

Wildlife Watching Tips:

- **Blend in.** Wear drab clothing, move slowly, and keep your voice low.
- **Stop occasionally** to survey your surroundings, looking for movement and parts of animals.
- **Use binoculars** to view areas systematically.
- **Use a field guide** to provide information about the animal you are watching.
- **Familiarize yourself** with the wildlife in your area. The more you know about different species and their habits, the more success you will have in locating wildlife. This is a lifelong learning adventure.
- **Keep a respectful distance to stay safe.** avoid harassing wildlife, and allow you the greatest opportunity to view the animal acting naturally.
- **Do not harass or encourage wildlife to move.** Rest periods are important for survival.
- **Respect other viewers** by refraining from scaring animals, keeping your voice low, and limiting your viewing time.
- **Respect private property.** Wildlife is owned by all but land belongs to the owner.
- **Never approach an animal,** especially one that appears sick or is acting abnormally.
- **Leave pets at home** for successful viewing or **keep pets on a leash** for ethical viewing.

Some facts before you get started:

- Wildlife are focused on meeting their basic welfare needs of food, water, and shelter. Understanding how and when a particular species meets these needs will help you locate wildlife.
- Most wildlife species are crepuscular, being most active at dawn and dusk. These are the best times.
- Wildlife exhibit seasonal adaptations. Knowledge of these changes will also help you locate wildlife.

 **Daypacks with binoculars and field guides are available at the Trinidad Lake Visitor Center.**

Written and illustrated by Paul Sabourin. Special Thanks to: Mammals of North America (2002), Consie Powell, Ron Klinger, Elizabeth McClelland and Brad Sillasen for base images to create the illustrations in this brochure.



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Long's Canyon Watchable Wildlife Area was created by Colorado Parks & Wildlife in order to provide a remarkable opportunity for enjoying Colorado's amazing wildlife and varied habitats. Help us care for the area by treading lightly.



Introduction

This is the beginning of your wildlife watching adventure.

This 1.25 mile hike takes you along the intersection of three dynamic

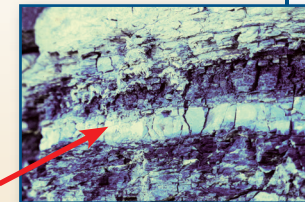
habitat types: the pinyon-juniper woodland, a stream-riparian area, and a wetland. While being introduced to several local animal species, you will learn some skills to improve your lifelong wildlife watching adventure. Review the wildlife watching tips on the back of this guide and be alert for wildlife along the trail.

KT Boundary in Long's Canyon

Sixty-five million years ago, the Earth was filled with ferns, various trees, aquatic life, and DINOSAURS! An asteroid about 6 miles wide collided with the Earth creating an impact that quickly killed more than 75% of life on Earth including Dinosaurs. This event is geologically indicated by a distinct line called the **KT Boundary**,

which marks the end of the Cretaceous period and the start of the Tertiary period.

One of the best exposures in the world of the **KT Boundary** is right here in Long's Canyon. Just below younger sandstone and coal layers, you can see a thin layer of rock containing shocked quartz and iridium ... both show evidence of this famous asteroid impact.



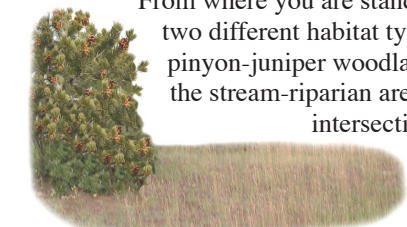
To view the KT Boundary: Park at the second parking lot (trailhead) and take the Long's Canyon Trail for a quarter mile. The KT Boundary interpretive station will be on your left.



Station #1

The "Edge Effect" and Wildlife

From where you are standing you can see two different habitat types converge—the pinyon-juniper woodland on your left and the stream-riparian area on your right. The intersection of two habitat types is often referred to as the "edge effect." Edge areas are usually abundant with diverse wildlife because many species make daily or seasonal use of both habitats to survive. This makes edge areas an excellent place for wildlife watching, as animals frequently cross from one habitat type to the other.



