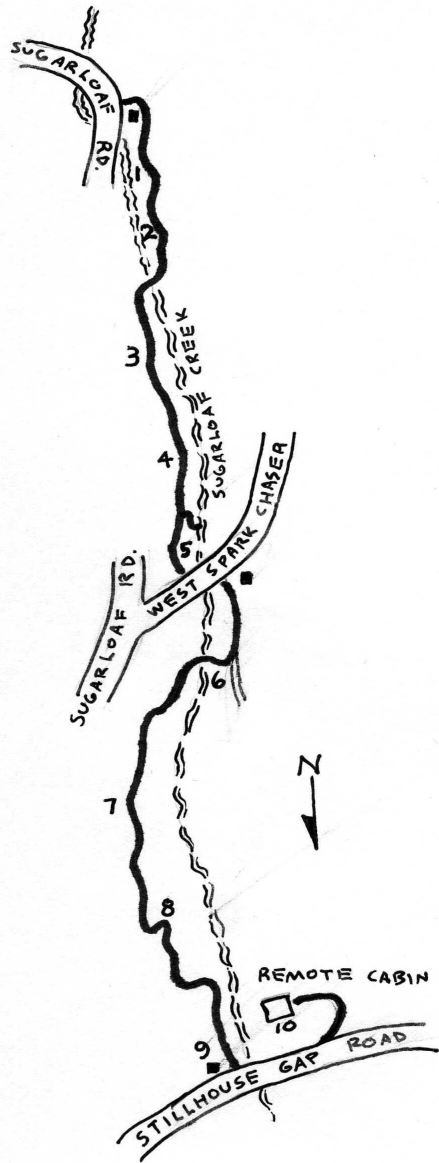


Sugarloaf Creek

Map not to scale



- | | | | |
|--------------------|--|----------------------|--|
| TRAIL | | ROADS | |
| INTERPRETIVE BOXES | | 2 INTERPRETIVE POSTS | |
| STREAMS | | P PARKING AREAS | |

HIKING SAFETY GUIDELINES

- Carry water with you
- Stay on designated trail
- Inform a friend of your hiking plans
- Hike with another person
- Leash your pet
- Carry a cell phone with a fully charged and extra battery
- Carry important medication/first aid
- Call Security or the Trust Nature Center if you need help



Balsam Mountain Trust
Phone: (828)631-1060

BMP Security
Phone: (828)631-1011

Interpretive Trail Guide

FOLLOWING NUMBERED POSTS PLACED



Sugarloaf Creek Trail I



Rosebay rhododendron
Rhododendron maximum

Terrain: Moderate terrain with log steps and bridges. Gravel roads bisect midpoint and connect north end with remote cabin.

Trail elevation: Gradual drop in elevation from the falls (3200') to remote cabin (2900')

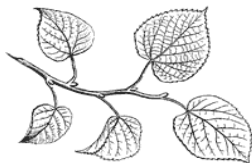
Trail length: A one way trip is 0.8 miles; round-trip is 1.6 miles

Trail Difficulty: Top to bottom is easy; bottom to top is moderate.

Must see: Sugarloaf falls & Remote cabin

1) Pouring over a prominent rock ledge, **Sugar-loaf Falls** is nearly hidden by vegetation in this acidic-cove forest community. Dominate tree species are birch, maple, yellow poplar, hemlock, oak, buckeye and beech. Underneath the tree canopy dense growths of rosebay rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*), an acidic soil-loving plant, can be observed.

2) The large tree spreading overhead is a **white basswood** (*Tilia heterophylla*). The underside of its leaves are very pale, accounting for the “white” in the common name. The stringy inner bark was used as bast fibers in earlier times and likely “bastwood” has been corrupted into the currently popular name. Basswoods prefer moist soil and are common in the Preserve.



Trail now crosses creek by foot bridge

3) Growing overhead and on the upper slope is **witch hazel** (*Hamamelis virginiana*). This unusual large shrub blooms in November and expels its seeds the following September by forcefully “shooting” them from the capsular fruits. Perhaps you have some of this plant’s sap on your face, since it is a popular astringent used in many skin cleansers.

4) The peculiar trunk swellings on the nearby young **white oak** (*Quercus alba*) are burls. These benign growths of abnormal wood can originate from soil fungi, e.g. *Phomopsis*, or from bacteria which enter a tree and insert gall-forming genes. Entry can be through any size wound. Burls may also be linked to genetics of individual trees, some more prone to produce them than others. The swirl of wood grain in a burl provides patterns prized in wood carvings.

5) The mature **black cherry** (*Prunus serotina*) beside the trail is instantly recognized by its scaly bark. The irregularly shaped scales curl on the edges, suggesting gray corn flakes. This species is very common in these mountains - a result of both high consumption and wide dispersal of its seeds by birds. Fruits ripen in late summer after other types of cherries have fallen- hence the name *serotina*, which means “late.”

Trail goes downhill & crosses West Sparkchaser Road; reconnecting across road on south side of bridge

6) Examples of several plants “using” other plants may be observed here. **Oilnut** (*Pyrolaria pubera*) is a parasitic shrub which attaches itself to the roots of trees - robbing a bit of nourishment. The **summer grape** (*Vitis aestivalis*) hangs from the canopy of a tall tree, having used it as climbing support since both vine and tree were young. A rotting stump provides a nursery for the seed of a **hemlock** (*Tsuga canadensis*) that will ultimately, after the stump’s decay, be left “stilt-rooted.” There are many other intricate biological relationships around you—revealed through careful observation and study of the natural world.

7) The vine ascending the large yellow poplar nearby is **poison ivy** (*Toxicodendron radicans*). Fibrous brown aerial rootlets on the vine’s stem enable it to grasp the host tree’s bark. These rootlets increase in quantity as the vine ages and as the tree trunk expands its girth, ensuring a better grip. There is no harm to the tree in this association as the vine only uses the trunk to access sunlight high above the shaded understory.



8) Nearby you will pass through “**fat man's squeeze**,” a narrow cleft between mica schist boulders. Rooted on these rocks are lichens, moss, ferns and a few herbs and tree seedlings. These plants obtain nourishment from the combined processes of rock erosion, decomposition of organic matter and ample moisture. The microclimate here provides the combination of cool temperature, high humidity and indirect light which best supports these plants.



9) Growing as understory trees, a few old **ironwoods** (*Carpinus caroliniana*) are evident here. Notice the thin, gray bark with a fluted or sinewy appearance- suggesting tendons and muscles under a thin skin. This is why the tree is sometimes called “muscle wood.” And as the name ironwood implies, the wood is also very hard. The small nutlets of ironwood are eaten by a variety of birds and rodents. It is a member of the birch family.

Follow trail uphill on Stillhouse Gap Road to cabin

10) This **remote cabin** represents the type of structure that was home for most mountain families in the 1800’s. While there are no modern conveniences here, there is shelter and a hint of rustic isolation. Homeowners wishing to use this cabin overnight are welcome; but reservations are suggested to ensure a comfortable time.

