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Zaleski State Forest Backpack Trail

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Zaleski State Forest Backpack Trail

County: Vinton, Athens, Hocking

Nearest town: Nelsonville

Total distance: 29.1-mile main trail beginning from the backpacking trailhead; 13.3-mile south loop beginning from the backpacking trailhead, 10.9-mile south loop beginning from the day hiking trailhead; 15.6-mile middle loop beginning from the backpacking trailhead including a visit to camp area 3 at Point P, 8.8-mile middle loop beginning from the day hiking trailhead not visiting camp area 3; 6.8-mile north loop beginning from camp area 3 at Point P

Hiking time: Approximately 5 to 9 hours each for the south and middle loops, 3 to 4 hours for the north loop, or up to 3 days for all loops in one trip

Trail conditions: Well established

Blazes: Main trail blazed orange, camp side trails and day hike cutoff trail blazed white

Water: Available at three backpack camping areas (Points D, I & P on the enclosed maps)

Highlights: Secluded backcountry camps, Hewett Fork overlook, magnificent pine plantation, multiple interpretive points

Maps: USGS 7.5': Mineral & Union Furnace; ODNR Div. of Forestry Zaleski State Forest Backpack Trail map; BackpackOhio.com eTrailsOhio

Contact info: Zaleski State Forest, P.O. Box 330, S.R. 278, Zaleski, Ohio 45698-0330, phone: 740-596-5781; Lake Hope State Park, 27331 State Route 278, McArthur, OH 45651, phone: 740-596-4938

Internet: www.ohiodnr.com & www.lakehopestatepark.com

Getting there: To reach the backpacking trailhead at Hope Schoolhouse (27800 Wheelabout Road, McArthur, OH 45651) from the town of Nelsonville, Ohio, take State Route 278 south for approximately 14.2 miles and turn left onto Wheelabout Road (across from the Lake Hope dam). Wheelabout Road will make a sharp right turn in 0.2 mile, the schoolhouse and trailhead are just ahead on the left. The day hiking trailhead is located on SR 278 1.2 miles north of Wheelabout Road. Look for this trailhead across from the historic Hope Furnace.

Trailhead coordinates: The backpacking trailhead at Hope Schoolhouse - 39° 18' 57"N, 82° 21' 05"W (WGS84); UTM 17 383476E, 4352491N (NAD27). The day hiking trailhead on State Route 278 - 39° 19' 53"N, 82° 20' 24"W (WGS84); UTM 17 384503E, 4354204N (NAD27).

Background

Covering almost 27,000 acres, Zaleski State Forest is Ohio's second largest state forest. Along with Lake Hope State Park located at the center of the forest, the region is rich in nature, outdoor recreation and history. The 120-acre 'C' shaped Lake Hope lies at the center of the state park and provides fishing, swimming and paddling recreation. Rental cottages and a beautiful dining lodge are located on a ridge above the middle of the arcing lake and a 187 site crowd-free campground is located on scenic Furnace Ridge, just to the north. Over 20 miles of top rated mountain bike trails twist and turn along the ridges throughout the park.

If not for remnants of the Hope Furnace across State Route 278 from the day hiking trailhead, you wouldn't know the Zaleski area was once at the heart of a very important iron-producing region known as the Hanging Rock Iron Region. The Hope Furnace, starting in 1854, along with others in the area, blasted 24 hours a day for nearly twenty years and produced high-quality iron, some of which was made into ammunition and weaponry for the Union Army during the Civil War. Charcoal required for the smelting process came from mighty trees gracing the surrounding hillsides. By the time the furnaces shutdown, thousands of acres of real estate were almost completely stripped of their timber. Coal mining also had a period of prosperity in the region and many tangible remnants of this activity can be found throughout the area.

The path to development of the forest followed one similar to that which led to the development of Tar Hollow State Forest. In the 1930s, federal funds were used to purchase neglected lands for conservation and

reforestation. A Civilian Conservation Corps camp was installed in the forest and became a temporary home for relief workers brought in to build roads, trails, structures and other improvements.

Hiking or driving throughout Zaleski State Forest is a unique experience. The forest is big and solitude is not hard to find (except on the south backpack trail loop in October). Wildlife and birds are plentiful and beaver activity abounds in many valleys. Rock cliffs can be found on steep hillsides and overhang caves at the head of many ravines. The human history of the Zaleski area adds to its intrigue. Old roads, abandoned homesteads and towns, old cemeteries, mining ruins and even the abandoned and allegedly haunted Moonville train tunnel are reasons for you to stop, explore and ponder the past. The Moonville Rail Trail utilizes an old railroad grade running through the forest--and the tunnel—on a route between Red Diamond and Athens.

A wonderful oak-hickory dominant second-growth forest covers Zaleski's hills. Native pines grow near dry rocky outcrops and hemlocks populate some cooler ravines. Unfortunately, a questionable forest management plan, with a history of igniting newsmaking protests, has brought large timber harvests close to trails and sensitive areas. These areas create localized eyesores but are not noticeably widespread throughout the forest.

The ridges on which Zaleski's trees are firmly rooted reach an average elevation relief of 300 feet, topping out at 1000 feet above sea level or slightly higher. Ridgetops are narrow and slopes are steep. Raccoon Creek is the largest drainage feature in the forest and its lowest point, exiting the southeast corner of the forest at an elevation of 690 feet above sea level.

The Trail

The Zaleski Backpack Trail is one of the state's most—if not the most—popular overnight hiking destinations. Many Ohio backpackers and group outings make the Zaleski Trail an annual stop on their backpacking schedule. It's no wonder so many return so often, Zaleski has a lot to offer. This scenic trail passes by many points of biological, geological and historical interest, several of which forest managers have highlighted in text (included at the end of this document) and marked in the field by lettered signs, making this the only self-guided interpretive backpack trail in the state.

