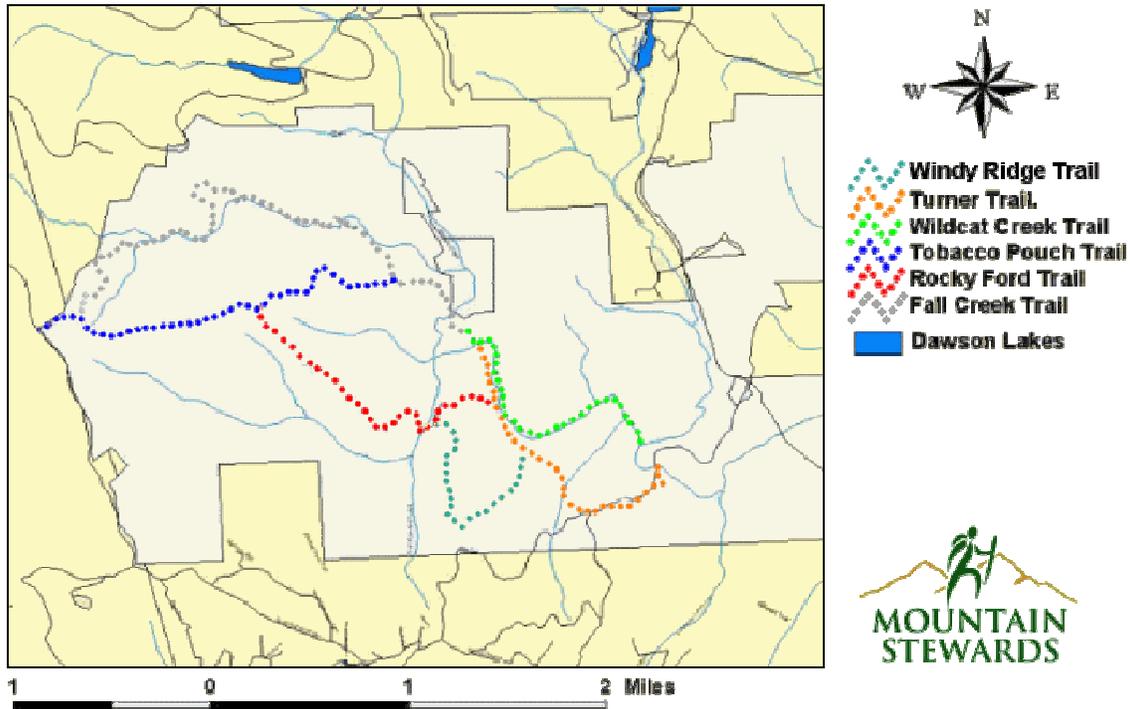


WILDCAT TRACT



Map of the Eastern and Western Trails in the Wildcat Tract

The Wildcat Area is a Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) property in Dawson County. The Wildcat area is approximately 4,500 acres. This area has been and will continue to be primarily used for hunting and fishing. In 2005, the WRD has begun opening the area to passive recreation to including hiking and nature studies. There are numerous trails throughout the area. The WRD will determine which of these trails will be opened to hiking, and as their partner, the Mountain Stewards, will perform the work to open and maintain the trails for recreational use. [see the history of the area in [Mountain History](#)].

NOTE: All trails in the Wildcat Section are on DNR property. However, some of these trails are connected to trails that lead onto private property. All trails are marked with signage to make it easy to stay on the DNR trail. Any one using the DNR property is cautioned to stay off of private property which is trespassing and punishable under DNR or local law.

Some of the trails are wilderness trails. Do not attempt to hike them unless you are very experienced at hiking in a wilderness. Wilderness trails are not suitable for children or casual hikers.

