

PRESERVE GUIDELINES

This natural area is open to the public for recreational, educational and scientific use. To help ensure the continued protection of this preserve please respect the following guidelines:

- No camping, motorized vehicles or littering
- The trail is maintained for hiking only
- No removal or destruction of plants.
- Hunting is allowed.

TO REACH THE PRESERVE

From the village of Westport (Route 9N) take Route 22N toward Essex. In .4 mile turn right onto Lakeshore Road (keep to the right at junction with Beekman Road in 1 mile) and continue 3 miles to Halds Road on the left (no sign). Take Halds Road about .75 mile to the parking area/trailhead on the right.

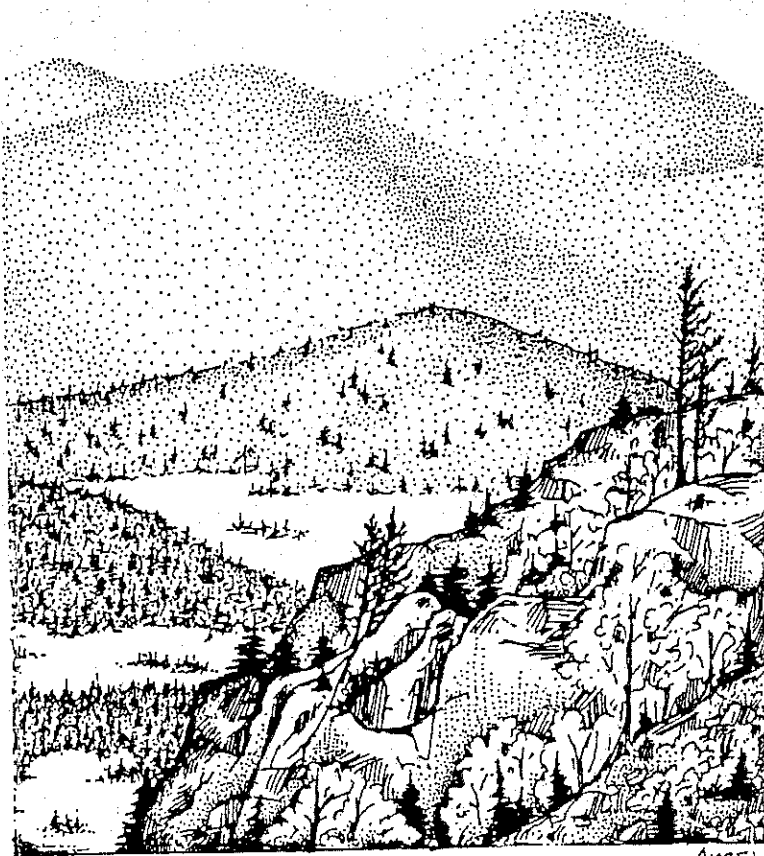
YOU CAN HELP TOO

The Adirondack Land Trust (ALT) was founded in 1984 to protect the working lands and open space of New York's thirteen northernmost counties. Its primary goal is to protect the region's productive forests, agricultural lands and natural areas such as wetlands, shorelines and special places like Coon Mountain. Since 1988, ALT has been working in partnership with the Adirondack Nature Conservancy.

For more information on membership, volunteer opportunities and land protection in the Adirondacks contact:

Adirondack Nature Conservancy
& Adirondack Land Trust
Box 65, Keene Valley, NY 12943
(518) 576-2082

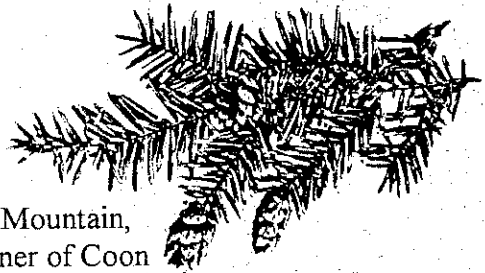
COON MOUNTAIN Preserve



COON MOUNTAIN

A bedrock knob of Adirondack anorthosite, or a monadnock as it is called, Coon Mountain is located 2.5 miles from lake Champlain. The mountain itself benefits from the warming influence of the three mile wide lake. Its low elevation and south facing slopes are hospitable to trees usually found farther south, such as red and white oak and shagbark hickory. Coon Mountain is famous for its mysterious and craggy interior with various rocky outcrops and dark hemlock forests.

