavy

Trail surface: Packed earth topped by loose gravel, some rock face.

Access: Open year-round sunrise to sunset. Admission is free.

Maps: Posted at entrance.

Facilities: None

Special comments: A good hike for families.

Wheelchair Traversable: No

GPS Trailhead Coordinates (WGS 84)

UTM

Zone 19T

Easting 318737

Northing 4680850

Latitude/Longitude

North 42° 15' 32''

West 71° 11' 52''

Nearby Attractions: To round out the day before or after hiking catch a movie at The Dedham Community Theater, est. 1927 located in the town center. Besides showing the best in movies the theater houses the Museum of Bad Art. Unlike most movie houses the concessions stand serves beer, wine and hot chocolate as well as sodas, candy and popcorn. 580 High Street, Dedham, telephone: 781-326-0409

Directions: From Boston take Route 128/ I-95 to exit 17 onto Route 135. Head towards Dedham. The parking lot is 0.5-miles on right.

Description:

In 1995 an out of town developer visited Wilson Mountain and conjured a plan to grade it's ruts, backhoe-out its boulders and once it

was bare- improve it with a shopping mall. The scope of the development meant zoning would need to be considered, reconsidered and possibly changed. A special town meeting was therefore scheduled to give the townspeople a chance to voice their thoughts and vote yea or nay not only for the acres of asphalt, linoleum and accompanying goods- but for the last sizeable tract of open space in Dedham. The vote was unanimous and Wilson Mountain's 216 acres were saved.

Head uphill from the parking lot following the wide gravel topped path into woods. Keep to the right passing another path bearing left. Within a few hundred yards this path identified by green blazes forms a V with the Red and Green Trail. A tree beside it bears the number 21. To escape city sounds and feel peaceful pines close by take the narrow Red and Green Trail. Traveling southwest over exposed roots and angular rocks spit up by the hill and what looks like the forehead of an earth enshrined granite giant the trail reaches a high point.

From here hiking becomes less strenuous. Less rocky under foot the path is now made of packed earth mottled with patches of sand, the remains of pulverized boulders. After passing through a stone wall built perhaps by Mr. Wilson for his family's cows, the trail rounds a bend and climbs to intersection number 24. Separating ways here the Red Trail hikes upward to the right and the Green Trail goes left easing downhill. On this slope cooled by shade cast by pines, hemlocks, some ashes and basswood trees the acoustics amplify the whoosh of cars slicing through air on a nearby road.

The next intersection the trail arrives at is disconcertingly marked number 18. Bear left to stay on the Green Trail. For a pleasant virtually rock-free stretch the trail travels south up a gentle slope. Then closing in on the reservation's boundary it contracts in width and doubles back to head northeast descending past knotted swamp oak

and spry sassafras. This sheltered eastern side of the hill harbors mountain laurel and woodland wildflowers including Lady Slippers (*Cypripedium acaule*). Easy to miss, this endangered member of the orchid family can live for 100 years but may flower only 10-20 times in its lifetime. Because of its rarity spotting its twin oval leaves lying flat against the ground to optimize photosynthesis gives nearly the charge of seeing the plant's single purplepink blossom.

Several unmarked paths split off from the Green Trail as it sweeps uphill again over pine needle fed humus, that besides being easy on the feet is the basis of life for myriad forest creatures ranging in form and appeal from the Lady Slipper to American robins (thrushes misnamed by colonists who missed their British robins) and mushrooms some deadly, some delicious. Stay on course with the Green Trail at both intersections number 16 and 17 and a split beyond to soon cross a modest stream with planks laid across it. In summer the leaves of lindens and basswood trees fan the air above. A fractured stonewall looking tired and disorientated traipses through this former meadowland.

Heading north past abutting residential property the trail crosses more wetland. Rough slabs of wood provide dry footing over pooled tea colored water. Granite hewn upland casts shadow from the right. Pitching downhill the Green trail passes junction number 15 veering away to cross a stream. Dazzling in the heat of a summer day dragonflies and fluttering butterflies stir the vaporous atmosphere. Weaving north then west, up then down between hill and mire the trail expands and flattens as it nears a road.

Insulated from the road and its light but steady traffic by a thick buffer of woods the trail winds alongside it to a rock formation looking like the spine of a monster arching out of a the earth. Then aiming

southwest, the trail eases downhill and frees itself from the road. Leveling at wetland once more the trail meets an enormous boulder at the center of a clearing. Carried here by creeping ice thousands of years ago the granite monolith is pinned in place by sassafras trees deeply rooted on opposing sides.

Wetland perhaps born of glacial melt-water picks up again beyond the boulder. An inviting pool to the left tugs at passers-by and dares jaded city slickers to give up inhibitions and at least dip their feet. Passing between the water and upland crag the trail meanders southeast. Quiet that includes squawking blue jays and chirping chickadees takes over. Here the city seems as far away as Maine. Dipping downhill over smooth ground the trail arrives at junction number 11. Sidetrack on the right-hand path for an alternate route to the peak otherwise stick with the Green Trail to meet up shortly with the parking lot.

For those wanting more steer right of the parking lot to take up the Red and Green Trail once again. This time when reaching junction 21 bear right onto the Red Trail to climb Wilson Mountain's western slope to the top. Featuring jagged ledges, cliffs and plenty of mammoth glacial erratics it serves as a dramatic counterpoint to the Green Trail. A massive mound of granite marks Wilson mountain's highest point and though offering very little in terms of a view it makes a perfect throne for "The King of the Mountain".

From this great rock follow the Red Trail as it serpentine around the peak, rising and falling with hillocks and hollows to eventually arrive at junction 24 where it reunites with the Red and Green Trail. Bear left here and descend back downhill.

Those who still balk at returning to their cars have yet another diversion available to them. Where the Red and Green Trail filters

towards the parking lot a second trail veers off to the right. Climbing a gentle incline this route leads past a collapsed cabin with its chimney still standing on the left to a hidden meadow. Attractive to deer looking for fodder in drab winter months, this round acre or so is a fantastic butterfly garden bursting with blossoming Bee Balm, Aster Queen Anne's Lace and terrifically tall Cone Flower in the summer months.

When ready follow the path of trodden grass southwest across the meadow back into woods. At the three way junction reached moments later take the left most trail and follow a stream on its northeast course to a pond below. Have a look for basking turtles, frogs or a blue heron and then turn heel and hike back to the parking lot.