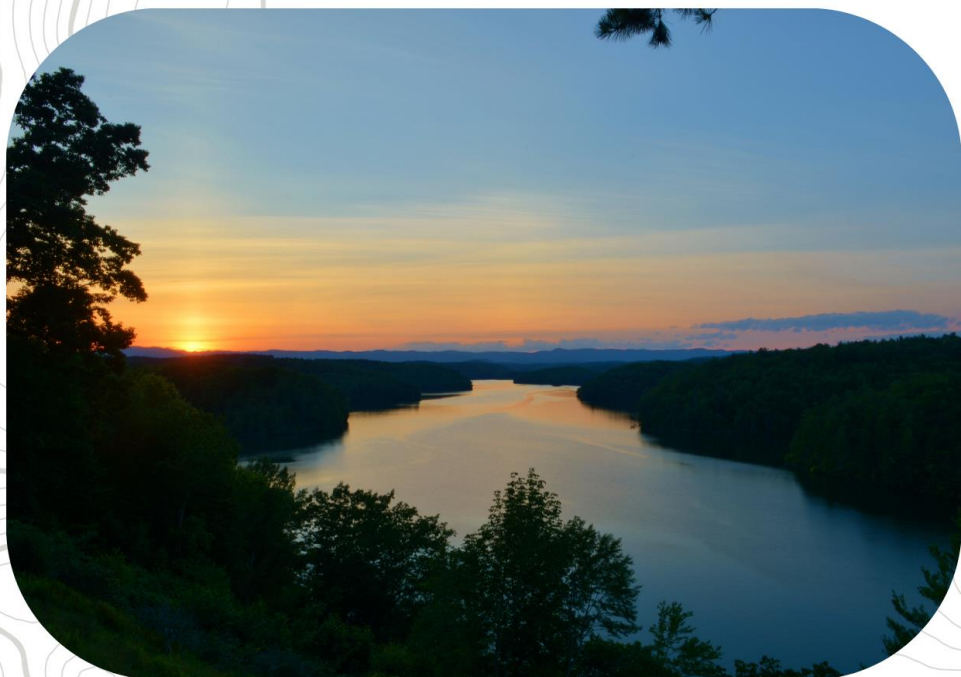
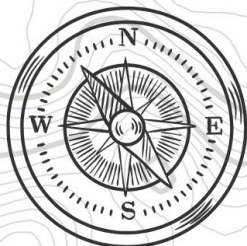


Laurel Ridge Trail

Interpretive Trail Guide



Philpott Lake



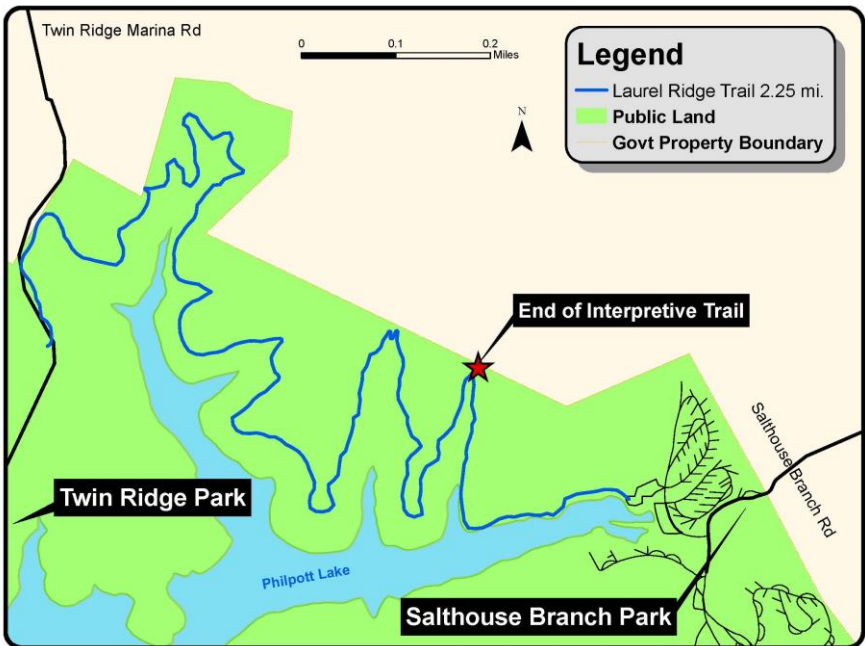
Trail Information

Length: 2.25 miles one-way, Interpretive trail – 4/10ths of a mile

Difficulty: Moderate (1 hr. to complete one-way)

Users Permitted: Hikers, Bicyclists

Laurel Ridge Trail traverses through beautiful, forested ridges, with stretches that hug the Philpott Lake shoreline, connecting Salthouse Branch Park and Twin Ridge Park. The trail is marked with blue blazes.



