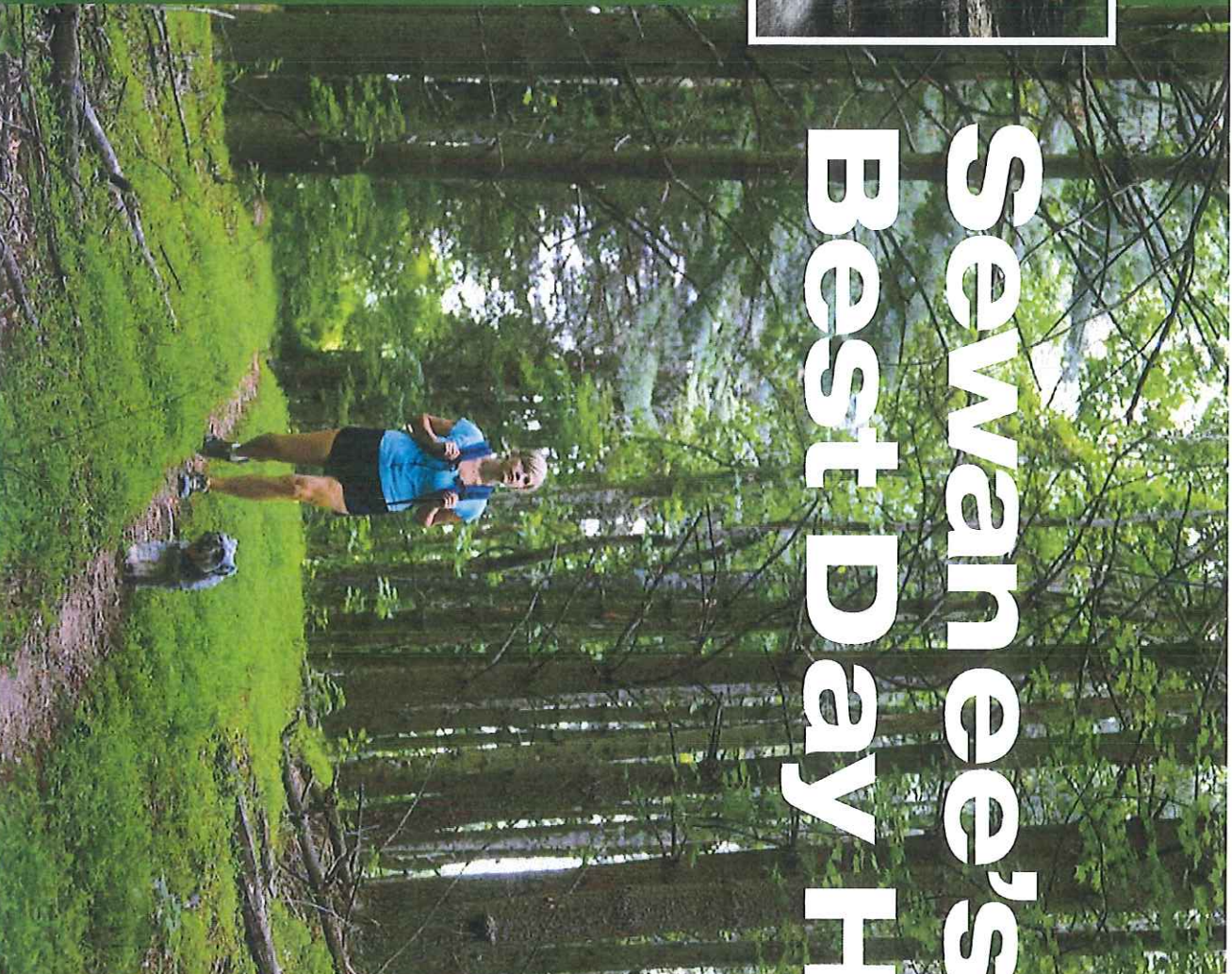




Grab your
daypack and
lace up your
hiking boots:
We're dishing
the dirt on
the best
hikes on
the Domain,
from hour-
long rambles
to daylong
treks.

