



## Neels Gap (U.S. 19/129) to Woody Gap (Ga. 60) Section Fifteen 10.7 Miles

### Brief Description of Section

This section of the A.T. is a pleasant day's hike between two paved highways. Despite two long, steep climbs (north to south), the section is a moderately strenuous hike. From Neels Gap (3,125 feet), the Trail ascends gradually, then more steeply by switchbacks, and then gradually through rock outcroppings to the top of Blood Mountain (4,461 feet), which has spectacular views. This two-mile section is perhaps the most hiked section of the Georgia A.T.

The Trail then descends to Slaughter Gap (3,800 feet). Beyond, through short climbs and descents, it gradually loses elevation until the ascent of Big Cedar Mountain (3,737 feet) and the descent to Woody Gap (3,150 feet).

Most of the Trail between Neels Gap and Woody Gap is included in a congressionally designated wilderness area.

### Points of Interest

The outstanding features of this section are Blood and Big Cedar mountains. According to Indian legend, a battle fought on Blood Mountain between the Cherokees and the Creeks was so fierce that the mountain "ran red with blood." Lichenous plants covering its rocky slopes sometimes have a reddish hue.

The views from Blood Mountain are spectacular. The rock outcrop near the stone shelter on the summit allows splendid views south. The A.T. is to the right, on the broad, flat ridge leading back to Springer Mountain. Just below the summit, a rock face provides a spectacular panoramic vista. To the southeast is Yonah Mountain, with an unusual, steep rock face. To the northeast, across Neels Gap, is Levelland Mountain. Also to the northeast is the crest of the Blue Ridge with Tray Mountain in the distance.

A two-room stone shelter is located near the summit of Blood Mountain. It was built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1994, at GATC's suggestion, the Forest Service banned all campfires within 300 feet of the Trail in the 3.3-mile section between Slaughter Creek and Neels Gap. The ban, which remains in place, is an effort to allow overused areas to return to their natural state. Fires are prohibited at the shelter as well; the fireplace at the shelter was closed in with stone in 1996. Blood Mountain is the most-visited spot on the A.T. south of Clingmans Dome, and the impact of more than 40,000 visitors a year has taken its toll.

The top of Blood Mountain has no firewood or water. The nearest water sources are near Flatrock Gap, 1.4 miles north, and at Slaughter Creek, 0.9 mile south, but they are unreliable. Fires are prohibited between Neels Gap and Slaughter Creek.

Big Cedar Mountain, one mile north on the Trail from Woody Gap, has excellent views to the south from its rock outcropping.

The Lake Winfield Scott Recreation Area can be reached by a 2.7-mile blue-blazed trail from Slaughter Gap and a one-mile side trail from Jarrard Gap. This area may be closed in winter but, in season, has swimming, a lake, restrooms, picnic areas, and water. Lake Winfield Scott is located on Ga. 180, about 22 miles north of Dahlonega *via* Ga. 60.

### Road Approaches

Neels Gap, the northern end of the section, is located on U.S. 19/129, 19 miles north of Cleveland and 22 miles north of Dahlonega. Neels Gap is about 14 miles south of Blairsville and three miles south of Vogel State Park. Parking is available 0.3 mile north on highway.

Woody Gap, at the southern end of the section, is on Ga. 60, about 5.6 miles north of Stone Pile Gap, the junction of Ga. 60 and U.S. 19, and 15 miles north of Dahlonega. The small town of Suches is 1.6 miles north of Woody Gap. Parking is available in the gap; \$2.00 parking fee required (1998).

## Maps

USGS Neels Gap quadrangle, ATC Chattahoochee National Forest map.

## Shelters, Campsites, and Water

This section has two shelters for overnight use. The new (1998) Woods Hole Shelter is located 0.5 mile off the Trail near Bird Gap, 4.0 miles south of Neels Gap. A small stream is nearby. Blood Mountain Shelter is located 2.4 miles from the northern end of the section. This shelter may be closed in the near future, so check with the Forest Service or ATC before planning an overnight stay there. On the northern 3.7 miles of the section, campfires, fire rings, and the gathering of firewood are prohibited.

