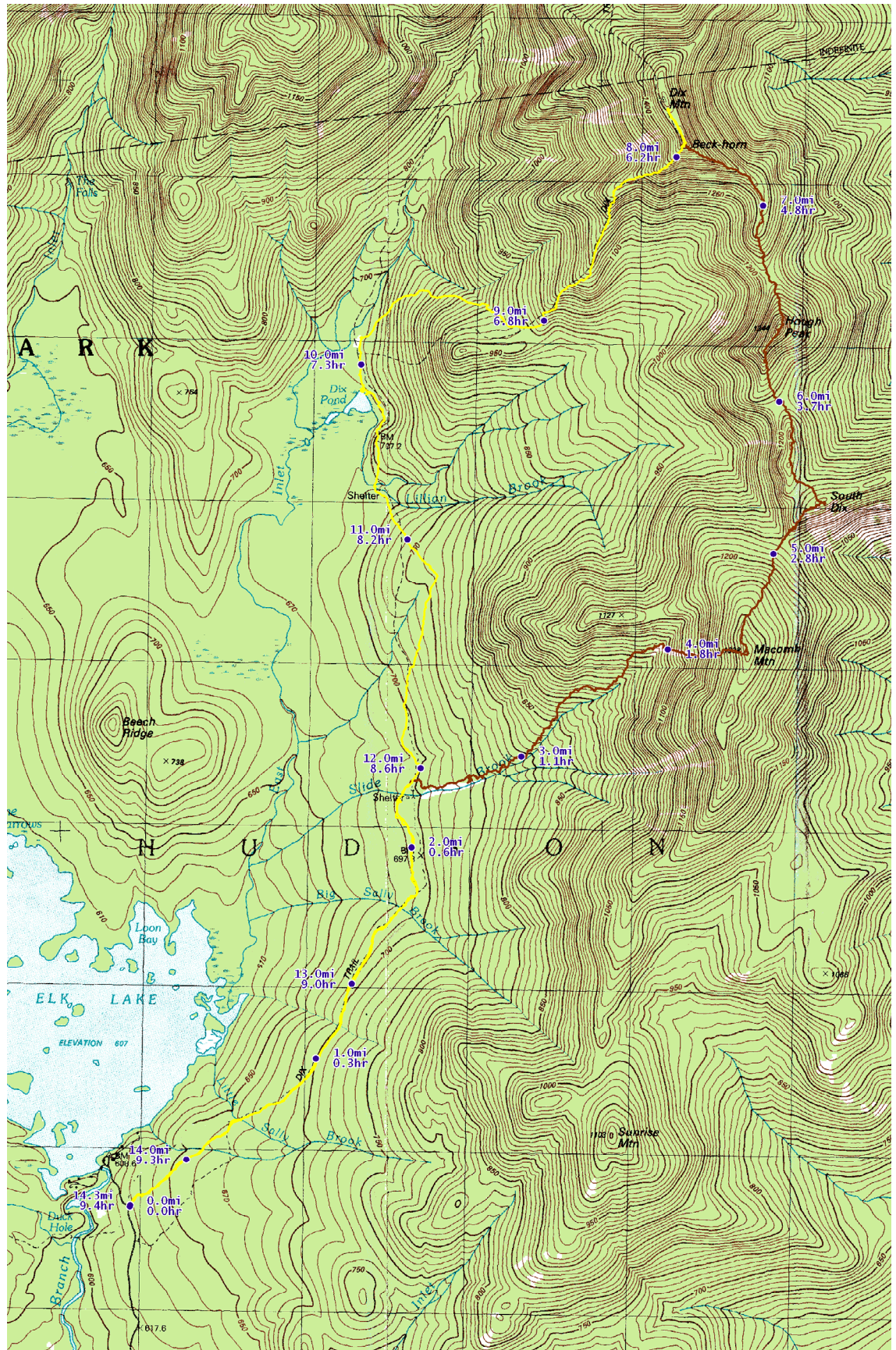


DW02: Macomb and Dix from Elk Lake

We had settled into the lean-to at Slide Brook enjoying the reprieve from tenting in the rain. Then three doctors showed up, and they wanted to share the lean-to. It was possible to squeeze in, but that left my wife as the only woman with six guys staying in the lean-to. The tension was high, made worse by the fact that we were poor college students with “make do” gear while the doctors had gone out and bought brand new gear which they didn’t know how to use. For example, they had a gorgeous state of the art white gas stove, but hadn’t brought any gas. We gave them some gas to cook with, and settled into an uncomfortable night. Minutes after settling in, the doctor next to me screamed, and in a blink a



mouse landed on my face and then scurried away. We settled back into an uncomfortable night.

