

Deep Gap (USFS 71) to Bly Gap

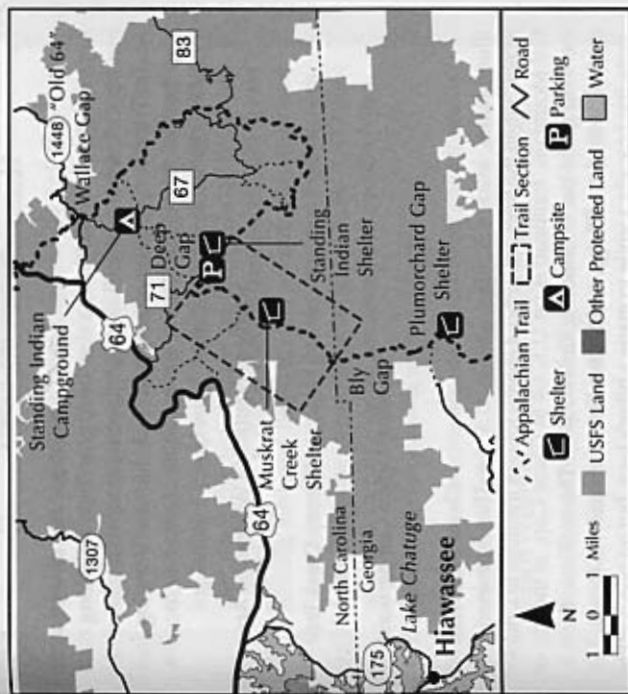
6.8 MILES

Bly Gap, at the southern end of this section, marks a division between club maintaining responsibilities and a division in the terrain of the Trail. From here on, northbound hikers will generally find themselves at elevations of 4,500 feet, or higher, all the way north through the Smokies (see Section One). South of Bly Gap, the Trail averages about 3,500 feet in elevation. Between Deep Gap (elev. 4,341 feet) and Bly Gap (elev. 3,840 feet), the Trail follows the crest of the Blue Ridge, with views to the west of Shooting Creek Valley and Lake Chatuge. The northern part completes a long curve around the headwaters of the Tallulah River; the southern part climbs steeply north out of Georgia. This route skirts the Southern Nantahala Wilderness Area. Bly Gap offers an open view northwest to the Tusquitee Range, and a half-mile side trail near Muskrat Creek Shelter to Ravenrock Ridge affords an outstanding view to the north and west.

Road Approaches—The northern end at Deep Gap can be reached by following a long, gravel Forest Service road (USFS 71). There is no road approach to Bly Gap at the southern end.

Maps—ATC Nantahala National Forest map (with this guide); USFS map of Southern Nantahala Wilderness Area and Standing Indian Basin; TVA Rainbow Springs and Hightower Bald quadrangles.

Shelters and Campsites—The only shelter in this section is the Muskrat Creek Shelter (mile 4.0/2.8 below).



6.8 MILES

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

Northern end of section → At parking area on USFS 71, a one-lane, gravel, six-mile-long road leaving U.S. 64 near the Clay-Macon county line, about 5.0 miles west of Wallace Gap (see northern end of section) and Winding Stair Gap (see Section Eight). Trash cans available. No public accommodations or facilities are nearby.

Southern Nantahala Wilderness Area →

See Section Nine.

Kimsey Creek Trail →

See Section Nine.

Standing Indian Campground →

See Section Nine.

Chunky Gal Trail →

Blue-blazed, leads 5.5 miles west to U.S. 64. This little-used trail (scenic when the trees are without leaves) follows the ridge of Chunky Gal Mountain. Trailhead is on U.S. 64 in Glade Gap, at the top of the long grade out of Shooting Creek Valley. The trailhead there is marked with a small sign and blazes but is not easy to locate. The name has brought a smile to many a hiker's face, but no one is quite sure where it comes from. One possibility is a legend about a portly native American maiden, who left her family to pursue a lover. A more likely possibility is that it's simply a corruption of a Cherokee word. One old map from 1863 labels it "Chucky Girl"; "-chucky" is a common element in Cherokee place names.

