

# Scouting Hike: Cliff Slide and Redfield Bushwhack:

Cliff: 8.2 mi, 3100' - Redfield: 9.3 mi, 2170'

6/09/07

## **MudRat Account**

12:15

The Calamity Pond trail is one of the few Adirondack trails I haven't hiked in this region during the last several years. It's located at the very end of the Upper Works Road. Gravel leads to open field which leads to the deep woods and across Calamity brook via suspension bridges and rock hops. The grade was perfect to reach Flowed Lands in just over 1.75 hours for 4.5 miles at 2:00 p.m. Perfect weather set mood for some great shots of the area and a quick snack. Another mile led past Herbert Brook herd path (Mt. Marshall) and Colden Dam where the wind blew our shirts dry and cooled our bodies. The final 1.5 miles to Uphill Lean-to went quickly adjacent to the Opalescent River. 3:30 found us at the lean-to and contemplating our next move...the ascent and descent into an evergreen graveyard.

Our travels began as we walked up the corduroy mire that begins one of the herdpath routes to Cliff and were instantly greeted with the blowdown notorious to the area. The old yellow trail made its way up to the height of the Redfield/Cliff col and disappeared...replaced by thick blowdown. Some was in a state of decay and some was very fresh. Hugging Cliff's flank, we trudged onward and through. The occasional views of Cliff's magnificent...cliffs...were incredible and dramatic.

I picked up another old herd path near Redfield at one point which was also swallowed in short order. We found our way to about 3200' where we'd estimated the base of Cliff Slide to be based on satellite imagery and found a small somewhat clear and soft area to make camp. We were only about 100' off of the drainage which WWBF quickly found.

We unpacked a bit and separated our bear canisters from the rest of our valuables, packed a little food and started up the slide. The grade is minimal and rubble strewn. A mix of sand/gravel/boulders. Minutes up the slide, we could view a small section of Redfield's opposing drainage...Sunday's route up the mountain. Ascending Cliff was easy and the grade finally increased in short order. Water drained down the center where it had worked its way through the loosest debris. There was not "best" way to ascend. Finally, we were funneled closer as the slide narrowed and further increased its grade as we met the slab rock on our left and hugged it close. A ten foot headwall was the biggest challenge that we carefully overcame.

Above the headwall the slide narrowed into a simple step drainage that had gathered some typical summit blowdown. Ten minutes hiking led us to a small col where we picked up the herd path and ate on the summit less than two minutes later. I have to say, once at the slide bottom it was only a forty-five minute ascent to sit on the summit and one of the easiest ascents I've ever made. This was a beautiful second walk up Cliff. The sun was still bright and the wind kept the blackflies at bay. We refueled and started a 30 minute descent back down to our camp.

It was now time for the comedy portion of our hike...dinner and the walk back. We set up dining facilities about three hundred feet from our sleeping quarters. This entailed a modest ten minute stroll through the blowdown. Fine...it was daylight. Dinner was uneventful (even though this was my first time camping since I was five years old). Mine was mac and cheese. Our walk back was facetiously fun. During dinner I filled up six liters of water (about 16 pounds, I believe). WWBF carried some of his stuff, but asked me to carry the bladders...fine. Except we took a different route and they got heavy. Still ok, except that the twenty minutes of twilight hiking without a flashlight in brutally sharp heavy blowdown was interesting (facetious). My balance was ok. This was good since we were on top of the blowdown and about eight feet off the ground in several locations. I figured it was a test of sorts: like trying to run away from a stampede with a full cup of water while trying not to spill any. I passed and didn't puncture the bladders, but did learn several new curses from WWBF.

My body felt strong and I felt refreshed. Not even the bugs were bad. Each of us in a bivy bag went to sleep at 10, but stayed awake until well after midnight. The next day's hike would be on about four hours' sleep.