Sewanee's Best Day Hikes

BY JOHN
BENSON



THERE ARE AT LEAST 13,000 WAYS for alumni to enjoy Sewanee's 13,000 acres — a Sunday service at All Saints' Chapel, a round at the golf course, a cold beverage on the front porch of Shenanigans. But if you don't hit the hiking trails at least once during a return visit to Sewanee, you're missing an opportunity to experience the best the Mountain has to offer, from an early-morning stroll through the fog on the Bridal Veil Falls trail to a late-afternoon wildflower hike through Shakerag Hollow.

There are few people who know the Domain's more than 50 miles of trails as well as Sewanee Outing Program Director John Benson, so we asked him to put together this guide to 10 of his favorite hikes, ranging in length from one mile to 20 miles.

Now all you have to do is to take a little time, pick a trail and enjoy a class with Sewanee's longest-tenured professor — Mother Nature.

A version of this column appeared in the July/August 2010 issue of the Sewanee alumni journal, "The Point," along with a photo by John Benson.

1 The Cross/Perimeter Trail/Tennessee Williams Trail

Please note: Trails are numbered here to correspond with the map on p. 18, not to indicate ranking.

1.25-mile loop

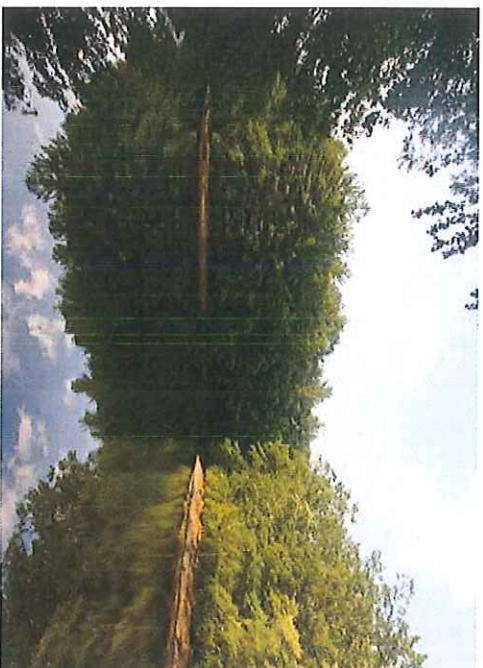
THE TRAIL: Start at the Cross. Facing the valley, head left, following the Perimeter Trail, being careful to follow the blue blazes. You'll cross over the old road to the Cross and then turn left on a fire lane. This will take you back to the Tennessee Williams Trail, which parallels the portion of Tennessee Ave. from the soccer field to the Cross. Take another left on this trail and follow it back to the Cross.



Above: Pick a trail, any trail — wooden signs mark major intersections. Above, right: Audubon Lake is one of several manmade lakes on the western portion of the Domain that make perfect settings for a day of fishing or a quiet picnic.

THE HIKE: This largely overlooked and shady section of trail offers an easy and relaxing hike through rolling topography. Remarkable features include a spot where the trail narrows through a split in a huge sandstone block and an easy stream crossing thanks to two perfectly placed flat rocks.

THE PAYOFF: On the first section of this hike, the trail will take you directly over a boulder that displays a geometric design of Liesegang banding. The pattern looks manmade; it's not. Liesegang banding is formed by iron deposits from water seeping through sandstone and is responsible for many elaborate designs found in the sandstone cliffs around Sewanee.



2 Morgan's Steep to the Cross

1 mile one way

THE TRAIL: Start at Morgan's Steep. Facing the valley, head down the stairs you'll find to the left and follow the blue blazes to the Memorial Cross and University View.

THE HIKE: It's the most frequently hiked section of the Perimeter Trail, and for good reason: This one-mile stretch has it all — gorgeous overlooks, waterfalls, sandstone overhangs and even a stone tunnel. Most of the trail runs just below the bluff, but it starts and ends at two of the best views on the Domain — Morgan's Steep and University View — with a bonus overlook if you scramble up to the top of Proctor's Hall. The tunnel through Proctor's Hall is reason enough to make the hike, inscribed with names carved over 100 years ago. This trail, as well as the one through Shakerag Hollow, was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. Take a moment to admire the CCC's impressive stone steps up the hill from the stream crossing.

THE PAYOFF: Walking this section at dusk provides a continuous view of the sunset.

