

The Sackett Preserve was designated as a “first priority” open space in 1996. Fortunately in 1999, the family expressed a desire to keep the property as open space and the Town of Wilton was able to purchase and protect the 33-acre property. The rear 27 acres contain wooded walking trails that connect to a network of trails on adjacent properties. The front six acres of the Sackett Preserve, which once contained the house, lawn and gardens, remain as fields and an old orchard today.

**T**his property, nestled east of the Marble/Van Haelewyn Preserve and north of the Richards Preserve, has been considered desirable open space because of its proximity to existing open space and the diverse natural features that it contains. A ridgetop stand of beech, a lush wetland valley and rolling open woodlands combine to make this parcel a marvelous open space.

The yellow-blazed access trail begins just south of the parking area at the top of the driveway. This trail winds its way south through a young forest of deciduous hardwoods. The yellow trail ends at a wide stonewall, where it intersects with the orange trail.

Turn right to connect to the orange northern trail. This trail crosses the wetland system that lies in the Huckleberry Hills valley. A springtime visit reveals that much of this area is flooded by seasonal water. Boardwalks and stepping-stones help walkers cross the wettest spots. Sensitive fern, skunk cabbage, jack-in-the-pulpit, and marsh fern cover the wetland floor in the summer months. This trail connects to the northern portion of the Marble/Van Haelewyn Preserve and intersects with its red-blazed trail. From here one can continue along trails within the Marble/Van Haelewyn – Richards Preserve and loop back to the trail entrance at Sackett.

A left turn at the end of the yellow access trail will put you on the orange southern trail. After winding through a wetland plateau thick with shrubs of spicebush, this trail rises up to a bedrock ledge that overlooks the large wetland valley to the west. The exposed bedrock ridge lies roughly north-northwest in and drops steeply to the west.

The exposed bedrock is a mafic gneiss, ancient ocean-bottom sediments that underwent metamorphism hundreds of thousands of years ago. At the high point of the trail, there is a great view west of the wetland valley and the Marble/Van Haelewyn Preserve. The trail turns east off of the ridge onto a flat upper plateau. Exposed rocks and thin topsoil support an open canopy of beech, chestnut oak and scarlet oak. The thin, dry and acidic topsoil keeps the shrub layer at a minimum, making an airy open walk through the woods.

The blue southern trail continues west into the Richards Preserve. With the approach to the wetland valley, notice the increase in other tree species, such as red oak, black birch and tulip trees. As soil moisture increases there is also an increase in shrubs and groundcover. A springtime walk will reveal beautiful forest floor of maple-leaved viburnum, swamp azalea, wild geranium, and hay-scented fern.

From this point one can either turn back and return to the trailhead or continue on the wonderful trails of the Land Trust's Marble/Van Haelewyn – Richards Preserve. A very enjoyable loop, on trails on each of the three properties, can be followed around the perimeter of the Huckleberry Hills wetland valley.

**Directions:** From Wilton Center, go west on Ridgefield Road (Rte. 33) 2.2 miles to the driveway entrance on the west (left) side of the road, just before Rte 33's intersection with Deforest Road.

**Acreage:** ±33 acres

**Parking:** At the gravel parking lot at the top of the driveway.

**Access:** Entrance to the trailhead is 150' south of the parking area. Also from trails within the Marble/Van Haelewyn-Richards Preserve to the south and west.

**Trails:** Distances not available

**Ownership:** Town of Wilton with a conservation easement granted to the Wilton Land Conservation Trust

