



Wright's Mountain Trails

Bradford, VT

Uses: *hiking, skiing, snowshoeing. Horseback riding and mountain biking can be done on some trails under dry conditions. Camping is allowed at the summit shelter.*

Description: With an elevation of 1,822 feet, Wright's Mountain is Bradford's highest peak, with wonderful views from its open summit ledges of the Waits River Valley and surrounding mountains to the west. A 3.5 mile network of footpaths and logging roads connect trailhead parking areas on both the Chase Hollow Road and Wright's Mountain Road. The Wright's Mountain Trail from the north is part of an "Interconnectedness Quest," an educational treasure hunt, created with Oxbow High School students in coordination with the Vital Communities Valley Quest program. The Chase Hollow Trail from the south leads to a boulder-strewn ravine with a number of shallow caves, the largest of which is known as Devil's Den. Ernie's Trail connects north and south, meeting up with the Wright's Mountain Trail at a large vernal pool on the southeast flank of Wright's Mountain.

The 218-acre Wright's Mountain parcel was purchased from Sylvia Appleton in 1993 with funds raised by the Bradford Conservation Commission via grants, private contributions, fund-raising events and an allocation by the voters of Bradford at Town Meeting. In April 2004 Bradford acquired the 60-acre Devil's Den tract in a bargain sale, and incorporated it into one conservation management plan with Wright's Mountain. Through a conservation restrictions agreement with UVL, the Wright's Mountain/Devil's Den area will always be conserved as wildlife habitat and forest land, and open to the public for recreation, education, and enjoyment.



Photo 1: *Snowshoers enjoying the view from Wright's Mountain lookout.*

Directions:

Chase Hollow Trailhead: From the Bradford exit of Interstate 91, go west on Route 25 for 3.3 miles. Turn right onto Chase Hollow Road and go 1.3 miles. Trailhead parking is on the left, and the yellow-blazed trail starts at the north side of the parking lot.

Wright's Mountain Trailhead: The Wright's Mountain trailhead can be approached from either the east or west. From the I-91 Bradford exit, go west on Route 25 for 4.7

miles. Turn right onto Wright's Mountain Road and go 2.3 miles, staying to the right at the Fulton Road intersection, to trailhead parking on the right. Alternatively, if you are planting a car for an end-to-end hike-through, continue from the Chase Hollow Trailhead on the Chase Hollow Road for another 1.1 miles, making sure to turn left at the intersection of Chase Hollow and Tarbox Roads at the 0.9 mile point. At the end of Chase Hollow Road, turn left again and follow Goshen Road for 0.7 miles. Turn left once more, and follow Wright's Mountain Road west 1.1 miles to Wright's Mountain trailhead parking on the left.

Exploring Wright's Mountain Trails:

Bradford residents have long considered Wright's Mountain and Devil's Den to be key properties for maintaining the town's beauty, unique rural Vermont character, history, and a strong sense of place. Bradford families have been picnicking there for generations. The town's high school and middle school students use the area for various activities including hiking trips, ecology study, photography classes, and undertaking trail maintenance projects as a community service. Bradford students were essential partners in the creation of the **Vital Communities Valley Quest** for the Wright's Mountain Trail. The area also plays a key part in the rich history and mythology of the town.



Photo 2: *Wright's Mountain*

Benoni Wright (1675 – 1702), for whom both Wright's Mountain and Devil's Den were named, was among Bradford's first - and least-respected - white settlers. Wright was a religious fanatic and self-proclaimed prophet who tried to undertake a Biblically-inspired 40-day fast at the site now called Devil's Den. The fast did not last long, as the haggard and wild-eyed Wright was soon found trying to steal food from a nearby farm. Because of his eccentricities, the townspeople of his day believed that he was possessed by the Devil. Ridiculed though he was, and never

achieving the sought-after status of prophet among his fellow citizens, he is remembered fondly today for his colorful place in the town's history. Though unconfirmed, a town legend has it that sometime later counterfeiters set up a press in the same Devil's Den cave once inhabited by Mr. Wright.

More recently, the Appleton family owned the Wright's Mountain land from 1916 to 1993. They selectively logged, cut firewood for personal use, and used the land for maple sugaring. They generously kept the land open for hiking, snowmobiling, picnicking, hunting, cross-country skiing, and similar outdoor recreational activities. As Sylvia Appleton neared retirement, she wished to sell the land, and both she and the townspeople were eager for it to remain both ecologically preserved and open to the public.