Red: 6/10/07

Breakfast was eggs/bacon for me. Uneventful, except after a snide remark about WWBF loss of silverware the night before, I promptly lost mine. WWBF blames pixies. I followed his example from the night before and carved a spoon out of driftwood (though I didn't lose that as well!).

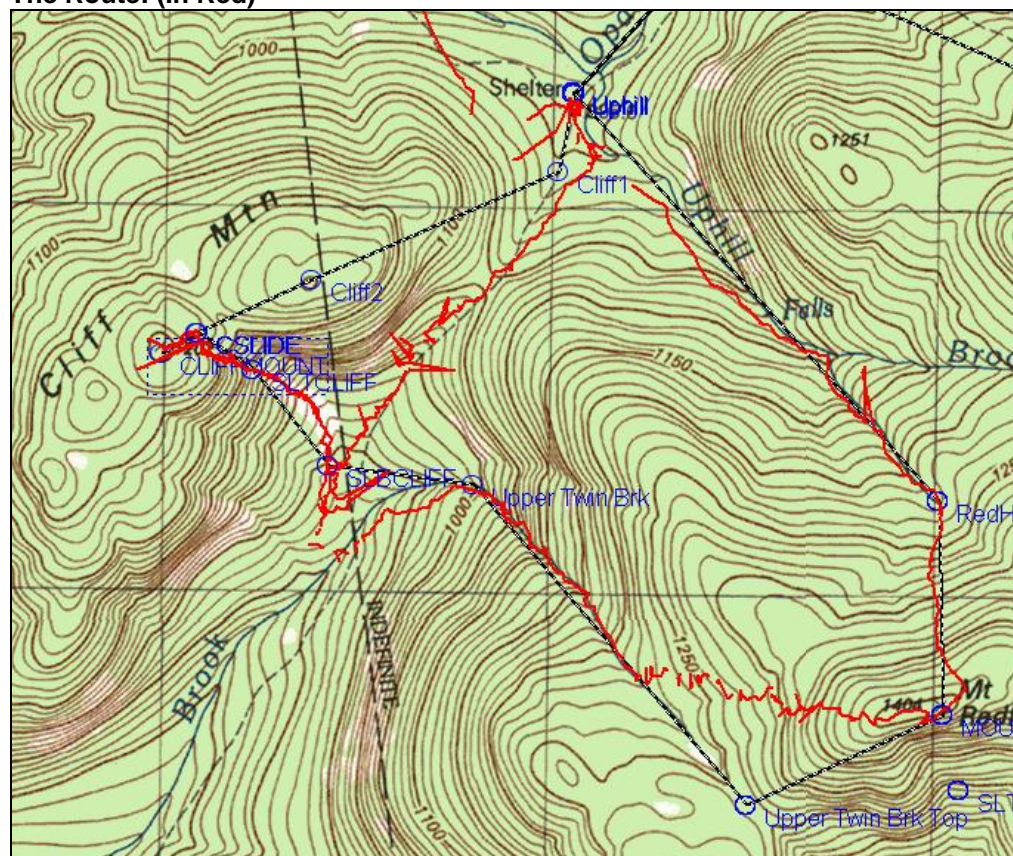
We began hiking the drainage from Cliff Slide about 7:30. There's plenty of blowdown in that area, though not as thick as the woods. Our first thought was to hike it until it intersected the Redfield drainage. I'm glad we didn't. The rocks were beyond slippery and I'd soaked my right leg to my knee within ten minutes. We saw a mildly penetrable area of the woods and opted to hike the two or three hundred feet across the hillock to Redfield.

This drainage was strewn with blowdown for the duration of its journey until it turned up the mountain. The drainage could have been a beautiful rock hop across interesting rock formations if it wasn't for the extra large variety of blowdown. Too high for up and below was many times a cage of branches...each vying for a chance to grab the pack. After its turn up Redfield the drainage became much more open, anywhere from about ten-twenty foot in width. Small deep pools dammed by debris and cascade rock climbs made up much of the ascent. Only one view opened enough for a decent view of Cliff Slide. The rest, though open above meandered to block views of Cliff. Interestingly, the perspective allowed us to view another slide up Cliff (to the north) adjacent and just below the cliffs near one of the cols.

