

ROUNDTOP MOUNTAIN
CLASS II NATURAL-SCIENTIFIC STATE NATURAL AREA

COUNTY: Sevier

7.5' QUADRANGLE: Wear Cove

PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: Unaka Mts.

OWNERSHIP: National Park Service

ACREAGE: 237

YEAR DESIGNATED: 1974

DESCRIPTION: Roundtop Mountain is a 237-acre natural area located in the southwest corner of Sevier County west of Wears Cove Gap and east-northeast of Townsend. It forms a section of the northwest boundary of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park (GSMNP). When it was originally acquired, Roundtop Mountain was contiguous with approximately one mile of GSMNP boundary. It was acquired by the State in 1975 to protect this area of the Unaka Mountain range as a state natural area. At the time of its acquisition, and even today, this area remains highly susceptible to development, particularly from summer homes and vacation rentals. While the State initially planned to manage this area, it was soon determined that Roundtop Mountain could best be managed by the National Park Service as a part of the GSMNP.

The natural area occurs in the Unaka Mountains between 1,800 and 3,000 feet in elevation. This is one of the least visited areas in the Smokies and is very peaceful. While there is no trail access into the 237 acres that were designated, hikers can climb through a dry oak-pine forest on a south-facing slope following the Roundtop trail. Common plant species in the understory include mountain laurel, dogwood and American holly. In the spring, flaming azalea provides much seasonal color. Table mountain pine and pitch pine are dominant trees found along the ridge tops. There are elements of mixed mesophytic forest found in the moist and protected coves.

SITE MANAGEMENT: National Park Service, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg, Tennessee 37738, phone (865) 436-1261; Division of Natural Areas, 401 Church Street, 7th Floor L&C Annex, Nashville, TN 37243, phone (615) 532-0431; Division of Natural Areas – East TN office, 3711 Middlebrook Pike, Knoxville, TN 37921, phone (865) 594-5601.

PUBLIC ACCESS: Public access is allowed; limited parking is provided. The Roundtop trail can be accessed from a small two car parking area near the park boundary or by walking the road from Metcalf Bottoms picnic area.

DIRECTIONS: From U.S. Highway 321 (5.5 miles east of Townsend or 9.5 miles west of Pigeon Forge), turn south on Lyon Springs Road toward Little River Road in the GSMNP. Roundtop Mountain will be visible on your right as you proceed toward the Park. A small parking area is on the your left as you enter the Park at Wear Cove Gap. Metcalf Bottoms picnic area has additional parking is 1.2 miles from Wear Cove Gap.