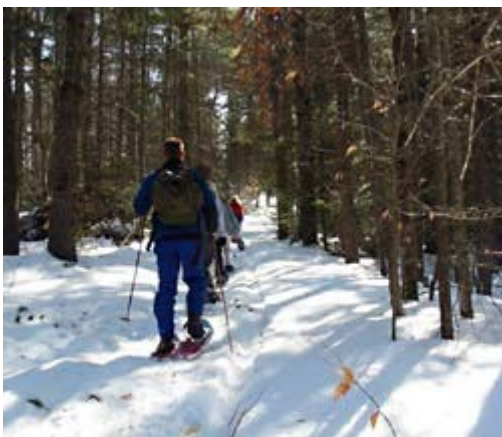


Photo 3: *Snowshoers hike Wright's Mountain Trail*

Nancy Jones, chair of the Bradford Conservation Commission, provided instrumental leadership in the town's effort to purchase and conserve the site. As a biology teacher at Oxbow High School, she has also led her students in studying the history and ecology of the land, as well as GPS mapping techniques. "The land is so pretty," says Jones. "There are interesting outcroppings and a diversity of tree types, fungus, all kinds of things. And then all of a sudden, you're in a ravine area with its steep cliffs, lichens, and ferns hanging, and if you're quiet you can hear the drip, drip, drip of water. It's hard to imagine that anything like this exists in Bradford."

The geological and ecological diversity of the area is indeed remarkable. Wright's Mountain is completely forested. Northern hardwoods dominate, although softwoods grow on the ridge and steep west slope. Several small dense stands of softwoods are used as winter "deer yards" – critically important habitat where the trees protect against wind and their evergreen branches intercept snow, limiting its depth, thus allowing deer to conserve energy and survive the long, cold winter. Moose traverse the mountain slopes. Keep an eye out for their large cloven tracks; at five to seven inches long and almost as wide, they are roughly twice the size of a deer track. As you hike along also listen for the loud hammering of the pileated woodpecker and the ruffed grouse's explosive wingbeats upon takeoff. In spring, the male courting grouse can be heard "drumming" – an accelerated thumping sound made with beating wings and sounding not unlike a distant lawnmower starting.



Photo 4: *View from Wright's Mountain*

To explore Wright's Mountain Trail follow an old logging road leading upslope for 0.8 mile to the summit of Wright's Mountain. At about the half-way point, Sylvia's Trail branches off of Wright's Mountain Trail for a slightly longer and gentler approach to the summit. Viewing ledges and an open-sided shelter are just beyond and to the southwest of the actual summit. The Wright's Mountain Trail continues from the lookout down the south side of the mountain towards Devil's Den and Chase Hollow, with the option of a loop back along Ernie's Trail.

Devil's Den lies in an impressive, sheer-walled ravine between a southeastern ridge off of Wright's Mountain and the main summit ridge. The shallow caves there were formed by large blocks of ledge that have tumbled down over time. A network of well-traveled porcupine trails wind through the ledges and the immediate vicinity of Devil's Den. The porcupine's worst enemy, the fisher, is also known to inhabit

the area. Look up towards the cliffs and listen for the calls of nesting ravens. "Whitewashed" rocks identify their nesting locations. On a day when warm winds create updrafts from the Devil's Den ravine, you may see the ravens or other raptors circling above, riding the air currents.



Photo 5: *Oxbow High School students at Devil's Den*

To get to Devil's Den via the Chase Hollow Trail follow a combination of footpaths and old logging roads for 0.7 mile through hardwood and mixed woodlands, passing many rock outcroppings. The trail crosses a number of other trails and logging roads, so look for yellow blazes whenever you are in doubt. Bring a flashlight, if you like, to explore the caves. Please watch your step, especially in wet conditions. About a tenth of

a mile east of Devil's Den on Chase Hollow Trail Ernie's Trail heads north to a large **vernal pool** where it meets up with the Wright's Mountain Trail to the summit.

Link:

Valley Quest program: vitalcommunities.org/valleyquest/

Trail Use Guidelines

- Carry out what you carry in.
- Stay on the trail and use only designated trailhead parking areas.
- Stay off trails during spring melt, when soils are soft and easily eroded.
- Be respectful of other trail users and be courteous to trail neighbors.
- Control your dog(s). Do not allow dogs to disturb livestock, wildlife, or sensitive natural areas. Pets are not allowed on some trails.
- Close farm gates behind you.
- For your safety during hunting seasons, wear blaze orange.
- Follow [Leave No Trace guidelines](#).

Trail Maintenance: The Bradford Conservation Commission (Wright's Mtn. Stewardship Committee) is responsible for all trail maintenance and construction. The BCC is assisted by students from the [Oxbow High School](#) and the [River Bend Career & Technical Center](#). The UVLT monitors trails along with the annual monitoring visit of the protected property.

While these trails are available for community use free of charge, their maintenance depends on the good stewardship and financial support of users. Donations for the trail program may be sent to: Trails, Upper Valley Land Trust, 19 Buck Road, Hanover, NH 03755 or [donate online](#).

Please contact UVLT at contactus@uvlt.org (603-643-6626) to report trail maintenance needs or recommendations.