- *Be courteous of other trail users.
- *Tell someone your travel plans. Hike with a buddy.
- *Enjoy wildlife from a distance.
- *Bicyclists yield to hikers, wear helmets, control speed.
- *Stay on the marked trail. Avoid trails when wet.
- *Area is open to hunting. Wear blaze orange during rifle seasons.
- *Pets must be kept on a 6-foot leash. Clean up after pets.
- *Unauthorized vehicles are prohibited on trails.



1. Introduction: The interpretive portion of Laurel Ridge trail is approximately 4/10 of a mile one way. The trail is marked with blue dots on trees to show the way. Your GPS location here is N 36° 48.818', W 080°02.441'. Points of interest along the trail are identified with numbered markers which correspond to interpretive information in your trail guide. On your return trip, try to identify the species of trees that you have learned about. Walk quietly. You may see songbirds, deer, squirrels, waterfowl, or even a black bear. **Watch your footing and be careful around the water.** You may keep this guide or recycle by returning it for others to use. We hope you will continue to learn about our natural and cultural resources. Remember: good hikers take only pictures and leave only tracks! Pack it in – pack it out!



2. White Oak: The majestic white oak can reach a height of 100 feet and a diameter of 4 feet. Found all over Virginia, the white oak is a very important tree for wildlife around the Philpott Lake area. It produces acorns which are preferred by deer, bears, turkeys, and various other small animals. The wood is heavy and strong. Its close grain lumber makes it highly sought after to produce barrels, tools, furniture, and flooring for homes. A substance called tyloses plugs the vessels in the wood, making it watertight. This trait made the white oak's lumber ideal for early shipbuilding.



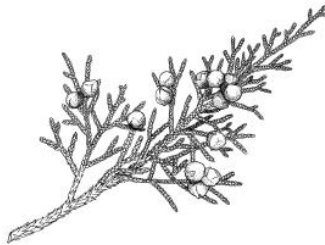
4. Eastern White Pine: The Eastern White Pine's wood is light colored, of medium strength, and has straight grain. It has many industrial uses including building lumber, cabinet making, furniture, and interior finishing. White Pines are also grown in Virginia for Christmas trees. Birds and squirrels love the seeds produced in the long cones of the White Pine. In the Philpott Lake area, White Pines may reach a height of 200 feet and may grow to three feet in diameter, making it the largest conifer in eastern North America. During Colonial times, the Eastern White Pine's great height put it in high demand to produce masts for early ships.



5. American Beech: The American Beech produces a fruit (beech nuts) contained in a prickly bur about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long. Each bur contains 2 nuts. The nuts are eaten by many birds and mammals including mice, squirrels, chipmunks, black bear, deer, foxes, grouse and ducks. Many of the older trees, which can reach a height of eighty feet and a diameter of three feet, become hollow, making excellent homes for wildlife. The Beech's wood is very hard, strong and tough. However, it is not durable when exposed to weather. The wood is used for furniture, flooring, rough lumber, tools, baskets, and charcoal. The American Beech's wood also has some medicinal value.



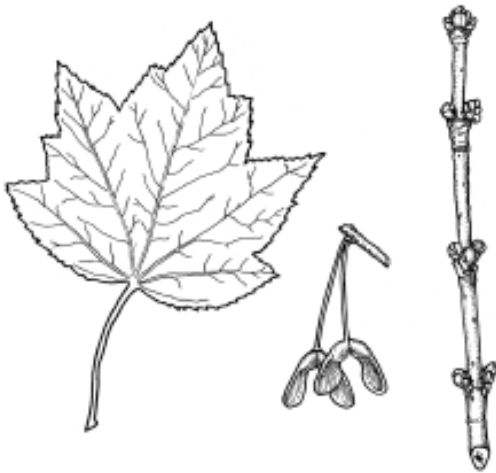
6. Mockernut Hickory: The heavy, hard, tough, and strong white colored wood of the Mockernut Hickory is harvested for tool handles, skis, furniture, and baseball bats. It is also an excellent firewood and is used to produce charcoal. Philpott's squirrels, bears, deer, foxes, and beavers feast off the nuts. Mockernut Hickory trees are found throughout Virginia and reach heights of 100 feet. The tree grows tall and straight. The Mockernut Hickory may reach an age of 500 years.



7. Eastern Redcedar: The Eastern Redcedar is found in all parts of Virginia. It is often seen growing in abandoned fields and along roadsides. The wood is fragrant, soft, and strong. The red heartwood and white sapwood produce beautiful effects when finished. Because the heartwood is resistant to decay, the Redcedar makes excellent posts, poles, cabinets, and chests. The natural oils produced in the wood repel insects. It is often used as paneling for closets and cedar shavings make excellent pet bedding material. The berry-like cones are a favorite food of many song and game birds from waxwings to quail. The thick foliage provides excellent cover for nesting and roosting birds. Redcedars are also good for protecting soils from erosion.