Most of the main trail's 29.1 miles are laid out in a long contorted loop, with a cutoff side trail at the southern end and a one-mile section of two-way trail connecting a smaller northern loop. In 2016, a new backpacking trailhead was created at the historic Hope Schoolhouse just south of Lake Hope resulting in a 1.9-mile section of two-way trail connecting the new trailhead to the south loop.

Most hikers refer to the sections of the Zaleski Trail in terms of its *south loop*, *middle loop* and *north loop*. The configuration of the trail offers many trip options for both day hikers and backpackers alike. Any of the loops can be easily completed as a single night backpack trip, but plan on a double-overnighter to hike all three loops in one trip or to complete the 22.3 miles of a combined south and middle loop trip.

The backpacking trailhead is located at the historic Hope Schoolhouse on Wheelabout Road. There is a paved parking area for approximately two dozen or so vehicles. A large wooden kiosk stands at the north side of the parking area. Backpackers are required to self-register here before starting. Registration forms, along with the Division of Forestry's version of the trail map, are available in a wooden box at the kiosk. Be sure to look for any postings regarding recent trail changes or temporary reroutes at the kiosk as well. No fee is required for hiking or camping.

A day hiking trailhead is located on State Route 278 across from the historic Hope Furnace, approximately 1.5 road miles north of the backpacking trailhead. Backpackers are permitted to use this trailhead as well but the forest service encourages backpackers to use the designated backpacking trailhead. A word of warning: the day hiking trailhead is prone to flooding during heavy rains.

The main trail is well blazed with orange paint for travel in either direction. Side trails to camping areas and the cutoff trail are blazed with white paint. Carsonite and wooden signs are often used as additional navigational aids where sudden turns, junctions or road crossings may present confusion. Along the course of the entire trail you'll see posts lettered A through Y. These posts reference your location to the map as well as point out camp and water locations, forest facts, historical facts and more. Abridged text descriptions associated with each post are found at the end of this document. Full descriptions are found on the Division of Forestry's map.

Backcountry camping is permitted at three designated camp areas only. Two are located on the south loop and one at the north end of a two-way section of trail between the middle and north loops. At each of the camping areas, you will find several established campsites, most with a small metal fire ring. Individual campsites range in size from small to large, with a few large enough for several tents. In the vicinity of each of the three camping areas, you'll also find pit latrines and supplied potable water. Having potable water waiting at camp gives you the option to carry only enough water for the hike in, thus lowering your pack weight considerably. If you choose this option, be certain to check on water status with forest headquarters before heading out.

South Loop

Of the three loops comprising the backpack trail, Zaleski's south loop is the most heavily traveled. The scenic south loop features mostly ridge walking through a mixed oak forest. Deep into the forest, a real sense of solitude prevails as you leave signs of civilization behind. Along the way you'll pass interesting rock outcrops, a peaceful pond and several marked interpretive stops.

From the backpacking trailhead at Hope Schoolhouse, the loop's distance measures 13.3 miles in length. This includes the 1.9-mile two-way section between the trailhead and the actual loop. With a scenic, secluded ridgetop camping area at the 7.3-mile mark (Point I on the map), the south loop can be broken up into two somewhat equal segments for a single overnight trip. Another camping area is located at Point D on the map at just less than 2.8 miles from the trailhead. For backpackers getting a late start or just wanting to experience backcountry camping without a long hike, then choosing the camp at Point D as the day's end destination is a smart choice.

For planning purposes, you'll want to consider the popularity of the south loop. During warmer months expect to find camping areas at or near capacity on weekends. Plan on arriving at camp early to nab one of the better sites. During the week, you may get lucky and find yourself camping without neighbors. On October weekends, you'll find greater solitude if you pitch camp at a mall parking lot in the city. Expect to find an overflowing trailhead and overflowing camps.

The south loop, once reached, is described in a counterclockwise direction of travel. From the backpacking trailhead, a hike to the south loop begins its official journey from the parking lot at the historic Hope Schoolhouse. The trail passes through a meadow before emerging onto Wheelabout Road for a few hundred yards of road walking. The Moonville Rail Trail intersects the backpack trail soon after emerging onto the road. Ahead, the trail leaves the right side of Wheelabout Road and enters the forest to begin ascending—steeply in places—an adjacent ridge. Once you've reached the ridgetop, you'll arrive at the south loop in approximately 1.5 miles.

When you've reached 2.7 miles you will have arrived at Point C, the first drinking water source and backwoods latrine. Water is located downhill to the right. The trail reaches Point D in a short 0.1-mile walk past Point C. This is camp area 1. A side trail blazed with white paint forks to the right and leads you to several campsites.



Vista from Hewett Fork overlook

At 4.6 miles you'll arrive at Point F, or the Hewett Fork overlook (a.k.a. Moonville overlook), an interesting rock outcropping with a wonderful view of the valley below. The Moonville Tunnel is located along an old railroad grade (now the Moonville Rail Trail) in the valley below. This is a convenient spot to incorporate a water/snack break into your plans. You'll pass a smaller, less scenic overlook about 0.1 mile before this one. You'll know you've reached the Hewett Fork overlook because the trail will begin to descend shortly ahead.

The second camp area awaits 2.6 miles ahead past the overlook. Prior to arriving at camp area 2, or Point I, you will descend into Bear Hollow and follow it southeastwardly to where its small stream dumps into a large pond (Point G) created when the old railroad was constructed in the valley. This is a very peaceful spot. Take a moment to watch for signs of beaver and waterfowl. After passing the pond, the trail will pass near the old railroad grade and then head uphill, gaining nearly 300 feet in the next 0.4 mile.

