Mt. Davis Area

Mt. Davis was named after John Nelson Davis, an early settler and former owner of the site. He was a Civil War veteran, land owner, and naturalist. It is said that he could readily identify all the wildlife and wild plants in the region, and was familiar with the various rock formations.

This area is unique in that the central feature is a rock, 3,213’ above sea level. This rock is the highest point in Pennsylvania.

Most of the State Forest land surrounding Mt. Davis was purchased by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1929. In 1935 the observation tower was constructed on site.

Mt. Davis was given recognition as an area of special significance in 1945, when it was declared a State Forest Monument. In 1937, 581 acres surrounding the High Point were designated a State Forest Natural Area. Because of the 1935 development at the High Point, the seven acres immediately surrounding it were not included.

Unusual circular patterns of stone, formed by frost action over thousands of years, occur near the base of the observation tower.

Mt. Davis

Mt. Davis is about 30 miles long, and located in the center of the Allegheny Plateau. It lies between Laurel Mountain on the east and Allegheny Mountain on the west. It is one of the oldest geological rock formations in the area, evidenced by the different rock outcrops along the ridge. The terrain is deceptive. The mountains are not sharply elevated, and their smooth water-washed surfaces give them a low profile.

Weather is an important factor in the region. Annual temperatures range from −30 degrees to 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Frost has been observed at some point during every month of the year. Annual rainfall ranges from 38 to 42 inches. It is not uncommon for snow depths to reach 3 to 4 feet by mid-winter.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

The 1930s had a profound effect on this area. President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the CCC in 1933 to provide jobs for more than 200,000 young men during the Great Depression. CCC camp S-97 was established in June 1933 at a site on Tub Mill Run. The camp was in operation until July 1937. During these 4 short years, many improvements were made. This group of men constructed North and South Wolf Rock Roads, Shelter Rock Road, Vaught Rock Road, and many miles of fire access trails. Springs were developed to supply water for fire fighting. The existing shelter at Mt. Davis picnic area was also constructed by the group.

Other projects include telephone line construction, road and trail clearing, construction of the Negro Mt. fire tower, timber stand improvement, tree planting, seed collecting, bridge construction, stream improvement projects, and feeding wildlife.

Two of the cabins from this camp still exist on the site (see map for locations).

Camping Information

Camping in the Forbes is restricted to backpack-type camping, except for several designated motorized sites. Permits are required if staying more than one night at any campsite, and for all motorized camping. All are encouraged to obtain a permit in case you are overdue or if someone needs to reach you.

- Camp at least 100 feet from any stream or open water source.
- Camp at least 200 feet from and out of sight of roads and parking areas.
- Camp at least 25 feet from and out of sight of any trails.
- Keep field privies at least 200 feet from any water source.
- Pack out all trash.
- Not have campfires when wildfire danger is high.
- Camping in Natural Areas is prohibited.