

REDINGTON*: (USGS Black Nubble & Sugarloaf Mtn. quads). Commonly done from the summit of South Crocker. Reports indicate that a herd path has developed from South Crocker to the summit of Redington. As with any herd path, however, one can lose it somewhere and end up bushwhacking at least until stumbling upon it again. There are two places in particular to be careful of. The first is where the herd path meets the AT boundary cut, 1000 feet from the summit of South Crocker. The boundary cut is said to be obvious, so much so that hikers have followed it by mistake and had to backtrack or bushwhack to get back on the herd path. Reports vary as to whether the herd path goes straight across the cut, or requires a short jog to the right along the cut. The second is where the path meets a jeep road near the col, after skirting a clear-cut (which may or may not be 'clear' to the summit-minded hiker). The advice is to follow this road to the left (uphill) a short distance to the actual col, where the herd path goes right. The turn at the col may or may not be flagged, depending on how one's luck is running.

Before the development of the herd path described above, logging on the eastern slopes of Redington enticed people to avoid the bushwhack by taking advantage of a road that leaves the Caribou Valley Road near Caribou Pond, a considerable distance beyond the AT crossing, and climbs to about 3250' on the ridge leading to the saddle between Redington and South Crocker, after which fairly clear skidder roads lead from the formerly drivable road to the saddle. Over a decade ago, a work road was constructed roughly along the upper part of this route to service an experimental wind-gauge tower, and hikers were surprised and disgusted to find there were now lounge chairs (and lots of trash) on the summit (now removed – the chairs and tower, not the summit, that is). The Caribou Valley Road is open to a point about 4 mi. from ME 27 and half a mile before the AT crossing; at this point, there is a barricade preventing further vehicular travel, which is fine since no one in their right mind would want to take a vehicle past this point anyway. Currently, ordinary cars can probably make it to this point, but this road is not consistently maintained, and from time to time, travel even to this point has required four-wheel drive, high clearance and a complete disregard for the aesthetic condition of one's vehicle. From the barricade, continue on foot past a bridge at about 5.5 mi. from ME 27 and 1.1 mi. beyond the AT crossing. Do NOT follow the side road that forks right near here and runs up a side valley; stay on the main road along the Caribou Valley stream. The road continues another 1.4 mi. to Caribou Pond; take the road to the right at the fork near the pond, climbing up a small rise and into the large cut-over bowl at the foot of Redington, and continue to a point about 7.7 mi. from ME 27 where a badly washed road climbs up to the right. Follow the washed road up toward the ridgecrest, but just below the ridgecrest turn left onto a rough but obvious road that runs mostly on contour or slightly downhill. Eventually it crosses a small brook with a rocky, mossy bed and makes a right-angle turn to the left. At a fork about 100 yards past this stream, the route continues straight on a road with a small, easily-missed cairn, still on contour at this point, as a bulldozed road turns right uphill heading for the Redington–South Crocker col. After climbing through a clear-cut area, the route turns sharp right off this road (the turn may be well-marked with flagging and a cairn) and becomes a well-cleared trail all the way to the summit. It is also possible, of course, to continue on the bulldozed road to the col and look for the herd path discussed above, but it may be a thick bushwhack if you don't find it.

Since the maps now show Redington as a 4000-Footer, hikers will probably attempt to keep this route open and marked. What was once one of the three or four most difficult of the Hundred Highest has become almost trivial and will likely never reclaim the daunting reputation it once had. However, the status of the Caribou Valley Road will always be a major variable in the degree of difficulty. In the times between major logging operations, it can deteriorate quite badly, and was once notorious for its infernally automobilicidal washouts. Decisions about maintenance rest with S. D. Warren or Scott Paper or SAPPI or whoever owns the land this week, and will likely be based on business considerations, without any regard for hiking visitors. Although modern communication (e.g. internet bulletin boards) may prevent nasty surprises upon arrival, future conditions may again require long road walks along the Caribou Valley Road, even for those with four-wheel-drive vehicles.

Some folks conceived the idea of trying to bushwhack back from Redington to the Caribou Valley Road near the AT crossing (rather than using the roads to circle around to the south, which is longer). To do this, one must cross the ridge leading to the saddle between Redington and South Crocker, which the road climbs, and apparently descends for some distance on the other side. The best plan would probably be to follow the paths back to the ridgecrest area and down the other side as far as possible, then bushwhack from there. In olden days, hikers frequently resisted the effort of crossing the ridge and eventually found themselves in the vicinity of Caribou Pond.

Hikers in this region should be aware of the presence of the Navy base where pilots receive winter survival training (this is where the road leads that is shown on the maps running to the north of Redington Pond); the area south of Black Nubble and west of the Redington Pond Range, down to the old RR grade that passes Redington Pond, is leased by the Navy and is considered a restricted area, although signing is virtually non-existent and enforcement is extremely erratic. A couple of hikers encountered armed servicemen who questioned them and ordered them off the base, but two other hikers who visited the main building in order to regain their bearings were served milk and cookies by a lonely cook.

Over the years, a couple of different proposals have been made to construct a system of windmills on the ridgecrest of the Redington Range. At one time a test tower was built right at the summit, and its removal created a mess of debris. Although we have this project to thank for the opening of the approach from Caribou Pond described above, there is nothing else beneficial about such a proposal. For now, the proposal appears to have been rejected or withdrawn, but that won't necessarily prevent some new company from trying again in the future.