



Barrett Hat
(944m)

Legend

Roads and trails

- Old dirt road
- Trail
- Highway 16
- Local road
- Resource road
- Private road

Streams

- definite
- intermittent
- indefinite

Elevation (metres above sea level)

- 600
- 750
- 800
- 850
- 900

Other features:

- Private land
- Barrett Hat Recreation Site boundary
- Wetlands

No motorized vehicles past this point

Barrett Hat Recreation Site boundary

Trails: Old trail to the lookout, Hawthorne Springs trail, Ridge Trail, Ridge Shortcut, Lost Dog - Burnt Turkey, The Aspens, Bunchberry trail, Vallee Face trail, Vallee Wetlands, Loop.

Landmarks: picnic shelter, panorama, viewpoint, Summer, Winter, boardwalk, canoe landing, viewing blind, canoe launch.

Water Features: Vallee Creek, Vallee Lake, Dunalter (Irrigation) Lake.

Roads: Vallee Creek Road, Parish Road, Barrett Hat Road, Highway 16.

Distances: Telkwa 34 km, Houston 14 km.

Barrett Hat Recreation Site

by Morgan Hite (morgan@hesperus-wild.org; additional trail maps at bvtrailmaps.ca)

I wrote about Barrett Hat in this space in 2012, but much has changed out there, and it's time to visit again. Where we used to have only an old dirt road that led out to the site of the original forestry lookout, now new trails have been added, and the area has been designated as a BC Recreation Site.

The lookout on Barrett Hat (long gone now except for its foundation) was one of a network of forestry lookouts across the region, where a person—I always imagine a keen-eyed loner—whiled away hours looking for signs of smoke in the summer season.

While in the end there was a jeep road to the summit of the Hat, the original lookouts reached it by hiking up a trail, having returned from Houston or Telkwa laden with supplies. That original trail, on the final section to the summit, has now been restored. And the sweeping view from up there—it sticks up right in the middle of the Bulkley Valley—is fantastic. One can take in everything from Moose Mountain and the Babines (to the north), Hudson Bay Mountain, the Telkwa Range, and Morice Mtn. and Nadina to the south.

The sponsoring organization that has done so much for this new rec site is the Morice Outdoor Recreation Society, and the guy who does most of the work (and should get most of the credit) is Frank McDonald.

One trail is called “Lost Dog—Burnt Turkey.” It's exactly what you think,” says Frank. “A family went out for a walk on Thanksgiving Day. The turkey was in the oven. The dog was deaf.” The dog got lost and by the time they got home the turkey was burnt. Mountain bike trails usually take the prize in British Columbia for the most creative naming, but I think this could be the best hiking trail name ever.

The walk up to Barrett Hat is about 45 minutes if you go straight in on the road and don't explore the side trails. It's child friendly, being mostly level with a serious (75 metre) hill to climb only at the end. But both Lost Dog—Burnt Turkey and the Ridge Trail loop out through lovely forest, and the Hawthorne Springs Trail has excellent views to the south.

To get to the trailhead, drive west on Highway 16 from Houston, or east from Telkwa. Atop Hungry Hill watch for Barrett Hat road. Currently, parking is a short distance from the highway, where Barrett Hat Road meets Parish Road/Vallee Creek Road, but Frank plans a larger summer parking lot slightly west.

The new rec site also includes new trails around Vallee Lake and the adjacent wetlands. In winter these make for excellent snowshoeing, and in summer there are boardwalks to ferry you across the wetter bits. At present these are reached by parking along Barrett Hat road, and in the future a new access point will be put in that does not involve nipping across private land to get to the lake.

A picnic shelter is planned for the summit of Barrett Hat in the future, and a wildlife viewing platform on Vallee Lake.