

Exploring Down Southeast

Steve Smith, 2009

<http://mountainwandering.blogspot.com/2009/07/exploring-down-southeast-62509-working.html>

Southern New Hampshire Trail Guide, 4th Edition. *AMC's Comprehensive Guide to Hiking Trails of Southern New Hampshire, Featuring Mount Monadnock and Mount Cardigan*

<http://amcstore.outdoors.org/so-nh-trail-guide-4e>

THURSDAY, JULY 2, 2009

EXPLORING DOWN SOUTHEAST: 6/25/09

Working on a new edition of the *AMC Southern New Hampshire Trail Guide* has gotten me out to some interesting new places this year. These are generally long days, leaving home in Lincoln early AM and getting home late in the evening, with multiple short to medium hikes. On this Thursday I headed down to the southeastern part of the state, wheeling along the backroads of Belmont, Gilmanston, Strafford and other quiet towns.

The last hike of the day was by far the longest. Over the last couple of years the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership, a consortium of conservation groups and government agencies, has developed the Sweet Trail, a route leading over several parcels of conservation land from Longmarsh Road in Durham to the edge of Great Bay in Newmarket. The AMC trail crew and many volunteers helped build this 4.6 mile route, which has only 0.3 mile of road walking. The rest of the way it's in quiet woods and along a variety of interesting wetlands. This is a great addition to the walking opportunities in the Seacoast region.



A half-mile from the start the trail passed by this beaver pond, where an old stone wall has been submerged.



As the trail meanders through the woods, it is well-blazed with these markers.



My favorite spot was about halfway along, where the trail passes between two large swamps. This one is on the right (west) side, where I saw a green heron...



..and this one is one the east. At one spot the trail climbs over an interesting rocky hogback that divides the swamps.



Along the way there were many stretches of strolling through hemlock forest.



Another swamp is home to a Great Blue Heron rookery; a nest is seen on the upper left. Hikers should take care not to disturb these magnificent birds.



Farther along was this mellow walk through an oak forest.



Towards its south end the Sweet Trail enters the Nature Conservancy's Lubberland Creek Preserve. Watch out for poison ivy in this area! After crossing Bay Road you pass by this field on the left with a glimpse of Great Bay in the distance. About here is where I first caught a whiff of the salt marsh, an evocative scent that reminded me of the many fine walks I've enjoyed on Cape Cod over the years.



The trail ended with a meander through a pine grove down to a breezy spot at the edge of a spacious salt marsh, looking across at Great Bay. While I was here two ospreys sailed by.



Granite benches beckon for a long break in the salty air.



A monument explains how the trail received its name.



What a peaceful spot...



Just before I got back to my car, with dusk drawing on, I paused briefly to take a picture in the town of Durham's Longmarsh Preserve. If you like woods rambles, wetlands, and a taste of the sea, the Sweet Trail is sweet indeed.



Posted by [Steve Smith](#) at [Thursday, July 02, 2009](#) 