



## Dicks Creek Gap (U.S. 76) to Unicoi Gap (Ga. 75) Section Twelve 16.1 Miles

### Brief Description of Section

While much of this section is on well-graded trail, it contains some of the longest climbs and highest peaks of any Georgia section.

From Dicks Creek Gap (2,675 feet), the Trail ascends Powell Mountain (3,850 feet) and Kelly Knob (4,276 feet), then loses elevation through a series of ascents and descents until it reaches "The Swag of the Blue Ridge" (3,400 feet), a wide, low section. Beyond, the Trail ascends Tray Mountain (4,430 feet), descends to Indian Grave Gap (3,113 feet), and climbs Rocky Mountain (4,017 feet), before descending to Unicoi Gap (2,949 feet).

The Trail between Addis Gap and Tray Gap is now included in the Bobcat Wilderness Area.

### Points of Interest

The major points of interest are Tray Mountain (4,430 feet), with a splendid viewpoint, and "The Swag of the Blue Ridge" (3,400 feet), a long, broad ridgecrest with only moderate elevation change for more than three miles.

In the 1960s, when the Georgia A.T. was threatened with extinction by a proposed extension of the Blue Ridge Parkway, GATC battled doggedly for, and won, preservation of "The Swag of the Blue Ridge" because of its unique qualities. Since the 1968 passage of the National Trails System Act and the designation of the Appalachian Trail as the first national scenic trail, the Georgia A.T., including the Swag, has been afforded protection from roads and other development.

The crest of Tray Mountain (4,430 feet) offers superb vistas to the south and southeast. Tray Mountain is probably the southernmost

breeding area in the United States for Canada warblers. Directly south is Yonah Mountain. The isolated peak to the southeast is Curruhee Mountain, near Toccoa, Georgia. Farther north on the Trail are views of the Blue Ridge. Brasstown Bald, the highest peak in Georgia, is the prominent peak to the northwest. Rabun Bald, the second-highest peak, is to the northeast. The Nantahala Range can be seen directly to the north in North Carolina.

Between Tray Gap and Indian Grave Gap is an area called the "cheese factory." This was the site of a remote mountain farm operated by a transplanted New Englander in the early nineteenth century. For an interesting account of the old "cheese factory" and of "Trail Mountain" (Tray Mountain), read Charles Lanman's *Letters from the Allegheny Mountains*, published in 1849.

### Road Approaches

Dicks Creek Gap is located on U.S. 76, 18 miles west of Clayton and 11 miles east of Hiawassee, which have most services.

In Addis Gap, 5.3 miles south of Dicks Creek Gap, a fire road, USFS 26, leads east about eight miles to Ga. 197 at Wildcat Creek near Lake Burton. To the west of Addis Gap, the road, impassable by car near the gap, leads about five miles to Ga. 75 north of Unicoi Gap.

Unpaved USFS 79 leads southeast from Tray Gap to join the Clarkesville-Lake Burton Road (Ga. 197). To the southwest, it leads to Ga. 75, north of Robertstown. This road was an old circuit road connecting Helen with Clarkesville and is usually passable by cars.

In Indian Grave Gap, unpaved, rough USFS 283 leads left (when hiking north to south) to the Tray Mountain Road (USFS 79) from Ga. 75, north of Robertstown to Tray Gap, and right to Ga. 75 north of Unicoi Gap.

The southern end of this section, Unicoi Gap, is located on Ga. 75, 10 miles north of Helen and 14 miles south of Hiawassee. Parking is available.

### Maps

USGS Tray Mountain and Macedonia (old Osborne) quadrangles and the ATC Chattahoochee National Forest map.

**Shelters, Campsites, and Water**

This section has two shelters. Deep Gap Shelter is 3.5 miles south of Dicks Creek Gap and approximately 0.3 mile from the A.T. at the gap. Tray Mountain Shelter, near the summit of Tray Mountain, is 10.6 miles from the northern end of the section.

Good water sources are adjacent to both shelters. In addition, several streams cross the Trail. Water also can be found at Addis Gap.

At the site of the old "cheese factory" near Tray Mountain Road is a spring.

**Public Accommodations and Supplies**

At the northern end, in Dicks Creek Gap, it is 11 miles west to Hiawassee and 18 miles east to Clayton for supplies. The Blueberry Patch, an organic farm 3.5 miles west on U.S. 76, offers lodging (hostel), laundry, shower, breakfast, and shuttle back to the A.T. only February 15 to May 15 and to southbound thru-hikers on request; (706) 896-4893.

At the southern end, Unicoi Gap, it is eight miles south to Robertstown, nine miles south to Helen, with all services, and 14 miles north to Hiawassee for supplies.