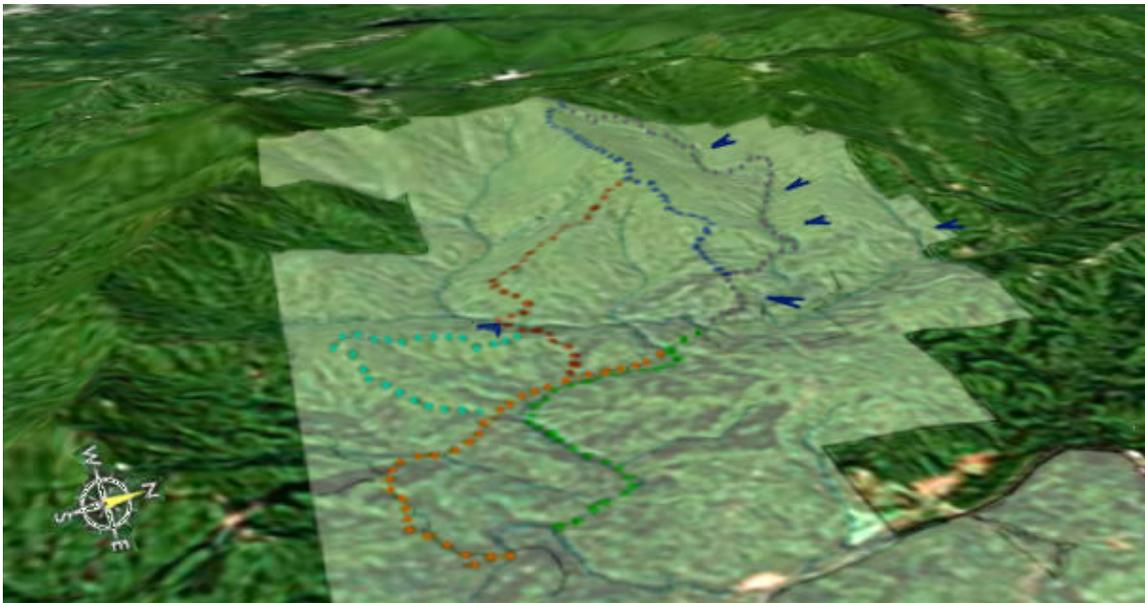
THE EASTERN WILDCAT TRAILS

DESCRIPTION

The Eastern Section of the Wildcat Area begins at the lowest elevation of the Dawson Forest at about 1,500 feet. The eastern area of the Wildcat Section of the Dawson Forest consists of foothills and coves with rivers and creeks cutting through to drain the Wildcat watershed. This area has been somewhat inaccessible due to lack of bridges crossing over the streams. That has now been corrected with two footbridges crossing over the Amicalola River providing access to the forested area. The lower areas are mostly sandy soil with a mix of rich organic soils. There are also large sections of clay soils in the foothills of the area

The cove areas at the lower elevations are very different ecologically from the higher elevations. These areas are generally wetlands or creek flats with an abundance of rhododendron, mountain laurel, hemlock trees and many other flora species. Along the rivers and creeks, the trails cross many bog areas from contact springs.

The Wildcat Creek connecting to the Huckleberry, Fall and Rocky Ford Creeks drains the entire Wildcat Section of the Dawson Forest. This creek joins the Amicalola River in the Wildcat Campground at the site of one of the bridges crossing the Amicalola River.



Waterfalls at the blue arrows
[click to view]

ACCESS TO THE AREA

The entrance to the Eastern Trails is located off of Steve Tate Road in Dawson County on Wildcat Campground Road. The Wildcat Campground Road is located just south of

Pleasant Union Baptist Church. Follow the gravel road for approximately 0.8 miles to the Amicalola River and the campground. There is a kiosk sign located in the campground with information about the trails.

There are three trails on the eastern side of the Wildcat area. These trails are rated as easy to low moderate. These trails connect with the trails on the western side of the Wildcat Section of the Dawson Forest.

■ **WILDCAT CREEK TRAIL (GREEN) 1.5 miles**

The Wildcat Creek Trail is 1.5 miles long, one way. This trail begins at the most western campsite in the campground and heads north for about 0.1 mile where it crosses over the Wildcat Bridge and then begins its westerly direction. The trail follows the Wildcat Creek for the majority of the trail.

