

## Trip Report: Crawford Mountain

Contributed by Utilma  
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**Goal**—The summit of Crawford Mountain is a crossroads: the Chimney Hollow Trail climbs from Rt. 250 up the NW face and continues down the SE ridge across Crawford Peak as the Crawford Peak Trail. The old road now called Crawford Mountain Trail follows the SW to NE ridge, though it is abandoned from the junction with the Crawford Peak Trail down to Rt. 250. The abandoned old road can be followed, however. I attempted to follow the road down to Rt. 250 last spring, but it peters out after about 1.5 miles.

Since exploring this area last spring, I have wanted to return to camp on a rise of land amid open woods where some hunters had spent time building fire rings, tree stands, and leaving other evidence. The trail to the NW to McKittricks Ridge is marked, at that camping area, as is the trail down to Rt. 250 where it departs from the old road. A mileage marker from the CCC days displays a 2 over a 1, marking the end of the first quarter of the second mile, or 1.25 miles, as I understand the convention.

**Route**—Chimney Hollow Trail climbs gradually approx. 1,800' in about 3.5 miles, and when the leaves are off, one gets a great view of Coalpit Knob looming ahead. There is a level section of trail about half-way up with possible campsites, and views of the Deerfield Valley to the NW, formed by the drainage of Calfpasture River. One special feature of approaching the area from Harrisonburg south on Rt. 42 is that just south of Parnassus, there is a sudden opening up of the view to the SW where one marvels at the impressive bulk of Elliot Knob and Crawford Mountain.

The Forest Service is phasing out their old series of maps and are now carrying an excellent series under the National Geographic imprint, with very few mistakes. I was intrigued by the fact that the NG mapmaker, in looking for a large area on his map with few features that would be obscured, chose the NE slope of Crawford Mountain to drop his compass image into. Not much here but us bears and trees!

**Sights and Sounds**—Speaking of bears, it seems that the SW slope down toward Dry Branch Gap (SR 688) is favored, with much sign. Food more plentiful down that way? The summit of the mountain is broad and flat, with no views, though a side route of a mile or so to Crawford Knob affords good views back to the summit as well as some interesting rock formations. Further down the Crawford Knob Trail are two developed springs. One warning: the route shown on the NG map to the access road from Jerusalem Church (FS 12269) is not correct. There undoubtedly is a fisherman's trail along McKittricks Branch, as is shown, but the actual route takes a more direct route up the mountain.

In July, there was considerable vegetative growth across the summit and down the old road, including Bear Grass, a red Lily, much Columbine, and Indian Pipes. Ravens circled and croaked.

Some local hunters, no doubt, were the helpful gang doing some light pruning down the old road. I approve, since these old trails grow in fast. Visit now, do some snipping, and let's keep the area open! I don't worry about too many visitors. I saw only one other group during the two-day trip. An old guide book of mine comments on the wilderness feel to the area, and since the FS gave up maintaining the north half of the road, there opened up lots of room for the mapmaker's compass.