

The Ravine Trail A Popular Hike

By Kristen Stodolski

Many times when starting a trail, a hiker's exit strategy is based on returning to the trail head.

It's the familiar "in and out" route, either doing a loop trail or returning to the starting point by simply reversing course and retracing the way in.

However like many of the popular trails in Lyme, the Ravine Trail -- which runs between Mitchell Hill Road and Joshuatown Road -- is an exception to this rule.

The trail can be accessed from either terminus on both Mitchell Hill or Joshuatown roads, so with a little planning with a carpool buddy a hiker can cover the entire trail in about an hour, enjoying the variety of relatively rough ledge-rock terrain without having to struggle with a return trip.

Before venturing onto the Ravine Trail, the hiker should borrow a map from the information stand or print one from the Lyme Land Trust website. But once on the trail beware that there are a number of trails in the ravine that are well maintained, but not marked on the maps. Since it's a relatively short trail in the first place, you don't have to worry about getting lost in a trackless wilderness, but it is possible to get a bit confused.

If your visit to the Ravine Trail starts on Mitchell Hill Road, there is an old farm road that can be followed. On your left is a stream, and as you head deeper into the trail, the stream enlarges as a result of a resident beaver population.

There is an old trail that takes the visitor to the edge of the beaver pond, and there are number of felled trees that are remnants of the beavers' work. It is very evident through this section that beaver are able to change the landscape relatively quickly.

Currently Emily and Jason Bjornberg steward this property. Approximately once a month, they walk the property and the



Forested Wetlands on the Ravine Trail

trails to ensure there are no trees blocking the trails, picking up any debris, and tend to general trail maintenance.

The Bjornbergs have noted that there are several new trails that have been created; these trails are being maintained and are sometimes easier terrain than the original trails. The stewards would like to work with the groups making the trails and encourage the group(s) using the trail to contact the Land Trust to coordinate forces.

It is evident from walking the trails that the property is used by many outdoor enthusiasts. It was featured recently a series about trails in Southeastern Connecticut published in [The Day](http://www.theday.com) newspaper. (www.theday.com, keyword Hiking Guide)

The Ravine Trail is located on adjoining parcels that make up the Selden Neck Preserve, most of which is owned by The Nature Conservancy. However, some portions of the land covered by the trail is owned by the Lyme Land Trust. The trail boasts a variety of indigenous species including red oak, yellow birch, and sugar maple. As a visitor makes his/her way through the trail, the landscape can be moderate in difficulty in a few sections.

The elevation of the established trails climbs over the bedrock. However, the view of the beaver pond expands with the elevation. At the top of the ridge is a perfect place to take a few minutes to enjoy the view. As one makes their way down the ravine, there is a well-defined drainage area where the water flows north to Whalebone Creek and south to Joshua Creek.

The Ravine Trail is a perfect place to spend a fall afternoon. Sunlight comes through the holes left behind by fallen hemlocks, illuminating the trail with filtered light. Like many areas of Lyme, it's quiet and secluded – a tranquil place to recollect oneself – and maybe a place to rekindle a new friendship as you hike from Mitchell Hill Road up to Joshuatown and maybe stop along the way for lunch on the ride home.