Walking into camp at Point I, you'll see a water hydrant to the left and a pit latrine and side trail to the right. The side trail is approximately 0.25 mile in length and will take you to your choice of several established campsites. At least four sites, including two at the very beginning, are large enough for more than one tent. As you walk into camp on the main trail you'll notice a gravel road used by the Division of Forestry to haul in water. The main trail forks sharply to the left and starts downhill just past the water hydrant. Do not follow the gravel haul road when leaving camp.

After leaving Point I, the trail descends 220 feet in 0.5 mile into King Hollow, crosses a gravel road (T-3), and then regains the elevation on an ascent of the opposite hillside. The next 1.5 miles of trail follow a ridgetop before beginning an often wet, slippery descent into Harburger Hollow. In Harburger Hollow, you'll arrive at Point K on the map and a nearby junction with the cutoff trail that will take you back in the direction of both trailheads. From Point K, you may opt for a longer trip by picking up the middle loop and heading north to Point N. To close out the south loop from Point K, head south on the cutoff trail toward Point Y. You'll pass some interesting rock formations and cross over a couple trickle waterfalls before arriving at a crossing of gravel road T-4. Once you've arrived at Point Y, go left and uphill for 0.5 mile to Point B and then right on the two-way section of trail leading back to the backpacking trailhead.



Side trail to camp area 2 (Point I)

South Loop Trail Notes and Mileage from the Backpacking Trailhead at Hope Schoolhouse

- 0.0** Start from the backpacking trailhead parking lot and look for the trail leaving the parking lot to the north and entering a meadow. This is Point A on the map.
- 0.1** Emerge onto Wheelabout Road and go right.
- 0.25** The trail forks right from Wheelabout Road and enters the forest.
- 1.9** Arrive at Point B and go right.
- 2.7** Arrive at a water hydrant and pit latrine. This is Point C on the map.
- 2.8** Arrive at camp area 1. A white-blazed side trail leading to several campsites forks to the right. This is Point D on the map.
- 4.5** Arrive at a small overlook downhill on the right.
- 4.6** Arrive at Point F on the map and the Hewett Fork overlook (a.k.a Moonville overlook).
- 5.5** Arrive at a large pond at Point G. Watch for beaver and waterfowl. Just ahead a short side trail provides access to the Moonville Rail Trail.
- 7.3** Arrive at camp area 2. This is Point I on the map. A water hydrant is located to the left and a pit latrine to the right. A 0.25-mile white-blazed side trail leading to several campsites forks to the right. When leaving camp, do not follow the water haul road. The trail makes a downhill left just past the water hydrant.
- 7.8** Emerge onto road T-3 in King Hollow. The trail continues across the road and is offset to the left about 100 feet.
- 9.4** Cross over a logging/service road.
- 10.0** Arrive at interpretive Point K on the map and a nearby trail junction with the cutoff side trail. Go left on the cutoff trail to return to the trailhead.
- 10.75** Arrive at a road crossing of T-4.
- 10.9** Reach a junction with the main trail. This is Point Y on the map. Go left to return to the trailhead.
- 11.4** Arrive at Point B on the map and a junction with the two-way section of trail leading the trailhead. Go right.
- 13.3** Arrive back at the backpacking trailhead.

Middle Loop

Zaleski's middle loop features scenic sections of ridge and hollow walking, but lacks other points of interest to break the monotony of trees. The trail stays within a few hundred feet of roads for nearly one-third of its distance, limiting your sense of solitude. The east side of the loop, as you approach Point N, contains a mile long section of nice ridgetop walking through mature oaks. Conversely, the west side of the loop possesses a nearly two-mile section of very nice hollow walking through Stony Hollow. This is the middle loop's most scenic section and features many interesting rock formations.

Completing an overnight trip on the middle loop will require a stay at the picturesque ridgetop camp area 3 at Point P on the map. The total distance for this trip is 15.6 miles when beginning from the backpacking trailhead at Hope Schoolhouse.

From Point Y, the middle loop is described in a counterclockwise direction of travel. To reach Point Y, the same 1.9 miles of two-way trail from the backpacking trailhead to Point B described in the south loop text will be traveled. Once at Point B, you'll go left for 0.5 mile to Point Y where you'll join the cutoff trail to the right to begin your journey on the middle loop. For the next 0.9 mile you'll hike the cutoff trail, crossing a gravel road, to Point K. From Point K, it's a 2.4-mile walk to Point N over a section of trail closely paralleling State Route 278. The first mile of this section passes through a 2006 timber harvest, but finishes nicely with a beautiful section of ridge walking before dropping to Point N in Morgan Hollow. Two Interpretive stops at Points L and M are passed along the way.



Large campsite at camp area 3 (Point P)

At Point N, you'll arrive at a junction with a section of two-way trail leading to camp area 3 at Point P and a crossing of State Route 278. You'll take the right fork here to reach Point P in just under one mile. Point P sits about 280 feet above your elevation at Point N, a big chunk of that climb is put behind you in the first 0.3 mile.

When you arrive at the camp at Point P, the first thing you'll notice is a pit latrine on the right. The trail will curve around and emerge onto a gravel road. Turn left on the gravel road and in a few feet you'll see the white-blazed camp side trail on the left and water on the right. You may also notice the orange blazes of the north loop trail coming into camp from the west.

There are several established campsites along the camp side trail here. The first one is quite large, with room for a small tent city. The white blazes of the side trail stop after 300 yards, but you will find at least two other smaller campsites a little farther down the trail.

