

DEVIL'S BACKBONE STATE NATURAL AREA
CLASS I SCENIC-RECREATIONAL STATE NATURAL AREA

COUNTY: Lewis

7.5' QUADRANGLE: Gordonsburg

PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: Western
Highland Rim

ACREAGE: 950

OWNERSHIP: State of Tennessee

YEAR DESIGNATED: 1997

DESCRIPTION: The Devil's Backbone State Natural Area offers a visitor the opportunity for a quiet hike in a natural environment little affected by modern human action. The trail takes the hiker from the pavement of the Natchez Trace Parkway out along the ridges of Tennessee's Highland Rim, down along a creek, and back again. This inviting walk provides time for enjoying nature and quiet reflection. The trail is a moderately strenuous loop with 200 feet of elevation change that is about 3 miles long.

Devil's Backbone has many important values that make it a significant ecological preserve. Its single most important value is community diversity. Many of the upland vegetation types of the western Highland Rim occur here. These include: 1) White Oak-Northern Red Oak-Hickory Forest 2) Chestnut Oak Forest 3) Chestnut Oak-Black Oak-Hickory Forest 4) Beech-Tuliptree-White Oak-Sugar Maple Forest 5) Chestnut Oak-Shortleaf Pine Forest 6) White Oak-Northern Red Oak-Tuliptree Forest 7) Scarlet Oak-Southern Red Oak-Mockernut Hickory Forest and 8) Sycamore-Tuliptree-Beech Forest.

Not many high quality examples of Western Highland Rim forest communities are known to exist because of present and past land use patterns. While Devil's Backbone represents second or third growth forest, it is unlikely many other sites on the Western Highland Rim will be identified that better represent the region's upland vegetative types. The forested area outside the existing boundary provides an important buffer and creates a much larger landscape scale ecosystem. The integrity is further improved since there is little exotic pest plant invasion compared to many other areas in the region. Another value relates to its recognition as a Class 1 scenic - recreation area. It can support day use activities and provide education opportunities regarding natural area values without impairing sensitive ecological areas. This opportunity is enhanced because of its location on the Natchez Trace Parkway.

SITE MANAGEMENT: Division of Natural Areas, Jackson Environmental Field Office, 1625 Hollywood Drive, Jackson TN 38305, phone (731) 512-1369. Division of Natural Areas, 7th Floor L&C Annex, 401 Church Street, Nashville, TN 37243, phone (615) 532-0431. Natchez Trace Parkway, 2680 Natchez Trace Parkway, Tupelo, MS 38804-9715, phone (800) 305-7417.

PUBLIC ACCESS: Public access allowed; parking and a hiking trail are provided.

DIRECTIONS: Devil's Backbone State Natural Area is located near Hohenwald on the Natchez Trace Parkway. From Nashville, head southwest on the parkway to mile marker 394 where a large sign points to the parking area. From Highway 412, head northeast on the Natchez Trace for about 3 miles, the entrance is on the left.