

Roger
Pryor
Pioneer
Backcountry



Pioneer
FOREST



R. Roger Pryor
1945-1998

This area is named in the memory of Roger Pryor who loved the Ozarks and worked for many years to promote the protection and good management of this area's forests, streams, and outstanding natural features.

Two separate areas of the woodland also recognize long-time employees of Pioneer Forest, Ed Woods and Charlie Kirk, who worked here and loved this extensively wooded region.

The backcountry is being protected in part through a cooperative arrangement with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, which seeks your cooperation so that the public may continue to enjoy the many recreational opportunities of this remote backcountry environment.



Ed Woods
1906-1976



Charlie Kirk
1914-1982

Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry

The Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry is a large and undeveloped area of Pioneer Forest. It is nearly 61,000 acres in size and lies in a remote region of the Ozarks. The size of this backcountry woodland, its extensive landscapes and its primitive nature offer unique and challenging experiences which are not available anywhere else in Missouri. Found here are many important natural and cultural features.

This area borders the Current River to its southwest for nearly 15 river miles. There are few roads. Deer and turkey are common here. Also found are bobcats, several species of bats in area caves, timber rattlesnakes, southern redback salamanders and a variety of birds such as acadian flycatchers, red-eyed vireos, and worm-eating warblers, all of which are commonly found only in such largely forested settings. Small glades dot the otherwise extensively forested landscape. This is an area that has been described as the most remote place in all of Missouri.

Originally settled over a century ago, the area was then abandoned beginning in the early 1900's. More recently it has been managed to restore the forests and allow the land to reestablish its rugged, natural character. Because this backcountry woodland is conservatively managed it offers truly outstanding recreational experiences.

features of the area

Extending north from the Current River are portions of three tributary watersheds. Altogether these form the heart of the Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry. Our trails lead deep into these watersheds where you will discover many interesting places.

- To the west is Big Creek with its wide valley, many old meanders, permanent water, large and deep pools, and tall bluffs. The outdoor experience within this valley is perhaps the most primitive within the entire backcountry.
- Brushy Creek has fewer meanders but hikers here will find permanent water any time of the year. In the upper end of Brushy Creek, sandstone outcrops and large boulders form a rugged and steep-walled hollow.
- Blair Creek forms a scenic valley and is fed by several springs. The permanent water here attracted early settlers. The deteriorating signs of homesites, springhouses, cellars, and

"Now, for years and years when I first came to St. Louis back in the Sixties, my friends would go out west to see mountains. I was either poor or cheap and so I found the Ozark mountains because I couldn't afford to go farther. And I said, by God these are mountains; they've been beaten down for a couple hundred million years; they're a little more rounded and not quite as precipitous; yet these are as pretty a landscape as you'll find anywhere."

Roger Pryor



Black Hickory

"How about dipping your feet in the clear waters of Blair Creek just below Harper Spring. Nearby, an old spring-house reminds us of past, less mechanized times."

Debbie Schnack, Resource Review, 1994

cemeteries are still in evidence.

Here are just a few of the many places within and between these hollows which may be reached by river, hiking trail, or foot travel:

- **Laxton Hollow Forest Reserve.** This is a 145-acre forest which has not been cut since becoming part of Pioneer Forest in the 1950's. Surrounding this area are forests which have been harvested one or more times using the single-tree selection technique and thereby providing a direct comparison between cut and uncut forest land. Laxton Hollow Trail winds through a northeast-facing hillside of this forest reserve. Our goal here is to reestablish an old-growth forest condition on this part of Pioneer Forest.
- **Current River Natural Area & Old-Growth Forest.** This is a small but outstanding Missouri Natural Area site, owned by the L-A-D Foundation, which is surrounded by several hundred acres of old-growth forest on a north-facing hillside. Trees within the natural area have been measured and aged at 400 years old. Tree sizes throughout this hillside are impressive, with large black oak and white oak trees commonly exceeding 30 inches in diameter. This area is reached on the Brushy Creek Trail immediately east of its juncture with the Current River.
- **Pioneer Natural Area.** This is an area of old-growth eastern red cedar and hardwood trees directly adjacent to the Current River. The natural area is owned by the L-A-D Foundation. A fairly rich understory includes leatherwood, spicebush, maidenhair fern, and hepatica. The old-growth cedar ranges from being a dominant canopy tree to growing alongside other species such as white oak, scarlet oak, walnut, black oak, and black cherry. The area is most easily reached from the Current River (located just upriver from Big Creek). Geographically it is located about one mile west of Tip Top Mountain.
- **Jerktail Mountain.** Located directly south of Bee Bluff, the eastern flank of this impressive mountain is within our backcountry area. Views from open rocky barrens to the south and across Current River are superb. This area is reached only through cross-country (off-trail) walking or hiking; there are no developed or marked trails to Jerktail Mountain.
- **Bee Bluff.** Rising several hundred feet above the river, this bluff is one of the area's most spectacular. Bee Bluff forms a sharp bend in this lower section of Current River just southeast of



Scarlet Oak

where the Brushy Creek Trail reaches the river.