When returning to Point N from camp, care must be taken to find the correct trail or you may end up unknowingly heading west on the north loop. Be certain to walk back to the pit latrine to pick up the two-way section of trail heading down to Point N. As mentioned, the north loop comes into camp from the west, closer to camp than

the trail from Point N. Many hikers will jump on the first trail they see when making the return trip, only having to backtrack when they realize their error.

Back in Morgan Hollow and Point N, the middle loop heads west and soon crosses Sandy Run and emerges onto State Route 278. Turn left and walk SR 278 for just over 0.1 mile and turn right on the first gravel road (Big Four Road). After a few paces, the trail leaves the left side of the road and climbs Starrett Ridge via one of the very few switchbacks you'll encounter. In winter, halfway up the hill you can look north to the opposite hillside and see a gated old mine entrance. Once on Starrett Ridge, you'll be walking on an old road and past Point V. There are several splits and forks with unofficial trails along this section. The main trail is well marked with blazes here, but care must be taken to stay on course.

Starrett Ridge merges into Long Ridge about 1.5 miles after Point N. Near this juncture, the trail will begin to parallel Bolin Road, and does so for nearly the next mile. Private property can be seen off to the right and several unofficial trails coming off the road will cross the main trail. At the end of this section, the trail will cross Irish Ridge Road at Point W on the map and begin to drop into Stony Hollow. The next 1.7 miles of trail travel along the floor of scenic Stony Hollow or just above it at the base of the east hillside.

The trail passes by many vibrant green moss covered boulders and rock faces. The trail also passes under a large rock shelter. Expect to cross the stream in Stony Hollow a minimum of ten times; but they are easy and will not pose a problem except in rainy weather.

The mouth of Stony Hollow is very wet and marshy. The trail may be difficult to travel through this area. You'll most likely end up leaving the trail momentarily to take a detour on the base of the left hillside around some of the wetter spots. After the marsh, the trail will emerge onto a large sweeping curve of Furnace Ridge Road, which leads to the state park campground. Hike a short distance straight ahead to State Route 278 and turn right. You'll soon arrive at the day hiking trailhead, Point X on the map. Walk past the parking area, over a bridge, to the trail forking left from the road about 200 feet south of the trailhead parking area.



Stony Hollow

Once you've exited the road, you'll be heading toward Point Y. This first section of trail is also the start of a shorter trail named the Olds Hollow Trail. Olds Hollow Trail will fork right just ahead. You may take the Olds Hollow Trail as an alternate; it will rejoin the backpack trail in approximately 0.5 mile and will only add 0.1 mile to your overall hike. The Olds Hollow Trail passes by an old cemetery and then through the Olds Hollow Cave before rejoining the backpack trail. At Point Y ahead, you'll go right for 0.5 mile and then to a right turn at Point B for the final 1.9 miles back to the backpacking trailhead.

Middle Loop Trail Notes and Mileage from the Backpacking Trailhead at Hope Schoolhouse

0.0 Start from the trailhead parking lot and look for the trail leaving the parking lot to the north and entering a meadow. This is Point A on the map.

0.1 Emerge onto Wheelabout Road and go right.

0.25 The trail forks right from Wheelabout Road and enters the forest.

1.9 Arrive at Point B and go left.

2.4 Arrive at Point Y and go right, following the cutoff trail.

2.55 Arrive at a road crossing of T-4.

3.3 Arrive at Point K on the map. Go left toward Point N at the nearby trail junction. The south loop forks to the right.

5.7 Arrive at an intersection (Point N on the map) with a two-way section of trail leading to camp area 3 at Point P. Go right.

6.7 Arrive at camp area 3 and Point P on the map. A pit latrine is located on the right as you approach. Follow the trail to a gravel road and turn left. A water hydrant is located to the right and a short white-blazed side trail leading to several campsites forks to the left. Take note of the north loop trail entering camp from the west. Do not take this trail when leaving camp. Go back to the latrine to find the trail back to Point N.

7.7 Arrive back at Point N. Go straight to cross Sandy Run and emerge onto State Route 278. Turn left and follow SR 278.

7.9 Turn right onto Big Four Road. Follow the road for a few paces and watch for the trail to leave the left side of the road and head uphill.

10.2 Emerge onto Irish Ridge Road. The trail continues straight across the road. This is Point W on the map. The trail descends into Stony Hollow a short distance ahead.

12.2 Emerge onto a sweeping curve of Furnace Ridge Road. Go straight to State Route 278 and turn right.

12.5 Arrive at the day hiking trailhead. This is Point X on the map. Walk 200 feet south on the left side of the road, over a bridge, to a wooden and metal footbridge where the trail forks left from the road.

12.65 Arrive at a marked junction where the Olds Hollow Trail forks right. Take this trail as an alternate to see an old cemetery and rock shelter.

- 13.0 Arrive at a junction where the Olds Hollow Trail rejoins the main trail.
- 13.2 Arrive at Point Y and go right.
- 13.7 Arrive at Point B and go right.
- 15.6 Arrive back at the backpacking trailhead.

North Loop

The north loop of the Zaleski Backpack Trail begins and ends at camp area 3 (Point P). For backpackers, carrying a weighted pack on the 6.8-mile north loop is unnecessary as there are no camping areas on the trail. In addition, the loop's configuration allows for packers to pitch base camp first at P, thus leaving all of the heavy stuff behind except enough drinking water and snacks for a 3 to 4 hour hike.

