

Winter in Missouri creates a harsh landscape. Trees shoot out from blinding white snow. Their naked tops fracture the blue sky, and the ebony trunks slash against the virgin landscape. My presence scattered birds roosting in the trees. They transformed into drops of India ink that flittered from branch to branch. This infinite white, black, and blue is winter at its most extreme. I've always felt that when one walks in the forest at the height of winter, it's a way to lose oneself, a way to detach completely from the modern world. I found it to be a great joy. So, I waded through knee-deep snow, breaking its crust as I approached the summit, far enough away that few people visit, and none would even think of in this weather. Then, something extraordinary occurred.