



Area 5 PINE MOUNTAIN



Pine Mountain

Size: 313 acres

ACCESS/PARKING: Small parking lot on Pine Mountain Road, 0.7 miles from the northern end of Pine Mountain Road, on the right (west). From parking area, follow yellow trail marks north along road for a short distance and watch for where trail turns east (right) into the woods. Also by trail from Lake Windwing, Bennett's Pond, Hemlock Hills, and via the Ives Trail from Wooster Mountain. [GPS Address: 200 Pine Mountain Road]

DIFFICULTY: Difficult, with steep sections over rocks. Approximately 2 hours to end of trail and back. All day hike if linked with Hemlock Hills, Bennett's Pond, and the Ives Trail.

FEATURES: Pine Mountain boasts extensive mountain laurel coverage at the start of the trail and a variety of interesting stopping spots. The large rock perched on the ridge is evidence of glacial activity. This rock marks one of the highest points between the coast and West Point, and during the Revolutionary War soldiers set fires atop it in order to relay signals.

At the first overlook there is a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. You can look out across southeast Fairfield County and not see any development. Near this outlook stood the weekend cabin of the composer Charles Ives. It was here, overlooking the hills, valleys, and churches of Ridgefield, that Ives wrote *From the Steeples and Mountains* in 1901. In autumn, after the leaves are down, there is a clear view of three Ridgefield lakes.

The history of the stone chimney further along the trail is unknown. Shortly after this point you pass the Bennett's Pond red trail junction and the continuation of the Ives Trail.

The end of the yellow trail is a circular trail that passes the foundation of an airway tower built in 1938. Close to the tower there are three United States Geological Survey circular brass markers embedded in rock. A large iron bar dates from around 1889 and was an attempt to mark out the Ridgebury-Danbury boundary.

HISTORY: Often called the highest point in Ridgefield, Pine Mountain is a long ridge in what is still wilderness in the northeast corner of the town, north of the Bennett's Ponds and Wataba or Rainbow Lake at the Ridgefield Lakes.



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At its highest point, at the old beacon, the mountain is about 1,021 feet above sea level. According to the US Geological Survey maps it is 1010 feet above sea level. Historian George L. Rockwell placed the elevation at 1,040 feet.

The mountain was so-called from at least 1835 when the name first appears in the Ridgefield Land Records. This part of town, hilly and rocky, was never homesteaded and instead served as a source of lumber for construction and wood for fireplaces and stoves of both Ridgefielders and Danburians - many of the latter owned land in this northeast corner. The name suggests that the predominant tree species was pine.

Much, possibly all, of Pine Mountain proper is today owned by the town as parkland. Part of it was acquired from the massive Ridgebury holdings of the late Otto H. Lippolt (see Hemlock Hills). Some was bought from the Ives family in the 1970's - whose most illustrious member, composer Charles Ives, is said to have found inspiration for his music in a family cottage that once stood on the mountain. IBM, which owns much land in the neighborhood, gave the town 35 acres, partly on the mountain.

More detailed information can be found in the *Hemlock Hills-Pine Mountain* Yale School of Forestry study, which may be viewed at the Conservation Commission Office.



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