3 Bridal Veil Falls

2 miles round-trip

THE TRAIL: Facing the valley at Morgan's Steep, take the Perimeter Trail to your right. After two-

tenths of a mile, cross a wooden bridge and turn left, following the Bridal Veil Falls Trail (white blazes) down the slope. The trail will intersect another trail; turn left to get to the waterfall. There's 400 feet of elevation change on this trail.

THE HIKE: The trail is an alternating series of steep slopes and flat benches leading off the plateau to a waterfall. The falls are spectacular, especially after a good rain. Other remarkable features along the way include large sandstone blocks and boulders that long ago broke away from the bluff above and gneiss veins hanging from the trees. Look for this same setting on other trails that drop off the plateau such as Thumping Pick Cove, Shakerag Hollow, and the Old Cowan Road.

THE PAYOFF: Bridal Veil Falls appears from the side of the mountain, cascades 27 feet down a limestone cliff, drops about 25 feet more, and then disappears into a sinkhole. Karst topography, man!

4 Elliott Point/ Parallel Trail loop

3.5-mile loop

THE TRAIL: Head toward the Equestrian Center on Breakfield Road and turn left on Cirahul Jones Drive. From the cul-de-sac at the end of this road, continue on foot in the same direction on a fire lane. After 100 yards, you'll reach the single-track Perimeter Trail (blue blazes). Turn right onto the Perimeter Trail, and follow the blue blazes until the trail intersects the Parallel Trail. (If you want a quick detour, Lake Audubon is just down the hill to the left.) Turn right onto the Parallel Trail and follow it back to the starting point.

THE HIKE: Most of this trail is a beautiful bluff path with a final stretch along a wide fire lane through the woods. After the first creek crossing, the trail passes through an old sandstone quarry site where you can see evidence of drilling in the rocks. Take a look back over your shoulder at the creek bed to see a lot of the discarded quarry stone.

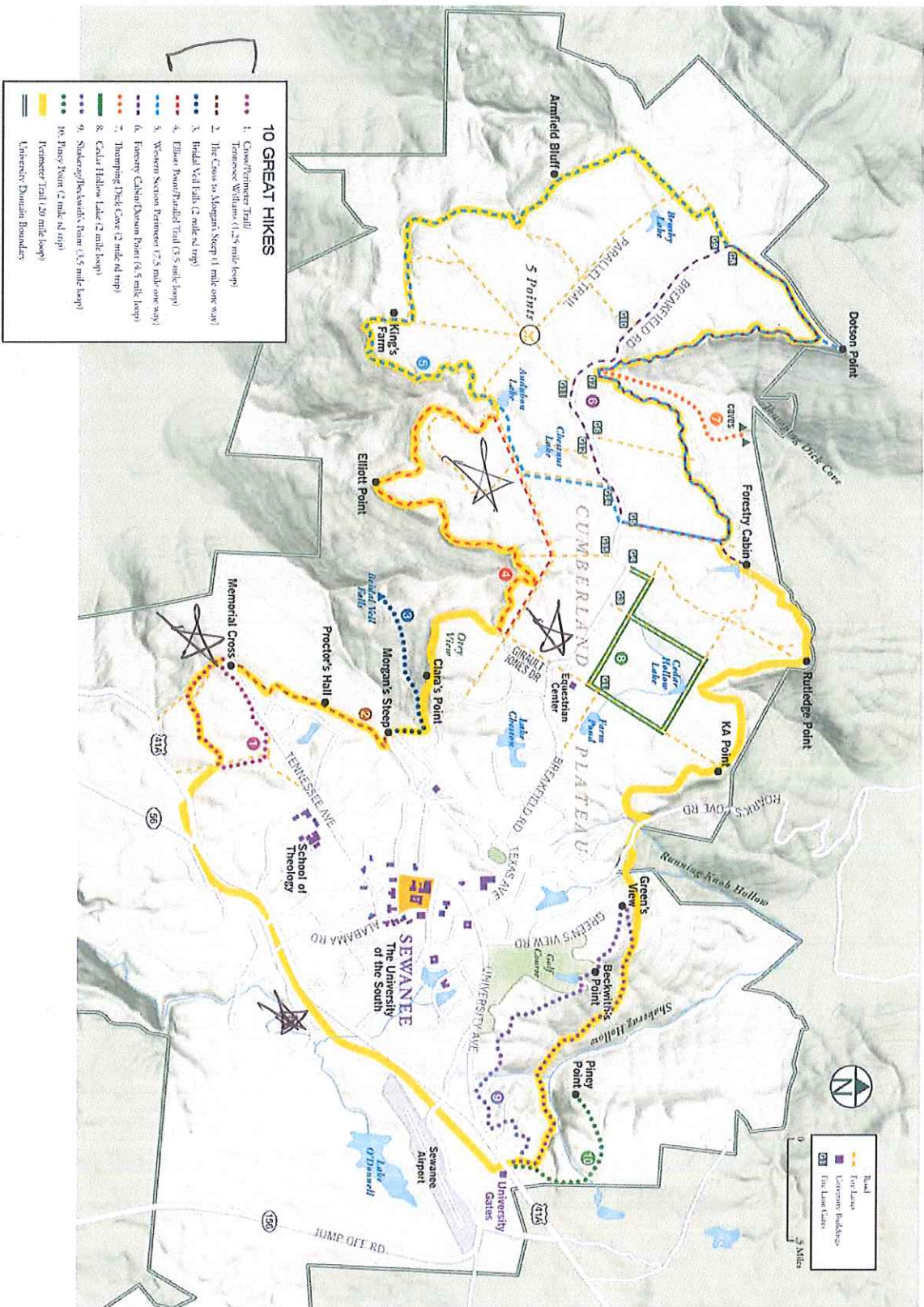
THE PAYOFF: Elliott Point seems to be the obvious overlook on this route, but the best view is farther along the trail. About halfway between Elliott Point and Lake Audubon, where the trail briefly splits in two for 200 feet, stay on the bluff side to find the rock outcrop. Perfect for a picnic for two.