- **Current River.** Celebrated among Ozark rivers, the Current River is perhaps the finest float stream in Missouri and is notable for the volume of springwater that forms most of its natural flow. As a result of the accumulated outflow of its many springs, this river is floatable year-round. You can launch a river trip from Round Spring, a part of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, and for nearly 15 river miles be floating through or directly alongside either the backcountry area or Pioneer Forest. Our backcountry area can be reached by walking or hiking north from the river from anywhere along this section of "river trail."

trails through the backcountry

We encourage you to use the developed trails to explore this backcountry area. Each of these trails has been clearly marked but you should be aware that there are some road crossings. Please pay particular attention to the trail markings. If you have not encountered a trail marker for some time, then return the way you have come until you see a trail marker.

You may also wish to explore this area on your own, by walking or hiking cross-country. If you decide to do this, remember to use your maps, carry a compass and pay attention to the landscape features. If you decide to go your own way, we want you to be prepared so that you can finish your trip when and where you intended to.

This is a backcountry area—it is minimally developed to maintain the primitive experience.

- **Laxton Hollow Trail.** From the parking area at the Himont Trailhead, this connector trail is a 2-mile walk to the Ozark Trail. This is a beautiful walk through the spring-fed Laxton Hollow which feeds Blair Creek. The lower end of this connector trail crosses the side of a high ridge and overlooks the spring branch and mouth of Laxton Hollow, affording outstanding views of this rugged watershed, which feeds the Current River. With parking at Himont, this walk is an easy way to experience the Ozark Trail and our Laxton Hollow Forest Reserve.
- **Ozark Trail.** Thirteen miles of the Ozark Trail through Pioneer Forest offer some of the best long-distance hiking in the Midwest. Hiking through the Blair Creek Valley you will see signs of early settlers, including the collapsed springhouse around Harper Spring, the Cedar Point and Poplar school sites, old lumber mill

