Coon Mountain is a naturalist's paradise and a view-hiker's dream. A steep hike of one mile to the summit offers great views of Lake Champlain, the patchwork of farmland in the Champlain Valley, the Adirondack High Peaks and the Green Mountains of Vermont.
**LISTEN FOR THE COON MOUNTAIN LEGEND**

According to legend, the giant Coon Mountain panther would attack its victims by crying like a damsel in distress, luring men deep into the woods. Many good dogs were lost to the panther while hunting. During one such hunt, however, the panther was shot in mid-leap and crashed down a cliff, sinking into one of the mysterious tarns that dot the summit ridge. The body of the panther was never found, leaving the legend of the Coon Mountain panther intact.

**COON MOUNTAIN NATURE PRESERVE**

Coon Mountain is the premier nature preserve in the central Champlain Valley. It is part of the West Champlain Hills that botanist Jerry Jenkins describes as “more diverse” and “richer in rare and uncommon species than any other (natural) community in the Adirondack Park.” The preserve is famous for its unique, craggy interior with rocky outcrops, lush forests, spring wildflowers and dark hemlock forests.

**SUMMIT TRAIL**

The summit trail traverses through a stand of hemlock and enters a forest of beech, maple and birch.

On the limestone ledges above the hemlock forest grows the biologically-diverse calcareous oak-hickory forest which is rich in rare and uncommon plants. The widely-spaced trees let in sunlight which promotes a great profusion of grasses, sedges, and wildflowers.

Along the southern slope, the forest composition changes and different tree species—white ash with its compound leaves (each with 7 leaflets) and basswood with its large heart-shaped leaves are present.

Some of the old trees may have barbed wire grown into the tree trunks, a sign that the property was once used for pasture. While walking through the large section of beech, look for signs of a different kind: bear claw marks on the smooth gray bark. Beech nuts are an important food source for bears and other wildlife.

**HIDDEN VALLEY TRAIL**

The Hidden Valley trail was established in 2003 following the purchase of an additional 72 acres. As you start up the Hidden Valley trail you will notice a forest stand of Eastern hemlock.

After about a half-mile the Hidden Valley trail conjoins with the Summit trail. At the top, you will be rewarded with stunning panoramic views of Lake Champlain and Adirondack mountains, including Dix, Giant, Hurricane and Saddleback.

**WHERE THE WILDFLOWERS GROW...**

Wildflowers are particularly abundant in spring before lush tree canopies shade the forest floor. Look for blue cohosh that produce blueberry-like seeds in a cluster. Also look for sharp-lobed hepatica, wild ginger, pink lady’s slipper and red trillium.

**Quick Species Identification Box**

**Canada Mayflower (Maianthemum canadense)**

...blooms after its first year of growth producing an inedible berry that turns from speckled green to red.

**Clintonia (Clintonia borealis)**

...also known as bluebead lily, has 3 to 6 greenish-yellow flowers atop a long stalk in June, and dark blue berries (inedible) in August.

**Trout Lily (Erythronium americanum)**

...has green and purplish mottled leaves resembling a speckled trout. The single nodding yellow flower blooms in May.