



Grooms Ridge/Chestnut Ridge - Todd Lake, Virginia

Length	Difficulty	Streams	Views	Solitude	Camping
9.2 mls	★	★	★	★	★
Hiking Time: 4.5 hours with 1/2 hour for lunch Elev. Gain: 2,570 ft Parking: The parking area is on right at the Wild Oak National Recreation Trail. 38.36701, -79.16446					

The Grooms Ridge-Chestnut Ridge loop hike in the GWNF Todd's Lake Recreation Area is a great workout with almost 2800ft of elevation gain and an equal amount of loss. The initial 1.7 mile climb up Chestnut Ridge is relentless and will get your heart pumping, no switchbacks! Mountain Laurel is all over the place on this hike and will be beautiful when blooming in June. Some other great hikes in the Todd Lake area include: Trimble Mountain, Sandspring Mountain, North River Gorge, and Hardscrabble Knob.

There are a couple of nice year round viewing spots, and some more during the winter months when the leaves are down. There are not a lot of good campsites on this loop, but you could do some base camping at Todd Lake or the North River primitive campground that are close by. There are also many campsites next to North River along FR95. These are our favorite secluded spots to car camp when in the Todd Lake area.

- ▶ **Mile 0.0** – The hike begins at the Wild Oak National Recreation Trail parking area, head back to FR95 and take a left back towards Tillman Road (gravel road) reaching it in 0.1 miles, bear left onto Tillman, reach Grooms Ridge Trail intersection on your left in 0.9 miles
- ▶ **Mile 1.0** – Grooms Ridge Trail (TR 424) on the left, wooden sign for trail is about 10 yards in from the road, on the opposite side of the road is room for 2 to 3 cars in the event you want to start your hike here. We wanted to get the gravel fire road walk out of the way first and not at the end of the hike.
- ▶ **Mile 2.6** – Climb 1250ft in 1.6 miles reaching a nice view point. This is a relentless climb with no switchbacks, catch your breath. Look for an unmarked path on the left to go down 100ft to Cameron Rocks for a nice view of Middle Mountain and over to Chestnut Ridge. This is a steep and small viewing area so be careful. Continue uphill on the Grooms Ridge Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 3.0** – In 0.4 miles arrive at a campsite on the left, no water source. The next section prior to reaching the pond is a little over-grown but not too bad.
- ▶ **Mile 4.9** – Small pond on the right.
- ▶ **Mile 5.2** – Intersection with Chestnut Ridge Trail, bear left. Grooms Ridge Trail goes straight and becomes part of the white-blazed 27 mile Wild Oak National Recreation Trail (WONRT). The Chestnut Ridge Trail is white-blazed as it is also part of the WONRT.
- ▶ **Mile 6.0** – Begin a steady descent on the Chestnut Ridge Trail reaching an obscured overlook in 0.8 miles. Little Bald Knob is to the northwest and Hardscrabble Knob (4282ft) almost directly to the west.
- ▶ **Mile 7.0** – V-intersection, Little Skidmore Trail (yellow blazed) goes straight. Take sharp left onto an unused fire road and then very quickly turn right, back onto the single track white-blazed Chestnut Ridge Trail.
- ▶ **Mile 7.7** – Top of Grindstone Mountain, this is the last climb of the day.
- ▶ **Mile 8.0** – Great view on the right looking down to Stokesville and east into the Shenandoah Valley.
- ▶ **Mile 9.0** – Parking area Spur Trail intersection, bear left, WONRT continues straight.
- ▶ **Mile 9.2** – Return to the parking area