The trail, for the most part, is located on the flat part of the embankment of the Wildcat Creek. Where the foothill ridges come down to meet the creek, the trail cuts across the ridges with a slight uphill climb before returning to the creek. The majority of this trail is on flat terrain making it one of the easier hiking trails.

After each foothill ridge section, the trail drops down into a cove area of hemlocks, rhododendrons, mountain laurel, and many other flora species. Throughout the trail, the Wildcat Creek flows east cascading over small rock ledges and a rocky bottom causing a soothing sound that makes the hike a peaceful experience.

At the 1.2 mile marker, the trail passes by a sharp rock escarpment that continuously weeps ground water creating a flora garden of mosses, wildflowers, ferns, and other flora species.

At the 1.4 mile marker, the trail junctions with an old roadbed which crosses over Wildcat Creek. The trail turns right and follows the road for about 0.1 miles and junctions with the Fall Creek Trail. Hikers can either turn around and follow the trail back to the campground or they can now follow the Fall Creek Trail which heads to the western trail entrance on Monument Road. At this point the trail will become strenuous and can be considered a wilderness trail.

At the junction of the Wildcat Creek Trail and the Fall Creek Trail, the roadbed continues to the north on private property. Persons using the DNR property are cautioned to stay off of the private property even though it is not marked.

Also, the hiker can follow the Fall Creek Trail for approximately 0.2 miles crossing over a rocky ford on Wildcat Creek and reach the 100 year old dam and mill site on Wildcat Creek. The dam is on private land. Persons using the DNR property are cautioned to stay off of the private property even though it is not marked.

■ **TURNER TRAIL (ORANGE) 1.7 MILES**

The Turner Trail begins at the point where the Turner Bridge crosses over the Amicalola River. This is located just to the east of Wildcat Campground Road where it crosses over the river. This trail is 1.7 miles one way and it ends at the Wildcat Creek. Although the Wildcat Creek Trail is just across the creek, there is currently no bridge to cross over the creek. The creek is about 1-2 feet deep here with a sandy bottom should you wish to cross over the Wildcat Creek Trail to head back to the campground.

After crossing over the Turner Bridge, the trail bears off to the right to connect with the old roadbed. Follow the road a distance of 0.1 mile where the trail turns right and heads uphill. The trail that goes due south is currently closed.

After making the turn, the trail ascends approximately 170 feet of elevation where another trail joins the Turner Trail from the left at the 0.5 mile marker. This trail is heads toward Big Canoe and is currently closed except to Big Canoe residents. Past the trail junction, the trail begins a descent into the Wildcat creek area. In another 0.2 miles another trail junctions with the Turner Trail again from the left. This trail is also closed.

From the trail junction the trail continues to descend another 100 feet of elevation and follows the valley of the Wildcat Creek. At 1.2 miles along the trail, the Turner Trail begins to parallel the Wildcat Creek Trail which is several hundred feet to the right of the Turner Trail along the Wildcat Creek.

At the 1.3 mile marker, the Rocky Ford Trail junctions with the Turner Trail. The Rocky Ford Trail heads west toward Monument Road and is a strenuous trail. Continuing north on the Turner Trail for another 0.3 miles, the trail ends at the Wildcat Creek.

■ **WINDY RIDGE TRAIL (AQUA) 1.7 MILES**

The Windy Ridge Trail starts at the 1.0-mile point on the Turner Trail from the Wildcat Campground. The trail turns off to the left and heads south/southwest up through a 3rd-order creek ravine. After 0.2 mile, the trail begins a steep incline in a southwest direction winding through a ravine. The trail reaches the top of a high knoll (elevation 2,450 ft) in about 0.4 miles from the start of the steep incline, a total distance from 0.6 miles from the Turner Trail.

At the top of the knoll, you reach an old roadbed that runs in a north/south direction. The south direction goes onto private land and the hiker is cautioned to not head in that direction.

The trail now turns right and follows the old roadbed to the north. The trail goes downhill for about 0.75 miles where it joins the Rocky Ford Trail near the Rocky Ford Waterfall.

The Rocky Ford Creek Waterfall is located off of the Rocky Ford Trail about 25 ft to the east from the junction of the Windy Ridge and Rocky Ford Trails.

