

# Horse Pond Mountain Loop

Overview - This lollipop-loop hike climbs to the summit of Horse Pond Mountain, with panoramic views over the Monksville Reservoir.

Details Time: 4.5 hours Difficulty: Moderate to Strenuous Length: 6 miles

## Driving Directions

Take Skyline Drive to its northwestern terminus at Greenwood Lake Turnpike (County Route 511). Turn right and continue for 5.3 miles, crossing a causeway over the Monksville Reservoir and passing the historic buildings of the Long Pond Ironworks to the right. Park in a large parking area on the left (south) side of Greenwood Lake Turnpike, opposite East Shore Drive.

## Description

From the parking area, proceed east for about 200 feet along the south side of Greenwood Lake Turnpike. Just after crossing the highway bridge over Hewitt Brook, you will see the trailhead of the blue-blazed Hewitt-Butler Trail, marked by a triple blaze on a tree. There is also a double (turn) teal diamond blaze for the Highlands Trail. Follow the joint Hewitt-Butler/Highlands Trail, which heads south into the woods and climbs to the top of a hill. Just beyond the crest, the trail joins a woods road which comes in from the left, and the trail descends along the road. When the road bends sharply to the right, follow the blue and teal diamond blazes, which turn left, leaving the road, and continue to descend on a footpath.

After crossing a small stream on rocks, the trail climbs an embankment and reaches the abandoned railroad grade of the New York and Greenwood Lake Railroad. Built in 1876 primarily to serve the recreational destination of Greenwood Lake, this portion of the railroad was abandoned in 1935. The trail turns left and follows the railroad grade, dipping to cross a gas pipeline (when the pipeline was constructed, a section of the railroad embankment was removed). To the left, through the trees, you can see the Monksville Reservoir.

In 0.2 mile, follow the blue and teal diamond trail as it turns right, leaving the railroad grade, and re-enters the woods on a footpath. The trail climbs gradually, passing several interesting glacial erratics (large boulders transported by glaciers), then descends over rocks to cross a stream in a hollow. The trail then climbs steeply up a rock ledge, descends slightly into another hollow, and climbs once more to reach a trail junction, where the blue-blazed Hewitt-Butler Trail turns right. This will be your return route, but for now, turn left, following the co-aligned white-blazed Horse Pond Mountain Trail (which begins here) and the teal-diamond-blazed Highlands Trail. The white and teal diamond trail continues to climb steadily, then descends briefly to another junction. Here, the blue-blazed Hewitt-Butler Trail rejoins from the right.

Follow all three trails (blue, white and teal diamond) as they climb gradually, level off, then descend to cross power lines. Just beyond the power lines, the blue-blazed Hewitt-Butler Trail again turns off to the right. Continue ahead on the joint white and teal-diamond-blazed trail.

Soon, you'll reach a fork where a woods road goes off to the right, but you follow the blazes to left, climbing to a rock outcrop, with views over the reservoir to the left when the leaves are down. After following along the ridge for a short distance, the trail bears right and briefly joins the woods road. It leaves the road only to rejoin it once more. The trail follows the road for the next half mile, passing on

the way a red-blazed trail on the right that descends for 0.2 mile to Burnt Meadow Road, opposite Camp Shiloh.

After a level stretch, the trail begins a gradual climb. Near the top, the trail crosses a large rock outcrop. The southern end of the outcrop affords a spectacular view over the Monksville Reservoir. This is the only point from which you can see the entire horseshoe-shaped reservoir. You'll want to stop here to take a break and enjoy the view.

The trail now curves to the right and continues to climb to the summit of Horse Pond Mountain (elevation 945 feet), marked by a grassy area and an interesting balanced boulder. The views over the reservoir from the summit are partially obstructed by trees.

The trail bears left and descends from the summit, then climbs slightly to reach a rock outcrop, where a boulder with a triple yellow blaze marks the start of the the Burnt Meadow Trail. Turn right and follow this yellow-blazed trail, which descends very steeply over rocks. The grade soon moderates, and the trail turns left onto a woods road. It turns right, leaving the road, and descends on a footpath, then turns right onto another woods road.

Soon, the trail turns left, leaving the second woods road, and descends to cross a stream on rocks. After a short climb, it briefly turns left to parallel the stream, then turns right and heads west to reach Burnt Meadow Road. The trail turns right and follows the road for 200 feet, then turns left and reenters the woods, following a wide, eroded woods road.

After passing a rusted automobile to the right, the trail turns right onto a narrower woods road and begins a gradual descent. It crosses another woods road, bears left, and descends to cross Hewitt Brook on rocks. This crossing can be difficult if the water is high.

On the other side, the trail climbs away from the stream and bears right to follow the contour of the hill. Soon, the climb resumes, and the trail reaches a rock ledge with a limited view back towards Horse Pond Mountain. A short distance beyond, the Burnt Meadow Trail ends at a junction with the blue-blazed Hewitt-Butler Trail.

Turn right and follow the blue trail, which heads northeast along the shoulder of Long Hill. To the right, you'll pass a large glacial erratic formed of puddingstone - a type of rock not characteristic of this area. The trail now climbs over a slight rise and continues to follow along the side of the hill. Soon, it begins to descend.

After turning right and leveling off briefly, the trail goes through a dense mountain laurel grove, passes another large erratic to the left, continues through a grove of white pines, and resumes its descent. Near the base of the descent, it joins an eroded woods road, and it recrosses Hewitt Brook on rocks (this crossing, too, can be tricky during wet seasons).

The trail continues along a dirt road under power lines out to Burnt Meadow Road, which it crosses diagonally to the right. It reenters the woods and climbs to reach a junction with the white-blazed Horse Pond Mountain Trail and the teal-diamond-blazed Highlands Trail. Turn left, cross under the power lines, and continue over a hill and down to a junction where the blue-blazed Hewitt-Butler Trail goes off to the left.

Turn left and follow the blue blazes, which gradually descend through a grove of white pines and soon rejoin the Highlands Trail at the trailhead for the Horse Pond Mountain Trail. Turn left again and follow the joint Hewitt-Butler/Highlands Trail, retracing your steps to the parking area on Greenwood Lake Turnpike where the hike began.