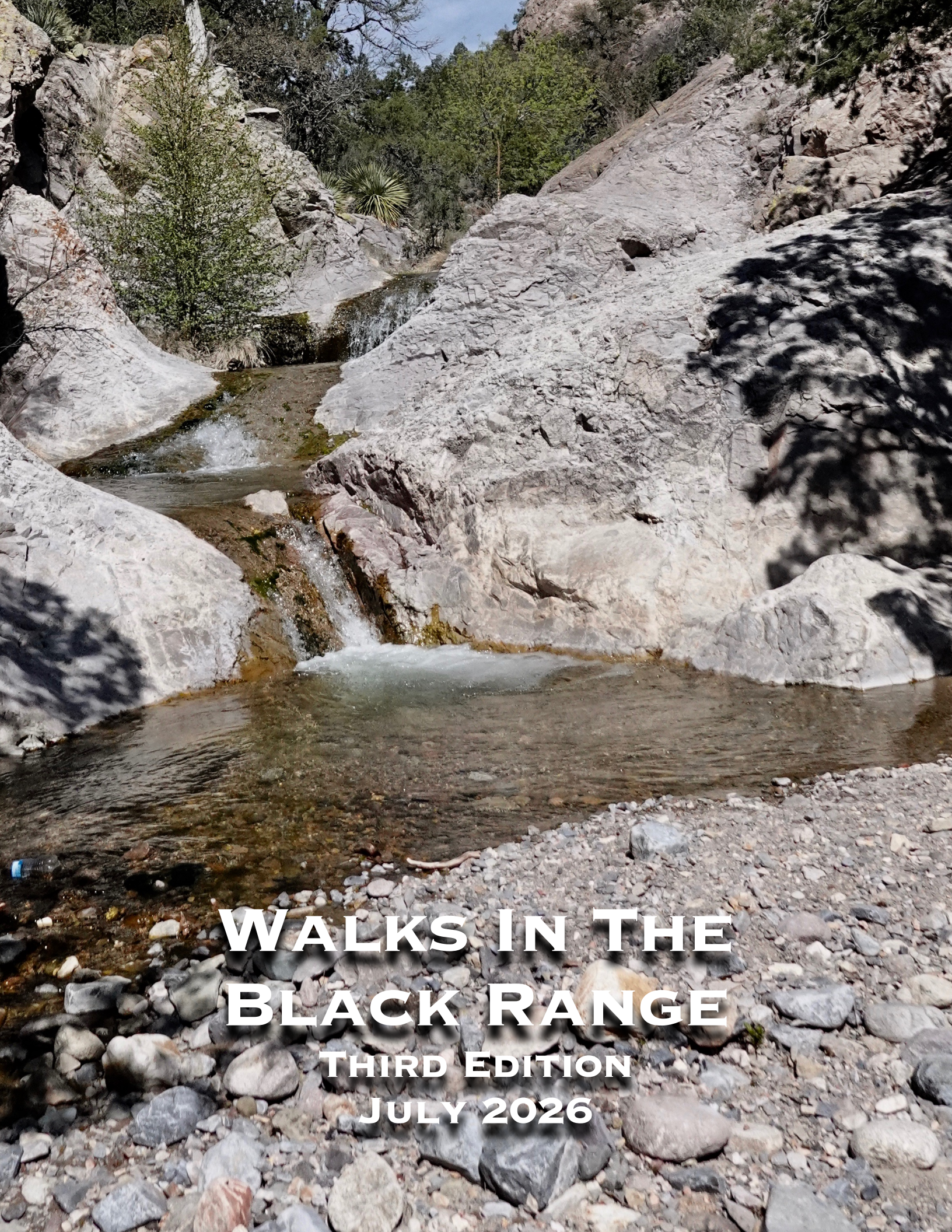


Walks In The Black Range

Third Edition

July 2026

Walks
In The Black Range
Third Edition

The third edition of *Walks In The Black Range* is an updated and reformatted version of the first two editions of the work. Five years ago the 2nd Edition was issued in four volumes (dates varied by volume).

Descriptions of individual walks vary in age. Rain, fire, and/or wind can change many aspects of a walk, literally overnight. In the formatting of this edition we have tried to address this constraint in two ways. First of all, we provide dates for much of the material in individual trail entries and second, we have formatting the walk entries in such a way that updates can be inserted in future versions without requiring extensive reformatting of the rest of the document, thus encouraging the issuance of more frequent revisions.

In the southwest of the United States a walk is a way of getting from one point to another, it is not necessarily a path, a road, a trail, a track… it is a way. It may be a formal trail, it may be a ridgeline, it may be a wash, it may be an old road, it may be a line of sight. Some version of all of these are found in this work.

This is a project of the Black Range Website, www.blackrange.org. The website, its journal (*The Black Range Naturalist*), blog (Natural History Blog), and various other publications (like this work) are intended to be community efforts. Please contact Bob Barnes, rabarnes@blackrange.org if you would like to provide a walk write-up or update. This work is provided to any and all under a Creative Commons license (Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International [CC BY_NC_NC_SA 4.0]). Contributors and users must agree to the terms of that license.

Although this work is provided in ready to print format, meaning any print shop can print a copy for you, it is intended to be electronic media. It is not available from us in hard copy, you can not buy it. It is free. If you have a copy, please forward the link used to access it to anyone who might like to have it.

The Black Range website does not accept advertisements nor does it accept monetary donations. It is "not-for-revenue". It is about sharing knowledge. This publication is available as a .pdf on the Black Range Website (in several levels of compression including higher resolutions than you may be currently reading).

All descriptions of trails are accurate as of the time they are written. This area is mountainous and changes to the trails can happen quickly. Therefore, when you walk one of these trails it may not be like the one described here.

As noted above, the Black Range is a rugged place, it is a place where you can get hurt and it can be a long time (most trail distances are not long in the Black Range - but it can take a while to get from "A" to "B") before you get help, so be careful. The Black Range has its share of potentially dangerous critters, including Cougar and American Black Bear. Other than an occasional snake bite, hostile encounters are rare but be warned, but most of all be happy.