WILDFLOWERS OF SHAKERAG HOLLOW

Photographs by David Cox

Sewanee wildflower fans know that Shakerag Hollow is the place to be in the spring, when the display here changes from week to week, revealing hikers who make multiple visits. Among the blooms you might find on the Shakerag trail are (clockwise from top left), Dutchman's breeches, dwarf larkspur, Southern red trillium, trout lily.





Blue blazes mark the Perimeter Trail. White blazes mark side trails.

Western Section of the Perimeter Trail

7.5-mile loop
 THE TRAIL: Start at Gate 5. Walk straight out the fire lane to the Perimeter Trail. Turn left onto the Perimeter Trail and follow the blue blazes all the way to Lake Audubon. Continue past the lake and turn left at the intersection of fire lanes. This fire lane will lead you to Gate 14. Turn right onto Breeshfield Road, and a short walk takes you back to Gate 5.

THE HIKE: This long hike covers the westernmost portion of the Perimeter Trail and provides a bit of everything. There are many views, named and unnamed. There is a popular rock climbing area (Armfield Bluff) which is a good halfway picnic spot. After that, the terrain changes as the trail drops below the bluff, following an old roadbed thick with summer foliage and big sandstone blocks. Coming back up onto the plateau, you reach King's Farm. A quiet and pretty clearing with two huge sugar maple trees marks the old homestead. Then comes one my favorite stretches of trail, leading to Audubon Lake.

THE PAVOFF: Are you bidding? This entire hike is the payoff.

6 Forestry Cabin/ Dotson Point loop

4.5-mile
loop

THE TRAIL: Start at Gate 5. From here, it's a straight shot out the fire lane to the Perimeter Trail. (At this point, a detour to the right on the Perimeter Trail will take you to the Forestry Cabin.) Turn left onto the Perimeter Trail and follow it all the way to Gate 8 at the end of Breakfield Road. Follow the road back to Gate 5.

THE HIKE: This route along the bluff and through mountain laurels is great for hiking as well as mountain biking (with a few dismounts). A short detour gets you to the Forestry Cabin for a good view of the valley. Dotson Point further along the trail also offers a nice view, but note that the farthest rock out on Dotson Point is not for acrophobes.

THE PAYOFF: Views from the Forestry Cabin and from Dotson Point are from opposite sides of Thumping Dick Cove, so you can see where you were or where you are going.



Above: Numbered fire-lane gates on Breakfield Road make useful landmarks for Seawanee hikers. (Gates are indicated on the map on p. 18 by numbers "G1," "G2," etc.)

