

Come Explore the 'Living Laboratory' of Black Rock Forest

Black Rock Forest in Cornwall, N.Y., features dramatic topography, numerous lakes and streams, and a high diversity of species and habitat, making it a valuable place for research opportunity as well as hikes. Located just north of Harriman and west of Storm King state parks, it functions as a 3,914-acre "living laboratory" dedicated to advancing the scientific understanding of the natural world through programs in research, education, and conservation. As a scientific field station that is also open to the public for day use, Black Rock Forest is an incredible resource for exploring and learning about nature in the Hudson Valley.

The Scenic Trail on the west side of the forest is a very rewarding out-and-back hike option for moderate effort. Co-aligned with the Highlands Trail, it's a 1.35-mile (each way) trek that packs in a magnificent seasonal waterfall, diverse habitat, and views that stretch to the Catskills. It also features the work of the Trail Conference's Hudson Nor'Westers Trail Crew, who have remediated several wet and/or eroded



Details

- ▶ **Trail:** Scenic Trail/ Highlands Trail
- ▶ **Park:** Black Rock Forest, Orange County, N.Y.
- ▶ **Difficulty:** Easy to Moderate
- ▶ **Length:** 3 miles, out and back
- ▶ **Dogs:** Allowed on leash
- ▶ **Features:** Views, waterfall

Read the full hike description at bit.ly/tc-brfffh.

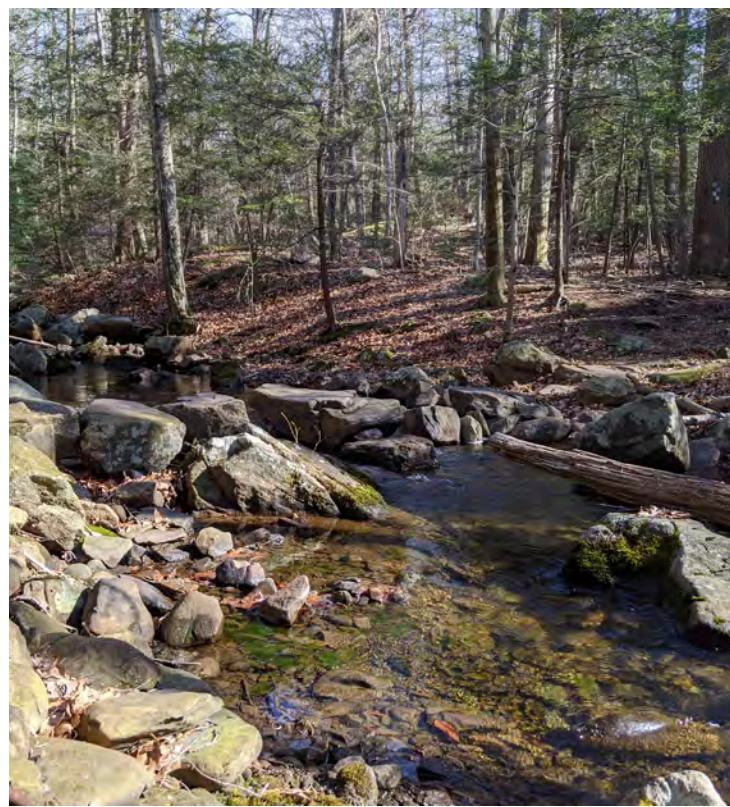
areas of the trail over the years.

You'll find the trailhead on Old Mineral Springs Road, where there is pull-off parking for several cars. This road is

owned and maintained by the town and clearly marks where parking ends. The Scenic Trail (white blazes)-Highlands Trail (teal diamond blazes) hike starts on an old woods road. Walk beyond the gate, and in just about a quarter mile, bear right to arrive at the Mineral Springs Waterfall—a lovely spot for both quiet meditation and a photo opp. Turn back 100 feet, and you'll see the trail continuing to your right, up around the waterfall. You'll also see tall, black mesh fencing as you climb this section—a reminder that Black Rock Forest is an active research center. The fencing is in place to keep deer out and to encourage recovery of native species that have been trampled from overuse.