8. Fish Structure: Structural features, such as the fallen trees you see here, are important in helping to maintain a diverse and healthy lake ecosystem. They are also important in sustaining game fish and non-game fish populations. Structure provides a place for fish to hide from predators, shade from the hot summer sun, spawning and nesting habitat, and places for food organisms to live. Fish like to hide, especially when bigger fish and other predators are looking for a meal. Without hiding places like this fallen tree, populations of young fish and smaller fish species are at risk of being significantly reduced by predation (eaten). As you continue your walk, look for other fish structures.



9. Red Maple: The Red Maple offers some of the most spectacular fall colors of any tree in the Blue Ridge Mountains with its brilliant orange and scarlet leaves. Its winged shaped seeds fall to the ground like little helicopters, providing food for birds, squirrels, and other rodents. Deer also feed on young Red Maple sprouts. The wood is softer than the other maple species and is somewhat weak. However, it still has value in the furniture and paper industries. Red

Maples with their large crowns and 90-foot heights make popular shade and ornamental trees. The Red Maple is the most tolerant to soil variation and conditions of any tree in North America, making it common in many regions.

10. Nature's Oddity: At first glance, it appears that two species of trees are growing from the same stump. But closer examination reveals that the Hickory tree on the right has extended its root system in a manner which has completely encompassed the Beech tree on the left. Trees exhibit amazing adaptability. Their root systems can run many feet and go around or through many obstacles to obtain their needed water and nutrients. Trees can be found growing on what appears to be almost bare rock, from dead logs, in sidewalk cracks, or even in standing water. As you continue your journey on the Laurel Ridge Trail, see if you can discover your own oddity of Nature.



11. Sourwood: The Sourwood is found throughout southern Virginia. The tree is usually leaning and is poorly formed with many crooked branches. It reaches a maximum height of 40 feet and a diameter of 12 inches. The wood is heavy and hard with a compact grain. It is sometimes used for handles, but most often for firewood and pulp for paper. In the Spring, white urn shaped flowers adorn the tree. Bees use the flower's nectar to make a highly sought-after light-colored honey. Sourwood trees are sometimes planted as an ornamental, and they naturally spread over cutover land.

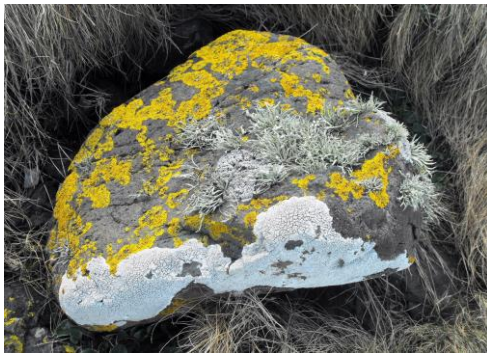
14. Philpott Lake: In 1944, due to severe flooding for many years, Congress authorized the construction of Philpott Dam to tame the Smith River. The Smith River is part of the Roanoke River Basin that eventually empties into the Atlantic Ocean at the Albemarle Sound in North Carolina. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began construction of the 220-foot-high Philpott Dam in 1948 and started protecting the downstream towns from devastating floods in 1951. With the completion of the dam, 3000 acres of mountain valleys in the Counties of Henry, Patrick and Franklin were flooded to create today's Philpott Lake. The lake is surrounded by 7,000 acres of forested land which is owned and managed by the Corps. With all of the water and forests, the Philpott area offers a variety of recreational opportunities for every sportsman and outdoor recreational enthusiasts.



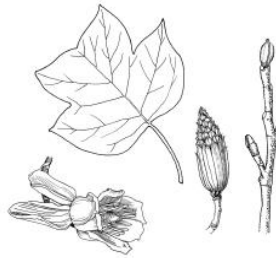
16. White Quartz: The white quartz to the right represents two occurrences. The large boulder outcroppings are typical of the naturally occurring vein quartz found throughout Virginia's mountains. This quartz is usually a milky white color and is very hard and durable. The black or reddish staining is from iron oxide and/or manganese. White quartz is used in cast concrete products and as a decorative stone around bushes, trees, flowers, and driveways. White quartz was very valuable to Native Americans to fabricate arrowheads, spear points, and other tools. The smaller stones, which appear to have been piled up, were in fact piled up, indicating that the entire hillside was once farmed. This area was cleared, probably over 100 years ago, and all the rocks taken to one end of the field. Can you imagine trying to make a living for your family by farming the steep hillsides with a plow and a team of horses? Over the years Nature has reclaimed the abandoned field and returned it to forest.



