

# *Step-by-Step*

# TRAILS GUIDE

# STOKES STATE FOREST



State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Parks and Forestry • State Park Service  
[njparksandforests.org](http://njparksandforests.org)



# STOKES STATE FOREST

**STOKES STATE FOREST**, located in Sussex County, New Jersey, comprises 16,447 acres of mountainous woods in the Kittatinny Mountains. Stokes extends from the southern boundary of High Point State Park southwest to the eastern boundary of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

## TRAILS OF STOKES STATE FOREST

**Stokes State Forest** has 24 marked trails with over 62 miles of total trail length. Trails vary in length from a half mile long to 17.3 miles long, and over terrains ranging from flat lowlands to rocky mountains. Many of the trails connect, offering the hiker a variety of trips from an hour to a full day. There is also a 12-mile-long section of the Appalachian Trail that follows the Kittatinny Mountain Ridge through Stokes State Forest. This trail's designated use is restricted to hiking only for its entire length from Maine to Georgia. White blazes mark this narrow and sometimes very rocky trail.

Along the Kittatinny Mountains are outstanding views of the surrounding landscape. Sunrise Mountain offers scenic vistas of the Kittatinny Valley to the east and the Delaware River Valley to the west.

### TRAIL SENSE AND SAFETY

**Trail Markings** Official trails in the state forest are marked with colored blazes or markers on posts or trees. Horses and bicycles must stay on designated trails or roads and hikers are encouraged to stay on trails. One blaze means to continue straight. Two blazes indicate that the trail makes a turn in the direction of the top blaze.

**Be prepared** Bring water, snacks, insect repellent, and sunscreen. Check the weather before you go and dress appropriately. The weather in Stokes is often cooler and windier than elsewhere in the area so it is best to dress in layers.

**Tick protection** Insect repellent, long pants and light colored clothing can help prevent tick bites. It is a good idea to check yourself periodically during your hike, when you're done, and when you get home.

**Hunting** Stokes State Forest is open to various hunting seasons year-round. Contact the Stokes office for more information. It is advisable to wear bright colored clothing (blaze orange recommended) that can be seen from all directions.

**Report** trail issues to Stokes office (973) 948-3820.

**Report** emergencies by calling **1-877-WARN-DEP** (1-877-927-6337) or **911**.

### Stokes Trail Lengths at a Glance

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|  Acropolis Trail (1.0 mi)      |  Red Maple Trail (5.0 mi)   |  Steffen Trail (1.8 mi)     |
|  Appalachian Trail (12 mi)     |  Rock Oak Trail (1.5 mi)    |  Stoll Trail (0.7 mi)       |
|  Blue Mountain Trail (17.3 mi) |  Shay Trail (1.5 mi)        |  Stony Brook Trail (2.8 mi) |
|  Blue Mountain Connector       |  Silver Mine Trail (2.2 mi) |  Stony Lake Trail (0.7 mi)  |
|  Cemetery Trail (0.33 mi)      |  Geology Trail (1.0 mi)     |  Swenson Trail (3.7 mi)     |
|  Coursen Trail (1.5 mi)        |  Ladder Trail (0.4 mi)      |  Tillman Trail (1.5 mi)     |
|  Criss Trail (2.2 mi)          |  Lead Mine Trail (0.7 mi)   |  Tinsley Trail (2.0 mi)     |
|  Deep Root Trail (1.2 mi)      |  Parker Trail (6.5 mi)      |  Tower Trail (1.6 mi)       |

## TRAILS OF STOKES STATE FOREST

### Acropolis Trail

*Gold & brown • 1 mile • Hiking*

*Difficult • Steep trail*

**Trailhead** Located along south side of Route 206 across from Culvers Lake.

This trail, although quite the climb, pays off with great rewards! Start at pullout & gate on south side of Rt. 206. Trail starts uphill, ascending a series of switchbacks on an old road bed. After 0.3 miles, the trail intersects with the Appalachian Trail. As the Acropolis Trail continues towards the ridge-top, it is littered with sedimentary rock fragments like shale, conglomerates, and breccias. A conglomerate is a rock comprised of smaller, rounded rocks cemented together; while a breccia is a rock comprised of smaller, angular rocks cemented together.

As the Acropolis Trail climbs, a unique scrub oak ecosystem takes over the exposed rocky outcroppings. Various types of oaks, including northern red, white, and black oak can be found along the rocky ridges. In addition, pitch pine trees, juniper trees, and sheep laurel are abundant. Blueberries and raspberries are also scattered along the ridges. This type of ecosystem is ideal for snakes, including rattlesnakes, so be conscious and aware of your step.

