Blue Spring Lake Segment (Atlas Map 79f, 80f; Databook pages 77–78)

SNAPSHOT

7.1 miles: Young Rd. to CTH-Z

This up-and-down segment features panoramic views from the top of Bald Bluff and the Stone Elephant, a massive granite erratic.

At Kettle Moraine State Forest—Southern Unit (KMSF-SU) Horseriders’ Camp on Little Prairie Rd. and KMSF-SU Emma Carlin Trails parking area. From small ponds and springs near the segment.

TRAIL ACCESS AND PARKING

Young Rd.: From the intersection of STH-59 and CTH-H in Palmyra take CTH-H southwest 3.0 mi. At Young Rd. turn left and go east 0.1 mi. Roadside parking.

CTH-Z: From the intersection of STH-59 and STH-67 in Eagle, take STH-59 west 3.7 mi. At CTH-Z turn left and go south 0.6 mi. No parking. Instead, use nearby Kettle Moraine State Forest—Southern Unit (KMSF-SU) Emma Carlin Trails parking area on CTH-Z south of the Ice Age Trail access. A short blue-blazed spur trail leads to the Ice Age Trail.

Two ColdCache sites on segment.

Dogs should be leashed (8-ft max) and under control at all times.

Bald Bluff trails, Stone Elephant spur trail and KMSF-SU Emma Carlin bike/hike trail system.

amenities and activities

Two ColdCache sites on segment.

Dogs should be leashed (8-ft max) and under control at all times.

Bald Bluff trails, Stone Elephant spur trail and KMSF-SU Emma Carlin bike/hike trail system.
Additional Parking: (i) Bald Bluff Scenic Overlook parking area. From the intersection of STH-59 and CTH-H in Palmyra, take CTH-H southwest 2.8 mi. Parking area on east side of road. The trail to Bald Bluff serves as a spur to the Ice Age Trail. (ii) Tamarack Rd. Trail access. Roadside parking. (iii) KMSF-SU Horseriders’ Camp parking area on Little Prairie Rd.

THE HIKE

From the trail access point on Young Road the segment heads north and quickly intersects (0.2 miles) a spur trail that leads west to the CTH-H Bald Bluff parking area. From this intersection the segment makes its way up Bald Bluff on a series of switchbacks. Bald Bluff is the largest and most diverse of the area’s dry native prairie openings, which are often found on gravel knobs and steep south- and west-facing ridges. Here grow prairie flowers and grasses such as little bluestem, side oats grama, prairie dropseed, silky aster, pasqueflower, grooved yellow flax and rough blazing star. Trailside benches encourage hikers to soak in the panoramic view. Bald Bluff is one of the highest points in Jefferson County at 1,050 feet above sea level and 200 feet above the surrounding area. Native Americans used the prominence as a lookout and for ceremonial dancing. Twice in July 1832, General Henry Atkinson camped with troops to the north-west of the bluff as he pursued the Sauk Chief Black Hawk in the Black Hawk War. A brochure for the self-guided nature trail is available at the Kettle Moraine State Forest—Southern Unit (KMSF-SU) headquarters or at the Bald Bluff trailhead on CTH-H.

The section of Trail from Bald Bluff to the KMSF-SU Horseriders’ Camp provides hikers with outstanding views of glacial moraines, eskers, kettles and erratics, including spectacular long views of the surrounding topography during leaf-off seasons.

The segment descends down Bald Bluff and after 0.6 miles comes to a small clearing on the left with an impressive stand of white pines. In another 0.8 miles the segment intersects a short spur trail that leads downhill to the massive granite erratic known as the Stone Elephant (JW1). Prairie Potawatomi Native Americans visited the rock frequently and probably considered it a sacred area. Early settlers named the rock the Stone Elephant because of its color, size and general elephant-like shape. In the 1920s it was a popular day outing, in which tourists traveled to the site by horse-drawn surrey.

Almost all of the portion of this segment between Young Road and Tamarack Road traverses the Kettle Moraine Oak Opening State Natural Area. This area is a mixture of oak openings and oak woodland dominated by open-grown bur and black oaks. The Trail also passes a few native dry prairie remnants along the way. The first is located 0.2 miles past the Stone Elephant spur intersection and is located in a field on the north side of the Trail. The showy rough blazing star, a dry prairie species, is found here; the best time to see this plant is late August. The second remnant is found about 0.4 miles east of the first remnant (or about 0.5 miles southwest of Tamarack Road) on a south-facing slope. Here are found flora such as silky aster, leadplant, goldenrod, purple prairie clover, flowering spurge, sunflowers, arrow-leaf aster and a number of prairie grasses. A trailside bench provides a rest stop with a view.

The segment leaves the State Natural Area and crosses Tamarack Road. Three
trails (horse, hiking and biking) converge/diverge near the Tamarack Road crossing, so pay close attention to signage. The Trail continues through the woods and eventually climbs and follows a steep ridge offering impressive views. Crossing Little Prairie Road, the segment again climbs for 0.2 miles to the top of a ridge where a short side trail leads to a clearing with a bench and views to the northwest. From the bench, the KMSF-SU Horseriders’ Camp is 0.2 miles farther on. Horseriders’ Camp is for equestrian camping only. However, showers are available for hikers who have reservations in one of the three KMSF-SU backpack shelters.

The segment crosses through the Horseriders’ Camp and 0.2 miles east of the camp passes a small trailside pond. The segment continues east on level terrain past a few more small ponds and small springs. It eventually comes to an opening with a trailside map and a view of a barn across Carlin Trail (a road). From here hikers will travel up and down some hills and be rewarded with nice views down into the forest on both sides of the segment. In early spring hikers should watch for fields of mayapples in this area.

In the final mile a careful observer may notice a rock seat embedded in a tree and discover an old foundation with day lilies. Just south of the segment’s endpoint on CTH-Z a short spur trail leads to the KMSF-SU Emma Carlin Trails parking area. Note: As hikers approach the end of the segment they may hear gunfire; a public shooting range can be heard from the Trail.

Mobile Skills Crew project site, 2003

AREA SERVICES

**Palmyra:** Restaurant, grocery store, convenience store, library. From the Little Prairie Rd. Trail access go 1.0 mi northwest on Little Prairie Rd. The library has limited hours.

**Eagle:** See Eagle Segment, p. 282. From the CTH-Z Trail access go north then east ~4 mi. Also see Trail Access and Parking directions, above.
Must-Have Ice Age Trail Books!

The **Ice Age Trail Guidebook** features more than 100 detailed segment-by-segment descriptions and maps to help you connect with the thousand-mile Ice Age National Scenic Trail. Written for those seeking a wide range of adventures on the Ice Age Trail.

The **Ice Age Trail Atlas** is a set of 105 color, shaded relief-style maps at 1:48,000 scale. In contrast to the smaller map excerpts in the Ice Age Trail Guidebook, each map in this package is printed on an 8.5” x 11” sheet and includes not just the Ice Age Trail route but also a wider snapshot of the area around the Trail.

Both books were written and published by the Ice Age Trail Alliance. All proceeds for each book help build and maintain the Ice Age Trail. Please call the IATA at (800) 227-0046 with any questions.

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