No public transportation is available through either Dicks Creek Gap or Unicoi Gap. Call ATC headquarters, (304) 535-6331, for a list of available shuttles.

**Trail Description, North to South**

Miles	Data
0.0	From U.S. 76 in Dicks Creek Gap (2,675 feet), follow Trail south on old road for about 50 yards. Bear left off road, and ascend gradually on right side of ridge, then on left side. In first mile, cross several small streams. Pass to left (east) of Snake Mountain.
1.2	Reach Moreland Gap (3,050 feet). Obscure trail to right (west) leads from Moreland Gap along Swallow Creek

about five miles to Lower Hightower Church at the Osborne settlement on U.S. 76. From Moreland Gap, bear left, ascending steadily on left (eastern) side of ridge. Continue on more gradual slope along broad ridgetop.

- 2.2 Reach top of Powell Mountain (3,850 feet). Descend slightly.
- 2.4 Reach McClure Gap. Ascend. At top of slope, blue-blazed trail to left leads to fine view. Continue along ridgetop. Pass to left of Wolfstake Knob, then to right of Whiteoak Stamp. Descend.
- 3.5 Reach Deep Gap (3,550 feet). Look for blue-blazed trail to left leading 0.3 mile to Deep Gap Shelter and spring. On Trail, ascend steadily, and pass to right of Dismal Knob.
- 4.0 Cross to left side of ridge in shallow gap.
- 4.2 Reach crest of Kelly Knob. Summit (4,276 feet) is about 0.2 mile to right. This is the highest peak between the North Carolina line and Tray Mountain and one of the two peaks of Double Spring Knob. Descend steadily around southwest slope. Cross over small knoll.
- 5.3 Reach Addis Gap (3,304 feet). Water may still be found 0.5 mile from fire road to the left at old shelter site. From gap, begin ascent along ridgecrest, soon swinging to right (western) side of ridge.
- 5.9 Return to ridgecrest, and begin descent.
- 6.1 Cross Sassafras Gap (3,500 feet). Spring is about 150 yards downhill to left (east). Ascend around left side of ridge. Regain ridgetop, and continue to ascend around eastern side of Round Top (3,964 feet).
- 6.5 Cross over shoulder of Round Top, and descend. Continue along ridgetop, generally descending.
- 7.2 Cross Blue Ridge Swag (3,400 feet), lowest gap in this section. Begin long climb, generally ascending on or just below ridgecrest.
- 8.4 Swing around right (western) side of Young Lick Knob (3,800 feet). Descend along eastern side of ridge.
- 8.9 Reach Steeltrap Gap (3,500 feet). Ascend, then descend.
- 9.4 Pass Wolfpen Gap (3,550 feet). Ascend, pass to right of knob, and descend.
- 10.1 Reach gap (3,760 feet). Begin ascent of Tray Mountain, along left (eastern) side of ridge.

- 10.6 Reach junction of A.T. with blue-blazed trail to right, which leads about 0.2 mile to **Tray Mountain Shelter**, built by USFS in 1971. On right of blue-blazed trail are excellent views from the rocky ledges. Spring is approximately 800 feet downhill to right of shelter. Bear left on Trail, and continue ascent.
- 10.9 Reach small, rocky summit of Tray Mountain (4,430 feet), with excellent views. This is an outstanding peak of the Georgia Blue Ridge. Descend by switchbacks.
- 11.7 Reach Tray Mountain Road, USFS 79, in Tray Gap (3,847 feet). Cross road, and enter woods on path to left of parking area. Continue along ridge.
- 11.9 Rocky cliff overlook to the left, with fall and winter views. Descend.
- 12.5 Reach gap. To right is site of the old "cheese factory." (See "Points of Interest.") Farther right about 50 yards is Tray Mountain Road with a spring. Ascend slightly, then descend through laurel and rhododendron thickets.
- 12.7 Cross Tray Mountain Road, USFS 79. Continue descent.
- 13.4 Reach unpaved road in Indian Grave Gap (3,113 feet). To right along road is blue-blazed trail, which rejoins A.T. in about 1.8 miles, just north of Unicoi Gap. (This blue-blazed trail and the A.T. provide an excellent one-day loop hike.) Cross road, and ascend around southern side of ridge.
- 14.0 Come into small saddle, bear left, and begin ascent of Rocky Mountain. Cross to southern side of ridge, where rocky slopes afford views to south.
- 14.8 Reach summit of Rocky Mountain (4,017 feet). Continue along crest; descend.
- 15.2 Pass junction with side (blue-blazed) trail, which leads back to Indian Grave Gap.
- 15.5 Cross stream.
- 16.1 Reach Unicoi Gap (2,949 feet) and Ga. 75. To continue on A.T., go to northern end of parking area, and cross highway.