This section has several water sources: at Flatrock Gap; Slaughter Creek; just south of Jarrard Gap; between Henry and Dan gaps; near Big Cedar Mountain; and in Woody Gap, about 150 yards away on a woods road. There are several stream crossings.

Due to the unreliability of those sources, hikers are advised to obtain water at Neels Gap or Woody Gap.

## Public Accommodations and Supplies

Neels Gap, at the northern end of the section, has a store at the Walasi-Yi Center with hiking and camping supplies, showers, and a laundromat. (The hostel will resume services in 1999.) Write Manager, Walasi-Yi Center, 9710 Gainesville Highway, Blairsville, GA 30512, or call (706) 745-6095. Blood Mountain Cabins and store are located about 0.3 mile south on U.S. 19/129, and Goose Creek Cabins are located 3.5 miles north of Neels Gap.

From Woody Gap, it is two miles north to Suches and the intersection of Ga. 60 and Ga. 180, where there is a grocery store and post office. Facilities at Lake Winfield Scott, 2.7 miles from Slaughter Gap, are seasonal and limited. Write USFS, Brasstown Ranger District, Blairsville, GA 30512; call (800) 864-7275.

Cabins, tentsites, showers, laundry service, and a supply concession are located at Vogel State Park (fee charged), about three miles north of Neels Gap off U.S. 19/129. For information, write: Superintendent, Vogel State Park, Blairsville, GA 30512.

No bus lines operate through Neels Gap or Woody Gap. The nearest taxi service to Neels Gap is at Blairsville, 14 miles north; shuttle services are available here and elsewhere on the A.T. Call ATC at (304) 535-6331 for an up-to-date list.

Parking for hikers at Neels Gap is available at the Byron Reece Memorial, 0.3 mile north on the highway. A blue-blazed trail leads from parking area to A.T. on Blood Mountain.

## Trail Description, North to South

Miles	Data
0.0	On the western side of U.S. 19/129 in Neels Gap (3,125 feet), ascend on graded trail.
0.9	Reach balanced rock on left. In about 100 yards, reach blue-blazed trail on right that leads about one mile to the Byron Reece Memorial, where parking for hikers is available. Water can be found about 0.2 mile down this trail. On A.T. just beyond is the blue-blazed Freeman Trail, to the left, which leads 1.8 miles around the southern slope of Blood Mountain and rejoins the A.T. at Bird Gap.
1.0	Reach Flatrock Gap (3,452 feet). Continue on A.T., ascending by switchbacks.
1.8	Reach rock outcrop with fine views. Bear around to right.
2.3	Reach exposed rock with panoramic vistas. (See "Brief Description of Section.") Climb steeply up rock face.
2.4	Reach open, rocky summit of Blood Mountain (4,461 feet). This is the highest point on the Georgia A.T. and offers splendid views. Summit has no water. Near the summit is the Blood Mountain Shelter, a two-room stone building built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps (may be closed; check with the Forest Service or ATC). The fireplace has been bricked in, and fires are prohibited in the shelter. Descend steeply.
2.5	Take sharp left, avoiding rocky old road. Begin descent of southwestern side of Blood Mountain by switchbacks.
3.3	Reach Slaughter Gap, where several trails converge. Straight ahead, blue-blazed Slaughter Gap Trail leads about 2.7 miles to Lake Winfield Scott, with campground and parking. Blue blazes to sharp right lead downhill to

water (unreliable). Blue-blazed trail on right through camping area is the Duncan Ridge Trail (DRT), a USFS national recreation trail constructed in the 1970s by GATC and USFS. The Duncan Ridge Trail intersects the A.T. at two points, here and one mile north of Three Forks, providing a 65-mile "loop trail" with the A.T. Several hundred yards down the Duncan Ridge Trail is the intersection of the yellow-blazed Coosa Bald Trail, which leads downhill to the right to Vogel State Park, a fee facility. Turn sharply left to continue on A.T., and swing around western slope of Blood Mountain.

