

## Hiking Hale Brook Trail

The Zealand Valley was the scene of extensive logging during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Lumber baron J.E. Henry purchased a sawmill, built a railroad into Zealand Valley and harvested timber there through the turn of the century. The Town of Zealand was located near the present site of the U.S. Forest Service Campground. Today, little evidence remains of the once bustling logging town that boasted a mill, railyard, store, post office and housing. The present day trail follows the grade of the old Zealand Valley Railroad. With keen eye the hiker can spot where railroad ties once crossed level sections of the current trail. During the latter part of the nineteenth century the Zealand Valley was virtually stripped of all vegetation; a wasteland of slash, erosion and fire damage. This devastation was the result of the intensive logging and two great fires. The presence today of a luxuriant hardwood forest is a fine example of the recuperative power of forest succession. As a result, State and Federal foresters have instituted sound guidelines and laws regarding timber harvesting, regeneration and fire prevention. The dominant species of trees are: maple, birch, beech and ash. Red spruce and balsam are found in areas that are not well drained. Many species of shrubs and plants common to the northern hardwood coniferous forest are found throughout the Zealand. Animal life includes woodchuck, porcupine, black bear, deer, lynx, moose and beaver. A number of beaver dams are located on the lower and upper ponds. Dusk is the best time of day to observe the beavers at work. 0.2 mile up the Twinway Trail from the junction of the Zealand and Ethan Pond Trails is the AMC operated Zealand Falls Hut. Built in 1932, the hut is a back country facility serving both day and overnight hikers. From the hut, there is a spectacular view south through Zealand Notch.

### Hale Brook Trail

Access: Route 302, turn at U.S.F.S. Zealand Campground up Zealand Road 2.5 miles to trailhead parking lot.

Trail Beginning: 1750 ft. elevation (530 m). Trail begins at a small parking area on the west side of the Zealand Road about 2.5 miles from Route 302

Trail Ending: 4054 ft. elevation (1228m). Trail ends on the summit of Mt. Hale at the junction of the Lend-A-Hand Trail.

**Length:** 2.3 miles (3.8 km)

**Camping:** Same as for Zealand Trail.

The Hale Brook Trail ascends Mt. Hale through forest with views only on the summit. The Lend-A-Hand Trail descends to Zealand Notch with a number of views from ledges to the east and west. Water is readily available, but is untested and should be boiled or chemically treated.

Some of the rocks on the summit of Mt. Hale are magnetic. This geologic phenomenon is evident when a compass is placed on or near these rocks for the needle will spin.