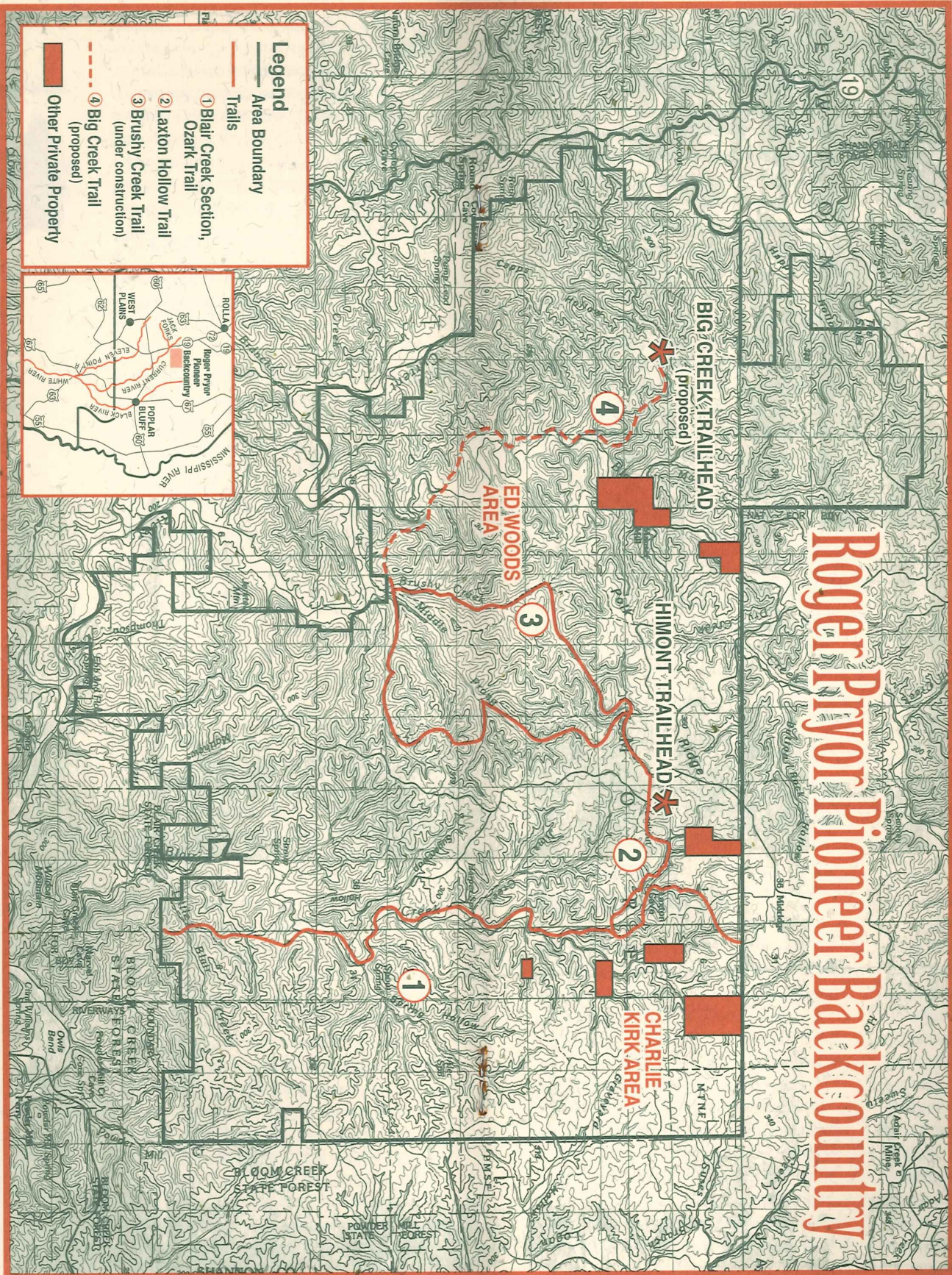
"I do not know of anything comparable to the charm of gliding down an Ozark stream, fast on the riffles, slow and quiet over the pools with their shimmering reflections of sky and cliff and overhanging foliage."

Thomas Hart Benton



Black Oak

Roger Pryor Pioneer Backcountry



Legend

- Area Boundary
- Trails
- ① Blair Creek Section, Ozark Trail
- ② Laxton Hollow Trail
- ③ Brushy Creek Trail (under construction)
- ④ Big Creek Trail (proposed)
- Other Private Property

sites, and the Blair Creek Cemetery near the mouth of Holmes Hollow. Volunteers from the Sierra Club constructed this section of the Ozark Trail in the 1970's, the first segment to be completed as part of the Ozark Trail concept, a several hundred-mile-long trail winding through the Ozarks of Missouri and eventually connecting with the Ozark Highlands Trail in Arkansas. This section of the Ozark Trail provides a recreational opportunity that can be enjoyed by individuals or families. It can be used for long-distance backpacking, half-hour strolls, day hikes, and weekend trips. You can reach the Ozark Trail by parking at the Himont Trailhead and walking the Laxton Hollow Trail into the Blair Creek valley.

- **Brushy Creek Trail.** This trail extends west and south from Himont, with an overnight camp located at the Current River. Just west of Himont is an old narrow-gauge logging tram which was abandoned by the 1940's. This old tram leads into Brushy Creek and passes the sites of the Brushy Post Office and the Brushy Mill, though you will have to look hard to see much sign of the activity which once occurred here. The top of the railbed serves as the tread for the beginning of this trail, while farther down the Brushy Creek valley the trail follows an abandoned roadbed, passing several springs on its way to the river. Hikers can camp overnight at the mouth of Brushy Creek near Bee Bluff.
- **Big Creek Trail.** Currently under consideration is a hiking and overnight backpacking trail into the Big Creek watershed. When completed, this link to the Current River will begin in Cedarhouse Hollow, a rugged and scenic tributary to Big Creek. The trail will pass along the west side of Big Creek, heading south. Along the lower end of Big Creek is an interesting bluff as large as any on the Current River.

a word about the management of these forests

This Pioneer Backcountry is not a wilderness area, but the woods here and their management may be unlike any you have seen in Missouri. First of all, the logging that is done here is a conservative method of harvesting trees. The actual cutting method used throughout Pioneer Forest is a technique known as single-tree selection management. This method of forest management, perhaps more than any other, most closely mimics



Blackjack Oak

the natural process which occurs when a single tree or small group of trees succumbs to incidences of natural mortality. Small-scale disturbances, such as lightning strikes, wind damage, or insect attack, are the most common type of disturbance affecting older, mature forests. Single-tree selection harvests have been the only forest management technique practiced on Pioneer Forest since its establishment in 1951.