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*Local favorites
Students, faculty,
and staff make
this hike their
favorite hike
on the Domain.*

HIKER: Marcia Clarkson, retired
Director of Personnel Services

HIKE: Equestrian Center/Forestry
Cabin/Audubon Lake Loop

There are many variations to this hike, but I suggest starting at the Equestrian Center barns and heading northeast toward Gate 1. Immediately after passing the horse gates, there is a trail on the left with a slightly overgrown entrance marked by three small concrete pillars. This pine tree trail is one of my favorite places on the Domain. From here, follow the fire lanes to the Forestry Cabin (with a detour to Cedar

Hollow Lake to look for the resident huge turtle). From the Forestry Cabin, follow the Perimeter Trail to Gate 7. Turn left on Breakfield Road and then right at Gate 11 toward Five Points. At Five Points turn left

some of the most beautiful mountain laurel on the Domain, and follow the Parallel Trail back to the Equestrian Center. Not only does this route provide variety (lakes, bluff views, creeks, pine forest) but almost all of the route can be run by a senior citizen who is not as sure-footed as John Benson.

HIKER: Bentley Cook, C'11,

SOP Summer Trail Crew

HIKE: Morgan's Steep streambed

I like to start at the waterfall near Morgan's Steep (head down the stairs, follow the sound of falling water) and walk the streambed for as long as my legs will carry me. It's a great hike for a hot summer day because the water keeps your legs nice and cool. Few people ever make this hike, so you get to enjoy the huge rock formations along the way in peace and quiet.

HIKER: Will Haight, Instructor
of Math and Computer Science

HIKE: Down the plateau from
Brushy Lake

There's a small valley carved by the creek that drains Brushy Lake. It extends beyond the Perimeter Trail toward the south bluff just west of Arnfield Bluff. It's a lovely stream with cataracts crashing over moss and lichen-covered boulders, and between large trees.

HIKER: David Haskell, Professor
of Biology

HIKE: Morgan's Steep to Elliott Point

This section of the Perimeter Trail hugs the bluff, and in the springtime it provides excellent views of migrant birds in the tree canopy. You'll also find some interesting grafted trees growing in the thin soil, some of which are around 200 years old. Acorns that fell in the 1800s are still bearing birds today.

HIKER: Jeff Heitzenrater,
Head Coach, Track & Field and
Cross Country

HIKE: Cedar Hollow Lake Loop

We take our cross-country team to this area several times a year to do interval workouts. The pine trees that dominate this area drop needles that cover the trails and make them easier on runners' legs. The terrain is rolling in some areas and very hilly in others, so we

spend much of our time doing hill intervals on the long sections of straight hills.

HIKER: Martin Knoll, C'82, Professor
of Geology

HIKE: Morgan's Steep to Arnfield
Bluff and beyond

The stretch of Perimeter Trail from Morgan's Steep to Arnfield Bluff affords wonderful views to the valley and into deep coves. The west-facing aspect of this trail is especially welcome on cold winter days. The trail winds through historic sandstone quarries, past small lakes and blueberry and grass-covered bluff edges to the main point at Arnfield Bluff. From here, you can see down into a bowl-shaped, wild cove that is trail-less and less well known than Lost Cove. You can get below the cliffs from the main point and hike straight downhill (no trail) past huge boulders fallen from the cliff and

deep cylindrical shafts eroded in the limestone. Partway down into the cove is a sinkhole with the entrance to the Arnfield Bluff Horror Hole — Seawanee's longest and perhaps most difficult cave. The round-trip hike takes four to five hours.

HIKER: Dan McCoy, C'10,
SOP Summer Trail Crew

HIKE: Green's View to KA Point
and back

For this approximately four-mile round-trip hike, begin at Green's View, taking the trail into Shakerag Hollow on your right. Follow the Perimeter Trail, taking a left at the fork after the stone staircase. Continue to KA Point, then take the same trail back. This hike starts and ends at two of the best overlooks on campus, passing through a considerable diversity of forest environments in between.

HIKER: Pratt Paterson,
Sports Information Director

HIKE: Bridal Veil Falls

This is a perfect hike to make after a good rain. I love to head down the trail here with my golden retriever, Cherokee, to watch the falls disappear into the sinkhole below. After checking out some of the caves near the falls, I try to get back to Morgan's Steep right at sunset — it's a great way to finish the day.

