

Location

From Nelson village, take Old Stoddard Road 2.9 miles east toward Stoddard. The trailhead and parking area are on the right (just past house #611 on the left). There is a yellow black fly marker on a tree near the trailhead. Trail guides and a map can be found in the Kulish Ledges mailbox nearby.

Parking

There is parking for several cars at the trailhead on Old Stoddard Road. The parking area can be wet and uneven.

Minimize Your Impact

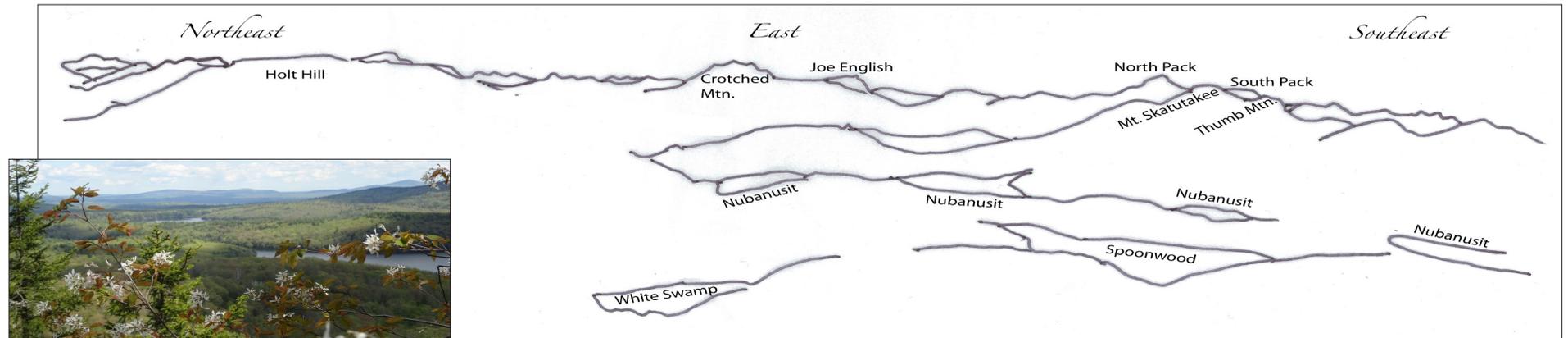
This trail is for your enjoyment and for those who may follow you. Leave flowers, plants and natural objects as you find them. Preserve the past by not disturbing historic or cultural artifacts. Observe wildlife without impacting their quiet or their environment. Please carry out anything you may have brought along with you. Enjoy your time on the trail while respecting the private property it passes through.

Trail Description

Pick up your trail guide from the mailbox and proceed straight ahead on the abandoned road that runs from Old Stoddard Road to the old sawmill on Bailey Brook. About 600 feet from the parking area, there is a sign directing you to the right (west) towards Kulish Ledges.

Just after you cross a stone wall and before you cross a second one, you might notice a large pile of stones off to the left of the trail. These were likely put there by a 19th century farmer clearing his field.

A quarter of a mile from the parking area you will cross Bailey Brook on a foot bridge. This bridge



The view from the East Pinnacle

was built in 2013 by the Nelson Trail Committee. Just as you come off the bridge you will see a 9-inch American hemlock with a yellow-arrow blaze indicating the right turn in the trail. The trunk above the blaze is covered with rows of pencil-sized holes made by a yellow-bellied sapsucker, a small woodpecker.

After the bridge, the trail parallels Bailey Brook upstream to a dam on your right. This dam, probably built soon after 1815, served as a holding pond for the Osborn mill 200 yards downstream. The dam allowed the mill to sustain operations for many hours at a time on a stream with relatively low volume of water. In the early 19th century the gate in this dam would have been opened about half an hour before mill operations began. Walls along the brook and the dam at the mill site itself ensured an ample supply of water power and allowed the operator to regulate water to the wheel. You can see how beavers have more recently augmented the stone dam with branches, plugging the gate and making it difficult to see.

