

Busby Trail to Spruce Hill

Savoy Mountain State Forest



SELF-GUIDED HIKING TOUR

WELCOME to Savoy Mountain State Forest, 10,200 acres managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and located in the towns of Savoy, Florida, Adams and North Adams.

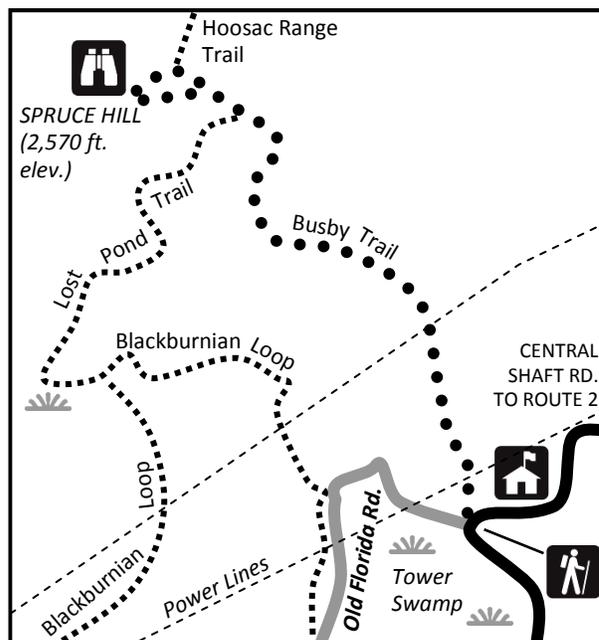
Savoy Mountain has many miles of wooded trails offering opportunities for year-round passive recreation. Much of this state forest was acquired by Massachusetts beginning in 1918, assembled from abandoned farmland. Many farming residents, tired of poor conditions, had moved into valley towns of Adams and North Adams to work in the woolen mills, or headed west for better farmland. The evidence of these farms remains with old orchards and stone fences and a cellar hole found along the Busby Trail.

*Please remember to **carry-in, carry-out** all your belongings, including trash. Please leave no trace of your visit, and leave all that you find in its natural environment for all to enjoy. Thank you.*

THE BUSBY TRAIL to Spruce Hill is perhaps the most popular hiking trail in the state forest. It offers a great panoramic view. The trailhead is located 3 miles from MA Route 2, at the intersection of Central Shaft Road and Old Florida Road (a rocky dirt road), just beyond the state forest headquarters at 260 Central Shaft Road, where you may also pick up a *Savoy Mountain State Forest Trail Map*. Park on the shoulder of Old Florida Road. Be prepared with sturdy footwear, water and snack.

This hike begins gradually, following an old farm road. As you near the top the trail becomes more strenuous. Throughout, the hike is in shaded woodland with occasional breaks at the power lines and at the summit - good places to see wildflowers in season. The summit of Spruce Hill is also a great spot to watch migrating hawks and other raptors as they head south in the fall.

As you walk the Busby Trail there are no marked stops. Allow this guide to give you some things to think about as you hike and encounter things of interest.

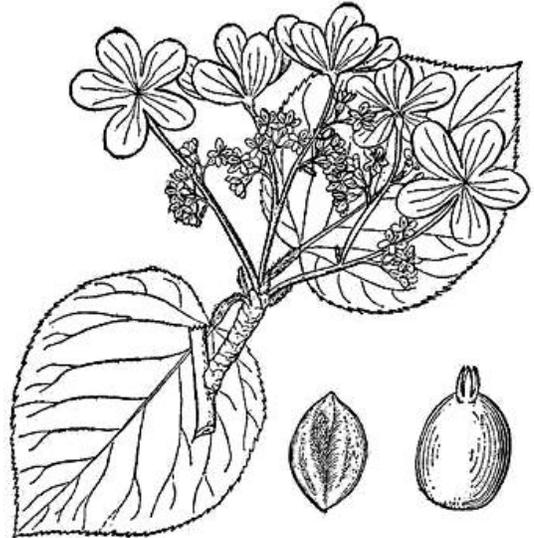


Busby Trail is 3 miles long, round-trip, and moderate to strenuous for average hiker ability, with 680 foot elevation gain. Footing is uneven and wet in places. Plan about 2 hours 30 minutes to complete it. The trail is marked with blue blazes.

SPRUCE HILL, your destination, is a rocky prominence on the Hoosac Mountain Range offering fine views of the Hoosac Valley below, Adams, North Adams, Mount Greylock and Green Mountains. The name *Hoosac*, said to be a Native American Algonquian dialect, means *place of stones*, which becomes evident as you climb higher. The Hoosacs, part of the greater Appalachian Mountain chain, are the transition between the Berkshire Hills plateau to the south and the Green Mountains of Vermont to the north. In the time before good roads, this range was notorious as a tough climb for those heading east and west. First on the Native American footpath, the Mohawk Trail, and later in the 1700s as settlement crept into the region. When you are on top consider that the Hoosac Tunnel is about 1,700 feet beneath you. This still active railroad tunnel took over 20 years to build, completed in 1875. Passing 4.75 miles directly through the Hoosac Range it created a direct commerce route from Boston to markets west. Look for the highpoint's namesake red spruce trees when you reach the top.

