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Giant Ledge #2

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SUNDAY, AUGUST 10, 1969
SHEPHE SATTERTHWAITTE AND WM. CULLEN CARNEY

2750'

I. Several small fir (ca. 4" x 20') were found just SW of the intersection of the Giant Ledge-Woodland Valley trail junction, on the Winnisook trail's west (northwest) side. They are widely scattered in a hardwood forest.

II. The ^{flat} summit of Giant Ledge is predominantly yellow birch, black cherry, and red maple, with some mountain ash, fir, mountain hickory, maple, and beech. Sugar maple seems absent. Openings in the canopy are large, and horizontal fern glades abundant with some woodfern in the more shaded spots. Cornus, Carex, Clintonia & Oxalis, though not abundant, do reflect the presence of spruce and fir at the east edge of the ledge. If it weren't for spruce, the Giant Ledge summit looks like one of the western Catskill summits, i.e., Big Indian - Eagle - Hayes - Balsam.

The spruce lining the very crest of the 200' ledge are common, but not abundant and of all sizes from saplings to trees 10" x 40'. One leaning dead one 12" DBH stands ^{at the north end} just, and can be seen from the south end overhairs and even from the base of the ledge looking up.

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III. The Base of Giant Ledge contains some virgin spruce and hemlock. The area was probably never logged because of its distance from Woodland Valley, its elevation, and the presence of huge talus boulders from the Giant Ledge above. The disturbance in the area is most likely natural, from rock slides off the ledge, and old huge trees falling creating canopy openings filled up by yellow birch. The large spruce are in a grove about 250' down from the crest of the ledge, on a terrace, about $\frac{2}{3}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way toward the north end of the ledge from the south end. Sizes run, for the large ones, from 12 to 24" DBH, with heights of close to 100 ft (at least 75'). One monstrous stump and downed trunk approaches 36" DBH and is perhaps the largest spruce (dead or alive) seen in the Catskills.

Spruce of all seedling & sapling sizes are reproducing under the virgin trees. Fir are also present as saplings & young trees, but not as abundantly as spruce. Yellow birch is ever present, especially above in the more open rocky ^{talus} areas. Occasional young hemlock are also among the spruce.

Perhaps equally as good as the virgin spruce is the carpet of bryophytes on the large talus boulders:

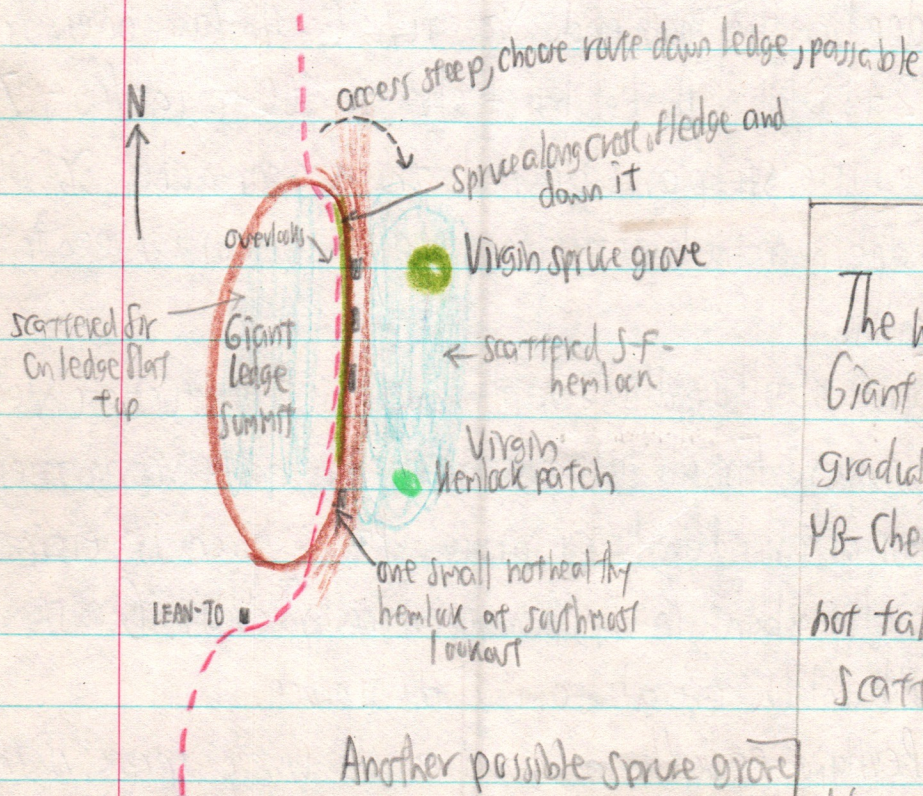
Brotherella, *Hypnum impanens*, *Dicranum fulvum*, *Polypodium*

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chinese, *Ptilidium pulcherrimum*. Areas of *Ptilium crista-castriensis* and *Xylococcum splendens* are noteworthy, contrasting as yellow-green in the blue-green *Polypodium*-dark-green *Dicranum* carpet. The largest observed stand of *Xylococcum* seen in the Catskills is here, covering several adjacent boulder tops and dozens of square feet.

Southward, about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way from the south end of the ledge to the north, is a clump of large virgin hemlock, nearly as big as the spruce, and just as tall.



The west slope of Giant Ledge is quite gradual, and is mostly YB-Cherry-Red Maple, not tall, with occ. fir scattered

Another possible spruce grove is on Fork Ridge, about 1 mile east, } Hemlock -
in a slight depression on the crest.