Station #2

Coyote's Haven

Open fields in stream-riparian areas—like the area before you—are a haven for the coyote. They are skilled hunters of mice and voles and have been known to hunt in groups for large mammals like deer. The sight of a coyote hunting for rodents can be an entertaining display marked by a stalking and tilting of the head to listen, followed by a sudden leap into the air and a pounce on their prey. Their characteristic behavior of joining in a chorus of wild and high pitched howls at sunrise and sunset allows a unique opportunity to get a sense for how many are actually in the area.



Station #3

Raptors Above

Throughout your hike, you may spot large birds soaring above or roosting in the trees. Raptors (birds of prey) are carnivores—specially adapted to hunt and eat meat. They have strong feet with sharp talons for grabbing prey, a curved beak for tearing meat, and wide wings for riding the air currents during the hunt. Some nocturnal raptors, such as owls, use their light-sensitive eyesight and keen hearing to hunt at night. The red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, and great horned owl are just a few of the raptors that are common here. If you spot one, identify it using the *Guide to Birds* in your daypack.



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Station # 4



Cackling Wings

Along the trail you may flush the mourning dove—a pale brown bird that cackles as it flies away. They have developed this flushing behavior to avoid predators, because they spend most of the day foraging along the ground for seeds. You can often find doves along gravel trails like this one foraging for gravel to aid in the digestion of seeds. In the morning and evening, the mournful song for which

they have been named can be heard (ooAAH coo coo coo). As doves are migrational, you are most likely to see them during the summer and fall.



Station # 5



The Local Habitat Architect

If you look into the distance, you can see signs of the beaver, a semi-aquatic, year-round resident of the wetland that plays an important role in this ecosystem. Through the building of dams, beavers maintain and create open pools. Other species, such as ducks and fish, depend upon this habitat alteration to survive.

Beavers eat the bark, buds, leaves, and twigs of trees. They can harvest a 5-inch diameter tree in about 30 minutes, which becomes both food and building material for dams and lodges. Scan the wetland as you finish your hike and you can spot dams, lodges, and possibly even a beaver.

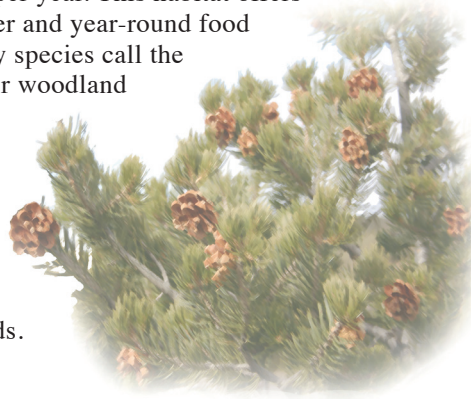


Station #6



Pinyon-juniper Woodland

The pinyon-juniper woodland is one of Colorado's most dynamic habitat types, second only to the grassland in terms of wildlife abundance and diversity. Short, drought-tolerant trees such as the pinyon pine and one-seed juniper mark this ecosystem. Other defining characteristics include coarse, well-drained soils and only 10-20 inches of precipitation per year. This habitat offers abundant cover and year-round food sources. Many species call the pinyon-juniper woodland home such as elk, deer, mountain lions, rock squirrels, pinyon mice, and collared lizards.

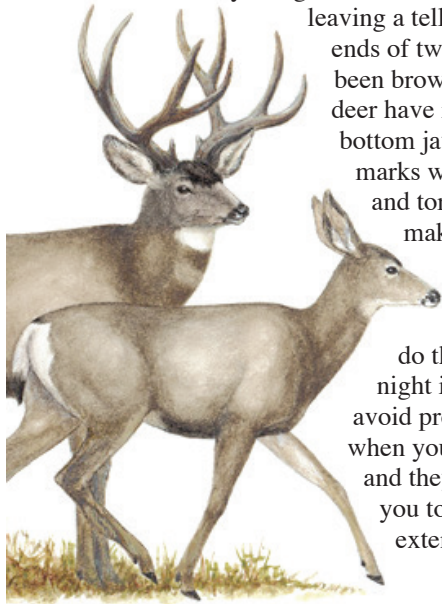


Station # 7



Ghosts of the Forests

This is an excellent place to glass the open fields and hillsides for the mule deer. Mule Deer are browsers, which means they forage for tree and shrub foliage, leaving a telltale sign on the ends of twigs that have been browsed. Because deer have incisors on the bottom jaw only, browse marks will appear jagged and torn. Although deer make daily use of the water source in the riparian area, they often do this during the night in an effort to avoid predators. Freeze when you see a deer and they might allow you to observe for an extended time.