References are made to geologic formations in some of the trail descriptions for routes east of Hillsboro. See T*he Black Range Naturalist*, Volume 8, Number 4 for a full description of the geology of this area.

Recognition should be given to the Southern New Mexico Explorer blog of Devon Fletcher, which is not affiliated with the Black Range Website or its projects. His blog is the best source of information on the trails of Southern New Mexico. He has kindly provided several trail descriptions for use in this volume.

Unattributed work is by Bob Barnes.

Special note should be made of the Follow The Contours page on The Black Range website. Links to this work, trail videos, auto road videos, and a variety of other reference sources can be found on that page, arrayed by geographic location.

Walks in the Eastern Foothills North of NM-152

1. **Black Peak**
   This walk starts at NM-152 and proceeds north, up North Wicks Canyon, to Black Peak. Several variations of the basic walk to the peak are possible and described in this entry.

2. **East Slope of North Wicks**
   This walk starts at NM-152, follows an old road and then turns east and north to follow a dike over a hill and then along the east slope of North Wicks Canyon.

3. **West Slope of Wicks Canyon and Wick's Mine Walk**
   A walk from NM-152 to the Wicks Mine and along the west slope of North Wicks Canyon

4. **Ready Pay to Wicks**
   This trail starts at NM-152 crosses a ridge and terminates at NM-152 farther east.

5. **Ready Pay Mine Walk**
   This short walk (2.5 miles RT) begins at NM-152 and ends at the Ready Pay Mine shaft. This entry includes descriptions of both the Ready Pay and Sherman mine groups.

6. **McKinley Mine**
   The McKinley Mine is located between Ready Pay Mine gulch and the Stowaway Mine. Access is along an old mining road. This description includes a walk across the saddle to the east into Ready Pay Gulch.

7. **Stowaway Mine Walk**
   At just over a mile and a half (round trip) this walk is a nice outing during the winter or shoulder months - or early/late during the summer. Start as if going to the Opportunity Mine but walk north at the first major gulch before the Opportunity.

8. **Opportunity Mine Walk**
   This walk to the Opportunity Mine starts at NM-152 east of Hillsboro and follows an old mining road to the Opportunity Mine. It then continues to the saddle which separates the Opportunity and Rattlesnake

8. (con't) Mines. This description includes a substantial amount of information about the Rattlesnake and Opportunity Mines which were often under the same ownership and operation.

9. **South of the Opportunity Mine**
A walk up the hill south of the Opportunity Mine.

10. **Warm Springs Wash (South)**
A short walk from the top of the hill east of Hillsboro down the wash to the north of NM-152.

11. **Rattlesnake Mine Walk No. 1**
This walk begins at Warm Springs Wash where it crosses under NM-152. (From the east the Rattlesnake mine can be reached by an extension of the walk to the Opportunity Mine.)

12. **Rattlesnake Mine Walk No. 2**
This walk to the Rattlesnake Mine begins at the Hillsboro Transfer Station.

13. **Bonanza Mine Walk**
A round-trip distance of 3.7 miles from the Hillsboro Transfer Station to the mine entrance.

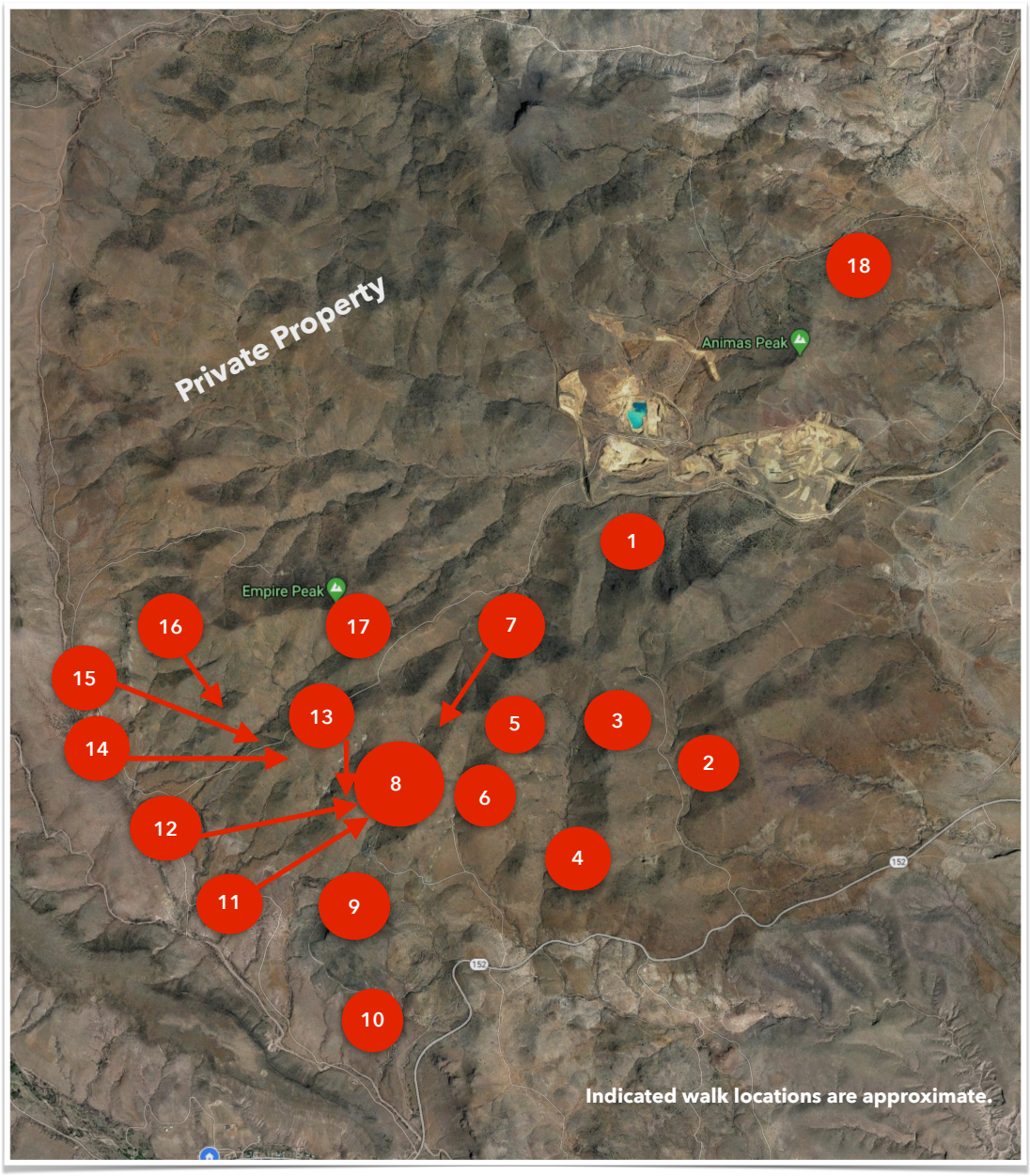
14. **Bigelow Mine Walk**
This trail starts at the Hillsboro Transfer station, NE of Hillsboro, and follows an old mining/ranch road to the site of the Bigelow Mine. The walk has two major variations, one of which is 2.1 miles (from the Transfer Station to the Mine) and the other is 2.3 miles.

