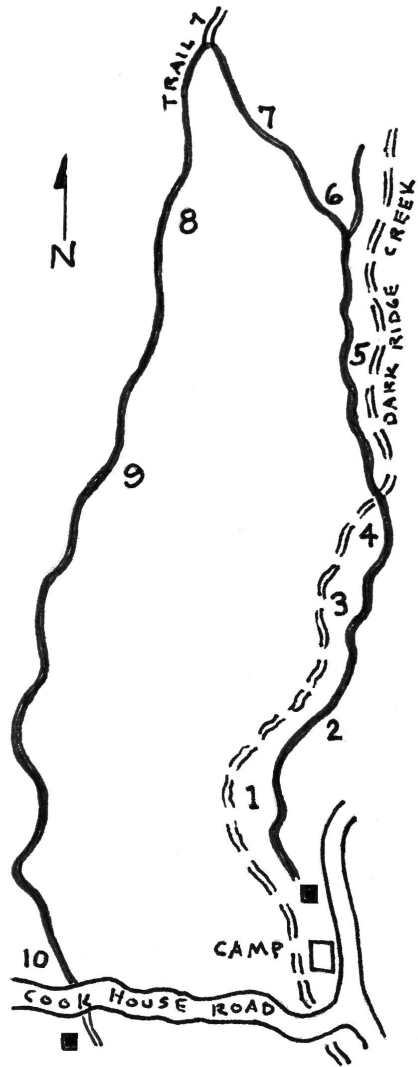


Camp Ground Loop Trail 37

Map not to scale



- | | | | |
|--------------------|--|--------------------|--|
| TRAIL | | ROADS | |
| INTERPRETIVE BOXES | | INTERPRETIVE POSTS | |
| STREAMS | | 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 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

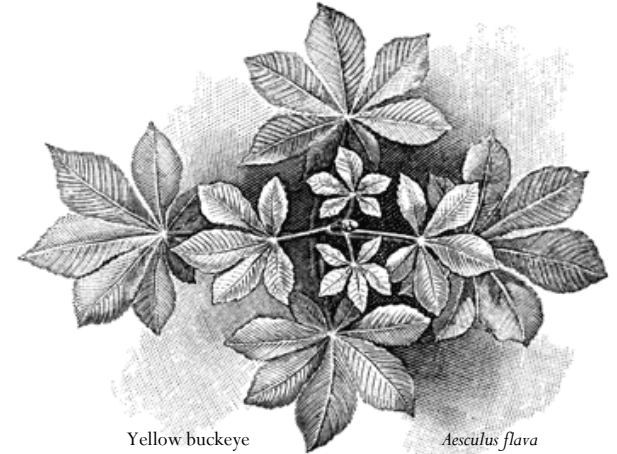
BMP Security
Phone: (828)631-1011

Interpretive Trail Guide

FOLLOWING NUMBERED POSTS PLACED
ALONG TRAIL



Camp Ground Loop Trail 37



Yellow buckeye

Aesculus flava

Terrain: Moderate terrain with log steps and bridges. Connects with Fisher Cove Trail to complete loop back to Camp.

Trail elevation: Gradual change of 100'

Trail length: A one way loop trip is 1.2 miles

Trail Difficulty: Easy to moderate.

Must see: Dark Ridge Creek

1) The abundant evergreen shrubs hint that soils are highly acidic in this cove. These shrubs are all members of the heath family (Ericaceae), which as a group thrive in soils of low pH. Dense patches of **dog-hobble** (*Leucothoe catesbyana*) hide the forest floor, while taller **mountain laurel** (*Kalmia latifolia*) and **rhododendron** (*Rhododendron maximum*) rise overhead. All bloom at different periods from May to July.

2) The **Fraser's sedge** (*Cymophyllus fraserianus*) is a clump-forming evergreen herb



with leathery, strap-shaped leaves resembling a ground-dwelling bromeliad. It is uncommon on the Preserve and its

presence here can be viewed as a botanical highlight of your walk. This plant prefers shady, moist locations in mature or old forests. Its white flowers appear in May.

3) The small island within the streambed of Dark Ridge Creek gives an indication of the volume and power of waters that can race through here. Debris ranging from leaves to logs can be seen piled up against sturdy obstacles, a testament to times of high rainfall. Upstream are many square miles of steep terrain in an extensive watershed, and this creek is the drain outlet. The high water quality of this stream also tells you the majority of its watershed is still protected and filtered by an intact covering of forest.



4) The **yellow buckeye** (*Aesculus flava*) thrives in moist, cool soils and shows up most frequently along streams, as here. Its capsular fruits split and release glossy brown seeds resembling nuts but they are inedible because they contain a bitter and poisonous alkaloid. Several types of buckeye are native in the U.S, but yellow buckeye attains the largest dimensions - heights over 100 feet and diameters of 4 feet or more.

5) Here you can see the two common birches of the southern Appalachians side-by-side. **Yellow birch** (*Betula allegheniensis*) has slightly shreddy or papery bark on young trunks, ranging in color from gray to yellow-brown. **Black birch** (*Betula lenta*) has relatively smooth dark grayish bark. Both are popular for their tasty wintergreen-flavored sap which can be sampled by chewing on a twig.

6) *The trail portion continuing down Dark Ridge Creek ultimately dead-ends; to complete a loop back to the Camp, take the left fork.* As you start up the slope, notice the big tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) with a large grape vine attached. This is **summer grape** (*Vitis aestivalis*), the most common type of wild grape on the Preserve. Notice the way this vine hangs from high in the tree's crown. It is likely the vine attached to this tree when it was a young sapling, as the grape cannot climb a large, limbless tree trunk.



7) About 25 feet downslope stands a large **pignut hickory** (*Carya glabra*). Its trunk diameter, height and crown spread indicates this tree is one of the older residents of this forested slope. Smaller sub-canopy trees are waiting for an opportunity to push upward on the day this hickory loses its dominance.



8) Along this old road edge are many **silverbell** trees (*Halesia tetraptera*). Their bark is striped on young sprouts, but thickly furrowed and dark bluish-gray on older trunks. These are showy trees in spring, when white, bell-shaped flowers dangle on nearly bare twigs. The corky-winged fruits yield tasty internal seeds for rodents. Silverbell is somewhat uncommon throughout the Preserve, but locally abundant here.



9) Below the trail stand two **sugar maples** (*Acer saccharum*), side-by-side. These two trees illustrate genetic variation within a species, as



one is tastier to sap-drinking birds. Sap quality, whether involving sugar concentration or flow, has prompted woodpeckers to feast on one of these maples and ignore the other, tapping horizontal holes so the sap can ooze forth. Evaporation of water from sap that has run down the bark leaves sugar behind, which hosts growth of black sooty mold- hence the burned look.



10) Perched on the slope between Cookhouse Road and the trail is a **butternut walnut** (*Juglans cinerea*), an uncommon tree destined to become rarer. The butternut wilt disease, for which there is no known cure, has killed a great majority of these trees in the eastern U.S. The dead limbs and cankers of this tree indicate the presence of the fungal pathogen.

From the junction ahead, follow Cookhouse Road back to the Camp.