

IVES TRAIL GREENWAY

CONNECTING DANBURY BETHEL AND RIDGEFIELD, CT

Hiking the Ives Trail June 5, 2010 by Mike Cunningham

The Ives Trail is a multi-town trail in western Connecticut. The length is approximately 15 miles.

Back in February when I put this hike in for National Trails Day, it seemed likely that the Ives Trail would be finished by then. We had relocated the trail from its original path and there were several easements needed.

The new trail sections had not been blazed and were definitely not finished although I know where they go. Much of it, but not all, had ribbon flags to indicate the way. I had GPS waypoints for various critical places.

The trail includes a stream crossing which will eventually have a bridge on it. It did not. It can be crossed on rocks and there is a ladder there, but it is swampy on both sides. We got wet feet.

The trail is nominally 15 miles and is a real bushwhack. I put the hike in to the AMC, the GMC, the ADK and the CFPA. Somehow it did not get into the CFPA book. No one from the GMC or ADK signed up for the hike although there was one inquiry through the GMC.

Ten people signed up for the hike. The forecast was for showers sometime late in the day. As the hike was likely to take about 8 hours running into the showers four people did not come.

We met at the appointed time and drove to the start of the hike. The first part goes through Bennett's Pond State Park in Ridgefield. The land was once part of a fancy resort. It was then used as a nursery, then sold to IBM which planned a conference center, then sold to a developer who planned to put in hundreds of homes.

The people of Ridgefield opposed that and the land was purchased by Ridgefield then turned over to the state.

It is a really pretty place with an open meadow with some specimen trees from the nursery and nice views from the location of the inn and around the pond. It was along the inlet stream to the pond that we saw a very co-operative male Scarlet Tanager, who let us take his picture.

From there the trail goes into a Ridgefield open space area and steeply up to a viewpoint which was the site of a cabin (really more of a lean-to) where Charles Ives spent some time.

The trail continues down and around through the western side of Wooster Mountain State Park, coming down to busy Route 7. We crossed Route 7 at a crosswalk and after about a ¼ mile road walk went into the woods on an old wood road actually named Old Wood Road (after someone named Wood).

We then climbed up the western side of Moses Mountain in the eastern section of Wooster Mountain State Park. From here we went down into a gorge which contains the watershed divide between the Still and Saugatuck rivers.

Then once again up, this time into Tarrywile Park to the viewpoint at Mootry Peak, where we had lunch. After lunch we hiked down (and up) to Parks Pond in the main area of Tarrywile Park. Here we were met by Sandy Moy & Becky Petro with cold water and by Tina Maripuu with brownie and oatmeal cookies!

Sandy Moy is a member of the Ives Trail Task Force and the Executive Director of Tarrywile Park and Mansion, Tina Maripuu is the Secretary of the Ives Trail Task Force. We were all very happy to see them and I heard many comments later on from the hikers expressing their appreciation.

Now the fun part started. The trail continues along a trail through Tarrywile Park and then on another old wood road into a section of Tarrywile which is not contiguous with the rest of the park. Then we got to the “fish”, so called because the property shape resembles a fish tail.

Here there was no trail. We went up between cliffs following ribbons through a Mountain Laurel thicket. After topping out we went down a cliff on the other side and out onto another woods road.

After another short bushwhack we emerged onto another woods road called Old Post Road. We followed this for over a mile to another bushwhack edging around a swamp. It was about here we started hearing thunder. We got out our rain gear and continued.

We then emerged onto another old woods road called Old Starr's Plain Road and another bushwhack up a hill through Land Trust of Danbury (LTD) property, now in the rain, then down the hill and along the edge of some private property where we crossed the unbridged stream.

It was hard to tell whether our feet were wet from the stream or from the rain. Once again up a hill to Long Ridge Road. Here the trail ends only to start again about 0.4 miles further north on Long Ridge Road.

Once again onto an old woods road this time into two more LTD properties skirting a swamp in each one by following the ribbons. This time we emerged onto a cul de sac where we followed several roads into the Redding Bogus Brook open space where we went through some more swamp and skirted another pond.

Here we saw a large bird which flew off through the trees. We were not sure if it was an owl or a hawk as none of us saw it very clearly.

Here the trail ends at a railroad track only to magically start again on the other side of the tracks. This time we went through a flat section. Can you believe that? It really is flat.

Here we came out into Side Cut Road in Redding, from which it was about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile back to the cars. We completed the hike in just short of 8 hours.

Leader: Mike Cunningham, Co leader: Russ Charest. Hikers: Richard Applegate, Robert Cieri, Bob Cotton, Roger Hibbert, Keith Wright.