The hiker can continue on the Rocky Ford Trail to the right for 0.35 miles where you will join the Turner Trail. Turning right, the hiker can head back to the Wildcat Campground, a distance of 1.3 miles. Total round trip for hiking the Turner Trail to the Windy Ridge Trail to the Rocky Ford Trail and back to the campground is 4.0 miles.

THE WESTERN WILDCAT TRAILS

DESCRIPTION

The Western Section of the Wildcat Area begins at the 3000 foot elevation along the Southern Appalachian Mountain ridge line that defines the border between Dawson and Pickens Counties and descends steeply to the east and south into the Wildcat, Fall, and Rocky Ford Creek coves which are at about 1600 feet of elevation. The higher elevations are broken up into ridges and ravines with the headwaters of the creeks forming in the higher elevations and cascading downhill into the cove areas with several spectacular waterfalls occurring at various elevations.

Wildflowers are abundant in the higher elevations as well as in the cove areas.

The cove areas at the lower elevations are very different ecologically from the higher elevations. These areas are generally wetlands or creek flats with an abundance of rhododendron, mountain laurel, hemlock trees and many other flora species. The Wildcat Cove is a wide and flat sandy soil area enclosed by steeply sloped walls. This was a farming area during the pioneer days, and the south end of the cove has a 100-year-old mill and dam site. A number of the early pioneers made their homes in the Wildcat area, which was also the site for many moonshine stills.



Waterfalls at the blue arrows
[click to view]

ACCESS TO THE AREA

Access to the western trails is off of Monument Road. Follow Georgia Highway 136 to the Dawson/Pickens County line and turn south on Monument Road. Go approximately 3 miles to the trail entrance on the left side of the road. A kiosk sign is located here. A new road access and parking area is being added in late 2005.

There are three trails on the western side of the Wildcat area. These trails are rated as strenuous if you hike down any of the trails and loop back to the entrance point. The trails are not appropriate for the casual hiker or children. Part of the trails are located on the ridge area, and hikers can go in along the ridge and return before heading down the steep terrain. The ridge area, particularly on the Tobacco Pouch Trail, is a mostly at a constant elevation making it easy to hike. If you stay on the ridges, a round trip hike of two miles can be done at a easy to moderate rating.

■ TOBACCO POUCH TRAIL (BLUE) 2.0 miles

The Tobacco Pouch trail is two miles long, one way. This trail begins at the Monument Road trail head entrance and goes due east about 0.1 mile before dropping down to an old roadbed through a switchback trail section. At the 0.3 mile marker, the Fall Creek Trail junctions and heads off to the NE.

After the junction point, the Tobacco Pouch Trail turns south for about 0.2 miles and then turns east again heading over several ridges following an old roadbed created by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. At the 1.2 mile marker, the Rocky Ford Trail begins heading down a steep slope toward the south.

The trail continues east winding down a steep slope area of rocky terrain flattening out at times and then dropping down the next slope area. Near the end of the trail the terrain flattens into a pine forest along a ridge line and reaches the junction of the Fall Creek Trail at the 2.0 mile marker. The Tobacco Pouch Trail ends at this junction having dropped down about a 1000 feet of elevation. Near the junction heading off to the south is another trail, which is currently not open.

At the junction of the Fall Creek Trail, the hiker can either turn around and climb out the 1000 foot of elevation or return to the trail head entrance via the Fall Creek Trail (White). Total round trip distance is 4.8 miles.

■ FALL CREEK TRAIL (GRAY) 3.3 MILES

The Fall Creek Trail begins approximately 0.3 miles from the Monument Road Trail head and is reached by following the Tobacco Pouch Trail to the junction point of the Fall Creek Trail.

Like the Tobacco Pouch Trail, the Fall Creek Trail follows an old roadbed down slope for about 0.6 miles and 475 feet of elevation drop where it reaches Fall Creek and the trail

turns abruptly to the right following the creek. At this point the trail will level out for awhile before descending again.

