

Mark Twain National Forest Trail Map – Rockpile Mountain Wilderness Area 2022

The 4,238 acre Rockpile Mountain Wilderness takes its name from an ancient circle of granite rock, piled by some earlier man on top of the mountain. Located in Madison County on the Fredericktown Ranger District, southeast of Bell Mountain and southwest of Fredericktown, Missouri, the wilderness is within the St. Francois Mountains, with elevations ranging from 1,305 to 520 feet. The area is primarily a broken ridge, having steep rocky slopes running from Little Grass Mountain on the north to the National Forest boundary four miles to the south.

The entire area is heavily forested with oak, hickory, pine, red cedar, and miscellaneous hardwood species. A virgin forest consisting of large basswood, butternut, Kentucky coffee tree, walnut, sugar maple, white and red oak is sheltered in one narrow gorge, making it an ideal outdoor biological laboratory.

Scenic attractions include Rockpile Mountain itself, the steep limestone bluffs, rock formations, and caves along the St. Francis River. The narrow gorges or "shut-ins" with rushing cascades during periods of runoff and the scattered granite glades add variety to the wilderness landscape, as well as unique plant and animal communities.

The area has no significant natural permanent water except for the St. Francis River, which touches the wilderness along the southwest corner. The intermittent drainages, flow only in times of surplus rainfall. Runoff becomes a torrent in some of the small streams following heavy rains because of the rapid runoff from the steep areas of exposed rock. A few springs exist in the area. Five wildlife ponds constructed prior to Wilderness designation still provide a manmade source of year-round water for wildlife.

Wildlife within the area is typical of the Missouri Ozarks. Big game consists of white-tailed deer and wild turkey. Small game animals include squirrels, rabbits, and various other fur bearers. The different habitats encourage a variety of birds ranging from large birds such as hawks, owls, turkey vultures, and pileated woodpeckers to the smaller songbirds. Turtles, lizards, and snakes are found throughout the area, but timber rattlers and copperheads are the only venomous snakes.

wild azaleas give the wilderness a wild burst of color in the spring. Fall isn't to be outdone when the oaks, sweet gum, and sugar maple put on a show of yellow, oranges and reds. Scattered limestone glades and other openings provide some of the more favorable places to view wildlife. White-tailed deer, gray squirrel, raccoon, coyote, red and gray fox, bobcat and striped skunk are some of the mammals native to the area. Wild turkey, red-tailed hawk, great horned owl, bald eagle, turkey vulture, great blue heron, pileated woodpecker and various songbirds can be seen. Among the reptiles common to the area are two poisonous snakes, the copperhead and the eastern timber rattler. As a designated wilderness, the Devils Backbone Wilderness is managed by the Mark Twain National Forest and enjoys the highest level of permanent protection!

Trails: Rockpile Mountain Trail.

Restrictions: Foot, and horseback travel only, **no motorized or mechanized use.**

Rating: Moderate. Terrain is sometimes steep. The area is within the St. Francois Mountains where elevations range from 1,305 to 520 feet.

Disclaimer:

-This map is intended to depict physical features as they generally appear on the ground and may not be used to determine title, ownership, legal boundaries, legal jurisdiction, including jurisdiction over roads or trails, or access restrictions that may be in place on either public or private land.

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