The overall concept at work when managing a forest like this is a rather simple one, that is "to leave the best trees and cut the worst trees." Our periodic harvests remove the trees most affected by disease, deformities, damage, etc., while leaving the healthiest trees which express the greatest potential for growth and are best suited to a particular site.

As you explore this large area of Pioneer Forest, you will see signs of previous as well as ongoing forest management. Please keep in mind that for fifty years this has been a working forest demonstrating a sustainable tree harvesting method known as single-tree selection management. It is this forest management practice that has maintained the natural diversity of the forest, including the great variety of oaks and hickories characteristic of this region, as well as many other species and many sizes and ages of trees.

Because the forest canopy is never completely removed, a wide range of benefits -- such as continuous forest cover; snags for wildlife, den-trees and cavity-nesting birds; and recreational opportunities -- are always present on every acre.

We hope the time you spend here in this backcountry woodland is pleasurable.

planning your trip

The map reproduced in this brochure is from the Spring Valley 1:100,000-scale metric topographic map. If you are planning a trip to this area we recommend using the 1:24,000-scale series topographic maps. This entire area can be found on the Round Spring, The Sinks, Midridge, Powder Mill Ferry, and Eminence quadrangle maps which can be ordered from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geology and Land Survey, P.O. Box 250, Rolla, MO 65401; telephone 573.368.2100.

For maps and information on the Ozark Trail, write to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Ozark Trail Coordinator, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102.

"It has been my privilege to walk the Ozark woods for 40 consecutive years while plying my trade. I have often thought of Karle Wilson's phrase. 'Today I have grown taller from walking with the trees.'"

Charles Kirk

"We should let nature regenerate our oak forest for us. That's the best way."

Ed Woods



White Oak

I think you have to look at what you've got, and what you have is some of the prettiest earth that God put anywhere in the world. You've got some of the finest streams, the prettiest woods and hills and resources that people like to see."

Roger Pryor

Remember, as you enjoy this area there are several things you can do as safety measures for your trip, and to protect the area for those who follow:

- Make sure everyone in your group knows where you are going and how to get there. Be sure to carry appropriate maps.
- Camp at least 100 feet from any trail, water, and scenic areas.
- Leave your campsite so no one will know you were there.
- Use existing fire pits or a backpacking/campstove.
- Bury all human waste at least 100 feet from any trail and from water.
- Pack out everything you packed in, including cans, gum wrappers and cigarette butts.
- Stream crossings are sometimes difficult or impossible to negotiate; use caution when crossing streams.
- Treat all water which is used for drinking or cooking.
- Enjoy plants and animals in their natural setting. Do not dig or pick wildflowers, shrubs, trees, or roots.
- Vehicles are to remain on developed roads at all times.
- Work areas where active logging is under way will be clearly posted and should be avoided during your visit.
- Respect the rights of private landowners.

Boundaries of Pioneer Forest are clearly marked with orange paint blazes, and private land not part of Pioneer Forest is indicated on the map.

other nearby areas

Virgin Pine. Immediately south of Round Spring on Highway 19 is Missouri's impressive virgin pine forest. These are large trees -- the average date of germination for these trees occurred sometime around the year 1791. This is one of the oldest "pineries," or natural old-growth pine forests in Missouri. There is a short hiking trail through the area. The virgin pine forest is owned by the L-A-D Foundation.

Interpretive Drive. This forest drive extends for two miles through Pioneer Forest, with numbered stops which explain how our method of forest management works. You can reach this area immediately south of Round Spring and mid-way through the virgin pine by turning east and driving a short distance to a small parking area where you will find a printed guide.



Post Oak

Pioneer Forest, established in 1951, demonstrates sustainable forest management. Combined benefits include showing private landowners the increased economic return which is possible from a well-managed Ozark forest -- restoring the forested landscape, protecting significant species diversity and natural communities, and providing ongoing recreational opportunities.

Recreation on Pioneer Forest includes hunting and fishing by persons who are licensed by the Missouri Department of Conservation. Existing county roads are used for drives through the forest. There are short- and long-distance trails, an interpretive drive, and throughout the forest there are abundant opportunities for camping, nature study, photography and picnicking.

Natural conditions of the property include water, cliffs, down trees, caves, etc. We ask that you use common sense as you enjoy your visits to these areas.



Pioneer
FOREST

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