To start your counterclockwise trek on the north loop, walk 200 yards northerly then easterly along a gravel road past Point P and the water hydrant. The trail will fork to the left, leaving the gravel road. Missing this fork will send you into the Waterloo Wildlife Area. In 1.25 miles, you'll arrive at Point Q and an interesting old auger mine area. If time permits, walk the old railway to the southeast and explore this small but secluded valley claimed by beavers. If you're lucky, you'll catch a glimpse of one. From the auger mine, a road crossing at State Route 56 lies 0.75 mile ahead, or 2.0 miles from camp.



Doolittle, Enderlin Forest

Directly across State Route 56 the trail heads uphill on Dogwood Ridge Road for 0.1 mile before forking to the left and following a series of old roads. At approximately the 2.7-mile mark, the trail crosses over the dam of a small but picturesque pond before heading uphill and into the highlight of the north loop. Soon you will enter a magnificent pine forest named the Doolittle, Enderlin, York or Carbondale Forest. It is the largest unmanaged plantation of its kind in southeastern Ohio and an exhilarating experience to walk through. The experience is very similar to hiking through the conifer forests of the western U.S. Many of the earliest planted trees now exceed the century mark in age.

The trail weaves in out of pines for the remaining section north of State Route 56. Before descending to the highway, the trail will pass over a footbridge above a beaver pond. Upon arriving at the most westerly of the two SR 56 crossings, the trail turns right and follows the road for 200 yards before actually crossing it. You should see Carsonite signs located about every 50 feet in the right-of-way. At the crossing point, 4.7 miles into the hike, the trail utilizes an abandoned township road to gradually ascend a ridge on the south side of the highway. If you find trail blazes sparse on this section of old road, stick to the road grade and you'll be fine. At nearly 1.0 mile past the crossing of SR 56, the trail will fork 90 degrees to the left from the old road. It may not be obvious, especially in summer, but the trail is blazed at this fork. From this point, you'll have about a 1.1-mile walk back to camp.

North Loop Trail Notes and Mileage from Camp Area 3 at Point P

- 0.0 Leave camp area 3 at Point P and follow a gravel road past the water hydrant in an easterly direction. The trail will fork left from the gravel road in approximately 200 yards.
- 1.25 Take time to explore this interesting old auger mine area. This is Point Q on the map.
- 2.0 Emerge onto State Route 56. On the opposite side of the highway the trail follows Dogwood Ridge Road uphill for 0.1 mile.
- 2.1 The trail forks to left, leaving Dogwood Ridge Road. The trail walks under a powerline in 300 yards. The upcoming section of trail will travel on old roads.
- 3.0 You are entering a magnificent mixed pine stand known as the Doolittle, Enderlin, York, or Carbondale Forest. This is Point S on the map.
- 4.6 Approach the second crossing of State Route 56. The trail goes right and travels along the right side of the highway for approximately 200 yards before crossing. Several Carsonite posts marking the way are normally present in the road right-of-way.
- 4.7 The trail crosses State Route 56 and heads uphill on an old township road over an old metal bridge.
- 6.8 Arrive back at Point P and camp area 3.

Day Hikes

Any of the Zaleski Backpack Trail's three loops can be completed as a long day hike for fit hikers. Day hikers can access the south and middle loops from the day hiking trailhead on State Route 278 across from Hope Furnace. Hikers beginning from here will find the actual south loop trailhead a couple hundred feet south of the trailhead parking lot. Begin from the parking lot (Point X on the map) and walk south on the left side of State Route 278, crossing over Sandy Run, to a wooden and metal footbridge. This is also the start of a shorter trail named the Olds Hollow Trail. Not far past the footbridge the Olds Hollow Trail will fork right. You may take the Olds Hollow Trail as an alternate for a short loop hike; it will rejoin the backpack trail in approximately 0.5 mile giving you the option to return to your car or to continue on to the south loop. The Olds Hollow Trail passes by an old cemetery and then through Olds Hollow Cave before rejoining the backpack trail.

North loop day hikers can safely park along State Route 278 in a flat grassy area 0.15 mile north of Big Four Road (T-21). A small pullout on the right a few yards down Big Four Road offers additional parking. From here, hike the nearly one-mile section of two-way trail leading to Point P on the map to access the north loop. Additionally, the north loop can be accessed along State Route 56 at the most westerly of the two trail crossings of this road. There exists a gravel pullout on the south side of the road, approximately 1.5 miles east of the junction of State Routes 278 and 56. The trail crosses SR 56 at this point. Parking here will allow for the shortest walk to the magnificent Doolittle, Enderlin pine plantation. Walking clockwise, a loop hike of 3.2 miles on the section of trail north of SR 56 can be completed by using SR 56 as a cutoff and walking it back to your vehicle from a second crossing of SR 56 approximately 0.5 mile to the east.

A wonderful out-and-back hike of just under 8.0 miles can be taken from the day hiking trailhead to the Hewett Fork overlook on the south loop. The overlook provides a peaceful spot to rest and re-energize for the hike back. The valley in view south of the overlook provides many opportunities for exploring, too. In this valley sits the allegedly haunted Moonville Tunnel on the Moonville Rail Trail. Although the rail trail is a work in progress, the old railroad grade is open for walking. Most of the original trestles carrying the old tracks over streams were removed when the railroad was abandoned, but a few have been replaced, including the one in front of the tunnel. Efforts are underway to raise money to replace additional structures. The railroad grade can be accessed from the south loop just past Point G on the map, or from Hope-Moonville Road.

Visiting the Moonville Tunnel by road provides the easiest access to this interesting site. To get there from the day hiking trailhead on State Route 278, travel south on SR 278 for approximately 1.25 miles and turn left onto Wheelabout Road. Before turning, you will see the dam holding back Lake Hope on your right. In approximately 0.25 mile, Wheelabout Road will curve right, stay straight and travel onto Shea Road. Approximately 1.0 mile ahead, Shea Road will turn to gravel and become Hope-Moonville Road. Back at the beginning of Shea Road, your distance to travel is 2.5 miles to where the road crosses the Moonville Rail Trail. You can park on the left side of the road in a gravel area on the old railroad grade and walk across the bridge in front of you to visit the tunnel.