Station #8



Fur on the Run



As you walk through this open area you may see small mammals darting away. These are the desert cottontail, a rabbit that inhabits open areas in the pinyon-juniper woodland. Cottontails find cover in burrows, crevices in rocks, and shrubs such as the rabbit brush that dominate this area. They are mostly nocturnal (active at night) and crepuscular (active during dawn and dusk), feeding on small branches, twigs and grasses. Because cottontails are not territorial, they can often be observed in great numbers in suitable habitat. Move slowly and you might see one freeze in your presence allowing you to get a good look.

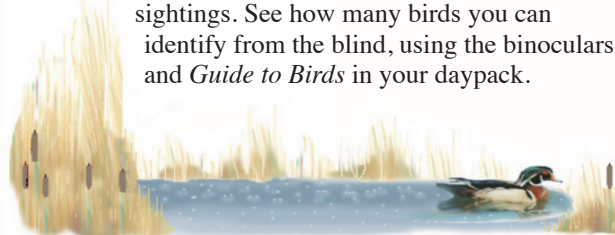


Station # 9



Wings of the Wet

The wetland is the richest ecosystem for bird watching, offering the opportunity to view ducks, geese, grebes, song birds, and a variety of shore birds. Many species of wetland birds are migratory, traveling thousands of miles between summer breeding grounds and wintering grounds. Ducks are divided into two groups. *Dabbling* ducks, mallards and wood ducks, feed in wetland shallows, often flying to agricultural land during the day. *Diving* ducks, such as ring-necked ducks and buffleheads, dive for fish and crustaceans and are usually seen cruising open portions of ponds. Behavioral traits like these can help you identify your sightings. See how many birds you can identify from the blind, using the binoculars and *Guide to Birds* in your daypack.

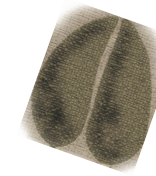


Station #10

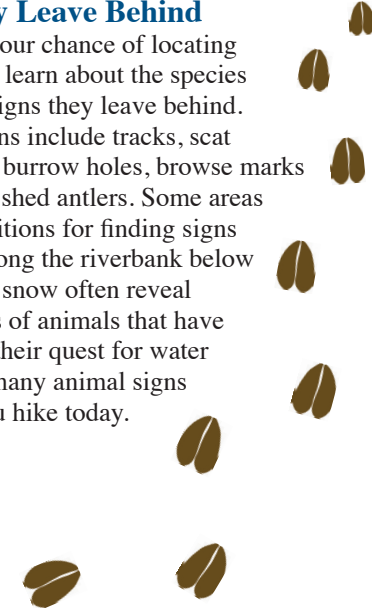


The Signs They Leave Behind

You can increase your chance of locating wildlife, as well as learn about the species present, from the signs they leave behind. Some common signs include tracks, scat (droppings), nests, burrow holes, browse marks on vegetation, and shed antlers. Some areas offer optimal conditions for finding signs such as the mud along the riverbank below you. Soft mud and snow often reveal well-defined tracks of animals that have passed through in their quest for water or food. See how many animal signs you can find as you hike today.



Mule deer track

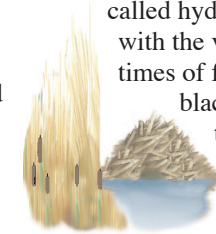


Station #11



Riparian Habitats

Wetlands offer an abundance of resources for wildlife. Marked by the interspersed of open pools and shallows dominated by water-loving plants called hydrophytes, wetlands provide many species with the vegetative cover to avoid predation during times of feeding, rest, and breeding. The red-winged blackbird suspends its nest in the reeds above the water. In spring and summer, you may see them flying in and out of the reeds as they build and inhabit their nests.



The Adventure Doesn't End Here

Colorado has eight unique ecosystems formed by differences in elevation, latitude, vegetation, soil type, and availability of water. From grassland to alpine tundra, each offers the opportunity to view unique species and behaviors. Use the skills you have learned today to continue exploring Colorado. Hiking in different areas in different seasons will provide a never-ending journey of splendor and entertainment.

Your lifelong adventure has just started!