At the top, having gained the ridge, enjoy the views east over Culvers Lake and west over Kittatinny Lake and Kittatinny Mountains.

### Appalachian Trail (AT)

*White • 12 miles • Hiking*

*Moderate • Long distance trail with varied terrain*

**Trailhead** Numerous entry points along the trail.

The **Appalachian National Scenic Trail**, generally known as the A.T., is a marked hiking trail in the eastern United States extending between Springer Mountain in Georgia and Mount Katahdin in Maine. The trail is about 2,200 miles long, though the precise length changes over time as parts are modified or rerouted. The trail passes through the states of Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

The Appalachian Trail was completed in 1937 after more than a decade of work, although improvements and changes continue. It is maintained by 31 trail clubs and multiple partnerships, and managed by the National Park Service, United States Forest Service, and the nonprofit Appalachian Trail Conservancy. The majority of the trail is in forest or wild lands, although some portions traverse towns, roads and farms.

## **Blue Mountain Trail**

*Blue • 17.3 miles • Multi-use*

*Moderate • Long-distance loop trail*

**Trailhead** There are numerous locations to enter the Blue Mountain Trail.

**Blue Mountain Trail** is a newly created loop trail around the center of Stokes State Forest and created using existing trails, as well as short sections of new trail.

### ***From Stony Lake:***

From the parking area at Stony Lake, enter trail and head southwest along slight ridgeline passing Lead Mine Trail on right after 0.8 miles. Descend to small ponds and turn right (north). Follow wide grassy road running along a small creek. The trail joins the main park road just at intersection of Coursen and Shotwell Roads. Turn right on Coursen Road for 25 yds., crossing small bridge, then left into trees. The trail follows stream for a short distance on new trail, with uneven terrain and many roots. Trail eventually evens out onto 4'-wide forest track for 0.5 mile until meeting with a connector trail from Coursen Road on the right. Blue Mountain Trail turns left on grassy path and descends a gradual slope along the south side of a marshy area. The trail crosses the outlet stream and then crosses Shotwell Road. After another 0.5 miles, merge with a rocky, rutted road. Continue downhill along road to a small pond. Pass over a small concrete dam and spillway. Just beyond the pond, and before reaching a metal bridge, trail turns right and meanders along braided creek drainage for 0.75 miles, crossing behind Haskins Group Camping and directly along creek. Reach the parking area at end of Kittle Road and continue across road, sharing trail with Stony Brook.

After 0.2 miles, trail crosses creek on wooden bridge and turns left to continue on Blue Mountain Trail through a long section of forested terrain. Cross Skellenger Road and continue along Big Flat Brook for another 1.25 miles until intersecting with Crigger Road. Trail joins road, turns left across a short bridge, and then quickly leaves road again. Blue Mountain Trail makes a long sweep around the eastern portion of Stokes Forest. Along its southeastern curve, the trail comes close to joining the Appalachian Trail (AT), just 0.1 mile away. The trail crosses the Sunrise Mountain Road and back towards the northwest into the center of the forest. After 1.33 miles from Sunrise Road, the trail passes Spring Cabin and then intersects with Tinsley Trail. Continue on through creek drainages for close to 2 miles until arriving back at Stony Lake parking lot.

Blue Mountain Trail passes through most regions of the park, from interior forests and ridges, marshes and wetlands, lake and stream environments, and along the shoulder of the Kittatinny Ridge.

## **Coursen Trail**

*Blue • 1.5 miles • Multi-use • Moderate*

**Trailhead** 1 mile from 206 on north side of Sunrise Mountain Road.

**Coursen Trail** is a short link to the Stony Lake area and can be combined with other trails in the area (e.g., Tower, Stony Brook) to create a moderate loop. The trail starts out heading north on single-track through mixed hardwood forest. Trail changes to an old forest road, widening to 4-6', and then as it begins to

descend gently towards Stony Lake, changes back to single-track. The trail tread is uneven with many rocks and roots. Intersect with Tower / Stony Brook Trail on east side of lake.

### **Criss Trail**

*Gray & teal • 2.2 miles • Hiking  
Moderate • Mixed terrain*

**Trailhead** 2 access points on north side of Grau Road.

Beginning at the dirt entrance to Cabin 12 on Flatbrook Road, the trail climbs a gentle slope and then descends into Criss Brook drainage. Trail turns right along heads northeast. After a short distance, the Deep Root trail begins on the left. The trail continues upstream along brook for much of its length into the upper reaches of the drainage until it meets with Degroat Road for a short section and then turns to south alongside Forked Brook. Trail heads downhill and ends at Grau Road.