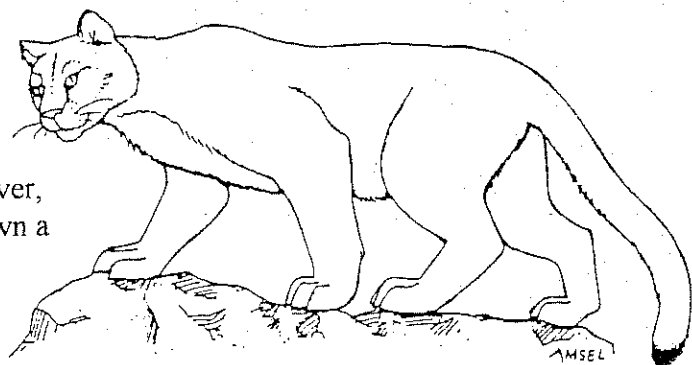
The Coon Mountain Preserve was made possible via an innovative land swap. Thanks to the generosity of a conservation minded landowner, some 275 acres of productive forest land in the Town of Chesterfield were donated to the Adirondack Land Trust. The Land Trust then exchanged that land for the 246 acres of Coon Mountain, land that was marginal from a forestry perspective. The original owner of Coon Mountain in turn gave a conservation easement to the Land Trust on both the Chesterfield land and the 73 acres adjoining Coon Mountain Preserve. Under the terms of the easement, forestry is allowed and open space preserved. Almost 600 acres of Champlain Valley forest land have been protected, public recreational opportunities expanded and the working forest enhanced.

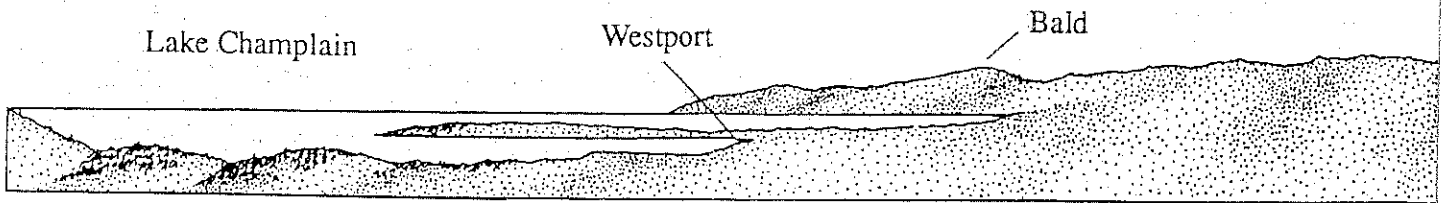


HISTORY AND LEGEND

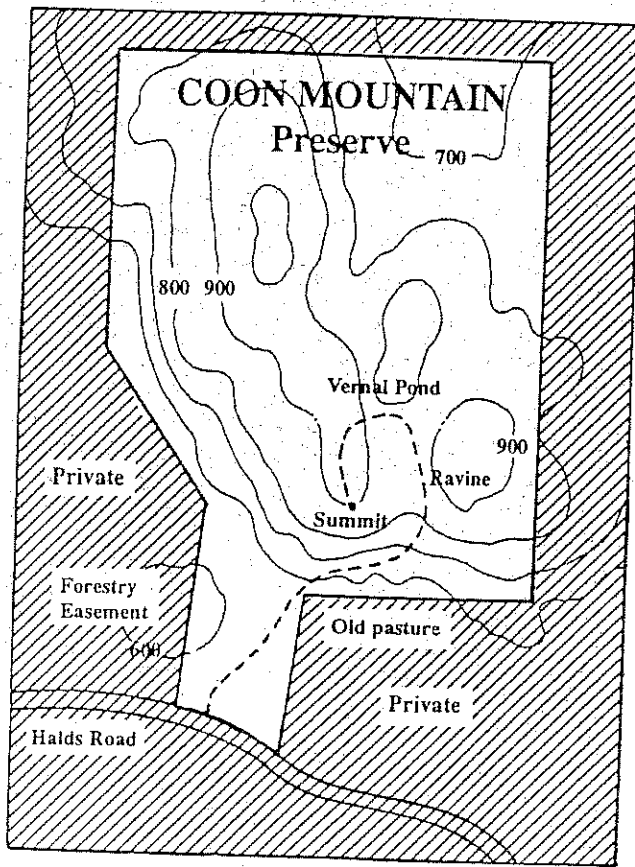
For generations people have farmed and logged in the Champlain Valley. William Gilliland, the area's earliest settler and namesake of the Town of Willsboro, died on Coon Mountain. Gilliland had originally purchased huge tracts of lakeside property to establish a baronial estate. However, the Revolutionary War halted his dream, for his early settlements were sacked by the British and the Indians. In February of 1796, friendless and alone, he became lost on the rough and broken summit of Coon Mountain and succumbed to exposure.

According to legend, the Coon Mountain panther, which cries like a damsel in distress, would lure men into the deep woods where the giant cat then sprang onto its victim. Many good dogs were lost to the panther in attempts to hunt it. During one such hunt, however, the panther was shot in mid-leap and crashed down a cliff, sinking into one of the mysterious tarns that dot the summits ridge. The body of the panther was never found, leaving the legend of the Coon Mountain panther intact.





TRAIL NOTES



The trail to the summit of Coon Mountain is about one mile long with an ascent of 500 feet. It is steep and rocky in places and is maintained for hiking only. To avoid getting lost on the mountain or wandering off onto adjoining private lands, we recommend you stay on the marked trail. Please remember...Leave only footprints, take only pictures.