HIKER: Bran Potter, Professor
of Geology

HIKE: Lost Cove loop, off-trail

One of my favorite walks takes you into the northern portion of the University's new Lost Cove land. This off-trail loop will take you down Depot Branch past a spectacular jet of water from the limestone cliff near the old Domain boundary. You may return up Barnes Branch of Lost Cove, or take



the Point Disappointment ridge that lies between the two branches. The beautiful sandstone steps and giant sycamores in the Barnes Branch creekbed are memorable. To begin, drive past the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Bobtown to the end of the road at the old water treatment plant on Depot Branch. This hike is not for the faint-of-heart and may take four hours.

Top left: A wildflower called fire pink in the sandstone near Morgan's Steep; the view into Shakerag Hollow and beyond from Pine Point. Above: the Forestry Cabin.



7 Thumping Dick Cove

2 miles round-trip

THE TRAIL: Start at Gate 7 on Breakfield Road. After eight-tenths of a mile, the old road crosses a broken wooden bridge. A small path (which is not easily visible) is located on the left, just on the far side of the washed-out bridge. Follow the little path down the steep slope to the small cave on the left.

THE HIKE: The trail starts on an old road that drops down into the cave and leads to a small, kid-friendly cave on the left that can be fun to explore with a flashlight. The more popular but more technical Solomon's Temple Cave is on the right 50 yards farther down around the bend.

THE PAYOFF: Thumping Dick Cove has all the elements of a classic old-growth forest: a wide range of large, mature trees and smaller ones create a multilayered canopy.

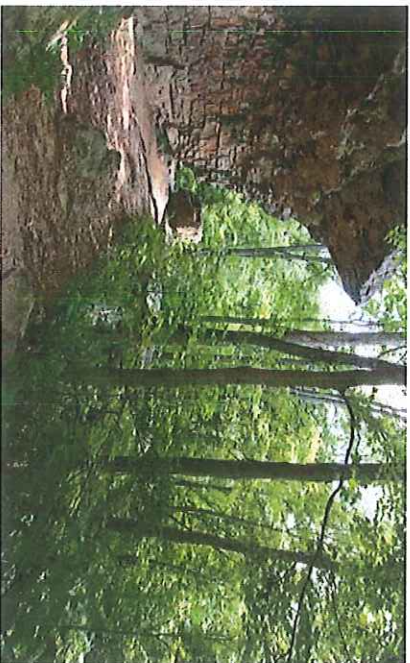
8 Cedar Hollow Lake

2-mile loop

THE TRAIL: Start at Gate 4 on Breakfield Road. (Be careful not to block the gate with your car.) Head north on the fire lane and take the first right onto another fire lane. Continue straight and take a left at the next junction. Then take a right at the next intersection, heading to Cedar Hollow Lake. Once you get past the lake, turn right at the first junction. Head straight. Just past the orange gate, look for the three short concrete posts on your right and turn right here, back into the woods. Take this all the way back to Gate 4.

THE HIKE: From start to finish, you'll be on fire lanes for this entire hike. The lanes are wider than normal hiking trails, so you can easily walk side-by-side with a friend. The last section of this hike leads you through a tall pine forest straight out of a Disney movie. The trees prevent sunlight from hitting the forest floor, completely shading out plant growth. This magical area is referred to by many as "Fairyland."

THE PAYOFF: The perfect outdoor setting to enjoy a stroll and catch up with an old friend. And if your old friend is a dog, the lake provides a cool swim.