The vicinity around the Moonville Tunnel contains other intriguing points of interest including the old Moonville Cemetery, Lookout Rock, another tunnel 2.5 miles to the east and a balanced rock formation on a nearby hilltop. Some of these features are highlighted on the map for the south loop. There are also many unofficial trails utilizing old roads that provide access to the south loop of the backpack trail from the tunnel valley. With the aid of a topographic map and a GPS, you can really get to know this section of Zaleski State Forest and spend many adventure filled days exploring this wild and wonderful corner of Ohio.



Moonville Tunnel

Index of Reference and Interpretive Points

Point ID	Description
A	Backpacking trailhead and parking
B	Intersection of the south loop trail and two-way connecting trail to the trailhead
C	Drinking water, latrine
D	Camp area 1
E	The west side of the trail burned in an accidental wildfire in 2012, and the east side burned during a prescribed fire in 2005.
F	Located in the valley below is a section of the Moonville Rail Trail. The old track that used to lay here was claimed to be haunted by a brakeman, known as the Moonville Ghost. He was killed while he was supposedly drunk and trying to stop a train near the Moonville Tunnel by waving his lantern. He was buried in the Moonville Cemetery, but reportedly, he can still be seen waving his lantern trying to stop that train.
G	Ohio's state forests are managed for a variety of purposes, including timber production and wildlife habitat. Areas like these wetlands, which are adjacent to woodland cover, provide a unique and special habitat.
H	The small, doughnut-shaped mound is a ceremonial ring that was built and used by the Native Americans of the Adena group.
I	Camp area 2, drinking water and latrine
J	This selective harvest was completed in 2012. The purpose of the harvest was to remove trees that were stressed, damaged or inhibiting the growth of better quality trees.
K	The rock outcropping on the south side of the trail has vertical grooves cut into the face of the sandstone. These are drilling marks left from when this site was used as a stone quarry. The sandstone from this site was most likely used to build one of the local iron furnaces, railroad abutments or local structures. A trail intersection with the cutoff trail is nearby.
L	This area is part of the Ohio State University's research study that began in 2006. The goal of this study is to use a mix of prescribed fire and tree removal to find the best combination for increasing oak seedling development.
M	The 20 acres to the north were regenerated with a clearcut harvest in 1987. In this area, foresters have mimicked the natural disturbance cycle of the forest by creating an opening in the canopy, allowing sunlight to reach the forest floor.
N	Trail intersection with State Route 278 and a two-way section of trail to camp area 3 at Point P
O	The harvest to the north is a deferment cut. This harvest took place in the summer of 2012. This type of "two-aged" cutting practice achieves the forest management goals of creating early successional habitat while retaining some mature trees.
P	Camp area 3, drinking water and latrine
Q	This is an old auger mine area. To the southeast, people can still see remnants of the trolley car railway that was used to haul coal mined from the site.
R	This area is part of a 59-acre selective timber harvest that was completed in 1993. This is the same type of harvest seen at Point J.
S	This is a mixed pine stand generally known as the Doolittle Forest. It is composed of conifer plantings with an understory of woody and herbaceous plants. The planting started in 1906 and continued for nearly 30 years.
T	This is a surveyor's monument designating a corner shared by three counties. The counties are Hocking to the northwest, Athens to the east and Vinton to the southwest.
U	This is the beginning of the Zaleski Turkey Management Area.
V	This is an old township road, used until around 1920.
W	Trail intersection with Irish Ridge Road
X	Day hiking trailhead and parking
Y	Main trail intersection with the cutoff side trail

384000m E. 385000m E. 386000m E. 387000m E. 388000m E. 389000m E.

4355000m N.

4355000m N.

4354000m N.

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4353000m N.

