

Middle Springs Ridge - Turkeypen Cove Loop Hike

A 5 Mile, Strenuous Loop Hike - Elevation Gain 1450 Feet

A Multi Use Trail in the Sampson Mountain Wilderness.

A good footpath with several easy creek crossings.

Caution: There are many blowdowns on the top part of Turkeypen Cove.

Route finding may be difficult at times.

Hiked June 20, 2009

Copyright 2009 Ned Sanders. Information may be used by permission only.

Directions to Trailhead: Leave Greeneville on 11-E Bypass North. Drive past the Wal-Mart Supercenter and turn right at the first traffic light on Highway 107 toward Erwin. Continue for 5.1 miles, turn right and follow the signs to Horse Creek Recreation Area. Upon entering Horse Creek continue straight ahead to the end of the paved road and small parking area.

Park and begin your hike up the old forest service road. After only .1 mile you will leave the road and cross the creek on a bridge to your left. After two more bridged crossings, you will pass an A-Frame house on private property. Here you will cross the creek by rockhopping, then cross two more times to reach the bottom of the loop at .75 of a mile. The Turkeypen Cove Trail (which is a little difficult to spot at this point) begins to your left. Take the right fork straight ahead for just a few hundred feet to reach the junction of the Middle Springs Ridge Trail and the trail to Squibb Creek Falls. For this hike, you will take the left fork and begin the steep climb up Middle Springs Ridge. The climb is continually uphill and overgrown in places but the footpath is good and the grade will not be difficult for a person in good condition. At the time of the hike, blueberries were ripe and delicious and a downed, rotten tree was passed which had been worked over heavily by a bear in search of insects. The Sampson Mountain wilderness contains a relatively large black bear population though a sighting is rare.

After covering about 2.25 miles you will have climbed nearly 1500 feet and reached the top of the loop at the intersection with the Turkeypen Cove Trail. The junction is in a flat area you need to look closely for the trail which begins to the left. After descending a half mile, you will find many pine tree blowdowns making route finding difficult. Continue straight ahead as best you can, and look for a large rock which is a good overlook into Northeastern Tennessee. This is a great place to take a lunch break as you will probably be hungry after the long climb.

After your stop, follow the trail at the rock downhill steeply. Many more blowdowns will be encountered, but finding your way is not difficult if you watch for the trail. After a series of switchbacks, the Turkeypen Cove Trail descends into a very dark area surrounded by very thick foliage. Here you will encounter several easy creek crossings. When you have covered a total of about 4.25 miles, you will return to the bottom of the loop, with Middle Springs Ridge coming in from the left. Continue to the right back to the parking lot at Horse Creek.



Bear Activity on Middle Springs Ridge

SYNOPSIS OF HIKE

Mile	Elevation	Description
0	1984	Trailhead at Horse Creek.
.14	1992	Bridge over creek to left. Two more bridged crossings.
.55	2075	A-Frame. First unbridged creek crossing.
.75	2117	Third creek crossing. JCT Turkeypen Cove - Middle Spring Ridge Trails.
.78	2140	JCT Middle Spring Ridge to left. Squibb Creek straight ahead.
2.29	3445	Top of loop. JCT Turkeypen Cove Trail to left.
2.5	3230	Rocky Vista.
4.25	2117	Bottom of loop. JCT Turkeypen Cove - Middle Spring Ridge Trails.
5.1	1984	Trailhead at Horse Creek.

