

Trail Notes for the Four Ponds-Rock City Loop

Description: For more information on the Frederick Municipal Forest and the Catoctin Trail see the Clifford Hollow Loop on this site.

Described here is a moderate 11.2 mile circuit utilizing the Catoctin Trail and assorted woods roads and mountain bike paths that form a network throughout the forest. It visits four ponds, pretty streams and creeks, a partial vista and a wonderful assortment of large rock outcrops in a Hemlock forest. Most climbs (save one) and descents are gradual. There is one crossing of Fishing Creek that might be difficult during periods of high water.

The hike starts at the Catoctin Trail Hamburg Road parking area.

Trail Notes: Only the Catoctin Trail is signed and blazed.

From the parking area cross the road and take the un-signed Buck Flats Trail (an old haul road) to the left of the blue blazed Catoctin Trail. In 0.3 miles, just before reaching posted private property, bear right onto another old road. Descend gradually for 1.5 miles to the junction with the Catoctin Trail. Continue straight on it, crossing a stream and passing the first of four ponds to be visited on the right. (If you wish to do a short, family friendly hike turn right on the Catoctin Trail instead and follow it back to your vehicle – 3.3 mile total distance.) In 0.4 miles turn left off of the road at a blazed post and climb over a low knob. In 0.9 miles cross another road. The trail becomes a gravel driveway for a residence just before reaching Delauter Road in another 0.3 miles. Cross the road, jogging to the right a bit, to continue on the Catoctin Trail. In 0.3 miles cross the dam of pond #2 and climb gradually for 0.7 miles up a recently restored section of trail. Near the top the trail turns right and in 0.3 miles arrives at a five-way trail junction. The old section of the Catoctin trail is signed and filled in with branches to inhibit travel. Take the new trail to its left as it weaves its way down for 1.3 miles, crosses the headwaters of Fishing Creek and arrives at a road of the same name. Cross the road as the trail climbs gradually for 0.8 miles to the intersection with an obvious ridge top woods road. Turn right and climb over another short knob. In 0.4 miles from the last junction pass a trail on the left and in 0.3 miles pass a trail on the right. In 0.5 more miles arrive at a triangle junction. Continue to the right as the road curves around to join Fishing Creek Road once more. After the curve watch for a narrow footpath on the left that will take you down to the road. Turn left on the road. Look

for a pink "T" painted on a pole. Turn right onto a gravel footpath just before it and follow it down to beautiful Fishing Creek. As of this writing there is a log across the creek. The trail continues on the other side of the log above a large boulder. This is the section we call Rock City. Mountain Bikers call it the Re-Animator. From a Mountain Biker's perspective this has got to be one of the most technical trails in the Mid-Atlantic. It switchbacks around and over one rock outcrop after another for 0.9 miles as it climbs steeply to Fishing Creek Road. Turn right on the road but in a few steps turn left onto a smaller, flatter version of Rock City. In 0.4 miles arrive at the back of the first pond you visited and a junction with the Catoctin Trail. Continue straight on it, passing pond #3 on the right. At 0.4 miles from rejoining the Catoctin Trail the trail splits. Bear right to stay on the trail. Pass pond #4 and in 1.1 miles from the last trail split arrive back at Hamburg Road.