

Description: It is not that often that an old hiker gets to hike a new trail so when my friend, Sam Savage, showed me the Browns Hollow Trail on the latest (2011) PATC Map G that covers Massanutten Mountain-South I just had to explore it. (It is not shown in earlier versions of the map.) Our initial attempt to find the Browns Hollow Trail southern terminus did not go too well as we tried to expand upon the Bird Knob hike but we found its northern terminus two weeks later and completed a pretty demanding 10.2 mile loop. I describe it here. Much of the "new" trail is on an old logging road with about 0.3 miles constructed by machine. It passes above many mini-water falls, one 20 feet in height, and several chutes and rapids. To close the loop we use the Roaring Run and Massanutten-South Trails. For a slightly longer outing with less forest road walking, perhaps an overnight backpack even, add the Bird Knob Trail. There is a pond and large campsite about 0.25 miles off of the forest road.

The hike starts at the parking lot for the now defunct New Market Gap Visitor Center on U.S. 211.

Trail Notes: From the parking lot walk back towards the highway and turn right onto the white blazed Nature Trail. In 0.3 miles turn left onto the orange blazed Massanutten-South Trail. Arrive at a dirt road that runs through a picnic area. Turn right onto it. In another 0.2 miles the Massanutten-South Trail will turn left towards U.S. 211. Stay to the right, now on the pink blazed Browns Hollow Trail – an old logging road. In another 0.2 miles the road forks. Go to the right to continue. Bear left at the next fork in 0.3 miles. From here the trail descends into the hollow and curves to the right to follow the stream. Pass a campsite on the left and cross the stream in 0.6 miles. A thin waterfall flowing off of Big Mountain will be to the right. For the next 1.9 miles the climb is gradual but becomes more tedious near the top. At that point, shortly after passing a small campsite on the right, the logging road ends and the trail continues as a wide machine made path until it reaches a saddle between Big and Short Horse Mountains where it joins another logging road. The trail is flat just for a short while before descending into Roaring Run Gap. In 1.3 miles from the last campsite turn right onto the purple blazed Roaring Run Trail. You'll climb 520 feet in less than 0.7 miles. It's a steep one but there are a few strategically placed switchbacks to help you. At the top you'll find a small but dry campsite with a winter time view to the east. You'll lose most of your recent elevation gain in less than 0.4 miles during your descent to gravel Mountain Road/Massanutten-South Trail. Turn right onto it. It's a long steady climb from here. In 0.4 miles arrive at a gated fire road on the left. This leads to the pond, a large campsite

and the Bird Knob Trail mentioned in the description. Note that there is no trail leading to Bird Knob itself and the knob offers little if anything in the way of views.

To continue the short version of the hike continue straight on the road for another 0.4 miles where the road curves to the right to go to some towers. Continue straight, around the gate, onto a fire road. It is wide, flat and lined with pine trees and giant ant hills. Bear right at a fork. In 1.3 miles from leaving the forest road arrive at the northern junction with the Bird Knob Trail on the left. Turn right to stay on the Massanutten-South Trail and enjoy a pleasant ridge walk for the next 0.8 miles. Here you will find a grand vista under some pines to the left and a dry campsite hidden in the woods to the right. The trail descends rapidly through a series of rock gardens over the next mile before arriving back at the white blazed Nature Trail. Turn left and re-trace you initial steps back to the parking lot.