The trail skirts walls of rock as it climbs along the waterfall. Hikers are asked to remain on the trail and not venture near the falls to avoid both injury and the impacts of erosion. In an effort to create a safe experience and sustainable trail that will last decades, the Hudson Nor'Westers Crew built a beautiful stone staircase along this section in 2019.

Enjoy the view and the



splendidly built trail, then continue your rolling ascent along the stream through hemlock groves, mountain laurel, and a young birch forest. Along the way you'll encounter additional handiwork of the Nor'Westers Crew in the form of two stepping stone bridges. In little time, Jupiter's Boulder will appear to your left, marking the turnaround point for this hike. Pausing at this glacier erratic, enjoy the views of Schunmunk Mountain to your right, the Shawangunk Ridge beyond it, and the Catskill Mountains rising in the distance. Soak in this opportunity to connect with nature, turn back, and follow the white and teal blazes back to the trailhead.

Volunteers Wanted!

The beauty of Black Rock Forest remains accessible to the public thanks to the Trail Conference volunteers who care for its 27 miles of trails. If you'd like to be a part of the community that keeps this special place walkable for visitors, please consider adopting a trail to maintain! No experience is necessary; we'll teach you everything you need to know about keeping a trail in good repair. Find out how to get involved by emailing volunteer@nynjtc.org.

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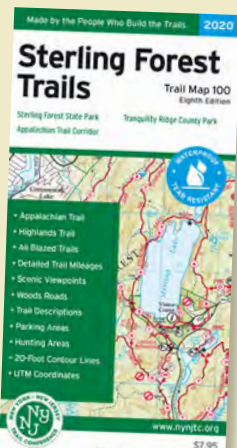


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▶ 10% of online honey purchases go to the Trail Conference. Available for purchase at Trail Conference Headquarters, where \$5 per pound and \$2 per half pound proceeds are donated.
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Sterling Forest Map Update Features New Trails

Featuring several new trails and trail adjustments, a revised 8th edition of the Sterling Forest Trails map will be available this spring. The map covers more than 175 miles of marked trails in Sterling Forest State Park and nearby parklands, including more than 18 miles each of the Appalachian Trail and Highlands Trail. All trails include detailed, junction-to-junction trail mileage numbers.

Twenty years ago, the Trail Conference published the 1st edition of



the Sterling Forest Trails map as our very first digitally produced map. That map paved the way for much of the mapping work over the past two decades. The trail system in Sterling Forest State Park has changed significantly since 2000, and this revised, 8th

edition includes the latest trail additions and relocations. The most significant change is the addition of nearly 7 miles of newly constructed multi-use trails. These trails, including the Hutchinson and Munsee-Eagle trails, were built by one of the Trail Conference's AmeriCorps crews

with assistance from many volunteers, including those from local biking groups JORBA and PMTB.

Further updates to the map include the addition and adjustment of several parking lots and the addition of newly protected lands, including those protected by the Trail Conference and Orange County Land Trust. Many other updates make this revised map a must-have for anyone looking to explore Sterling Forest State Park.

Additional map features include parking areas, scenic viewpoints, waterfalls, historical ruins, and other points of interest. The map front includes UTM gridlines. The map back includes detailed descriptions for most of the

trails in the park.

The Sterling Forest Trails map will be available in print format in vibrant color on our popular waterproof, tear-resistant Tyvek, by shopping online at nynjtc.org, or by visiting our headquarters. It will also be available in digital format on Apple and Android devices through the Avenza Maps app. Learn more about our GPS-enhanced maps at nynjtc.org/pdfmaps. Jeremy Appar

Special thanks to volunteer project manager John Mack and all the volunteers and park partners who helped create this map revision! This map was produced with support from Valley Rock Inn and Mountain Club.

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