### **Deep Root Trail**

*Red & yellow • 1.2 miles • Multi-use  
Moderate • Short sections of steep trail*

**Trailhead** Starts from Criss Trail.

**Deep Root Trail** begins from Criss Trail and immediately crosses Criss Brook and heads uphill out of stream drainage. The trail climbs moderate slope among boulder strewn hardwood trees. After a constant 0.3-mile climb, the trail levels out along ridge-top and winds through thick ferns. The trail continues along the ridge and meets with upper reach of Degroat Road.

### **Geology Trail (also named Kittatinny Glacial Geology Trail)**

*Blue • 1.0 mile • Hiking & interpretive  
Moderate • Rocky trail through glacial landforms*

**Trailhead** Begins and ends at Tinsley Trail, a short distance downhill from Sunrise Mountain Road.

**Geology Trail** is a loop trail that begins and ends at Tinsley Trail just downhill from Sunrise Mountain Road. where there is a small pull-off parking area. The trail is narrow and winds through an area of glacial landforms. Along the way, numbered posts correspond with the interpretive guide that explains the numerous sites. The interpretive guide is available from Stokes Office.

### **Ladder Trail**

*Blue & gray • 0.4 miles • Multi-use  
Moderate • Steep rock ledged hillside*

**Trailhead** From Red Maple Trail on Woods Road.

**Ladder Trail** is a short trail connecting Woods Road with the Appalachian Trail (AT). From Woods Road, ascend a series of steep ledged terraces up forested hillsides. The trail is very rocky and steep in places before reaching the ridge, leveling out and intersecting the AT.

### **Lead Mine Trail**

*Blue & gray • 0.7 miles • Multi-use  
Easy • Flat trail*

**Trailhead** From Coursen Road, on right, approximately 0.4 miles from Stokes office.

**Lead Mine Trail** is 1-2' wide rocky path connecting to Blue Mountain Trail along a slight ridge 0.5 miles from Stony Lake.

**Lead Mine Trail** traverses through forests in various stages of successional growth. You will see a nicely developed understory with ferns and hardwood and pine seedlings, immature saplings, as well as older growth and mature trees. The forest type also varies, with areas of hardwoods and areas of pines and evergreens. If you want to create a longer loop, you can connect with the Blue Mountain Trail (blue) to Stony Lake or southwest to park office and back to Coursen Road.

### **Red Maple Trail**

*Red maple leaf • 5 miles • Multi-use  
Moderate to difficult*

**Trailhead** Parking lot off Struble Road for Lake Ashroe Recreation Area, or the upper parking lot at Tillman Ravine Natural Area.

**Red Maple Trail** connects the Lake Ashroe Recreation Area with the unique Tillman Ravine Natural Area. Starting from the upper parking area at Tillman Ravine, the trail moves out of the Ravine and heads west for 1.5 miles across forested uplands of mixed hardwood and pine. The trail crosses the Shay Trail, which connects north to Dimon Rd or headed south, ascends to the Brinks Shelter and the Appalachian Trail just beyond. The Red Maple Trail continues along the relatively flat and wide Woods Rd. for another 1.5 miles until intersecting with the Ladder and Steffen trails. The Ladder Trail heads south-east up the ridge on a series of steep terraces for another access point to the Appalachian Trail. The Red Maple Trail departs from Woods Rd and turns slightly north on Coss Rd, sharing the route with the Steffen Trail. After a short distance, both trails leave Coss Rd. and turn right onto a forested 2-track path. The Red Maple and Steffen Trail continue together for 0.5 miles while ascending a broad ridgeline northwest of Kittatinny Lake. As the trail gains the ridge, the Red Maple turns north and moves through forested hillside. After another 0.5 miles, the trail curves back to north-east and begins to descend ridge into the Lake Ashroe drainage. The trail continues to descend and meets the east side of Lake Ashroe. It continues along the Lake edge and through the cabins and lodges of a former boy scout camp before joining Struble Rd and the parking area for Lake Ashroe.

## **Rock Oak Trail**

*Blue & yellow • 1.5 miles • Multi-use  
Easy • Flat trail along ridge*

**Trailhead** from west side of Deckertown Turnpike (Rt. 650) 1 mile from intersection with Crigger Road.

**Rock Oak Trail** heads immediately into woods on old road through mixed hardwoods with open understory. Look for blackberries along forest road in summer. After 0.5 miles, the trail narrows to 2-4' and begins a gentle uphill climb along ridge as hillsides slope away on either side of trail. The trail gains a subtle high point, and then begins to descend and widen to become a forested road where it joins Degroat Road.