- 3.7 Cross stream. Within 200 feet, cross second stream. Both form headwaters of Slaughter Creek.
- 4.0 Reach Bird Gap (3,650 feet). Here, blue-blazed Freeman Trail to left leads 1.8 miles around the southern side of Blood Mountain to rejoin the A.T. at Flatrock Gap. In about 60 yards reach blue-blazed trail on right leading about 0.5 mile to Woods Hole Shelter. Water available at small stream about halfway along trail (may be dry in dry weather).
- 4.3 Reach shoulder of Turkey Stamp Mountain (3,770 feet). Descend gradually to wide, flat area. Continue descent. Cross Horsebone Gap (3,450 feet). Ascend.
- 5.0 Reach shoulder of Gaddis Mountain, and descend around west slope.
- 5.4 Reach dirt road in Jarrard Gap (3,250 feet). To right, blue-blazed Jarrard Gap Trail, beginning on old road, leads about one mile to Lake Winfield Scott. Stream crosses this trail in about 0.3 mile. Continue uphill on wide trail.
- 5.5 Intermittent water on left of Trail.
- 5.9 Reach ridgcrest, known as Burnett Field Mountain (3,478 feet). Continue on Trail, which soon turns left and descends. Follow Trail on southern side of ridge, ascend, then descend into wide, flat area. Continue just below ridgetop. Reach rocky ledge with views to south. Descend by switchbacks.
- 7.0 Side trail leads right about 200 feet to Henry Gap (3,100 feet). Unpaved road from Henry Gap leads about 0.5 mile to Ga. 180 near Mt. Zion Church. Continue along left side of ridge (Baker Mountain). Descend.

- 7.8 Reach stream. Bear left, and ascend generally along small ridge.
- 8.1 Cross Dockery Lake Trail, which leads left about three miles down to Dockery Lake recreation area (no facilities).
- 8.5 Begin ascent of Granny Top Mountain. At top of ridge in small gap, turn back sharply left, and continue ascent.
- 8.7 Descend to Dan Gap. Watch for Trail relocation between here and summit of Big Cedar Mountain. Begin ascent of Big Cedar Mountain.
- 9.2 Pass spring on right of the Trail. Bear right, and continue gradual ascent.
- 9.7 Reach rocky face of Big Cedar Mountain (3,737 feet), with views to southeast. This rock face is sometimes called "Preaching Rock." Descent is steep.
- 10.0 Lunsford Gap (3,300 feet) is just to left at top of ridge. Ascend briefly, and continue around right side of ridge.
- 10.7 Reach picnic area and Ga. 60 in Woody Gap (3,150 feet); parking available. Trail on immediate right leads about 150 yards to spring. To continue on A.T., cross highway. Suches is two miles to the north, with a post office, health clinic, store with laundry facilities, and shower.

### Trail Description, South to North

#### Miles

#### Data

- 0.0 From Ga. 60 in Woody Gap (3,150 feet), go north through picnic area, and enter woods. Trail to left leads about 150 yards to spring. A.T. climbs gradually along left side of ridge.
- 0.7 Descend slightly, swinging to left of Lunsford Gap. Beyond, ascent is steep.
- 1.0 Reach rocky overlook near top of Big Cedar Mountain (3,737 feet), with excellent views to southeast. Continue ascent, then descend gradually.
- 1.5 Watch for Trail relocation between here and Dan Gap. Bear left, and begin descent.