Past the dam, after the trail squeezes between two 15 to 20-inch white pines, notice the stones placed on the boulder on the right, probably again by the farmer clearing the field.

As the trail bends left, crosses a wall and a damp area near the upper part of the pond, be watchful for wildlife that is around the pond. Waterfowl and other birds, otter, mink, and beaver are likely to be seen here. In summer you might hear the banjo-like call of green frogs, or the deep croak of a bullfrog.

Leaving the pond, the trail bends left up the hill and follows a stone wall. On the far side (west) of the wall are many shrubs and sunny openings, evidence of a logging operation around 2008.

The trail passes a large split boulder on the left (.6 miles from the trailhead) Under the far end of this boulder is a natural shelter where a porcupine has denned in winter—look for droppings (scat), and tracks if it is in use.

The trail then climbs through sugar maple, red maple, red oak, hop hornbeam and yellow birch, levels out for a few hundred feet, and turns left (east) after crossing an east-west stone wall. Note the large boulder to the right of the trail past the wall—this is large enough to show up on satellite photos (such as Google Earth) in winter.

The trail crosses two foot bridges, over a brook that is labeled “North Branch of Bailey Brook” on some maps, despite it being south of the main branch of Bailey Brook.

About 350 feet beyond the brook, past the end of the ridge, an old cast-iron cook stove sits on the left side of the trail where a 12 foot square cabin once stood. (.8 miles from the trailhead) The outline of the cabin can be discerned in the ground around the rusted remains of the stove. The stove itself was made by the Barstow Stove Company in Providence, Rhode Island, late in the 19th century. It was a wood and coal burning stove that likely provided heat and cooking for the logging or hunting cabin in the early 20th century.

From here the trail snakes over two or three knolls and past a rocky “canyon” on the left. After climbing through mid-age spruce woods the trail crosses an east-west stone wall

Keep climbing on a somewhat rough area of side slope until you arrive at the East Pinnacle, 1,850 feet in elevation, on the left side of the trail. East Pinnacle offers the best views along the trail with a broad panorama to the east. Crotched Mountain is due east. Further off and to the right, is Joe English Hill in New Boston, with its steep southern slope. South Pack can be recognized by its radio towers, and is visible between the peaks of Skatutakee (left) and Thumb Mountain (right). North Pack is left of Skatutakee.