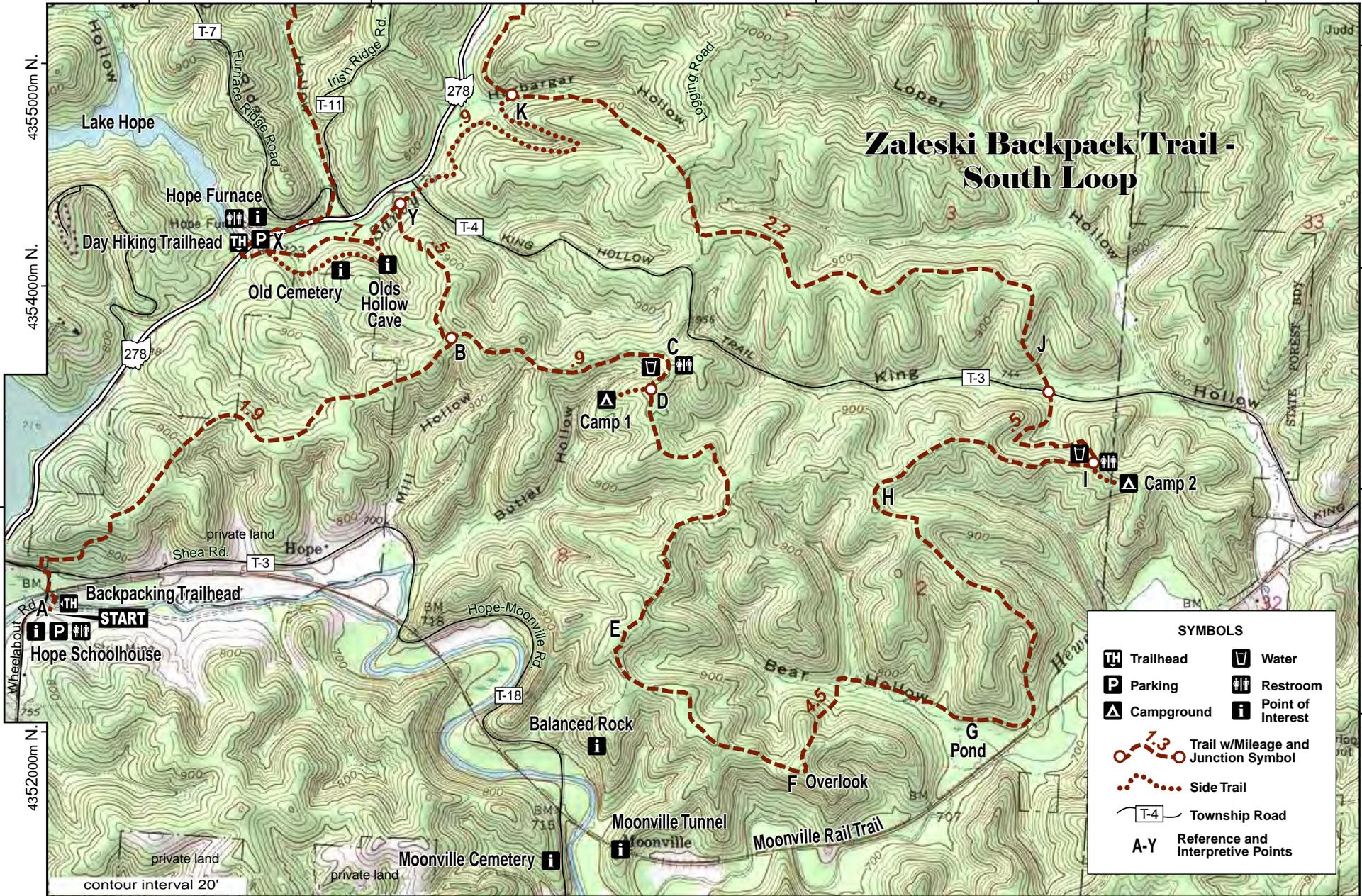
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Zaleski Backpack Trail - South Loop

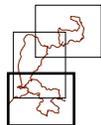
SYMBOLS



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0.0 0.5 1.0 miles

0.0 0.5 1.0 1.5 km

1" = 2000'

1000-Meter UTM 17 Grid
NAD 27



385000m E.

386000m E.

387000m E.

388000m E.

4358000m N.

4358000m N.

4357000m N.

4357000m N.

4356000m N.

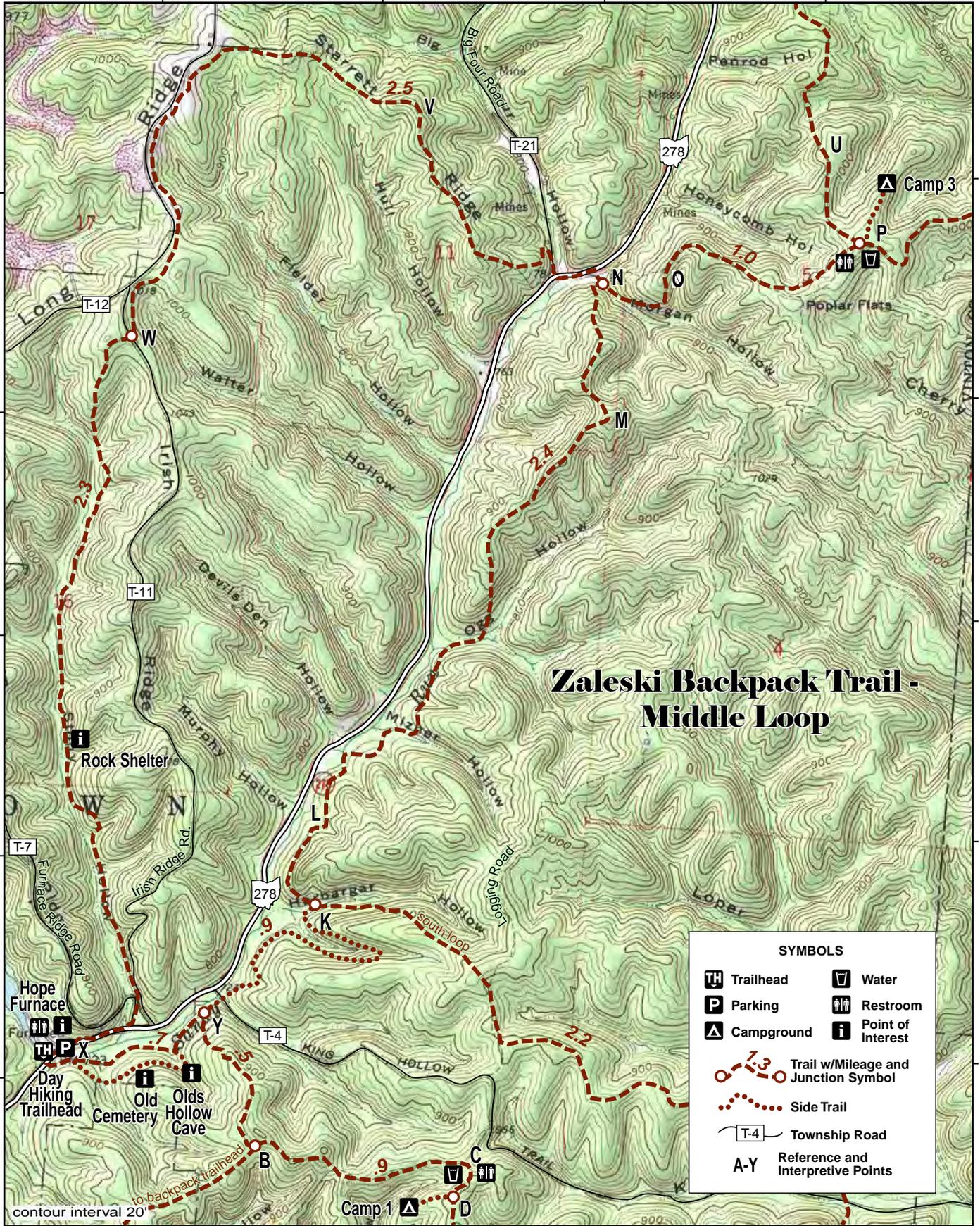
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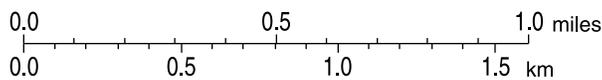
Zaleski Backpack Trail - Middle Loop