Whiteoak Stamp →

A fair spring is located about 400 feet southeast of Whiteoak Stamp on an unmarked trail.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION

- | N-S | TRAIL DESCRIPTION | S-N |
|-----|---|-----|
| 0.0 | Reach parking area at Deep Gap (elev. 4,341 feet) and northern end of section at boundary of Southern Nantahala Wilderness Area. USFS 71 intersects to west, leading 6.0 miles to U.S. 64. Blue-blazed Kimsey Creek Trail to west descends at a gentle grade for 3.7 miles to Standing Indian Campground. Seasonal water is available 150 feet down the blue-blazed trail at the edge of an old camping area. ■ Southbound hikers go straight across parking area and begin graded ascent. ■ Northbound hikers ascend on a graded trail between two logging roads, east of parking areas, beginning 2.4-mile, 1,157-foot ascent of Standing Indian Mountain (see Section Nine). | 6.8 |
| 0.7 | Cross rock outcropping on switchbacks. | 6.1 |
| 1.1 | Reach view to compass-north and highest point in section (elev. 4,840 feet). | 5.7 |
| 2.1 | Reach Wateroak Gap (elev. 4,460) in small clearing. | 4.7 |
| 3.0 | Blue-blazed Chunky Gal Trail intersects to west. • Southbound hikers bear left. ■ Northbound hikers bear right. | 3.8 |
| 3.2 | Cross edge of large, grassy clearing at Whiteoak Stamp. | 3.6 |

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

Muskrat Creek Shelter →

Built in 1996, accommodates eight. This shelter has a latrine uphill from the shelter. Water is located at a spring behind the shelter. Next shelter: south 7.3 miles (Plumorchard Gap); north 4.9 miles (Standing Indian).

Blue-blazed trail →

Leads west about 0.5 mile to cliff view on Ravenrock Ridge.

Southern end of section →

Not accessible by road. North of here, the Trail is maintained by the Nantahala Hiking Club. South of here, it is maintained by the Georgia A.T. Club. USFS 72, sometimes impassable, is the nearest road, at Blue Ridge Gap (see Section Eleven) that crosses the A.T., 3.2 miles south. USFS 71, 6.8 miles north on the A.T. at Deep Gap, at the northern end of this section, leads six miles to U.S. 64. Bly Gap has two springs, one on each side of the Trail, about 100 feet away. Several trails converge here, so take care to follow the A.T. To the west is a five-mile route down Eagle Fork of Shooting Creek, which begins as a worn woods road. Another trail, as indicated on the TVA Hightower Bald quadrangle, leads to Tate City on the Tallulah River Fall Branch.

Side Trails in the Nantahalas—Side trails are an outstanding feature of this part of the Appalachian Trail. In conjunction with the A.T., a wide variety of loop hikes of one day or several days can be made. Hikers contemplating loop hikes are urged to acquire the USFS map entitled "Southern Nantahala Wilderness and Standing Indian Basin," which covers the A.T. from Wallace Gap south into Georgia and most of the side trails described in this book. Most north of Bly Gap are maintained cooperatively by the USFS and the Nantahala Hiking Club. See pages 223–227 for more information on loop hikes.

TRAIL DESCRIPTION

- 4.0** Blue-blaze trail leads east 100 feet to **Muskrat Creek Shelter**. ■ **SOUTHBOUND** hikers cross stream and pass **blue-blazed trail** leading west. ■ **NORTHBOUND** hikers follow mostly gentle terrain.
- 4.1** Pass viewpoint to west.
- 4.3** Cross logs over stream.
- 4.9** **Sassafras Gap**. ■ **SOUTHBOUND** hikers begin steep ascent of Courthouse Bald. ■ **NORTHBOUND** hikers follow gently rising Trail.
- 5.4** Skirt top of Courthouse Bald (elev. 4,690 feet). ■ **SOUTHBOUND** hikers begin steep descent to end of section and 4.5-mile, 1,580-foot descent to Blue Ridge Gap (see Section Eleven). ■ **NORTHBOUND** hikers descend steeply.
- 5.7** Pass fine view into Shooting Creek Valley to west of Trail.
- 6.0** Skirt Sharp Top (elev. 4,338 feet). ■ **SOUTHBOUND** hikers descend steeply. ■ **NORTHBOUND** hikers ascend through two small gaps.
- 6.8** Reach **southern end of section** at Bly Gap (elev. 3,840 feet), north of the Georgia line, on an open ridge below Sharp Top with fine views to west. ■ **SOUTHBOUND** hikers descend and turn sharply left, descend another 100 yards, then turn right (see Section Eleven). ■ **NORTHBOUND** hikers continue along crest straight ahead, beginning steep, 1,000-foot ascent of Sharp Top and Courthouse Bald in North Carolina.