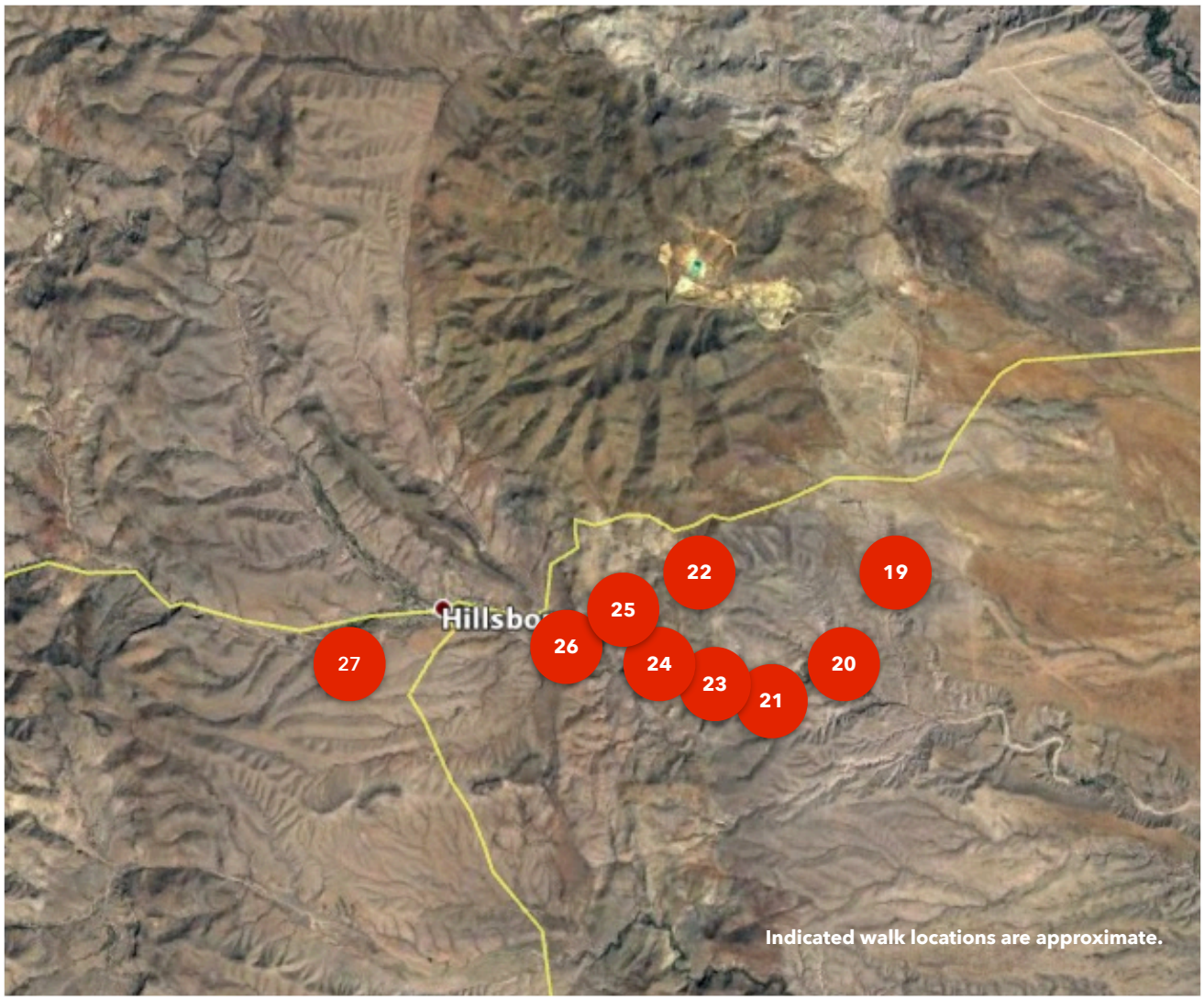
15. **Jackpot Mine**
Across the canyon from the Bigelow Mine, this site is accessed by an old mining road.

16. **Garfield-Butler Mine**
A walk of 2.9 miles from the Hillsboro Transfer Station to the mine entrance.

17. **Empire Peak**
From Bigelow Mine to the saddle and Empire Peak above.

18. **El Oro Mine and Andrews**
There are multiple walk opportunities available at the old townsite of Andrews, northeast of Hillsboro.





Walks in the Eastern Foothills South of NM-152

19. South Wick's Canyon
This trail starts just south of NM-152, east of Hillsboro, and proceeds down Wicks Canyon to Percha Creek. Round trip is about 5.5 miles.

20. Percha to Wick's
This walk starts in Ready Pay Gulch and follows the most northerly of the major washes on the south side of NM-152 to the Percha Box and then downstream to the Wick's Canyon confluence.

21. Ready Pay Gulch - Percha Box Loop
A 5.4 mile loop which starts near NM-152, heads southeast to Percha Box, upstream from that point, returning to NM-152 via an old mining road.