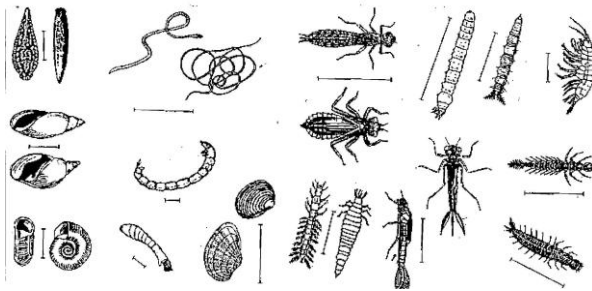
17. American Hornbeam: A small bushy tree reaching a height of 30 feet, the American Hornbeam is found all over Virginia. Its wood is heavy, close grained, tough, and very strong. Although this tree's wood is rarely harvested, it has been used for handles, mallets, and wedges. The small nutlet fruit is a good food for squirrels and different species of birds. If you look at the shape of the trunk, it resembles well developed, rippling muscles, hence one of the common names, "musclewood".



18. Lichens: As you walk along, look for plant-like growth on rocks, the ground, and on trees. These are lichens. Lichens are formed by two components: an alga and a fungus. They work together in a symbiotic relationship which means the relationship benefits both. Lichens on rocks can cause the rock to break down over thousands of years to produce primitive soil. Lichens can be green, brown, or bluish and can have many different shapes.



19. Yellow Poplar: This tree grows tall and straight. The Yellow Poplar can reach heights over 200 feet, diameters of greater than 3 feet. The shape of the yellow blooms in the spring resemble a tulip, thus giving the Yellow Poplar one of its common names, the tulip tree. The wood is soft and very easy to work. The wood is used in a variety of products including building lumber, veneers, paper pulp, chip board, plywood, and framing for furniture products. The Yellow Poplar is a very important tree for the local sawmilling industry. Deer, birds, and small mammals feed off various parts of the tree. The bark is a favorite food of Philpott's beaver population. Bees make a tasty honey from the blossoms and the Yellow Poplar makes an ideal tree for shade and landscaping.



20. Stream Life: This little stream seems unimportant as it meanders to the lake. However, it is teeming with life. Millions of microscopic organisms live in the stream. Water insects and other larger organisms feed on the microscopic species. The stream is also home to salamanders and crayfish. The nocturnal raccoon, with its bandit's mask, frequently hunts the stream at night to feast on its inhabitants. The small stream also irrigates the water dependant plants along the banks. Streams like this one are a very important part of the watershed which will be discussed at a future stop.



22. Rhododendron: The rhododendron is actually a native East-Coast Azalea. The shrub is an evergreen with its long, waxy leaves maintaining their green color throughout the winter. In the spring, the Rhododendron produces a large, fragrant white bloom. Because of its relatively small size, its bushy shape, and its flowering blossoms, the Rhododendron, is sought as an ornamental shrub. In the wild, Rhododendrons grow close together and their twisted branches form thickets which are almost impenetrable. Local animals, especially deer, seek areas covered by the Rhododendron to provide shelter, bedding areas, and protective cover.



24. Moonshine Still: While hundreds of thousands of visitors come to Philpott annually to enjoy the sunshine, a few, in days gone by, came to enjoy the moonshine! Moonshine is illegal liquor which was manufactured, or distilled, at locations like you see here. The horseshoe shaped pile of rocks served as a furnace which contained a fire to cook a mixture of corn, water, and yeast known as “mash”. The steam from the boiling mixture contained a high amount of alcohol. The steam was condensed (changed back to a liquid) by passing the steam through a coil of copper pipe (the worm) submerged in a barrel of cold water. The resulting liquid from the worm was a very high alcoholic content whiskey and was called moonshine. Remains of old moonshine stills can be found along many of the small streams around Philpott Lake. Moonshine probably got its name from the fact that it was made by the light of the moon. **PLEASE DON'T DISTURB, TOUCH, OR REMOVE ANY REMAINS OF THE OLD STILL THAT YOU MAY SEE.**

THIS MARKS THE END OF THE INTERPRETIVE PORTION OF THE TRAIL. TURN AROUND OR CONTINUE ON THE TRAIL EXTENSION TO THE LEFT TOWARD TWIN RIDGE.

Bobber the Water Safety Dog says:



www.bobber.info

1. Always wear your life jacket while around water.
2. Never swim alone
3. Don't dive into lake waters without first checking for underwater hazards.
4. Don't take unnecessary chances.
5. Visit Bobber's website: www.bobber.info



HELP SAVE A TREE – Return trail guide to rack for re-use.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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E-mail: philpott@usace.army.mil

www.saw.usace.army.mil/Locations/DistrictLakesandDams/Philpott.aspx

www.CorpsLakes.us