



## Unicoi Gap (Ga. 75) to Tesnatee Gap (Ga. 348)

### Section Thirteen 14.5 Miles

#### Brief Description of Section

Viewed north to south, the Blue Ridge turns northwest, then southwest to form the upper rim of a huge bowl, enclosing the headwaters of the Chattahoochee River, the water source for Atlanta, the capital of Georgia, as well as many other municipalities.

This section traverses broad and narrow ridgetops and uses well-defined trails and sections of abandoned fire roads. There are several long climbs, with elevations varying from 2,949 feet at Unicoi Gap to 4,025 feet at Blue Mountain.

From Unicoi Gap, the Trail makes a steep ascent over Blue Mountain in about 1.4 miles, then descends past Rocky Knob to Chattahoochee Gap (3,500 feet). Beyond, the Trail swings southwest, skirts Horsetrough Mountain, and drops into Poplar Stamp Gap (3,350 feet). It then follows an abandoned road to Low Gap (3,050 feet) and continues up and down, with elevations ranging from 3,650 feet on Poor Mountain to 3,150 feet in Wide Gap. There, the Trail turns west and descends to Wolfpen Stamp (3,600 feet) and Hogpen Gap (3,450 feet). It then climbs gradually over Wildcat Mountain and descends to Tesnatee Gap (3,138 feet) and Ga. 348.

The Trail between Unicoi Gap and Hogpen Gap, and some of the Trail between Hogpen Gap and Tesnatee Gap, is now included in a congressionally designated wilderness area, a decision that determines maintenance and management practices by both the Georgia A.T. Club and the U.S. Forest Service.

#### Points of Interest

One site of interest is Chattahoochee Spring, headwaters of the Chattahoochee River and the drinking-water source for millions of

residents. From Chattahoochee Gap, location of the spring, a 5.3-mile blue-blazed side trail leads around Jacks Knob to Brasstown Bald, Georgia's highest mountain.

An abandoned road that enters Tesnatee Gap from the south is reputed to be one of the oldest in the region. It is impassable by car but was once a toll road over the mountain before the Neels Gap (Frogtown Gap) highway was built near the end of the nineteenth century. Charles Lanman, in his *Letters from the Allegheny Mountains*, wrote of stopping overnight in April 1848 at the cabin of a poor farmer in Tesnatee Gap. Lanman was on an exploratory journey to "Track Rock" from Logan's Plantation near Dahlonega, Georgia.

Until 1966, the Trail from Unicoi Gap to Neels Gap was the longest section of the A.T. in Georgia not crossed by a paved highway. That year, the Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway, Ga. 348, was built from Ga. 356, northwest of Robertstown, about 15 miles to Ga. 180.

Unicoi Gap was first crossed by an old Indian trail. Later, it was the route for the first road built across the mountain range. It is now crossed by a major highway, Ga. 75. A spring, the headwaters of the Hiawassee River, is located east of Ga. 75 and north of Unicoi Gap about 400 yards.

#### Road Approaches

Unicoi Gap, the northern end of the section, is located on Ga. 75, about nine miles north of Helen. To the north of Unicoi Gap, it is 14 miles to Hiawassee.

Poplar Stamp Gap, eight miles from Unicoi Gap, may be approached but not reached from Ga. 358, off Ga. 75, north of Robertstown.

Hogpen Gap, 13.6 miles south of Unicoi Gap, is crossed by Ga. 348 (the Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway), which extends approximately 15 miles from Ga. 356 (northwest of Robertstown) to Ga. 180. Parking is available here and at Tesnatee Gap.

Tesnatee Gap, the southern end of this section, is also crossed by Ga. 348, north of Hogpen Gap. (To reach Hogpen Gap and Tesnatee Gap, go north on Ga. 75 in Robertstown, turn left across the Chattahoochee River bridge onto Ga. 356, and, in 2.5 miles, turn

right onto Ga. 348.) It is about 10 miles from Robertstown to Hogpen Gap and 0.7 mile by road farther to Tesnatee Gap.

### Maps

USGS Cowrock, Jacks Gap, and Tray Mountain quadrangles, and the ATC Chattahoochee National Forest map.

### Shelters, Campsites, and Water

This section has three shelters. Blue Mountain Shelter is 2.2 miles from Unicoi Gap, and Low Gap Shelter is 9.4 miles. The Whitley Gap Shelter is located 1.2 miles down a blue-blazed side trail, which intersects the A.T. about 0.2 mile south of Hogpen Gap (Ga. 348), or 13.8 miles south of Unicoi Gap.

