

## **Directions and Trail Notes for the Apple Orchard Falls/Cornelius Creek Loop**

**Description:** This is probably the most popular day hike in the Jefferson National Forest. Whether you are hiking up North Creek or down Cornelius Creek your eyes will be filled with views of one water work after another. And then there is the focal point of the hike, 200 foot tall Apple Orchard Falls. In 2000 the USFS constructed a rugged bridge and viewing platform across the chasm to make viewing the falls easier. Still the ascent up to the falls and beyond is rather steep. Approximately 145 wooden steps aids the hiker in getting from the base of the falls to the top. If you elect to do the 7.3 mile version you will climb approximately 2000 feet over the first 3.5 miles. The second half of the hike is literally all downhill. If you chose the 6.0 mile version you will still see all of the water works in both creeks and decrease the elevation gain by about 700 feet.

Spring flower specialties seem to be Mountain Rhododendron (Blooms in May instead of July like its cousin.), Bleeding Hearts, Canada Violets, Canada May Flowers, Golden Alexander, Wild Geraniums, Early Meadow Rue and others.

**Safety Note: Because of the moist conditions the lower sections of both the Apple Orchard Falls and Cornelius Trails are prime venues for Stinging Needles. From mid-May to the first frost wear light weight long pants while hiking these trails.**

### **Directions from I-81:**

1. Take the Arcadia Exit (168) to VA-614.
2. Take VA-614 East for 2.9 miles.
3. Turn left onto FS-59. There will be a sign with arrow pointing you toward North Creek.
4. The road will pass North Creek Campground on the right and become a one lane gravel road. Follow it to it's end at a turn around and trail kiosk. Apple Orchard Falls Tr is to the left. Cornelius Creek Tr is to the right.

**Trail Notes:** From the kiosk follow the trail on the left. Immediately cross Cornelius Creek on a bridge. In 0.18 miles come to a trail junction. The left fork crosses North Creek on a bridge. This is an old route. Do not follow it. Bear right at the fork and follow the blue blazes.

In another 0.95 miles come to 2 more bridges on the left. The first leads to an alternative trailhead on FS-3034. Ignore it. Turn onto the second bridge. Over the next 0.81 miles the climb becomes steeper and rockier. Finally arrive at the base of the falls. After taking in the grandness of the falls climb up 145 steps to the top of the falls. There is no view but a small falls awaits you as you cross the bridge.

In 0.60 miles arrive at a junction with a seeded woods road. Maps may call it the Cornelius Creek Connector but the sign calls it the Apple Orchard Rd.

**To do the 6.0 mile version turn right onto the woods road and proceed to the junction with the Cornelius Creek Tr.**

**To do the 7.3 mile version continue up the Apple Orchard Falls Tr for another 0.59 miles to its junction with the AT. Turn right onto the AT. This is a nice section of trail that alternates from smooth and grassy to rocky with a few short climbs. In 1.14 miles reach the junction of the Cornelius Creek Tr.**

**Turn right onto the blue blazed (sporadic) Cornelius Tr. At 0.64 miles join the Apple Orchard Rd.**

**\*\*\* If doing the long version, Turn left to stay on the Cornelius Creek Tr. If doing the short version you will simply stay on the woods road at this junction. \*\*\***

**Initially this section of trail will remain a woods road but as the descent becomes steeper it will become a footpath until it reaches the creek itself. Here it follows an old railroad grade back to the trailhead. Over the next 2.28 miles you'll enjoy several beautiful cascades and a couple of nice swimming holes. There will be 3 stream crossings: 2 rock hops with a bridge crossing in between.**