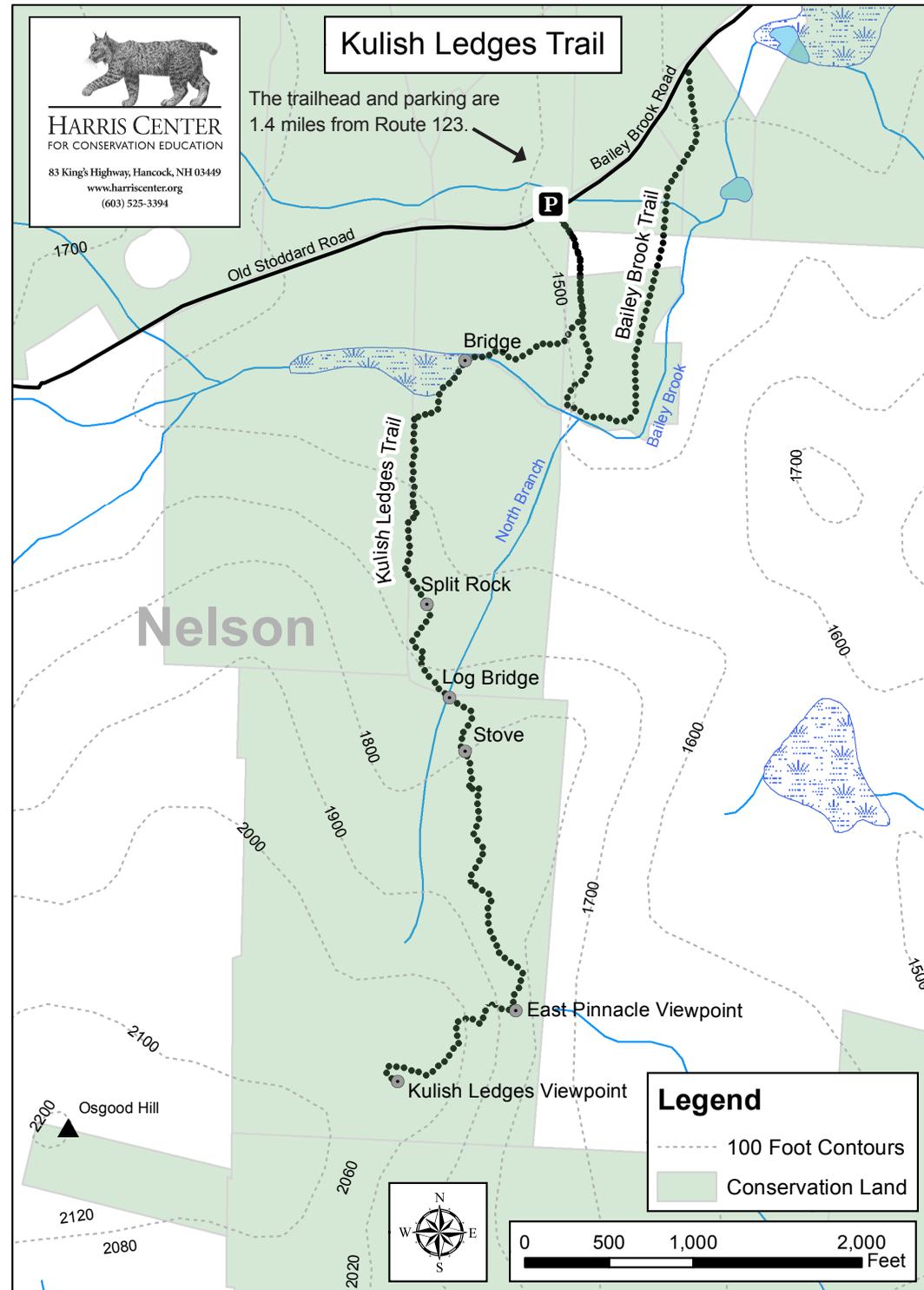
Looking left of Crotched, the nearest height of land is Holt Hill in Nelson, with Bald Mountain peeking over its top, and Rollstone Mountain to its right, usually difficult to distinguish from Holt Hill.

The most visible body of water is Spoonwood Pond, with many glimpses of Nubanusit Lake visible behind it and to its left and right. Below you, to the left of Spoonwood, is White Swamp, which has an active heron rookery.

From the East Pinnacle the trail climbs steeply for another 650 ft before leveling off somewhat following a ridge for a few hundred feet. You will come to a 3-ft high boulder on the right of the trail, with a chasm dropping off to the left above which is a higher, open, rock outcrop. This is Kulish Ledges, elevation 2,080 feet. The trail goes up to the base of the rock outcrop, turns right, and circles around to come to the Ledges from behind. As you approach the Ledges, notice the beds of soft moss and gardens of reindeer lichen.

The trail returns to the parking area via the same route you ascended.

Some last remains en route



Kulish Ledges

Hiking Trail Guide

Produced by the
 Nelson Trail Committee
 NOVEMBER 2015

Overview

This guide covers the trail to Kulish Ledges from the trailhead and parking area on Old Stoddard Road. Begin on an old woods road then turn right into the woods, cross a bridge over Bailey Brook, pass an old dam and proceed uphill to East Pinnacle and Kulish Ledges viewpoints. The trail returns to the trailhead via the same route and is 2.9 miles roundtrip, with an elevation gain of 700 feet. The trail is marked with yellow rectangles and signs.

History

Kulish Ledges are named after John Kulish, a self-taught naturalist, author of "Bobcats Before Breakfast" and one of the first teacher/naturalists at the Harris Center for Conservation Education. After a lifetime of woodsmanship, John Kulish became one of the nation's foremost outdoor education instructors teaching at Boston University's year-round Sargent Camp near Peterborough, N.H.