Water is located 0.2 mile north on the Trail, is 3.1 miles south of Unicoi Gap.

Springs are located near the Blue Mountain Shelter, at Rocky Knob, at Chattahoochee Gap, at Low Gap near the Low Gap Shelter, and near the Whitley Gap Shelter.

### Public Accommodations and Supplies

No bus lines operate through either Unicoi Gap or Tesnatee Gap. From Unicoi Gap, the nearest stores and supplies are in Robertstown, about eight miles south on Ga. 75. Helen, another mile south on Ga. 75, has motels, groceries, shops, laundromat, post office, and shuttle services.

### Trail Description, North to South

Miles	Data
0.0	At northern end of parking area in Unicoi Gap (2,949 feet), cross highway, and ascend on long switchback paralleling highway. Climb log steps, turn right, and continue ascent along rocky trail.
1.2	Reach ridgecrest.

- 1.4 Reach top of Blue Mountain (4,025 feet). Descend, and continue along narrow crest, alternately ascending and descending.
- 2.2 Reach blue-blazed trail to **Blue Mountain Shelter** (built in 1988 by GATC and USFS). Spring on the the right 0.1 mile south on A.T.
- 2.6 Pass Henson Gap (3,550 feet), named for man who was ambushed and killed here many years ago.
- 2.7 Reach large, flat area. Stream is approximately 150 yards down slope; spring is 0.2 mile ahead on Trail.
- 2.9 Spring is several yards to right of Trail, down rocky slope. Continue around Rocky Knob (4,015 feet). Cross several rock slides, and continue on northern side of ridge.
- 3.8 Enter Red Clay Gap (3,450 feet). Continue on left side of ridge.
- 4.2 Bear right, and ascend gradually.
- 4.4 Reach Chattahoochee Gap (3,500 feet). Chattahoochee Spring, source of Chattahoochee River, is about 200 yards down steep blue-blazed trail to the left. Blue-blazed trail entering gap from right leads around Jacks Knob and out Hiawassee Ridge about 2.4 miles to Jacks Gap on Ga. 180 and then to the top of Brasstown Bald. Avoid old road on left, and continue ascending along side of ridge. Descend following narrow ridgetop.
- 5.1 Reach flat area on ridgetop.
- 5.2 Begin sharp climb to top of knoll, then descend.
- 5.6 Reach Cold Springs Gap (3,450 feet). (No spring here.) Bear to left of ridge, and follow old road for next 3.8 miles to Low Gap. Skirt southeastern side of Horsetrough Mountain (4,045 feet). Several small streams cross road.
- 7.5 Cross shoulder, and descend.
- 8.0 Reach Poplar Stamp Gap (3,350 feet). Stream is several hundred feet down old road to left. Continue south along fire road.
- 9.4 Reach Low Gap (3,050 feet). Shelter and stream are about 200 feet to left (east). Two old trails, which may be indistinct and impassable, lead into the valley to right (west). Those trails converge at Stink Creek and connect with an old road that leads out to Choestoe. Follow Trail south up slope. Climb steadily.

- 10.0 Reach flat, rocky summit of Sheep Rock Top (3,575 feet). Descend, and continue along narrow ridge, alternately ascending and descending.
- 11.1 Enter Wide Gap (3,150 feet). (A trail, no longer visible from the A.T., enters from the right, and leads out to old Tesnatee Gap-Choestoe Road.) Begin long ascent along narrow ridge.
- 11.7 Reach top of Poor Mountain (3,650 feet). Descend along western side of ridge.
- 12.0 Enter Sapling Gap (3,450 feet). Continue on Trail, crossing to left side of ridge.
- 12.4 Pass to left of Strawberry Top (3,710 feet).
- 12.7 Reach ridgecrest at White Oak Stamp. Continue along crest, passing to left of Wolfpen Stamp (3,600 feet).
- 13.6 Reach Hogpen Gap and Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway (Ga. 348). (North on highway about 0.1 mile is a superb view of the mountains, including Brasstown Bald, as well as Lordamercy Cove just below road.) In parking area, turn left, and parallel highway for about 200 feet. Cross highway, and begin ascent of Wildcat Mountain. On left is blue-blazed side trail that leads to water.
- 13.8 On top of ridge, reach sign and blue-blazed trail to the left leading 1.2 miles to **Whitley Gap Shelter** (built by USFS in 1974). To reach shelter, follow blue-blazed trail along ridgetop through laurel and rhododendron, then descend steeply to shelter. About 0.3 mile behind shelter is a spring. To continue on Trail, follow ridge north for 0.1 mile, and begin descent.
- 14.0 Reach rock cliff with view of Cowrock Mountain to west and 1,200-foot deep gorge of Town Creek between. Descent is steep.
- 14.5 Reach Tesnatee Gap (3,138 feet) and Ga. 348 again. To continue on Trail, cross parking area, and begin climb.