A few steps in from the parking lot, signs of past land use become visible from alongside the trail. Areas of young successional woods serve as reminders of past forest management. The adjoining 73 acres to the west are privately owned under a Land Trust conservation easement that allows forestry and protects open space. Skid roads used to haul logs out of the woods are still visible.

The hiking trail soon leaves the woods road, traverses through a stand of hemlock, and enters a forest of beech, maple and oak. American beech, sugar maple and yellow birch are the climax tree species in the northern hardwood

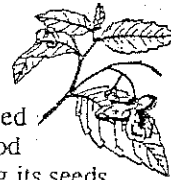
AMERICAN BEECH *Fagus grandifolia*

...has smooth gray bark and long pointed buds. Beech bark disease has killed many of the older trees but saplings continue to sprout from root suckers.



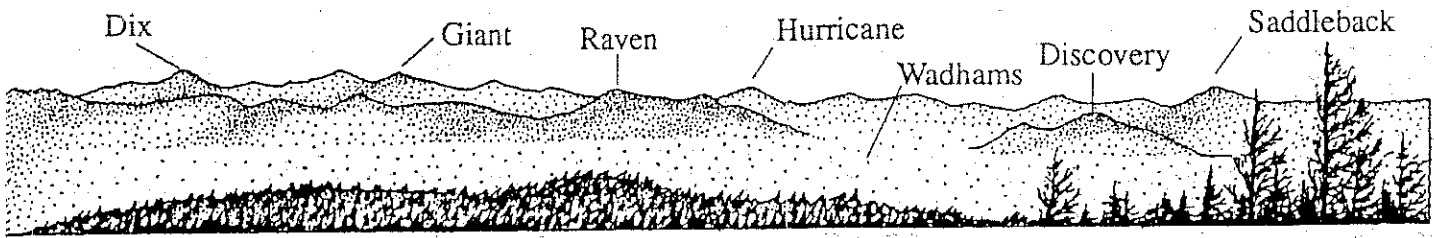
JEWELWEED *Impatiens capensis*

...has orange flowers that bloom from July to September. Also called Touch-me-not, the mature seed pod explodes when touched, spreading its seeds.



HERB ROBERT *Granium robertianum*

...is a small pink flower with delicate indented leaflets, usually found grouped together in threes. It blooms from May to mid-October.

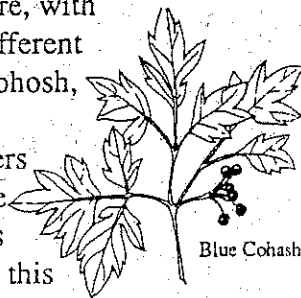


View from Coon Mountain Summit looking south

forest. Oak is a more southern species. If you look closely at some of the old trees you may see barbed wire grown into the tree trunk, a sign that the property was once used for pasture as well. While walking through the large section of beech, look for signs of a different kind: bear claw marks on the smooth gray bark. Beech nuts are an important mast crop for bears and other wildlife.

At the base of the ravine you may notice a subtle change in the forest. Here, with richer, moister soils we find different plants growing, such as blue cohosh, jewelweed and—watch out—stinging nettles. The wildflowers are particularly abundant in the spring before the forest floor is shaded by the tree canopy. On this south-facing slope we see two new tree species—white ash with its compound leaves (each with 7 leaflets) and basswood with its large heart-shaped leaves.

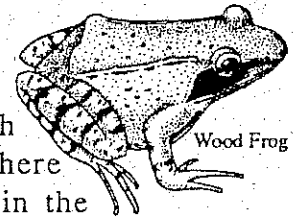
On the climb up through the ravine please stay



Blue Cohosh

on the rocks to reduce soil erosion. You may want to stop at the lookout partway up to enjoy a glimpse of Lake Champlain and catch your breath. As you continue climbing keep an eye out for porcupines that sometimes den in the rock crevices. Porcupines have sharp, barbed quills for protection. They don't "throw" their quills but can quickly slap you with a tail full if you get too close.

Leaving the ravine, the trail takes you through some low pockets where vernal pools develop in the spring. Though these pools will dry up later in the season, they are important breeding grounds for frogs and salamanders.



Wood Frog

Near the top, the trail winds round to the summit, giving a view of the Champlain Valley and the patchwork-like farmland below, until it opens up onto a rocky summit with vistas of Vermont, Lake Champlain and the Adirondack Mountains. In the springtime you may observe hawks migrating up the Champlain Valley.



RED OAK
Quercus rubra

...is a southern hardwood but extends into some areas of the Adirondacks, generally below 1400 feet in elevation. The leaves have pointed lobes.



RAVEN
Corvus corax

...are year round residents in the Adirondacks, nesting on cliff faces such as Coon Mountain. Listen for their low croaking call.

