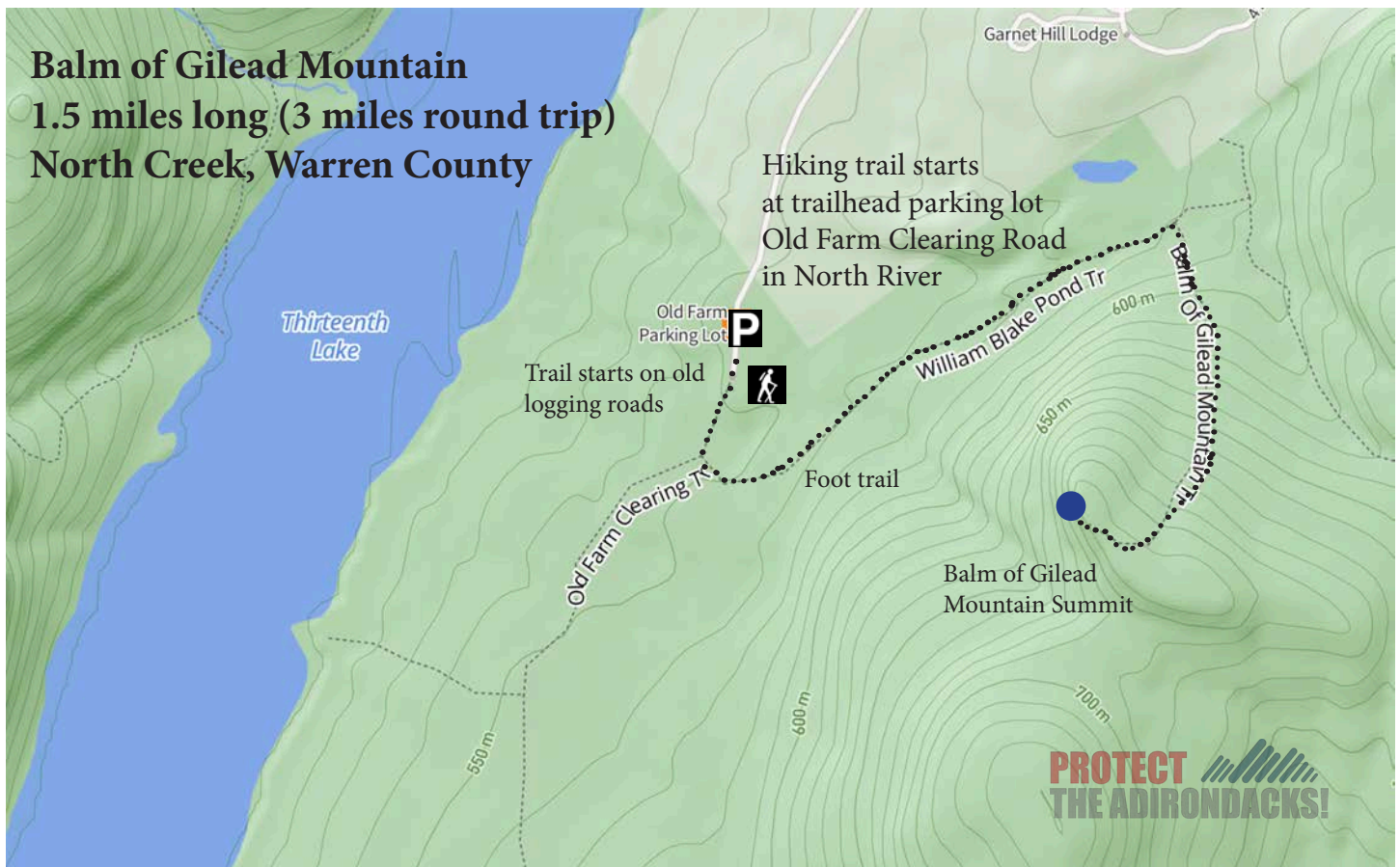


## Balm of Gilead Mountain



The Balm of Gilead Mountain Trail is a 3-mile hike through the Forest Preserve in the Siamese Ponds Wilderness in the northwest corner of Warren County, outside of North Creek. The parking area is reached via the long, winding 13th Lake Road off of Route 28 in North River. After 4 miles on 13th Lake Road, the route veers to the right onto Old Farm Road, a seasonal dirt road that ends in a large circular parking lot beside the trailhead. The hike is predominantly flat through a stretch of beautiful hardwood forest, before ascending just over 400 feet to a rocky summit with an excellent view of nearby 13th Lake and the surrounding mountains and ridges.

The start of the trail is clearly marked with blue trail markers and follows a wide path that was once part of Old Farm Road. The road is growing in with grasses and young trees, which have narrowed the trail corridor. The road descends gently and after a few hundred yards, it reaches the trail register in the middle of a junction of trails. To hike Balm of Gilead mountain, turn left onto the Halfway Brook Trail, and follow the yellow markers.

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After the junction, the trail is wet and muddy in sections. In these patches, watch for the bright orange of eastern newts standing out sharply over the dark mud and green, mossy rocks. A number of log bridges cross wetlands and streams. This portion of the trail is mainly flat. In the winter, this trail is part of a popular cross-country skiing loop. After about a mile, the trail thins as it reaches another junction.

At the intersection, the trail turns right and follows red markers toward the Balm of Gilead summit. The path immediately begins to ascend fairly steeply for the first time over a rocky stretch. The climb is steady for this last half-mile as the trail passes the faces of large bedrock outcrops. Large deciduous trees dominate the forest in this area, with openings in the canopy where sunlight streams onto the trail. After the trail flattens out slightly, the surrounding forest area shifts to a pine forest. Large boulders crop up around the trail as it opens out onto the summit.

The summit is spacious, with plenty of areas to sit and enjoy lunch after the hike. The mountain offers a delightful, broad, and varied view for such a brief climb. To the west, Thirteenth Lake stretches through the valley and Peaked Mountain rises up out of the forest above it. The thick stands of spruce and balsam on the summit and their mossy roots provide soft and shady spots to admire the surrounding landscape. The trek back out follows the same path with markers that change from red to yellow to blue at the two junctions.

**Help Protect the Forest Preserve and Be Prepared When You Hike:** Please follow “carry in, carry out” rules for all trash and follow **Leave No Trace** principles when hiking in the public Forest Preserve and other wild areas. The 7 Leave No Trace principles are: 1) Plan ahead and prepare ; 2) Stay on hiking trails and camp at designated areas; 3) Dispose of human waste and trash properly; 4) Leave what you find; 5) Minimize campfires; 6) Respect wildlife; 7) Respect other hikers. **Educated and prepared hikers do not damage the environment or need search and rescue unless injured.**