## **Shay Trail**

*Brown & yellow • 1.5 miles • Multi-use  
Moderate • Follows rocky road bed*

**Trailhead** South side of Dimon Road approximately 0.4 miles past the parking area and gate adjacent to the Lindley G. Cook 4-H Camp.

**Shay Trail** begins on an old road bed. The trail corridor is 4-8' wide gravel and dirt, uneven and eroded in places. After 1 mile, the trail joins with another gravel road (Brink Road) and crosses the end of a marsh on upper Tillman Brook. Continue across Woods Road, and past gate. The trail ascends a hill and arrives at the Brink Shelter and the Appalachian Trail just beyond.

## **Silver Mine Trail**

*Orange • 2.2 miles • Multi-use  
Moderate*

**Trailhead** Near waterfall on Stony Brook Trail, or from Blue Mountain Trail.

**Silver Mine Trail** is a partial looped trail beginning along the Stony Brook Trail just near the falls and connecting to the Blue Mountain Trail. From the Kittle Field picnic area, the wide open Stony Brook Trail follows the creek and encounters a small cascading waterfall over a resistant layer of metamorphosed red sandstone. Just beyond the waterfall, Silver Mine Trail turns sharply right and climbs a gently sloping hill along a 3-4' wide forest road among hardwoods and pine. After 0.4 miles, a short side trail descends back into the creek to an old silver mine shaft used by the previous property owner, John Snook, in the late 1800's. Using a hand drill and explosives, he excavated a rectangular shaft. This exploratory mine was most likely a test dig to determine the extent of the quartz seam which emerges from underground at this location. This seam is rather extensive and can be seen in neighboring rocks in the immediate area. This type of "sugar quartz" is the most common place to find concentrations of precious stones and metal deposits. Unfortunately, this type of rock is metamorphosed sandstone and is not known to contain either precious stones or metals. If the small pile of excavated material next to the hole is any measure, the depth of the test shaft is very small.

## **Steffen Trail**

*Black & gray • 1.8 miles • Multi-use  
Easy • Flat forested terrain*

**Trailhead** South side of road just after turning onto Struble Road.

**Steffen Trail** begins off Struble Road approximately 200 yards after turning off Route 206. Look for trailhead and sign on left with parking area on right side of road.

The trail starts on a 2' wide dirt path through open stands of tall pines. It makes a long gradual ascent through mixed hardwood hillsides. The trail is primitive in places and crosses lengths of grassy and rocky areas. The trail reaches the ridgeline and co-aligns with the Red Maple Trail to the northwest of Kittatinny Lake and joins a wider 2-track trail. Continue along grass and dirt track along ridge before descending to join Coss Road / Woods Road.

## **Stoll Trail**

*Blue & gray • 0.7 miles • Multi-use  
Easy • Gentle hike*

**Trailhead** Begins 0.2 miles past the parking area and gate (adjacent to Lindley Cook 4-H Camp) on Dimon Road. Look for a trailhead and sign on left (south) side of road.

**Stoll trail** follows blue & gray markers for 0.6 miles passing through hemlock and hardwood forests before connecting with a forest road (Coss Road) just south of Struble Road.

## **Stony Brook Trail**

*Brown • 2.8 miles • Multi-use  
Moderate • Trail across mixed terrain*

**Trailhead** Parking area at end of Kittle Road.

**Stony Brook Trail** travels between Haskin's Group Camping area off Kittle Road to the Appalachian Trail. It connects through Stony Lake area and can be combined with other trails.

**Stony Brook Trail** leaves Kittle Road on a dirt single-track trail on west side of brook, and shares trail with Blue Mountain. After 0.1 miles, cross a bridge to the east side of the brook, where trails diverge - Blue Mountain Trail heads to left; Stony Brook continues right on a gravel road bed 4-5' wide. Continue on path up a moderate slope. The trail climbs above the brook with large pines along ravine edge. Pass Stepping Stone Falls, a series of short drops and flows across creek bedrock- a must see in Stokes State Forest.

