

Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, VA Day Hike

This 3.5 mile loop hike occurred on Saturday, March 7, 2020. Participants were Tom O'Brien, Riley Hoch, Regan Hoch, Mary Gordon, Xander Campagna, Jessica Lowry, Dave McIntyre, Jason Brue, Abby Brue and Mike Calabrese.

It was 37 degrees and windy when I pulled into the church parking lot at 7:30 AM to see who would be attending this hike. I wasn't sure who would be showing up. Between 7:50 and 8:00 AM Dave, Tom, Mary and Jessica drove in. So then there were 8 of us going on this hike. At 8:00 AM we took 3 cars and drove the 1 hour and 20 minute drive to Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship near Purcellville, VA to begin this hike.

When we arrived at the park Jason and his daughter Abby were waiting for us. Then there were 10 of us. We used the restrooms and then started on what would turn out to be about a 3.5 mile hike.

I didn't recon this hike beforehand and the map was produced in 2004 and was updated in 2013. These 2 factors would affect this hike. We took the access trail for about .25 miles from the trailhead to the Farmstead Loop. We weren't sure which way to go so we turned right onto the Farmstead Loop. We would be mostly hiking counterclockwise on this loop.

Initially we had a big up. We passed the Rock



*Interpretive sign along the trail.
By Mary Gordon*



*Mike C conquering the up.
By Mary Gordon*



*1 of 3 Historic Cabins.
By Mary Gordon*

Trail, then the Piney Run Spur. We then had a nice down and then came across the first of 3 historic cabins. This one was in pretty bad shape. We hiked a short distance and came across a second historic cabin. It was in better shape but still not inhabitable. We noticed that there had been electrical lines run to this cabin at one time. While at this cabin I noticed that a side trail went to Piney Run and stopped. I wanted to get to the Little Turtle Trail to continue our trek. But the creek was too swollen to cross. About that time a gentleman came up the trail walking a dog. He started a conversation with us and told us of a bridge further down the trail that we could cross the creek on. He also said that he was involved with the organization that currently oversees this park. I asked him about when the commonwealth of VA was going to take this park over. He said that they now owned the land that we were standing on and would probably take full control and develop the park within the next 5 to 10 years.

Again, we started off down the trail, which was fairly level at that point. At around the 1.5 mile mark we saw a fairly new bridge spanning Piney Run. After crossing the bridge we had a short but steep up, then a short but not as steep down. We then intersected a gravel road. At this point I thought that we were on the Little Turtle Trail. We weren't. We were on the Old Bridge Trail. We should have turned right on this road and it would have taken us over to the Little Turtle Trail. I thought that we should turn left. We did, we made it to the power line that I wanted to get to. However, we were on Arnold LA, which was east of the Arnold Trail where I wanted to end up.



*Wortman Pond.
By Mary Gordon*



*Along the access trail.
By Mary Gordon*



*Which way do we go?
By Mike Calabrese*

We then turned around and hiked back to the bridge over Piney Creek and hiking about .5 miles that we shouldn't have had to hike. We then turned right and continued on the Farmstead Loop. When we came to the third historic cabin, which while still uninhabited, looked to be in the best shape of the 3 that we encountered, we decided to turn right and hike the Derry Loop. It was about a mile long. We had an initial up, then it leveled out. We weren't sure which way to turn at two points. We guessed correctly the first time, then incorrectly the second time.

I had my Bushnell Backtrack with me. This is a cheap GPS like device that you set when you are at your vehicle. It then tells you how far away that you are from your vehicle and which direction to take to get back to it. This device came to our rescue by telling us that we were only about 300 yards from our vehicles and which way to go to get there. So we followed it, got back on the access trail at around 3 miles, then made it back to our vehicles around 11:15 AM. We saw a troop of Boy Scouts lugging in their gear to camp out within the Demory Field campsite. I hope that they had fun and kept warm that night.

Everyone told me that they thought that it was a good hike. I'm disappointed in myself in that I should have researched this one better so that we wouldn't have had the issues that we did. I think that we can get another hike out of this park by parking our vehicles at the intersection of Arnold LA and the Old Bridge Trail. Then, we can hike in and explore the trail to the AT as well as the Wood Thrush Trail Loop and the Legacy Trail Loop. I'm looking forward to returning here in the future.



*Map of where we hiked.
By BRCES*

Mike C

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