21A. Percha Creek Side Canyons -
Describing walks with video.

22. National Defense Mine/Walk
This is a short walk just south of NM-152. It takes in the diggings of the National Defense Mine sites.

23. Hall Mine Walk
This is a 1.67 mile walk from NM-152 to the Hall Mine site on the south side of Percha Creek.

24. Pipeline Bridge Walk
From Ready Pay Gulch to Percha Box. The site of an old pipeline bridge across the Percha Box.

25. Vulture Road (Percha Box Overlook)
This walk is along an old mining/ ranching road. It starts at a gate on NM-152 (MP 50.4) and goes south to an overlook of the Percha Box.

26. South of the Percha Box
This walk starts at the culverts under NM-152 east of Hillsboro, follows Warm Springs Wash to Percha Creek, turns east down the creek to the start of the box and then climbs the hills to the south of the box. Geology of the area is discussed.

27. Mesa Walk South of Hillsboro
This is a cross-country amble of 6.1 miles on the mesa south of Hillsboro.

28. Apache Hill
A short walk up a hill north of the Lake Valley townsite. Fossils can be found in the strata here and the vistas are excellent. A nice walk in the winter, there is no shade and it is good rattlesnake country so avoiding this walk in the summer is advisable.

29. Monument Peak, Lizard Rock
A short walk up a peak to the east of the Lake Valley Townsite. This is a local landmark and easily identified from many points along NM-27. As with Apache Hill, this is a nice walk in the winter, avoid in the summer. Access is from the south.

Walks in the Black Range North of NM-152

30. Continental Divide Trail at Kline Mountain
This walk is 6.8 miles (RT) and is an out and back walk along the Continental Divide Trail south of NM-59, west of Poverty Flat.

31. Taylor Creek/Whitewater Canyon
The Turkey Creek and White-water Canyon walks start near Wall Lake and lead into an area which has been favored by plant collectors for decades.

32. Turkey Run/Diamond Creek - Forest Trails 42 & 40
An interesting assortment of hiking options are accessed from the area of this trailhead.

33. Upper Black Canyon - Forest Trail 72
Access from North Star Road, into the Wilderness, relatively flat along the stream, steeper as you climb into the Range.

34. Circle Seven Creek Trail - Forest Trail 106
At roughly 18 miles south of Winston (traveling on FR 157), the junction with FR 730 is reached. Travel west until you decide to walk.

35. North Palomas
Also reached via FR-157 south from Winston this walk offers an interesting box and rock formations. It can be hot and dry.

36. South Palomas
Starting near the old mining town of Hermosa there are many walks which can be accessed in this area.

37. North Seco Box
Access is from Chloride, travel south to Davis Well and then west up Seco Creek.

38. McKnight Cabin to McKnight Mountain Summit
Access from NM-35 via McKnight Cabin Road. Described trail is 2 miles round-trip, along the crest of the Black Range. Access Mimbres Lake from the McKnight Cabin trailhead.

39. Hillsboro Peak Bypass
This trail is about 1.3 miles long, connecting sections of Trail 79 on either side of Hillsboro Peak. This description continues the walk on Trail 79 to Holden Prong Saddle (for a total distance of about four miles). It is basically level but there has been a substantial amount of blowdown along this trail in the past.

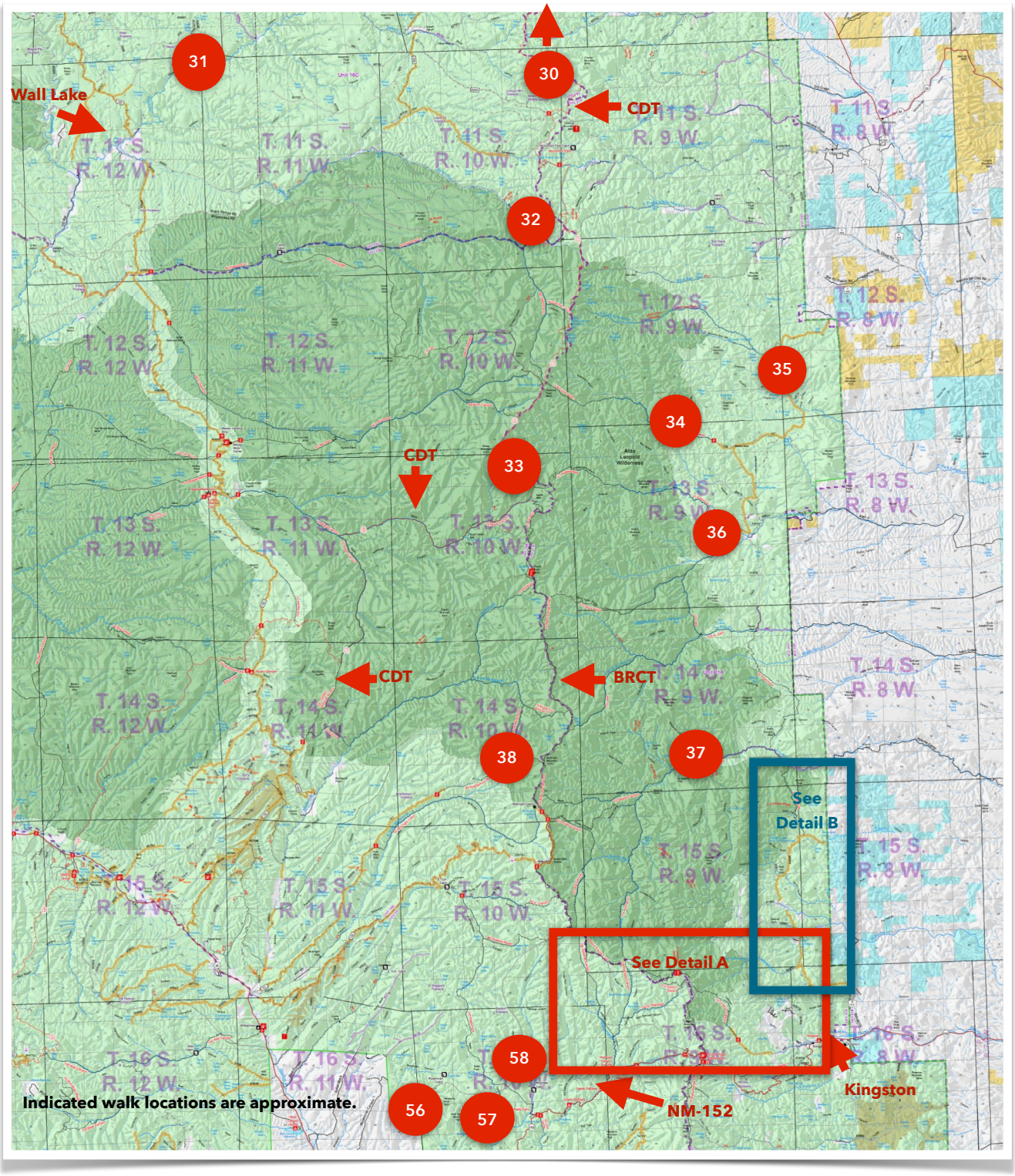
40. Hillsboro Lake
Hillsboro Lake is about 3.65 miles from the Emory Pass Overlook. From the Overlook walk north on the Black Range Crest Trail for 3.6 miles, to the saddle just south of Hillsboro Peak. Turn east and go down a steep slope for about 100 yards.