After eating 1 bag of homemade goop (brown rice syrup/peanut butter/vanilla flavoring), 1 soy dreams bar and one unidentified yellow granola bar we began again. The final portion of the drainage was, as most, marked by a leveling of the terrain, bogs, moss covered rocks and a much reduced water flow. Several hundred feet from the height of land, we made an error and veered from the drainage in pursuit of the summit. With Rico in the lead, we marched toward the summit. The way seemed mildly clear by our terms, but quickly closed in for the remaining .47 mile. A four hundred foot vertical ascent took over an hour and was almost invariably composed of non breakable cripplebrush. I bonked on food, but with a slowed pace managed to walk it off. Leaning forward and pushing outward with all our might, we finally made the summit plateau and spent another ten or so minutes finding the summit. My arms and sleeping pad looked like I got into a fight with a fisher. Lunch consisted of two servings of dried berries, 1 package of salmon and several handfuls of gorp.

The hike down and out the roughly nine miles was uneventful except that I finally got a chance to see the monument to David Henderson at Calamity pond. I was breaking in a new pair of sneakers. I had a few hotspots on toes and heels from some new sneakers and wet feet, but overall I felt strong. Thankfully, my knees did not bother me. My homemade goop (of which I ate two more bags) worked perfectly for an energy/sugar burst. 5:00 p.m. found us at our vehicles.

### The Route: (In Red)



## WWBF Account

June 9-10, 2007:

Kevin and I started at the Upper Works trailhead and hiked approximately 7 uneventful miles to the Uphill Lean To. From there, we bushwhacked the general path of the old Yellow Trail over a slight pass, and down into the valley between Cliff and Redfield. There was a mix of thick fir/spruce stands, blowdown from Hurricane Floyd years back, and some very recent blowdown as well (needles still on branches). We probably averaged just under 1 mph. Upon reaching a small clearing near the presumed bottom of the Cliff slide, we dropped our packs, and decided that we'd set up camp here. I noticed an open area to our west, and went to investigate. After a mere 50ft bushwhack, I popped out of the woods onto the bottom of the Cliff slide. Carrying just our fanny packs, we ascended this beautiful rubble slide right to the base of the summit cone. A short and easy bushwhack brought us to the established herdpath, and we were on the summit within minutes. The descent down was as easy as the ascent up.

Upon reaching camp, we decided to bushwhack over to the Upper Twin Brook... to both scout a route over there, plus to cook and eat our dinner away from camp so that we didn't pique the interest of any nearby bears. It was not an easy bushwhack, and we stopped at a small mossy clearing about 100 feet short of the brook. After firing up my stove, I realized that I didn't have my removable pot handle. I searched in vain, but then realized that my can opener made a steady handle. Just as the water was about to boil, I noticed that I didn't have my plastic silverware set either! I was certain that both the handle and the silverware were packed before-hand... how did I lose them in this small area? Resurrecting the inner MacGyver in me, I fashioned a spoon (actually more of a paddle) out of a piece of wood with Kevin's folding knife. No longer did I feel emasculated. Halfway through my meal (Kevin ate his meal before me, due to the limited amount of water we could boil at one time) I realized that we should head back to camp lest we try to bushwhack back in the dark. Upon reaching camp, I went into my cooking bag to retrieve the remainder of my meal and my spoon. Only I couldn't find my spoon! I remember putting it in the bag. Kevin made a comment about the spoon when I put it in the bag. We had two eye witnesses that saw me place the spoon in the bag. Yet it wasn't here. WHAT IS GOING ON?!?!?!?