### Trail Description, South to North

Miles	Data
0.0	From Ga. 75 in Unicoi Gap (2,949 feet), cross to southern end of parking area, climb several steps, and ascend, climbing steadily along left side of ridge.
0.6	Reach stream that crosses Trail. Continue climb.
0.9	Reach shoulder (3,600 feet) of Rocky Mountain. Blue-blazed trail to left leads westward and reconnects with A.T. in Indian Grave Gap. This blue-blazed trail, together with the A.T., makes an excellent one-day loop hike. To continue on Trail, bear right, and climb steadily.
1.2	Reach crestline of Rocky Mountain (3,960 feet). Continue on crest.
1.3	Reach summit of Rocky Mountain (4,017 feet). Bear slightly to right, leaving crest, and descend along southern side of ridge. Rocky slopes afford views to south. Cross to northern side of ridge, and descend more steeply.
2.1	Reach small saddle, bear right, and continue descent around southern side of ridge.
2.7	Reach unpaved road in Indian Grave Gap (3,113 feet). To left along road is a blue-blazed trail that rejoins A.T. just north of Unicoi Gap. Cross road, and ascend gradually through rhododendron, laurel thickets, and beds of galax.
3.4	Cross Tray Mountain Road, USFS 79. Continue to climb, then descend slightly.
3.6	Reach open gap. To left of Trail is the site of the old "cheese factory"—see "Points of Interest." To left about 200 feet is Tray Mountain Road. Nearby is a spring. Ascend, and continue on ridge.
4.2	Reach rocky cliff and overlook to the right of Trail, with fall and winter views.
4.4	Reach road, USFS 79, in Tray Gap (3,847 feet). Cross road, and ascend by switchbacks.
5.2	Reach open, rocky summit of Tray Mountain (4,430 feet), with excellent views. Beyond, Trail is rough, rocky, and steep.

- 5.5 Reach blue-blazed trail that leads approximately 0.2 mile to Tray Mountain Shelter, built by USFS. Spring is approximately 800 feet downhill to right of shelter. Bear right on Trail, and descend.
- 6.0 Reach gap (3,760 feet). Pass to left of knob, and descend.
- 6.7 Pass Wolfpen Gap (3,550 feet). Skirt western side of ridge, and descend.
- 7.2 Pass Steeltrap Gap (3,500 feet). Ascend along eastern side of ridge.
- 7.7 Swing around left (western) side of Young Lick Knob (3,800 feet). Continue along ridge.
- 8.5 Begin descent into the "Swag of the Blue Ridge."
- 8.9 Cross Blue Ridge Swag (3,400 feet), lowest gap in the general area. Continue along ridge, generally ascending.
- 9.6 Continue around right (eastern) side of Round Top (3,964 feet), which is the eastern peak of Dismal Mountain. Regain ridgetop, and descend on eastern side of ridge.
- 10.0 Reach Sassafras Gap (3,500 feet). Off Trail to right, or northeast, is spring about 150 yards downhill. After rounding ridge, descend.
- 10.8 Reach Addis Gap (3,304 feet). A shelter was formerly located 0.5 mile down fire road to right; water may still be found there. To continue on A.T. from Addis Gap, cross over knoll, then begin long climb up ridge to Kelly Knob.
- 11.9 Reach crest of Kelly Knob (4,276 feet), highest peak between Tray Mountain and North Carolina line and one of the two peaks of Double Spring Knob. Summit is about 0.2 mile to left. Descend right (eastern) side of ridge.
- 12.1 In shallow gap, cross to left (western) side of ridge. Pass to left of Dismal Knob.
- 12.6 Descend to Deep Gap (3,550 feet). Look for blue-blazed trail to right leading about 0.3 mile to Deep Gap Shelter and spring. Continue straight ahead from Deep Gap, passing first to left of Whiteoak Stamp, then to right of Wolf Stake Knob. Follow ridgecrest.
- 13.5 Reach blue-blazed trail to right leading to fine view. Descend.
- 13.7 Reach McClure Gap.

- 13.9 Reach broad top of Powell Mountain (3,850 feet). From top, descend around right (eastern) side.
- 14.9 After long descent, enter Moreland Gap (3,050 feet). Obscure trail to left leads along Swallow Creek for about five miles to Lower Hightower Church at the Osborne settlement on U.S. 76. From Moreland Gap, bear right, descend along old roadbed, and continue on eastern side of Snake Mountain. Cross several small streams in last mile of descent.
- 16.1 Reach Dicks Creek Gap (2,675 feet) and U.S. 76. State highway department picnic area is located in gap. To continue on A.T., cross highway, and ascend along stream.