Past the waterfall area, the trail widens to 6-8' road until it reaches the Kittle Field picnic area. Along this section, the brook follows along parts of the trail, creating a moist environment ideal for unique plants and animals. Fungi, lichens, mosses, and red spotted salamanders can be found on the trail. After a good rain, keep an eye out for these bright red creatures along the trailside. At the picnic area, the trail heads left and a short section winds to the Stony Lake parking area. The trail resumes adjacent to the large sign board and heads east sharing trail with Tower Trail.



The trail follows along Stony Brook drainage and after 0.5 miles leaves the brook and heads south up hillside along a small tributary stream. Continue up hillside to reach Sunrise Mountain Road. On the southeastern side of Sunrise Mountain Road is the Gren Anderson shelter, a popular overnight stop for Appalachian Trail thru hikers. Another 0.1 mile and the Stony Brook trail intersects with the AT.

## Stony Lake Trail

*Blue & brown • 0.7 miles • Multi-use  
Easy • Lakeside trail*

**Trailhead** From the playground at Stony Lake beach.

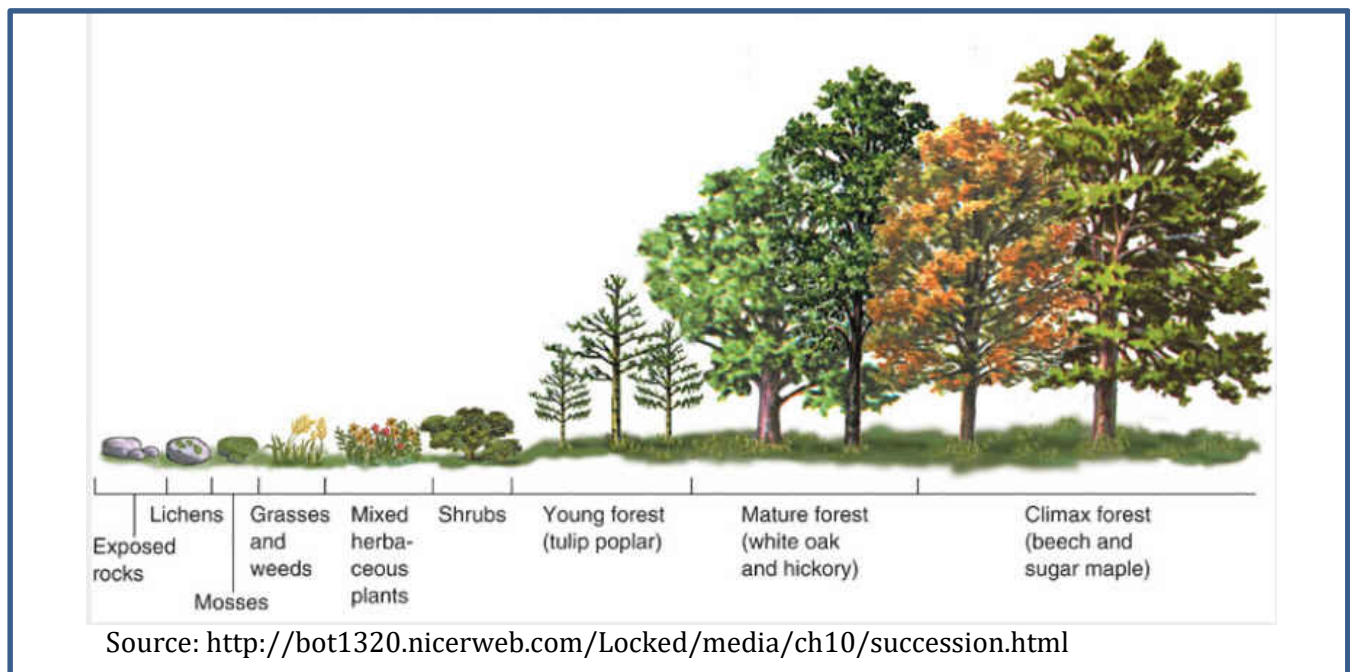
Stone Lake Trail is a short, looped trail around the south side of Stony Lake that provides good views and follows along the lake edge.

## Swenson Trail

*Red • 3.7 miles • Hiking  
Moderate*

**Trailhead** West side of Crigger Road, about 2 miles from the turn to the pavilion.

**Swenson Trail** passes through a section of forest that was subject to clear cut in the last century. You can see succession taken place, as the regeneration of oaks and hardwoods has occurred. You'll find these trees in a healthy young stage. There are a few areas on the trail with small stream crossings, as well as muddy and rocky patches. You can create a difficult loop (just over 5 miles, steep with elevation changes) by connecting the Swenson (red), Blue Mountain (blue), Tinsley (yellow), Appalachian (white rectangle), and back to Blue Mountain (blue). This loop offers amazing scenic overlook at the top of Sunrise Mountain.