Using Kevin's fork I finished my meal at the bottom of the slide. We then set up our bivy sacks about 20 feet from each other, and called it a night. Just as I was dozing off, I heard something large, followed by a deep grunt. You gotta be kidding me! Of all the places we decided to sleep, it happened to be 50 feet from a bear. I didn't hear it for quite some time, and started thinking that it thought the better of "invading" our camp, and backtracked to the slide drainage. Then a few minutes later I heard it again. I got my headlamp out and shone it on the trees in the vicinity of the noise, wondering if I'd see glowing eyes staring back at me. Nothing. A few minutes later, more noise... only this was a cough... and bears don't cough (at least I don't think they do). I asked Kevin if he had just made some noise, and he said he did. Ahhh... maybe the bear and Kevin were one in the same. Only the bear noises were coming from the opposite side of the camp. After hearing the bear once again, I asked Kevin if he just made some noise and he responded "Yes". Ha! Kevin WAS the bear. The sound must have been bouncing off the wall of trees near my side of camp.

At around midnight, I woke up cold. So I closed the top of my bivy sack. I woke up again at 1am, shivering. Damn... I should have brought a sleeping bag. Knowing there was nothing I could do about it, I just curled up in a fetal position and tried to get more sleep. It was a fitful rest until 5am, when I remembered that I had a spring jacket in my backpack. It probably wouldn't help much but I was desperate. After donning the jacket, I fell soundly asleep until 6:30 when the sun woke me up. Kevin was already awake, and he shared that he had been cold as well. However, he obviously being the smarter between us, had brought a sleeping bag and retrieved it from his backpack in the middle of the night.

We tentatively organized our backpacks and headed to the slide to eat breakfast. Kevin made some comments about his fork, poking fun at me. I found another piece of wood and fashioned yet another spoon. Just before eating, I saw Kevin looking around frantically. He couldn't find his fork! I laughed and laughed as he made his own wooden spoon. However, the bigger question was asked: Just what kind of utensil-stealing fairy lived in these parts?!?!?

Kevin and I both concluded that descending down the slide drainage, then bushwhacking over the Redfield drainage, would be the easier route since both drainages converged downstream. Unfortunately, the rocks within the slide drainage were very slippery, and we soon decided to cut over the Redfield drainage. Once there, the difficulty of the bushwhacking eased a bit, and we were continually making better progress as we ascended. Once the drainage began ascending the mountain (instead of paralleling it), the bushwhacking practically ended, and we enjoyed an open drainage with beautiful cascades and flumes. We noticed that the Cliff slide was directly across from us, and we have since decided that the easiest way between the two points is indeed a straight line.

The drainage was very pleasant all the way to near the top of the ridge, at which point we decided to leave the drainage and enter the woods to make our summit bid. At first, the bushwhacking wasn't too difficult, until we reached

an area where the grade dramatically increased. It appeared that the steeper the grade, the thicker the trees. We would literally have to part the trees to squeeze through. This continued for more than 1/3 mile until we reached the summit ridge. Our "progress" could be measured in hours per mile. The top of the summit ridge was much more open than what we had just traversed, and we soon reached the summit. As we ate, so did the blackflies. We concluded that we would keep the Cliff to Redfield traverse in our itinerary for the Big Hike, since 90% of it was great. However, we will ascend the Redfield drainage all the way to the top of the ridge, and hope that conditions are better on the ridge top or eastern flank of the ridge.

We made our way down the Redfield herdpath to the Uphill Lean To, and had an uneventful hike out to the trailhead. Back at home, I did some further research into our utensil-stealing entity. It appears that pixies were to blame, they being a bit more mischievous than your average fairy. Also, according to legend, pixies lure people into the woods where they're never seen again. But they obviously never considered that Kevin and I purposely enter such haunts for the sheer fun of it.



Cliff Slide from Redfield. Cliff summit is at the upper left of picture. The slide drainage continues into the trees for another quarter mile until it Meets with Upper Twin Brook.