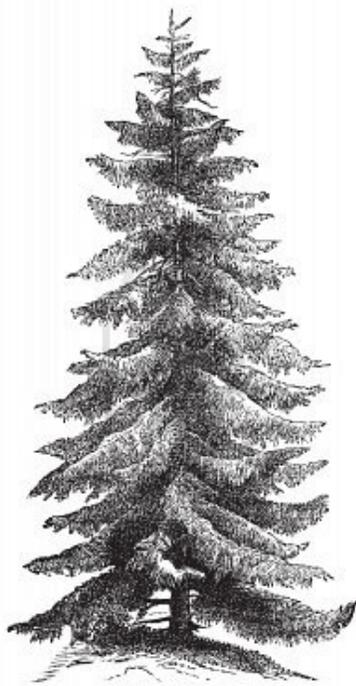
FOREST. You are hiking through a northern hardwood forest, which extends across northern New England to Minnesota and western Ontario. This is a transitional forest between the oak-hickory forest to the south and the boreal forest to the north. Northern hardwoods such as sugar maple, yellow birch, American beech, hobblebush and striped maple are well known for their brilliant fall colors. Much of this forest is not virgin, it has re-grown from what was mostly cleared for agriculture in the early-mid 1800s.

PLANTATIONS. Abandoned farmland acquired for the state forest was then purposely reforested with plantations of non-native Norway and blue spruce, mostly by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s. When the plantation reached maturity, over 60 years later, strip cuts were made. These managed harvest cuts in stands of mature trees allow for native



Hobblebush viburnum

hardwoods to grow in between. This also creates a balance of habitat and forest cover type to support a wide variety of wild life; biodiversity.



Norway spruce

OLD FARM. The trailside cellar hole, barn foundation and stone fences are remains of the Busby Farm. This farm existed from the early 1800s up until about 1933 when it was bought for the state forest. Imagine what it must have been like to live in such a remote place back then. Notice how the forest has reclaimed what was once a cleared landscape for farming.

Beyond the cellar hole the trail changes dramatically. The gentle wood road gives way to a steep, narrow path. After crossing over the stone wall note the junction with the Lost Pond Trail.

As you approach the summit the trail splits into two routes that make a loop around the top. The left route is steep and has some scrambling over rocks, the right route is easier. Remember this on your decent.

GEOLOGY. The Hoosac Range is a complex of folded, metamorphosed schist, mica schist, gneiss and phyllite bedrock, different from

the phyllite schist of Mount Greylock and Taconic Mountain Range to the west, but both are the product of sediments from a former sea bottom thrust up about 490 million years ago. A heavily eroded limestone-marble valley separates the two ranges. The Hoosacs form an impressive western flank to this valley rising to elevations over 2,000 feet, and increasing in height from south to north. Spruce Hill stands out at 2,570 feet in elevation.

RETURN HIKE OPTIONS

1) BUSBY TRAIL - the easiest return route. After you reach Spruce Hill summit return by the same route 1.5 miles, about an hour, to the parking area.

Two other trails intersect with the Busby Trail, which make a longer hike route. If you decide to do this **be prepared** with a *Savoy Mountain State Forest Trail Map* for reference, available at the headquarters. Plan accordingly, pay attention at trail intersections as signage may not be adequate.



Blackburnian warbler

2) LOST POND TRAIL - back at the stonewall, take a right. 0.75 mile brings you to **Blackburnian Loop Trail** and a beaver pond. Take a left and follow 0.7 mile back to **Old Florida Road** (dirt). Bear left and follow 0.3 mile to parking area. Total return trip is 1.75 miles, about 1 hour 15 minutes.

3) HOOSAC RANGE TRAIL -requires prior planning to spot a car at the Route 2 trailhead, near West Summit in North Adams. This trail intersects at the summit of Spruce Hill and goes north over Berkshire Natural Resources Council land, a pleasant ridgeline hike. Hiking distance from Busby Trail/Spruce Hill to the Route 2 trailhead is 3 miles, about 1 hour 50 minutes.

We hope your visit was pleasant and come back to explore Savoy Mountain State Forest.

RESOURCE LINKS

- Savoy Mountain State Forest Trail Map <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/parks/trails/savoy1.pdf>
- Hoosac Range Trail http://www.bnrc.net/properties/214_hoosac_range/

SAVOY MOUNTAIN STATE FOREST
Department of Conservation & Recreation
260 Central Shaft Road, Florida, MA 01247
(413) 663-8469
www.mass.gov/dcr



UPDATED 1/2012