

Trail Notes for Coopers Rock SF Loop-1

Description: First I'd like to thank Ann Devine-King, Serria Club Outing leader and good friend, for showing us this wonderful place. Coopers Rock State Forest gets its name from a legend about a fugitive who hid from the law near what is now the overlook. A cooper by trade, he resumed making barrels at his new mountain hideout, selling them to people in nearby communities. He lived and worked in the forest for many years. At 12,713 acres it is the largest State Forest in West Virginia. Although its main draw is the easy to access overlook (and the throngs of visitors prove it.) there are other less visited gems to explore. Described here is a 11.2 mile strenuous circuit that visits places like Raven Rock, Sunset Wall, Rock City, Cheat Lake and the Henry Clay Iron Furnace. If time or fitness requires you to shorten the hike one can shorten the hike by dispensing with either the 2.0 mile out-and-back to Raven Rock and/or the 1.5 mile out-and-back to the Lake.

There are several places to start the hike. We begin at the parking area across the road from the McCollum Campground.

Trail Notes: Green trails shown on the map are, to the best of our knowledge, un-blazed. Other colors match what is found in the field.

From the parking lot cross the road and follow the campground road, bearing to the right at the split. Turn right behind the campground office and follow the Campground Connector (McCollum) Tr for 0.67 miles. Cross dirt Woodshed Loop Road and in another 0.10 miles turn left onto Raven Rock Rd/Tr. In 0.16 miles look for a cairn marking a un-signed footpath on the right. You will use this later. Continue on the road, soon bearing right at a fork. In 0.51 more miles the main road bears to the right and begins a climb. There is another trail to the right. It might lead to another vista. In 0.19 miles from the last trail junction begin to follow a power line swath. In another 0.11 miles arrive at Raven Rocks. The view is so awesome you barely realize there is a power line overhead.

Retrace your steps to that un-signed trail marked with a cairn and turn left onto it. In 0.11 miles join an old logging road. Although there is no sign, we believe this is the Leaning Tree Trail. Be alert as in 0.20 miles you will leave the road to the left at another cairn and switchback down to the "unofficial" Sunset Wall Trail. The trail is generally easy to follow. If ever in doubt just keep the wall close to your right. In 0.22

miles this deviates some as you walk through Ann's Hall. Still follow the wall once you come out of this neat fissure through the rocks. In another 0.19 miles you will begin to see signs of trail maintenance as dead limbs are stacked up alongside of the trail. In another 0.16 miles climb up to an overflow parking lot. To visit the main vista walk toward the concession shop and turn left onto an asphalt paved trail. After taking in the view begin to backtrack but turn right onto the Underlook Tr. As the trail turns right pass a spur trail to the left. This is a steep, rocky route to 60 foot tall Haystack Rock which offers more views. Continue on. In another 0.14 miles blue blazed Rattlesnake Tr comes in from the right. Continue straight on it. In 0.56 miles reach a giant shelter built by the C.C.C. in the '30s. They used American Chestnuts from the forest.

After a break pickup the red blazed Rock City Tr to the left. In 0.36 miles climb out of the city and soon join the white blazed Ridge Tr. At first the trail descends gradually but towards its end turns hard right and in 0.84 miles from Rock City plummets quickly to its junction with yellow blazed Mont Chateau Tr-S. Turn left and descend. In 0.18 miles pass the Mont Chateau Tr-N on the right (Also blazed yellow.) and descend for 0.75 miles to the shore of Cheat Lake. After a break, retrace your steps to the previous trail junction. Turn left onto the Mont Chateau Tr-N and cross Clay Run on a bridge. In 0.68 miles the two yellow trails come together. In another 0.20 miles join orange blazed Rhododendron Tr. Continue straight to the junction with the Clay Run Tr/Rd. To the left is the Henry Clay Iron Furnace. Continue on the Clay Run Tr/Rd for 0.40 miles and make a sharp right hand turn onto a grassy, unsigned but obvious Trail D. Climb gradually for 0.27 miles and turn left onto un-marked but obvious Laurel Meadows Tr. This starts as an old rocky, shady woods road but eventually reverts to an exposed double track road. At 0.55 miles cross a power line swath. In another 0.89 miles a gravel connector from the Clay Run Tr/Rd comes in from the left. At this point you can see the 6 acre reservoir. Stay straight. In 0.17 miles the trail merges with the Clay Run Tr/Rd as it crosses a ski trail and the Roadside Tr to soon arrive at the road and your vehicle.