

Franklin Lakes Nature Preserve

Overview

This hike loops around a lake, formerly known as the Haledon Reservoir, which once served as the water supply for Haledon, North Haledon and Prospect Park.

Details Time: 1.5 hours Difficulty: Easy Length: 2.3 miles

Driving Directions

Take N.J. Route 208 to the Ewing Avenue exit in Franklin Lakes. Turn left at the end of the ramp (if coming from the west, turn right) and continue for about two miles until Ewing Avenue ends at High Mountain Road. Turn left onto High Mountain Road and continue past a lake and a smaller pond on the left. In 0.5 mile, at the end of the smaller pond, you will see a small brown sign for the Franklin Lakes Nature Preserve on the left. Turn left into a driveway, passing old reservoir buildings on the right, then turn left again at a sign for parking and continue to a parking area just below the dam. GPS [\[6\]](#) address: 1196 High Mountain Road, North Haledon, N.J. 07508.

Description

This hike loops around a lake, formerly known as the Haledon Reservoir, which once served as the water supply for Haledon, North Haledon and Prospect Park. The 75-acre lake and the surrounding land was acquired by the Borough of Franklin Lakes in 2006 and is now known as the Franklin Lakes Nature Preserve.

From the parking area, climb up the road leading to the dam, passing to the left of the closed gate. When you reach the top of the dam, you'll notice (on the fence on the left) a triple white blaze that marks the start of the Preserve Shoreline Loop. You'll be following this white-blazed trail around the lake.

Turn left and cross the dam, with views of the lake to the right and of the Lower Pond to the left. At the end of the dam, turn right and follow a narrow dirt path between a chain-link fence (with High Mountain Road beyond) on the left and the lake on the right. After crossing an open grassy area, you'll enter a wooded area and go across an open culvert.

Soon, the trail reaches the intersection of High Mountain Road and Ewing Avenue. Here, it bears right and begins to parallel Ewing Avenue. With a concrete road bridge on the left, the trail crosses an inlet of the lake on a wooden footbridge and continues beneath tall evergreen trees.

Upon reaching the intersection with Waterview Drive, go through an opening in the fence on the left and use the road bridge to cross the outlet of a wetland to the northwest. At the end of the chain-link fence, turn right and reenter the preserve (just beyond a large sign for the Franklin Lakes Nature Preserve).

Just ahead, you'll notice a triple-blue blaze on the right, which marks the start of the Island Bridges Trail. Turn right and follow this trail, which follows a dike that juts into the lake, forming a lagoon on the left. Short paths lead out to the water on both sides of the trail, and there are fine views of High Mountain to the southwest.

In about 0.2 mile, you'll reach the end of the dike. There are plans to construct a bridge that will permit you to continue towards the next section of the dike, but for now, you'll have to retrace your steps back to the white-blazed trail. When you reach the white-blazed trail, turn right to continue in a clockwise direction around the lake.

A short distance ahead, the trail turns right and crosses a wooden bridge. It turns left, curves around a bend and dips down to cross a narrow channel. With a church parking lot visible on the left, the trail turns right, away from busy Ewing Avenue. It briefly parallels Molly Ann Brook, the main inlet of the lake, turns right to cross it on rocks, and returns to the edge of the lake.

Soon, the trail bears left and heads inland. After skirting a wet area, it emerges on Basalt Beach – an open expanse of basalt rock (characteristic of the Watchung range). Here, the trail turns left, away from the lake, then bears right, with the High Mountain Golf Club visible through the trees on the left, and large boulders below on the right. After crossing another open expanse of basalt rock and passing some more large boulders on the left, the trail widens to a dirt-and-gravel woods road.

Soon, you'll come to a double blue blaze that marks the start of the other branch of the Island Bridges Trail. Turn right and follow this trail. Just past the junction, you'll notice several jagged basalt boulders on the left. Continue along the blue-blazed trail for about 0.2 mile to the end of the dike, with more views over the lake and High Mountain beyond, then retrace your steps to the white-blazed trail and turn right onto the wide woods road. After a while, you'll pass homes on the left and then a pine grove on the right. The white-blazed trail ends at a kiosk adjacent to the parking area where the hike began, completing the loop.