General

This is a splendid loop reaching four high peaks, three of them trail-less. If time is late, one can easily choose to return from Maccomb. On the other hand, there is a temptation to add East Dix into the route. It adds about 2 hours but I do not advise it unless you have significant experience on these herd paths.

Summary Statistics

Start coordinates: (44.0208, -73.8277).

Total distance: 14.3 miles.

Time par: 11.5 hours.

Cumulative ascent: 5380 feet.

Route

The trail begins on private land at a well marked parking area on the road to Elk Lake.

In big game hunting season this access may be closed. In the winter this road is closed part way, so expect to hike along the road an extra mile or so in the winter. From the parking area, it is about 400 feet along the trail to the register.

At mile 0.3 the trail passes a private trail and at mile 2.0 it passes a geologic survey benchmark in middle of the trail. At mile 2.2 the trail passes a mineral spring and reaches a bridge with a handrail at mile 2.6. This is where the trail-less route begins.

If you reach the Slide Brook lean-to, you have gone too far (there is a second similar bridge just before the lean-to). From the first footbridge with a handrail there is a herd path that follows the stream on its north side (the water may be underground in areas during dry spells). The herd path is now again very well established despite the extensive blow down that ravaged the route in 1999. However, one storm could change that fact again. At mile 3.1 views of the Maccomb ridge are visible from time-to-time. At mile 3.6 there is a



Mineral spring



The herd path begins over the bridge



After Floyd, before herd path reroute



The Maccomb Slide



Winter herd path



Ascent of the Macomb slide



Safe near the top



A hint of sunshine on the descent

glimpse of the slide and by mile 3.9, the route steps onto the slide. Note to old timers: the new herd path does not access the slide via the stream, but enters the slide near its base from the north side. One may climb the slide as one chooses, but I favor staying in the middle on open rock when possible, until open rock dominates, and then moving to the right (south) side of the slide. There is a grand look-out rock near the top of the primary slide at mile 4.2 and by 4.3 the route moves into the woods until the summit at mile 4.5. Note that if you face the sign on the summit, the herd path we used to get here is on the right of the sign, while the herd path toward South Dix is to the left. There are great views toward Elk Lake and to the north from the summit.

Moving along the herd path toward South Dix, the trail descends to the col at mile 5.1. There is another herd path that enters the col from below, stay on the ridge, reaching open rock on South Dix in just a couple hundred feet. There are a few cairns, but the point is to follow the ridge up the rock. There are grand views from this open rock, and though it is often windy,

it is a favorite place for a break. The herd path reenters forest twice with the final open rock at mile 5.4. In 150 feet we reach the herd path we will use to Hough, but for the moment we pass it, reaching the old site of the South Dix register and a nice view south on a spur in another 150 feet. The herd path to East Dix goes onward, but we leave that for another day. Returning to the herd path leading toward Hough, the path descends a bit, but then stays relatively level on the Hedgehog, until finally descending in earnest at mile 5.7. At mile 5.9 the col is reached and another herd path enters this col from the west, so stay on the ridge and ascend Hough. At mile 6.2 there is a delightful scramble up oddly weathered rock. One can by-pass the scramble by going left, but the scramble up the rock is more fun. At mile 6.4 the summit of Hough is reached. There are delightful views from this quiet peak, but few seats.

Moving further along the herd path, it reaches the col between Hough and Dix at mile 6.7. The ascent follows the ridge in general, with good views from the many humps and bumps along the way. At mile 7.5 the herd path scrambles up an open wedge between rock (a photo of the wedge is in DW08) and the Beck-horn on Dix is just



Rock on the ascent of South Dix

beyond the scramble. The views from the Beck-horn are splendid and other hikers on Dix usually stay on the peak further north. Here one can follow the trail on the ridge to the geologic markers at mile 7.7. Returning to the Beck-horn, the trail descends following yellow paint blazes on the rock, with some grand views, eventually reaching the trail in the valley at mile 9.9. Heading toward Elk Lake, the trail reaches Dix Pond at mile 10.3. Be careful of the delicate plants if exploring the pond's edge; there are pitcher plants and sundews. Reflections of fall colors can be splendid and the damselflies abound in season.

Continuing, the trail passes Lillian Brook at mile 10.7 and reaches the Slide Brook lean-to at mile 12.0. Just beyond the lean-to, at mile 12.1, is the herd path we used to Macomb. Now it is a matter of retracing the earlier hike, reaching the parking area at mile 14.3.



Hobblebush fruit



Hough ascent



A damselfly



Dix Pond