41. Hillsboro Peak
This trail starts at the overlook at Emory Pass and proceeds north as trail 79 to Hillsboro Peak.

42. East Railroad Canyon
This walk starts at NM-152 continues up Railroad Canyon to the junction of the Railroad Canyon Trail and East Railroad Canyon, a distance of about 2.2 miles. Continuing up East Railroad Canyon it reaches the Hillsboro Peak Bypass at about 5 miles from the highway.

43. Railroad Canyon Campground to Holden Prong Saddle
Begins at the Railroad Canyon Campground and follows the Gallinas Canyon Trail (Trail 129) upstream to the beginning of Railroad Canyon Trail (Trail 128). Follow Trail 128 to Holden Prong Saddle. A round-trip of just over nine miles.

43A. Gallinas Canyon Trail from the Railroad Canyon Camp-ground to Gallinas Canyon
At the first trail junction after leaving the Campground (about 1 mile) turn uphill (left or west) and continue up Gallinas Canyon.



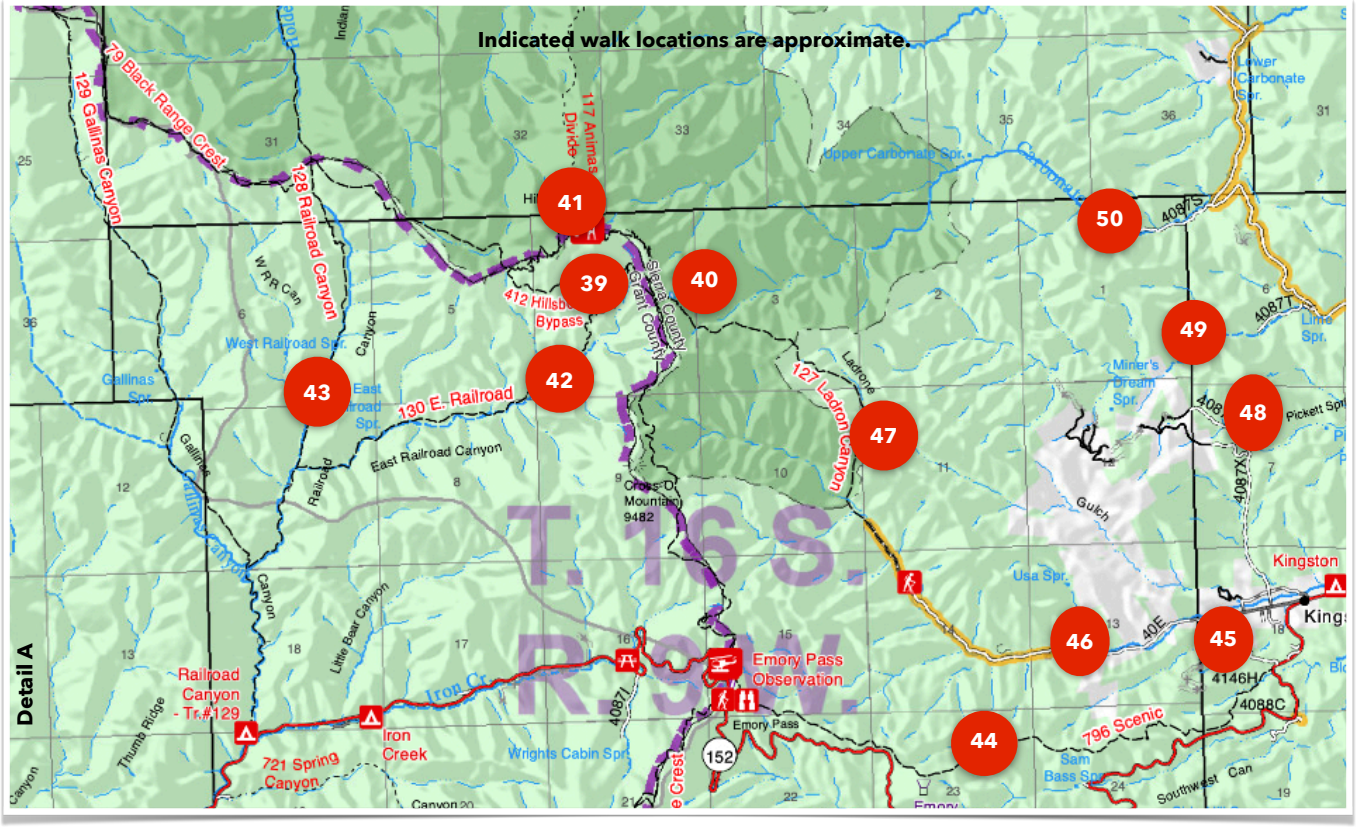
44. Forest Trail 796 - Kingston Cemetery to Emory Pass
This trail may be walked as a one-way, with a car shuttle, or roundtrip. One end is near the cemetery at Kingston, just north of NM-152. The other end is at the vista overlook at Emory Pass.