- 2.0 Reach Dan Gap, cross old road, and ascend Granny Top Mountain. At bottom of slope on crest, turn back sharply right, and descend.
- 2.6 Cross Dockery Lake Trail, which leads right about three miles to Dockery Lake recreation area (no facilities). Descend gradually.
- 2.9 Cross stream. Bear right, follow old road briefly, then ascend, continuing along southern side of Baker Mountain.
- 3.7 Side trail to left leads about 200 feet to Henry Gap (3,100 feet). Unpaved road from Henry Gap leads about 0.5 mile to Ga. 180 near Mt. Zion Church. Ascend. Reach rock outcrop with view to the south. Descend, and continue just below ridgecrest. Enter flat area on crest. Cross over shoulder of ridge, ascend to ridgecrest, and turn right.
- 4.8 Pass over flat area known as Burnett Field Mountain (3,478 feet).
- 5.0 Begin descent.
- 5.2 Pass intermittent spring in bank to right of Trail.
- 5.3 Cross dirt road in Jarrard Gap (3,250 feet). Blue-blazed Jarrard Gap Trail to left, beginning on old road, leads about one mile to Lake Winfield Scott. Stream crosses this trail in about 0.3 mile. Ascend, and soon bear left around western side of Gaddis Mountain, just below summit.
- 5.7 Reach shoulder, and begin descent. Follow ridgecrest, reach Horsebone Gap (3,450 feet), ascend, and pass through flat area. Continue ascent.
- 6.4 Reach shoulder of Turkey Stamp Mountain (3,770 feet).
- 6.7 Reach Bird Gap (3,650 feet). Blue-blazed trail on left leads about 0.5 mile to **Woods Hole Shelter**. Water is available at small stream about halfway along Trail (may be dry in dry weather). In about 60 yards, blue-blazed trail to right leads 1.8 miles around southern side of Blood Mountain to Flatrock Gap on the A.T. Ascend gradually, swinging around western side of Blood Mountain.
- 7.0 Cross stream. Within 200 feet, cross second stream. Both form headwaters of Slaughter Creek. No-campfire zone begins here and ends at Neels Gap.
- 7.4 Reach Slaughter Gap (3,800 feet). In gap is junction of several trails. Blue-blazed Slaughter Gap Trail to left leads

- 2.7 miles to Lake Winfield Scott; blue-blazed trail straight ahead leads downhill about 200 feet to unreliable water source. Through camping area, bearing left, is a third blue-blazed trail, the Duncan Ridge National Recreation Trail, which leads to Ga. 180 at Wolfpen Gap. The Duncan Ridge Trail (DRT) intersects the A.T. at two points, here and one mile north of Three Forks, providing a 65-mile "loop trail" with the A.T. Several hundred yards down the Duncan Ridge Trail is the intersection of the yellow-blazed Coosa Bald Trail, which leads downhill to the right to Vogel State Park; fee. To continue on A.T., turn sharply right, and ascend southwest side of Blood Mountain.
- 8.2 Make sharp right turn, and ascend on rocky trail to summit.
- 8.3 Reach summit of Blood Mountain (4,461 feet). This is the highest point on the Georgia A.T., with views in all directions of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Near the summit is the **Blood Mountain Shelter**, a two-room stone building built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps (may be closed; check with the Forest Service or ATC). The fireplace has been bricked in, and fires are prohibited in the shelter. The summit has no water. Cross over open summit area, and descend.
- 8.4 Reach rock outcropping, with excellent views (see "Brief Description of Section"). Continue steeply down rock face, bear left, then bear right into wooded area.
- 8.9 Reach rocky overlook, bear around to left. Skirt side of mountain, then descend by switchbacks.
- 9.7 Reach Flatrock Gap (3,452 feet). In about 50 yards, blue-blazed trail to right leads 1.8 miles around southern slope of Blood Mountain to Bird Gap on the A.T. Just beyond is another blue-blazed trail to the left that leads about one mile to Byron Reece Memorial, where parking for hikers is available. Water can be found 0.2 mile down this trail. Continuing on the A.T., in about 100 yards, reach balanced rock on right, and bear to left side of ridge.
- 10.7 Reach U.S. 19/129 in Neels Gap (3,125 feet) and end of section.