## **Tillman Ravine Trail**

*White • 1.5 miles • Hiking*

*Moderate • Steep trail along creek ravine*

**Trailhead** West side of park along Dimon Road, just before reaching seasonal gate and Walpack Cemetery. Take Struble Road from Route 206 and continue to Dimon Road. Signs direct you to the upper and lower parking areas for Tillman Ravine.

**Tillman Ravine Trail** is a short 1 mile looped trail that goes between ridge and ravine and along Tillman Brook, which flows from a spring in the Kittatinny Mountains to the east. The ravine is a narrow red shale and sandstone gorge set among tall hemlock trees. The forested hillsides are thick with hemlock and tulip poplar, with rhododendron and ferns blanketing the ground.

## **Tinsley Trail**

*Yellow • 2.0 miles • Hiking*

*Moderate • Crosses center of Stokes*

**Trailhead** Skellenger Road or Sunrise Mountain Road.

**Trailhead** To hike the Tinsley Trail uphill toward the Appalachian Trail and Sunrise Mountain Road, begin near the Lake Ocquittunk camping area. Cross over the stone bridge and turn left toward the School of Conservation, and the trail begins on the right. To begin hike Tinsley Trail downhill, start on Sunrise Mountain Road, park on the right side of the road near the Tinsley Trail trailhead sign, and cross the road to the left.

**Tinsley Trail** also includes the Kittatinny Glacial Geology Trail. Take an interpretive trail guide along as you stop at numbered posts along the way to learn about the geologic features of this area. Tinsley Trail provides good access to the middle of the Blue Mountain Trail. Hiking Tinsley Trail uphill from Lake Ocquittunk will link you up with the Appalachian Trail off of Sunrise Mountain Road.

Tinsley Trail traverses through a diverse area of mixed northern hardwood forest. One commonly observed tree species includes various types of oaks (*Quercus spp.*), including white, pin, black, northern red, and post oak. White oak leaves are pale green in color, 3-4" long, 2-4" wide, with moderately deep and round lobes. Pin oak leaves are deeply lobed, about 3-5" long and 2-4" wide, and slightly shiny. Black oak leaves are shiny and dark green, 4-9" long, 3-6" wide, with deep and sharp lobes.

Red and sugar maple trees (*Acer spp.*) are also common around the Tinsley Trail. Red maple leaves have three shallow, pointed lobes; and sugar maple leaves have five long, pointed lobes.

Tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) and American elm (*Ulmus americana*) are also found in this mixed northern hardwood forest. The trail is edged abundantly with mountain laurel, which blooms with beautiful pink and white flowers in early June.

Travelling through relatively undisturbed forest, wildlife is thriving on the Tinsley Trail. Common bird, mammal, and reptile species can be found. Keep your eye out for brightly colored birds, like the Scarlet Tanager and the Indigo Bunting; and be especially aware of black bears, rattlesnakes, and copperheads!

## **Tower Trail**

*Green • 1.6 miles • Hiking*

*Difficult • Trail ascends from creek to AT*

**Trailhead** 1.5 miles from Route 206 on Sunrise Mountain Road, or from Stony Lake parking area.

For a short (0.5 miles), however quite steep hike, park along Sunrise Mountain Road and hike uphill towards the Appalachian Trail and Culver's fire-tower. To hike the entire trail, park at Stony Lake and begin the trail behind the bulletin board.

**Tower Trail** begins adjacent to the large sign board at the Stony Lake parking area and heads east sharing trail with Stony Brook trail. After .2 miles, the Tower trail turns to the south, leaves stream area, and ascends a gradual hillside to reach the Sunrise Mountain Road. Continue south from the road on moderate slope until trail begins to ascend steeper, rocky hillside for last 100 yards to gain the ridge and intersect with the AT. Turn right (south) on the AT and continue for 200 yards to reach the Culvers Lookout Tower and a large grassy area with picnic table. The overlook offers spectacular sweeping views of New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. Hidden in the rolling green hills you can also see Stony Lake, Culvers Lake, and Kittatinny Lake.

The forest type changes from one end of the Tower Trail to the other. On the lower elevation end is mixed hardwood forest. As you climb higher in elevation, the forest type transitions to a scrub oak ecosystem along the exposed, rocky ridges. To create a moderately-difficult loop just under 4 miles, connect the Tower (green), Appalachian (white rectangle), and Stony Brook Trails.