45. Dry Creek (Kingston)
Access from the western edge of Kingston.

46. Middle Percha Loop
This is a loop walk up the Middle Percha west of Kingston. A nice "soft" trail for a walk through the woods (soft, because the ground is soft).

47. Ladrone Trail
A walk up the Middle Percha to a steep trail which does not really exist anymore. A nice work-out.

48. Picket Spring and Kingston to Goat Ranch
Newly improved, the Goat Ranch trail is of some historical interest. 2.6 miles RT. The Picket Spring "trail" is a walk down an over-grown wash to two springs. Both share the same trailhead and the initial part of the route is the same for both.



49. Sawpit Canyon and Goat Ranch Spring
Walk up a stream canyon at the old Goat Ranch on Forest Road 157.

50. Carbonate Creek
Walk from North Percha Road west up the stream to an old cabin.

51. Mineral Creek Walk, Spring, and Waterfall
This trail description starts at Forest Service Road 157 and continues for 1.8 miles to the west up Mineral Creek.

52. North Percha
A classic walk up the North Percha. Trail issues at times but beautiful scenery, glyphs, and high cliffs.

53. Bald Hill Spring
North of North Percha Creek. A mix of old mining road and uphill scramble.

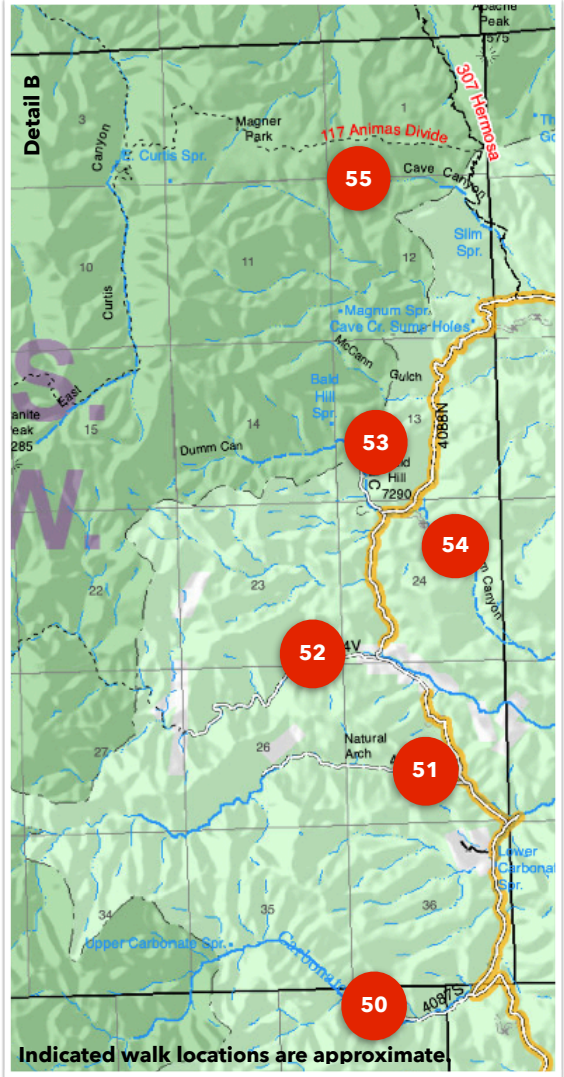
54. Dumm Canyon
East of Bald Hill - Some creek bottom walking through beautiful country.

55. Cave Creek to East Curtis Canyon or Las Animas Creek (FT 307 & 117)
A seldom walked trail with (perhaps) a bit of bushwhacking into country of high waterfalls and slot canyons.

56. Noonday Canyon
Access from NM-152, west of Lower Gallinas Campground.

57. Rabb Canyon Box
Access from NM-152, west of Lower Gallinas Campground.

58. Rabb Park
This trail starts at the same trailhead as the previous walk but heads more directly north into Rabb Park, an open area with access to several small streams.



Walks in the Black Range South of NM-152

59. Lower Gallinas Canyon
This walk starts at NM-152 and heads south down a canyon with a nice spring to Gallinas Creek. From there it heads downstream. The parking area for this walk is the same which may be used for the Rabb Park hikes and Noonday Canyon hike.

60. Bull Trap Canyon, Lower Silver Creek Falls
This walk starts at the old Lower Gallinas Campground, heads downstream and then east and south across a ridge and into Bull Trap Canyon. Sections may be difficult.

61. Sawyers Peak Trail
This is one of the standards of the Black Range. It starts at Emory Pass and follows the Black Range Crest Trail south to Sawyers Peak. This trail changes with the most recent fire, flood, and/or snow storm but remains basically the same.

62. South Percha - Drummond Canyon
This walk starts at a pullout on the south side of NM-152 and follows an old mining road down to South Percha Creek. From that point it is possible to hike up Drummond Canyon which is immediately across the stream; turn right and head west upstream to a nice spring in a little park; or head east, downstream.

63. Southwest Canyon
Access to this hiking area is from a large pull-out on the south side of NM-152 about a mile west of Kingston. From the pull-out a road leads down into the canyon which can be explored upstream and downstream.

64. Bloodgood Spring and Homesite
This short walk starts at or near the Kingston Cemetery. Cross NM 152 and head down the drainage following an old road bed (although a nice trail, a road it is not). Bloodgood Spring is not far down the drainage. There are several "artesian" (meaning the water bubbles up from the rock - not just out of a seep) low-flow springs at this site. Farther down the road is the old homesite. Other walk options abound at that point.

65. Forest Trail #134
Forest Trails 134 and 135 are accessed (at the east end of the trail) from Tierra Blanca Road. There is a road video which shows the road from NM-27 to the trailheads. This trail heads west from the trailhead up a mostly level stream bottom until it gets serious and climbs to the crest of the Black Range.

66. Forest Trail #135
This trail heads west from the trailhead up a mostly level stream bottom until it gets serious and climbs to the crest of the Black Range. Very beautiful.

