

# Featured Hike



By Robert Ross

## Franklin Lakes Nature Preserve: A Jewel Amidst the New Jersey Suburbs



Shoreline paths are an attractive feature at the preserve.

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference has maintained trails at the lovely 75-acre Franklin Lakes Nature Preserve in Bergen County since December 2011. Several projects are on the docket for us there this year—to be accomplished in collaboration with Eagle Scout candidates—and one recent one completed by the Borough of Franklin Lakes improved a popular trail across the water.

The shine on this gem of a preserve gets even brighter with trail improvements.

Currently, there are two relatively easy trails in the preserve. The Preserve Shoreline Loop (white blaze) is a 1.5-mile loop trail that circles the entire upper basin of the Preserve; the Island Bridges Trail (blue

blaze) is a 0.5-mile trail which starts at the Preserve Shoreline Loop trail and crosses the northern end of the lake on an earthen dike. A third, red trail, leads from the Preserve Shoreline Loop Trail out of the preserve to the nearby High Mountain Park Preserve, where one can enjoy more than 11 miles of trails on 1700 acres, and get a stunning view of Manhattan to the southeast on a clear day and long views over a valley, a reservoir, and occasionally magnificent sunsets.

Until recently, the Island Bridges Trail at Franklin Lakes was interrupted by breaches in the dike in two places. Recently, however, the borough installed two floating bridges to fill the gaps, and these now permit hikers to walk the entire length of the Island Bridges Trail.

The views to the south from these bridges incorporate most of the lake and, to the southwest, a splendid view of High Mountain. Of the two new floating bridges, John Moran, chair of our Northeast Jersey Trails Committee, reports: “I snow shod over them this winter, and they

seemed to be holding up nicely under their loads of ice—they really can't sink much.”

The Trail Conference plans three projects at the preserve this season: a bridge to span Molly Ann Brook; a permanent bridge to replace a temporary bridge near the north end of the preserve; and installation of rustic benches at scenic locations along with a footbridge over a small feeder stream. If things go well, Boy Scouts will complete these projects in spring and summer of this year. The Trail Conference is also working with the borough to obtain grants to build an accessible trail at the preserve.

Trail use at the preserve is likely get a boost if, as expected, the borough votes to allow lake access for car-top boats.

John Moran says: “The preserve is truly an amazing crown jewel amid attractive surrounding suburbs. The big beautiful lake is an eye catcher—with fishing, birding, and picnic opportunities, along with plenty of scenery for photography. The forests, islands, dikes, dams and smaller ponds provide a wide variety of terrain and habitat to amble along with family and friends.”



The lake at Franklin Lakes Nature Preserve

A free map of the Franklin Lake Nature Preserve is available for download on the Trail Conference website, [nynjtc.org/map/franklin-lakes-nature-preserve-trail-map](http://nynjtc.org/map/franklin-lakes-nature-preserve-trail-map).

*Robert Ross is an occasional contributor to Trail Walker and is a member of the Trail Conference Conservation Committee, focusing on trail conservation opportunities in New Jersey.*