**Trail Description, South to North**

Miles	Data
0.0	From Ga. 348 in Tesnatee Gap (3,138 feet), ascend Wildcat Mountain by switchbacks, passing large boulders and rock outcropping.
0.5	Reach rock cliff with view of Cowrock Mountain to west and Town Creek Valley below. Continue along ridge.
0.7	Reach sign and blue-blazed trail to right leading 1.2 miles to <b>Whitley Gap Shelter</b> . (To reach shelter, follow blue-blazed trail along ridgetop through laurel and rhododendron. Magnificent views in season from ridgetop. Descend steeply to shelter. About 0.3 mile behind shelter is a spring.)
0.9	Reach Hogpen Gap (3,450 feet) and Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway (Ga. 348). Cross highway, turn left, parallel highway, and continue to northern end of parking area. (North on highway about 0.1 mile is a superb view of mountains, including Brasstown Bald, and Lordamercy Cove just below road. In winter, springs above road form icy cliffs.) To continue on Trail, ascend short ramp, and follow ridgecrest, passing to right of Wolfpen Stamp (3,600 feet).
1.8	Reach White Oak Stamp. Bear to right, and continue on eastern side of ridge.
2.1	Pass to right of Strawberry Top (3,710 feet).
2.5	Enter Sapling Gap (3,450 feet). Beyond, ascend along western side of ridge.
2.8	Reach summit of Poor Mountain (3,650 feet). Descend, and continue along narrow ridgecrest.
3.4	Pass Wide Gap (3,150 feet). An old trail, no longer visible from A.T., enters from left. This trail leads to old Tesnatee-Choestoe road. Ascend, then alternately descend and ascend along narrow crest.
4.5	Pass summit of Sheep Rock Top (3,575 feet). Begin long descent.

- 5.1 Reach Low Gap (3,050 feet). Spring and shelter about 200 feet to right (east). Bear to right, and follow wide trail around eastern side of ridge for next 1.4 miles.
- 5.5 Stream crosses under road.
- 6.5 Enter Poplar Stamp Gap (3,350 feet). Stream is several hundred feet down old road to the right. Continue on old road, and climb gradually for approximately 0.5 mile, skirting eastern side of Horsetrough Mountain at about 3,500-foot elevation.
- 7.0 Reach shoulder, and descend gradually. Several small streams cross road.
- 8.9 Reach Cold Springs Gap (3,450 feet). (No spring here.) Proceed straight ahead, leaving remains of old road on right. Ascend.
- 9.1 Reach top of knoll, and descend along ridge.
- 9.3 Reach flat area.
- 9.4 Bear left, and ascend, following narrow ridgecrest.
- 10.1 Reach Chattahoochee Gap (3,500 feet). Chattahoochee Spring, source of Chattahoochee River, is about 200 yards down slope on a blue-blazed trail. In the gap, blue-blazed trail straight ahead up ridge leads around Jacks Knob and out Hiawasse Ridge about 2.4 miles to Jacks Gap on Ga. 180, then to the top of Brasstown Bald. From Chattahoochee Gap, continue to right along southern side of ridge.
- 10.7 Reach Red Clay Gap (3,450 feet). Bear right, and continue through laurel thicket, crossing several rock slides. Swing around to the left side of Rocky Knob (4,015 feet).
- 11.6 Spring is several yards to the left of Trail down rocky slope.
- 11.8 Reach large, flat area. Stream is approximately 150 yards down slope on left.
- 11.9 Pass Henson Gap (3,550 feet), named for a man who was ambushed and killed here many years ago. Beyond, ascend on northern side of ridge.
- 12.2 Spring on left of Trail.
- 12.3 Reach side trail to **Blue Mountain Shelter** (built in 1988 by GATC and USFS). Continue on Trail along ridge, which becomes narrow with steep sides. Alternately descend and ascend.

- 13.1 Reach crest of Blue Mountain (4,025 feet). Descend gradually.
- 13.3 Bear left of ridge. Continue descent.
- 14.3 Turn left down slope. Follow long switchback that parallels highway.
- 14.5 Reach Unicoi Gap (2,949 feet) and Ga. 75; parking available.