

LAUREL-SNOW
CLASS II NATURAL-SCIENTIFIC STATE NATURAL AREA

COUNTY: Rhea

7.5' QUADRANGLE: Morgan Springs

PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCE: Cumberland Plateau

OWNERSHIP: State of Tennessee

ACREAGE: 2,259

YEAR DESIGNATED: 1973

DESCRIPTION: Laurel-Snow is a 2,259-acre natural area located in Rhea County. The natural area occurs on the Walden Ridge of the Cumberland Plateau and contains a section of gorge that is deeply dissected by Morgan, Henderson, Laurel, and Richland Creeks. The site is named after two scenic waterfalls, Laurel Falls (80 feet) and Snow Falls (35 feet), and features two prominent overlooks, Buzzard Point and Bryan Overlook (also known as Raven Point). The natural area also has scenic creeks, steep gorges, geologic features, a small stand of virgin timber, and a wide variety of plants. After about 1.5 miles of hiking into the natural area beside Richland Creek, the trail forks. You can reach Buzzard Point and Snow Falls by following the trail as it forks to the left going west. The trail to the right leads to Laurel Snow Falls and then eventually climbs to the top of the falls. The distance for both trails is about 8 miles round trip.

The land use history of this area remains evident in places. Logging and deep mining took place in some portions of the area in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Some remnants of the mining activities can still be seen along the trail near the parking area. Part of Richland Creek was dammed to serve as the Dayton Reservoir and was once the water supply for the town of Dayton. The low dam across the stream can still be seen, although water is no longer collected here for the town. The Laurel-Snow trail was the first National Recreation Trail designated in Tennessee. See

<http://www.americantrails.org/nationalrecreationtrails/> for more information.

Laurel-Snow State Natural Area is part of the Cumberland Trail State Scenic Trail, and the area includes trailhead parking and an open section of the Cumberland Trail. Backcountry camping is available in the area at this time. See www.tnstateparks.com/CumberlandTrail for more information. The Cumberland Trail, the state's only linear state park, when completed will be 300 miles in length cutting through 11 Tennessee counties from the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park on the Tennessee-Virginia-Kentucky border to the Signal Point near Chattanooga.

SITE MANAGEMENT: Cumberland Trail State Park, South Trail Office, 1838 Taft Highway, Signal Mountain, phone (423) 886-2951; **Division of Natural Areas – East TN Office**, 3711 Middlebrook Pike, Knoxville, TN 37921, phone (865) 594-5601. **Division of Natural Areas**, 401 Church Street, 7th Floor L&C Annex, Nashville, TN 37243, phone (615) 532-0431.

PUBLIC ACCESS: Public access is allowed; parking and hiking trails are provided. The natural area has 10.5 miles of hiking trails. Backcountry camping is by permit only, call 423-566-2229 or go to www.cumberlandtrail.org.

DIRECTIONS: Laurel-Snow is located north of Dayton and is accessible via Highway 27/29. From the north turn right, and from the south turn left, onto Walnut Grove Road north of Dayton (new Eckerd Drug on corner). Proceed 3/4 of a mile to Back Valley Road (pass La-Z-Boy factory) and turn left. On Back Valley Road, proceed 0.7 miles to an unmarked gravel road/Richland Creek Road (small white church on the left) and turn right. Proceed about 1 mile to the parking area at the end of Richland Creek Road.