



**Brush Mountain East
Proposed Wilderness Area
Craig County**

The outstanding feature of Brush Mountain East as a wilderness area is its rugged and unspoiled terrain close to the population centers of Blacksburg and Montgomery County. The 3,769-acre area includes the dramatic north side of Brush Mountain, which rises nearly 1,600 feet from Craig Creek to the ridge top. The Appalachian Trail ascends that rise by a beautiful route with views along the steep mountain face. The escarpment gives a dramatic backdrop to the views from VA 621 along Craig Creek, and provides the foreground for the view from the Audie Murphy Monument lookout near the top of the ridge.

Brush Mountain is held up by a layer of Devonian sandstone, but the more friable strata on the north side have promoted many small drainages, coalescing into about 15 tributaries of Craig Creek. The old AT route on the lower slopes of Brush Mountain provides access to those drainages in the eastern section of the area. There are beautiful stands of large sugar maples, white pines, white oaks and hemlocks along some of the drainages, while the common trees on the drier ridges are Table Mountain pine and chestnut oak. Carolina hemlock occupies the rocky heights above. About 15% of the forest consists of old growth. Two shrubs of interest grow here: pirate bush and box huckleberry, the latter a rare plant throughout its Appalachian range. The area has been managed for wild turkey, but steep slopes inhibit hunting very far from the AT.

The southern boundary excludes the Appalachian Trail on the ridge, the Audie Murphy Monument, and the road that provides access to the monument from the southwest and stops short of the Roanoke County line along the ridge. To the north, an electric service line along Craig Creek makes a good boundary, leaving a narrow buffer zone along VA 621.

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