



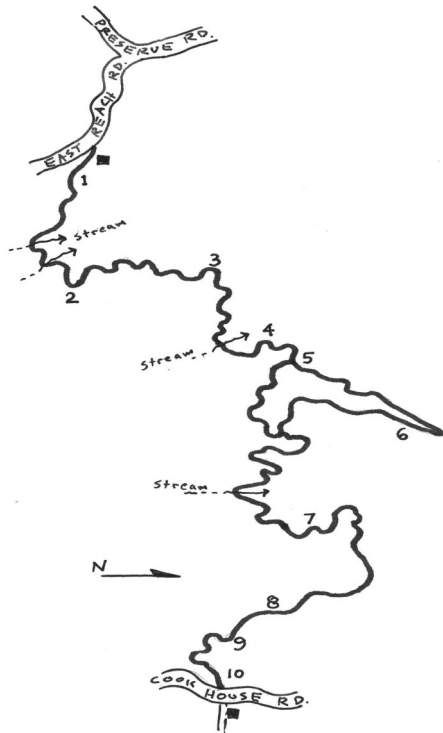
10) Perched on the slope between Cookhouse Road and the trail is a **butternut walnut**

(*Juglans cinerea*), an uncommon tree destined to become rarer. The butternut wilt disease has killed a great majority of these trees, and the dead limbs and cankers of this tree indicate the fungal pathogen is within it.

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

Fisher Cove Trail 7

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 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

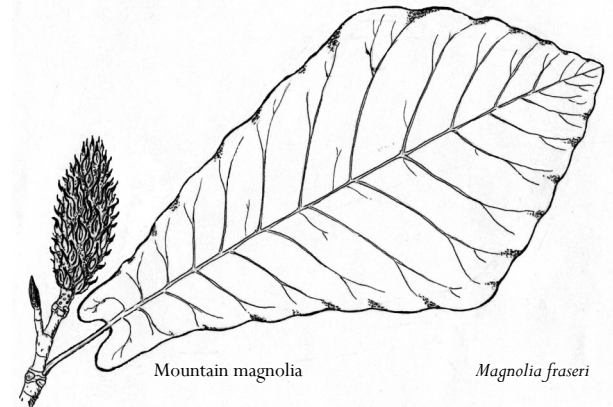
BMP Security
Phone: (828)631-1011

Interpretive Trail Guide

FOLLOWING NUMBERED POSTS PLACED ALONG TRAIL



Fisher Cove Trail 7



Terrain: Moderate terrain along old logging roads. Connects with Dark Ridge Camp Loop on east end.

Trail elevation: 100 ft elevation difference between each end

Trail length: A one way trip is 3.5 miles; the Fisher Cove Alternate Trail extends this by 0.7 mile

Trail Difficulty: Easy to moderate.

Must see: Dark Ridge Creek

1) Vines are abundant in the regenerating forests of Balsam Mountain Preserve. One common vine climbing by tendrils and having shreddy brown bark is the **summer grape** (*Vitis aestivalis*), often seen hanging vertically or looping from tree canopies. Our other common vine is the dutchman's pipe or **pipevine** (*Aristolochia macrophylla*), with green or gray stems twisting and twining around other supporting stems. Both are native species, even though their appearance might suggest an invasive plant.



2) The evergreen ground-cover is **running cedar** (*Diphasiastrum digitatum*), a type of club moss. This vascular plant is known by a variety of other names, including running pine, ground pine, ground cedar and turkey brush. Creeping stems lying between soil and leaf litter send up vertical stems at intervals. Extensive patches like this one are many decades old, likely older than the new forest overhead.

3) Dense patches of **greenbrier** (*Smilax rotundifolia*) are valuable habitat for a range of wild-life species. This



type of cover is used by grouse as well as other birds and small mammals. The succulent spring stems are relished by deer, rabbit, woodchuck, and make a fine salad for people, as well. The black fruits are eaten by many birds and mammals, and this plant may be the most widespread plant species on the Preserve, its seed dispersed through many digestive tracts.

4) The gray-barked tree nearby showing some heartwood decay is a **Fraser magnolia** (*Magnolia fraseri*), also known as mountain magnolia. Look for its fallen blackened fruit - conelike structures that were red when they matured in September. They offer fat-rich seeds for rodents and migratory birds. The purplish winter buds may reach over an inch in length, the largest and plumpest being flower buds. The early spring flowers may be 4 inches wide and tall and have an aromatic fragrance upon opening.

The trail forks at station 5; left (# 7A) is a 1-mile loop ascending 150 ft. to a ridge overlooking Fisher Cove, and including interpretive station 6. Continuing right (# 7), a shorter route takes you across the same ridge at a gap.

5) Notice here the nearby **striped maple** (*Acer pennsylvanicum*) with its thin bark, green twigs and large, 3-lobed leaves in summer. This understory tree is a northern maple intolerant of summer heat in southern lowlands, but thrives in these mountain elevations. It is not a long-lived tree, and rarely does its trunk exceed 8 inches diameter.

6) Along this ridgetop, a mature oak-hickory forest contrasts with the younger growth seen on the western slopes. Notice the wide crowns and large trunks of the old hickories on this wind-swept site, also a property line that escaped logging activities. The tough constitution of hickory trees to resist extremes of weather and site conditions permits them to reach sizes well beyond even these examples. A deep, anchoring root system helps in their stabilization and hardiness.



7) Above the trail find the **scarlet oak** (*Quercus coccinea*) that has abnormally thin and smooth bark. This tree re-sprouted from a stump after 1981 and has grown rapidly. Oaks that add wood quickly during fast growth typically have thinner bark, since the annual production of bark cells barely accommodates the expanding trunk diameter. Bark cell formation of slower-growing oaks normally can accumulate into thicker layers when the ratio of annual wood formation is less.



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. This tree's beautiful white, bell-shaped flowers dangle from nearly bare twigs in early spring. The corky-winged



fruits yield tasty seed for rodents. Silverbell is somewhat uncommon throughout the preserve, but 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 may 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.