In about 0.3 miles the trail will cross over Fall Creek and just beyond this point you will encounter the first of three waterfalls on Fall Creek. This waterfall is on your right as you descend along the trail. After passing the first waterfall, the trail will bend around hills and continue to descend to the east along the creek. The trail reaches a low point along Fall Creek at about 0.2 miles past the first waterfall and then begins a climb uphill. The trail makes a large sweeping curve to the NW and then back to SE away from the creek. The trail continues to follow the old roadbed.

At the 1.6 mile point along the trail, the trail will make a sharp left turn and go down a steep slope back to the creek. At the bottom of the slope the main trail heads off to the SE. If you turn back to NW and go about 0.1 mile you will see the Fall Creek waterfall, which is one of the largest in the Wildcat area, having a drop of about 75-100 feet.

From the waterfall site, the Fall Creek Trail follows the creek cove area for about a mile along a very picturesque area filled with mountain laurel, rhododendrons and hemlock trees. At approximately 0.7 miles from the second waterfall, the trail crosses over the creek and just past the crossing, you will see the third waterfall on the left of the trail. The trail will depart Fall Creek at about the 2.5 mile point and begin to head up slope to junction with the Tobacco Pouch Trail at the 2.8 mile point along the trail.

At the junction point, the hiker can return to the Monument Road trail head entrance along the Tobacco Pouch Trail or continue on the Fall Creek Trail. The Fall Creek Trail ends at 3.3 miles into the Wildcat Cove area where it connects with the Wildcat Creek Trail heading east along the Wildcat Creek. The total distance to the end of the Wildcat Creek Trail from Monument Road Trail entrance is 5.0 miles.

If you continue on the Wildcat Creek Trail (opening Fall of 2005), you will need to have spotted a car at the Wildcat Campground located off of Steve Tate Road. Otherwise, you will have to hike back to the Monument Road trail entrance.

As you continue along the Fall Creek Trail, the trail continues to descend through mostly a pine forest before reaching a junction point in about 0.2 miles. At this point, the roadbed turns NE onto private property. The trail turns SE heading down slope toward the Wildcat Creek. Just after making the turn there is a sign directing the hiker on a short side trip to see the 100-year-old mill site and dam. This dam is on private property just off of the DNR property. The hiker should be respectful of the historical site and not disturb it and stay off the private property. [I think it should be clearer here that hikers shouldn't go on the private property.]

Just beyond the sign to the dam, the Fall Creek Trail crosses over the Wildcat Creek at a rocky ford location. Since there is no bridge at this location, the hiker is cautioned to use care in crossing the creek on the rocky ledge (s). After crossing the creek, the trail heads up slope and crosses a ridge before descending to an old roadbed at the point where the

DNR property joins the private property. This ends the Fall Creek Trail at 3.3 miles and begins the Wildcat Creek Trail which turns right along the roadbed and heads south before turning back to the east at the Wildcat Creek. The Wildcat Creek Trail is 1.5 miles long and ends in the Wildcat Campground.

■ **ROCKY FORD TRAIL (RED) 1.7 miles**

The Rocky Ford Trail begins 1.2 miles from the Monument Road Trail entrance. To reach the start of this trail, the hiker must follow the Tobacco Pouch Trail for 1.2 miles to the junction point. This trail descends rather steeply at first dropping almost 400 feet of elevation in 0.4 miles before leveling out. The trail follows a gentler slope downhill for about 0.3 miles before dropping another 350 feet of elevation to reach the Rocky Ford Creek at the 1.2 mile marker.

When you reach the creek, the trail turns sharply to the left. There is a trail heading back to the right that is currently closed.

After turning right, the trail crosses the Rocky Ford Creek at a rock shelf that can be slippery at times. Caution is recommended crossing the creek. In a short distance after crossing over the creek, another trail will bear off to the right. This trail is currently closed. The Rocky Ford Trail continues along a ridge above the creek and then turns away from the creek heading east. After heading east the trail will descend about 100 feet of elevation to reach the end of the trail where it joins the Turner Trail. The Turner Trail heads south and east and comes out in the Wildcat Campground.

