



The logging road to Bear Mountain.

Ron Baldwin

Bear Mountain: Summit is not what writer expected

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Most cultures have had a time in which mountains were perceived as being imbued with spirits. Over the years of peering at this silent sentinel I have come to sympathize with this concept so it was not without some trepidation that I approached the road head this spring.

The logging road here deserves mention. It is not a new road but one that has been upgraded to haul out the logs that were harvested recently in the most efficient and expeditious manner. This is a road that was put here to stay.

The road roughly parallels state Route 401 for the first mile while gaining only

a few feet in elevation until you come to the base of Bear Mountain. From this vantage point it is easier to see the lay of the land and how the 1,014 foot mountain fits into the landscape.

Both sides of the road have been logged recently. At the base of the mountain the road begins to ascend rapidly around the north side. Hemlocks, possibly 40 to 70 years old, stand straight on both sides.

The road continues to wind upward around the steep slope in haunted-castle fashion until it approaches the top without a view, owing to the tree cover.

As I approach, I'm treated to a chorus of screeching from a flock of shiny blue Steller's jays, their black heads bobbing from every tree limb around. These birds don't want me around. After a few minutes they calm down a bit and I start

to look around. In a flash, the jays have gone. It becomes exceedingly quiet.

The summit is not what I expected. There is no view. Like most hikers, I prefer a reward, but this time to no avail. Instead of the depression or caldera that I expected, the summit is a sharp, narrow ridge about 200 yards long.

A clearing along the ridge affords a roadbed. Although things have probably changed here in 60 million years or so, there is no indication that this has been a volcanic vent. I am disappointed, if not crestfallen that reality has not fulfilled my hopeful imagination. At least the mystic powers could have come up with even a small castle and a few witches and hobgoblins.

Ron Baldwin is a musician, photographer and writer living in Chinook, Washington.

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