SYMBOLS

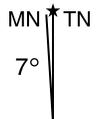
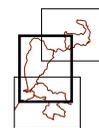
Trailhead	Water
Parking	Restroom
Campground	Point of Interest
Trail w/Mileage and Junction Symbol	
Side Trail	
Township Road	
A-Y Reference and Interpretive Points	



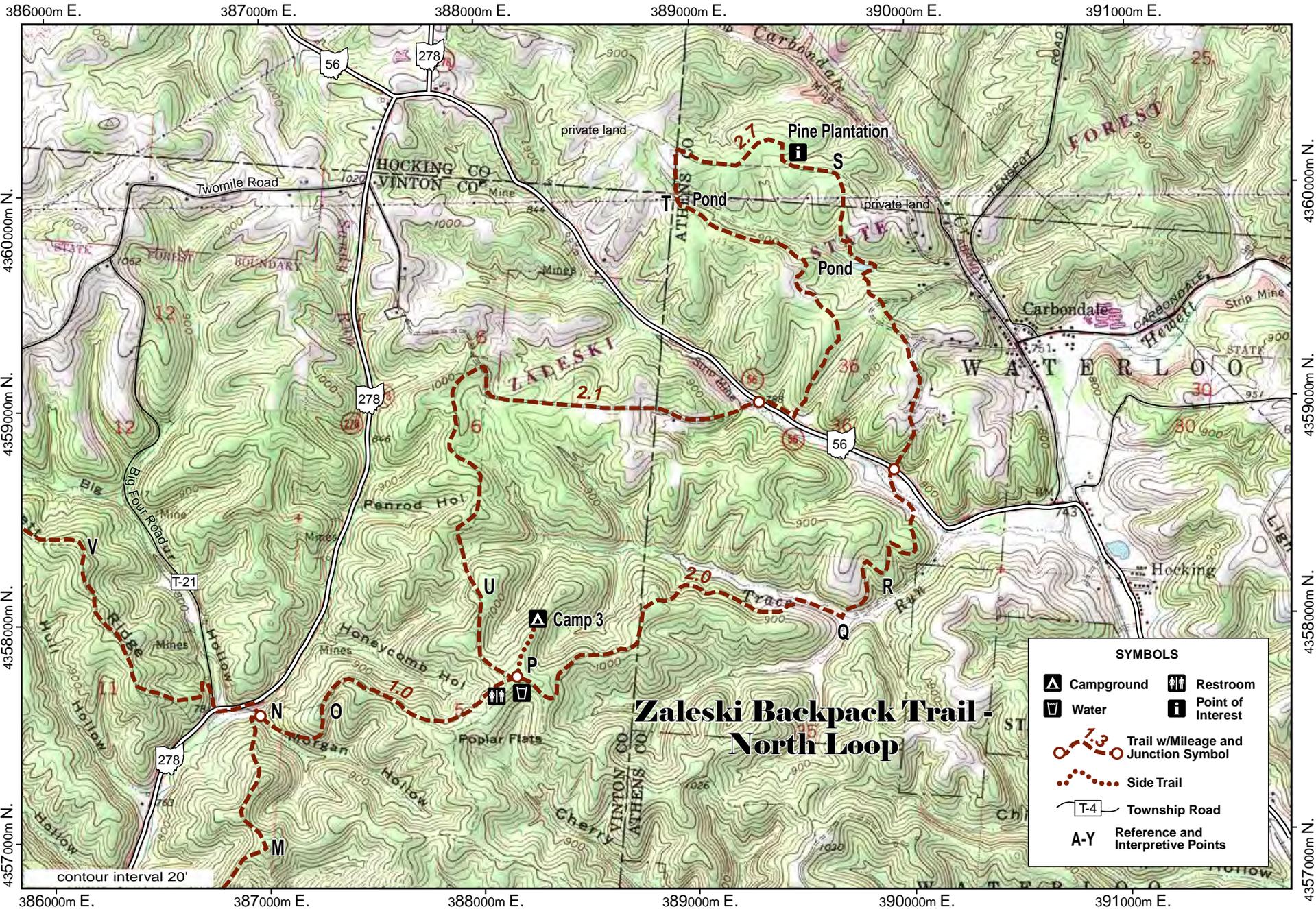
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1" = 2000'



1000-Meter UTM 17 Grid
NAD 27



SYMBOLS

- Campground
- Water
- Point of Interest
- Trail w/mileage and Junction Symbol
- Side Trail
- Township Road
- Reference and Interpretive Points
- Restroom



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