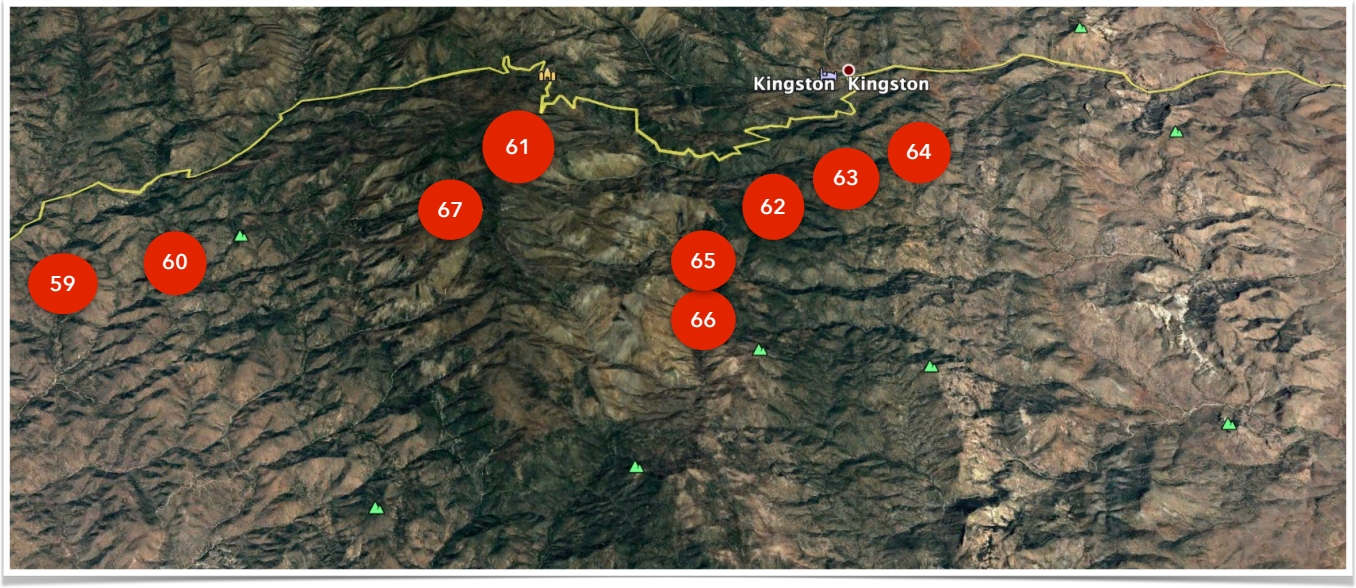
67. Grandview Trail
We have approached this trail from the crest of the Black Range and from the west. We have not walked it all the way through. Although the upper part of the trail is in reasonable shape (after you find it) - remember it is two miles from Emory Pass to this trailhead - the lower section is a mess.

67A. Lower and Middle FT-146 and FR-523 - Grandview Trail and Silver Creek Road
This trail description covers the middle portion of the Grandview Trail (not covered in "67") and the continuation of FR 523 on the north side of Silver Creek.

68. Ciénega Trail - City of Rocks State Park
The trailhead for this walk is just north of NM-61 on the City of Rocks State Park road. This is rare habitat for the Black Range.

69. Cooke's Townsite
From the townsite west (and up) to the saddle north of Cooke's Peak.

70. Cooke's Peak
Cooke's Peak is the land mark of the southern Black Range. This walk is an easy way to study the history of Cooke's Townsite and the adjacent mining ruins.



71. Massacre Peak/Cooke's Spring Pass

This route follows the old Butterfield Stage Coach Route (known by many earlier names) from Cooke's Spring at Fort Cummings to Frying Pan Canyon.

72. Frying Pan Spring

The walk from the Starvation Creek Detention Dam No. 4 site to Frying Pan Spring is about 4 miles roundtrip. It starts along the track which was the Butterfield stage route and then turns north (at the approximate location of Cooke's camp) up Frying Pan Canyon.

73. Sadler Mine

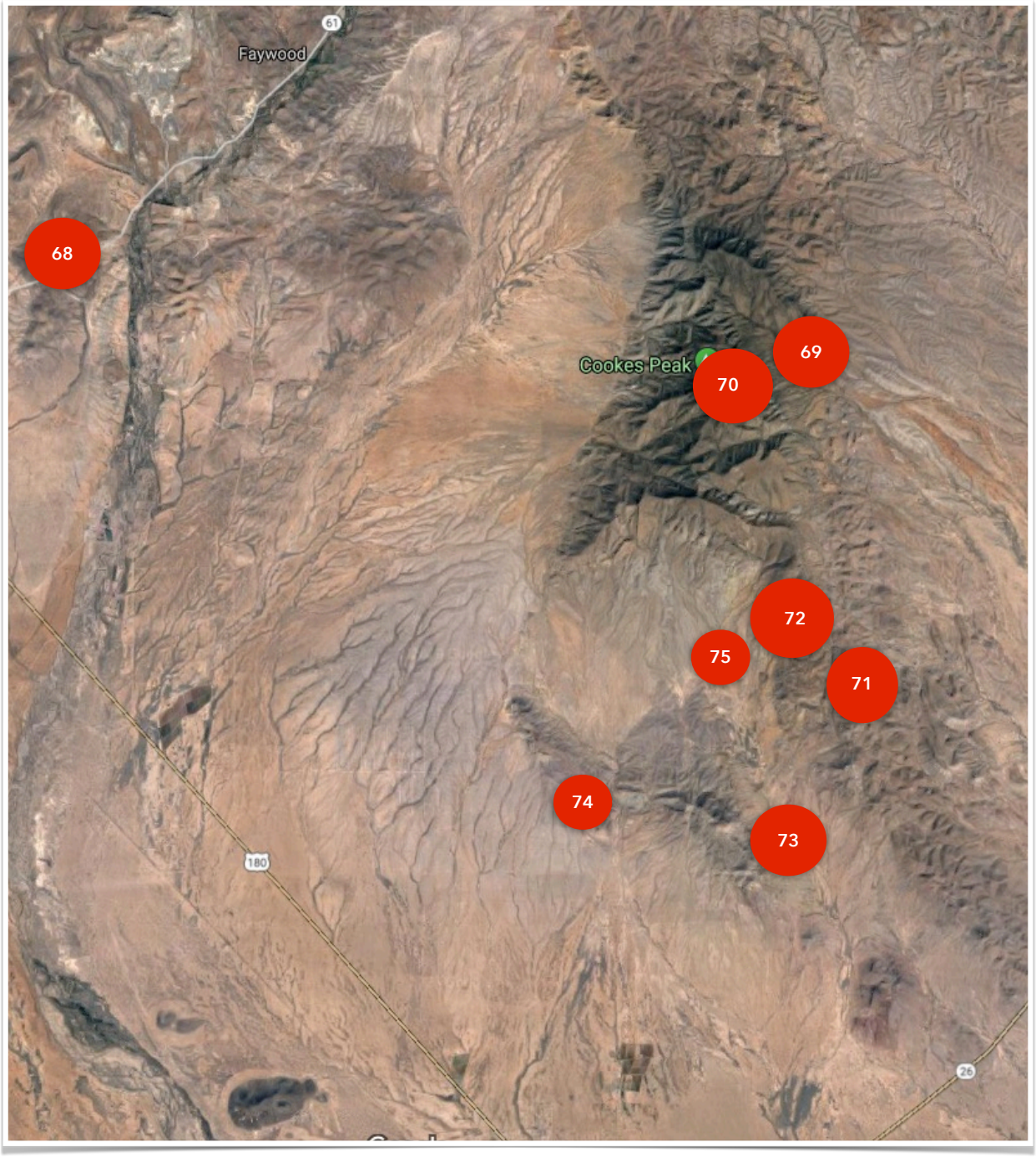
Mine site at the south end of Pony Hills, to the west of Green Leaf Mine.