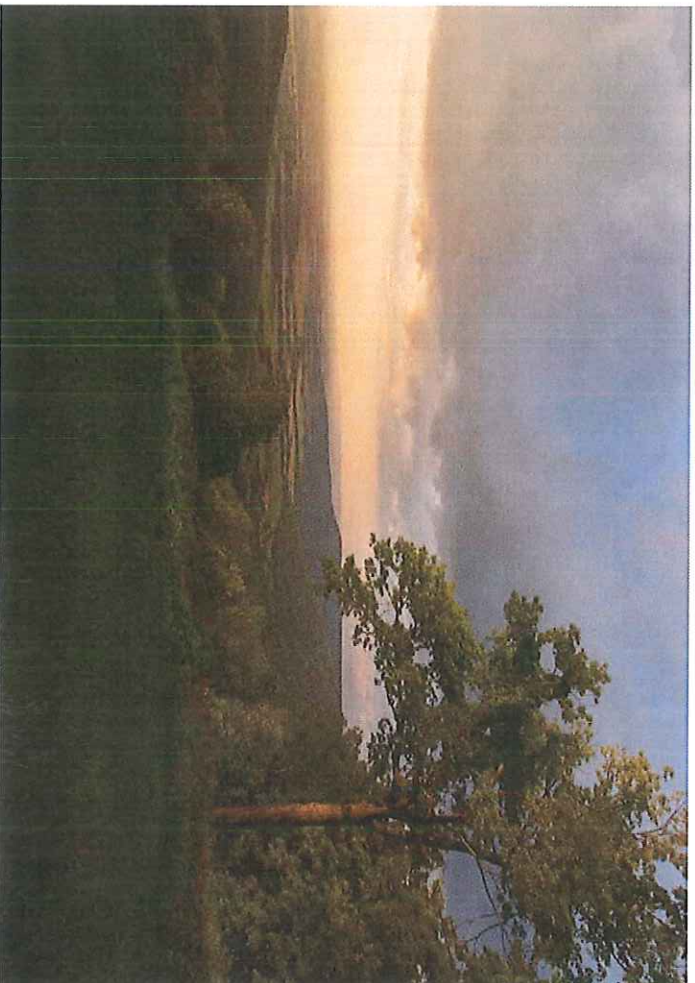


Portions of the Perimeter Trail are marked by dramatic sandstone bluffs and overhangs, like this one near Morgan's Slough.

9 Shakerag Hollow/ Beckwith's Point loop

3.5-mile loop

THE TRAIL: Start at Green's View. Facing the valley, take the trail on your right. When you come to the first signpost, follow the Beckwith's Point Trail, which stays on top of the plateau. Coming out of the woods, follow the signs indicating the trail continues along the edge of the golf course. After the short section on the golf course, the trail re-enters the woods, taking you all the way to the Perimeter Trail. Take a left onto the Perimeter Trail, which leads you down into Shakerag Hollow. (Taking a right leads you to the University's east gates.) Follow the trail and take a left at the signpost pointing to Green's View.



Above: From Green's View, you can take the Beckwith's Point Trail, or hike down to the Perimeter Trail, which leads into Shakerag Hollow or toward KA Point. Below: Mountain laurel blooms can be found along many Seawanee trails in spring and early summer.

THE HIKE: The highlight of the first section of this hike is Beckwith's Point. This long-forgotten overlook into Shakerag Hollow was once featured on postcards sold at the University Supply Store. Today, you'll likely have it all to yourself. Constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, the Shakerag Hollow Trail is one of the oldest trails on the Domain. It descends through a virtually undisturbed cove of hardwood forest, an area frequented by botany students.

THE PAYOFF: The best display of spring wildflowers in the area. Hike here often during March and April to see the display of blooms change from week to week.



10 Piney Point

2 miles round-trip

THE TRAIL: Start at the eastern University gates. Take the Perimeter Trail into Shakerag Hollow. Soon after starting down into the hollow, the trail to Piney Point takes off to the right. Follow the main trail to the point.

THE HIKE: Piney Point is one of the few places on the Domain where the native shortleaf pine is a dominant member of the forest community. The dense forest and thick tunnels of mountain laurel provide a sharp contrast to the overlook. A bonus is the relatively flat terrain with two bridged stream crossings.

THE PAYOFF: Piney Point is a striking promontory that boasts a sweeping view over Shakerag Hollow and Kank's Cove. If you time it right in the summer, you can eat wild blueberries right off the bush all the way to the point.

Bonus The entire Perimeter Trail

20-mile loop

THE PAYOFF: If you can anywhere and see it all. And thank the Tate Roberts Memorial Fund for maintenance of this trail.

JOHN BENSON has been the director of the Seawanee Ouling Program since 2001. In addition to hiking the trails with his wife, Math Professor Emily Puckette, and two-year-old son, Elliott, and running the trails with his dog, Joe, he enjoys leading trips with students on the mountain (kayaking and rock climbing) and off the mountain, near (road cycling and running marathons) and far (canoeing in Big Bend, Texas, and winter mountaineering on the Continental Divide in Colorado).