

Segment A (FDR 95 to Camp Todd-10.2 miles)

The first 4.5 miles of this segment (to Grooms Ridge Trail) is particularly lovely in early summer when long stretches of mountain laurel are covered with light blooms. The trail then climbs to its highest point, 4351 feet, at Little Bald Knob where the hiker will find a spectacular range of views to the east and west.

Parts of this segment are steep and rocky with grades up to 32 percent. A wider path provides about a mile of easy hiking after Grooms Ridge Trail to below Little Bald Knob. Later the trail becomes a narrow footpath that passes through an abundance of bear oak and mountain laurel.

MILEAGE LOG

- 0.0 The Wild Oak Trail begins at FDR 95 and winds through a wooded area of oak and hickory.
- 0.3 Begin Wild Oak Loop. Right fork to Little Bald Knob, left fork to Lookout Mountain
- 1.9 Overlook provides good view from both sides of ridge within a few yards of trail.
- 2.3 Trail enters area of pitch pine and table mountain pine with mountain laurel in undergrowth.
- 2.6 Wild Oak intersects Little Skidmore Trail (Elev. 2520'), a side trail used for timber access.
- 2.8 Wildlife clearing with pond, surrounded by maple, oak, hickory, black locust and dogwood.
- 3.3 Overlook-Somewhat rocky, surrounded by table mountain pine, chestnut oak, red maple, and mountain laurel.
- 3.9 Rocky overlook followed by steep and rocky portion.
- 4.6 Crosses Grooms Ridge Trail (Elev. 3200') then widens for almost a mile of easy hiking until the beginning of the climb toward Little Bald Knob.
- 5.5 Trail becomes narrow footpath, sometimes steep and rocky, on climb up to Little Bald Knob.
- 5.6 Here and at 5.9 miles Wild Oak crosses short side trails.
- 7.0 Overlook-Little Bald Knob, at 4351', the highest point on the entire trail. A short walk out Bald Knob Road leads the hiker to a spectacular range of views.
- 8.8 Trail narrows and provides view of mountains through pitch pine and table mountain pine
- 10.2 Trail crosses North River (Elev. 2350') into Camp Todd at FDR 95.

Segment B (Camp Todd to FDR 96-5.2 miles)

This is the most challenging part of the trail. Over 2.2 miles, on a narrow footpath up Springhouse Ridge, the hiker climbs more than 1700 feet on slopes up to 46 percent. The descent, over 1.5 miles, is almost as steep. The trail then runs along Mitchell Branch, a pleasant stream about 50 yards to the north.

MILEAGE LOG

- 0.0 Wild Oak Trail leaves Camp Todd, becomes narrow, often steep and rocky, as it climbs toward Big Bald Knob.
- 1.3 Trail crosses spring, an untested water source that should be treated before use.
- 1.4 Intersection with trail toward Hiner Spring and Ramseys Draft, Elev. 3730'.
- 2.2 Big Bald Knob, Elev. 4120' is an extensive, flat wildlife clearing of mountain laurel, bear oak, and pitch pine. The watchful hiker may spot signs of bobcat. Overlook on side trail to the left.
- 2.4 Open area, grassy, with ferns and maple, followed by good location for camping.
- 2.9 Wildlife clearing with pond, scrub oak, witch hazel and blueberries.
- 3.6 Stream near trail, rocky, with small falls. Water is untested and should be treated before use.
- 4.7 Wildlife clearing in fairly level area of trail.
- 5.2 Trail intersects with FDR 96 (Elev. 2312') as a second segment ends and the third begins.

Segment C (FDR 96 to SR 718-10.2 miles)

The first six miles of this segment, where the trail climbs and descends Hankey Mountain on a mostly gentle slope, once held dense stands of American Chestnut as can be seen along the way in the silver-grey trunks of the long-dead trees. The path widens to a road which is open to all forms of motorized travel during hunting season which runs mid-October to the end of December.

On the last four miles of this segment, the trail is sometimes steep and rocky with grades up to 32 percent. It provides a number of overlooks for excellent valley views.

MILEAGE LOG

- 0.0 Wild Oak Trail crosses FDR 96 (Elev. 2312') and climbs a short, steep grade of about 30 percent in an area of white pine and white oak.
- 0.4 Trail again steep, sloping off about 30 percent on both sides, with good view of surrounding mountains.
- 1.3 Wild Oak turns south as side trail goes off to the left.
- 2.3 Peak of Hankey Mountain, Elev. 3407', a grassy area with abundant wildflowers surrounded by oak and hickory.
- 2.7 Wildlife clearing here and at 3.1 miles, the second populated with large white oak.
- 3.2 Second peak of Hankey Mountain, Elev. 3450', in wildlife clearing.
- 3.4 Small wildlife clearing, followed by wildlife clearings at 3.8, 4.1, and 4.3 miles.
- 4.5 Wildlife clearing, surrounded by wide variety of trees, including white pine, hickory, chestnut oak, maple, and dogwood.

- 5.0 Overlook, in area of scarlet oak and sassafras, leading into wildlife area at 5.2 miles with black locust and large white oak.
- 5.7 Wildlife clearing with white pine in center, two muddy ponds, and view of valley.
- 56.2 Wildlife clearing with table mountain pine, abundant wildflowers.
- 6.4 Intersection with road that leads to North River Campground to the north. Wildlife clearing follows at 6.6 miles.
- 7.2 Overlook, after which trail descends ridge and provides panoramic view.
- 7.5 Wildlife clearing featuring large white oak, followed by overlook with excellent view at 7.7 miles.
- 8.4 Area of table mountain pine, oak, and red maple with blueberries and deerberries leading to steep and rocky sections.
- 9.6 Intersection with side trail. North River Gorge Trail to the left.
- 10.1 Wild Oak crosses North River, (Elev. approx. 1560') and head toward FDR 95/State Road 718 at 10.2 miles.