74. China Draw

To the west of Pony Hills near an RV camping site. This is a short walk to a petroglyph site located on State Trust Land.

75. McGee Canyon

This petroglyph site on the east side of Starvation Draw can be difficult to find.



1. Black Peak

Park at the pull out (13 S 263873 by 3647239) for North Wicks Canyon east of Hillsboro and walk up the old mining road until you reach the summit of Black Peak. The elevation at the parking area is roughly 1,673 meters and at the summit it is 1,896 meters, for a net elevation gain of about 223 meters or 670 feet (there is a bit of up and down along the route so the gross gain may be in the order of 250 meters). The detail from the 1909 USGS Hillsboro Quadrangle, right, shows the mining road as it then existed, now it continues up the mountain to just below the peak.

The map detail shows several mines in North Wicks Canyon, now there are many more - taking the form of adits, shafts, and trenches. The mine shown about a quarter of the way up from the bottom and left of center (with a road leading up to it from the main mining road) is the Wicks Mine.

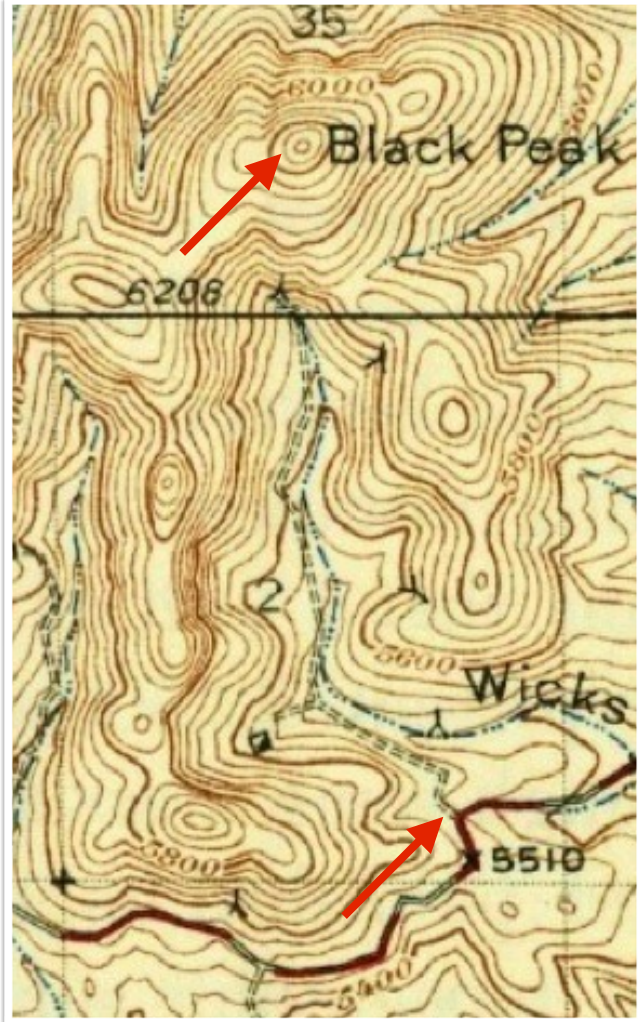
The walk follows the old mining road, which has many forks and turns - but the general direction of the walk - up and north - will suffice for route finding. This is a typical walk on an old road in this area, loose stones, uneven surfaces, various critters like rattlesnakes and possibly larger fauna are in the area so exercise due caution. Be aware that the mining locations are, in themselves, generally dangerous and are subject to cave-ins and slips. Yucca is very thick on some slopes, that and loose rock can make travel up or down the slope both tedious and potentially dangerous.

George T. Harley, in *The Geology and Ore Deposits of Sierra County, New Mexico* describes the summit as "The top of Black Peak consists of basalt 75 feet thick, and on the flanks of the hills at points 1 mile and 1 1/2 miles to the west are two other smaller patches. Black Peak is believed to be the source of the basalt flow in this region, as underground workings in the peak have encountered and passed completely around what appears to be the breccia filling in the throat of the old vent." (p. 131)

In Bulletin 39, "The Metal Resources of New Mexico and Their Economic Features Through 1954" (State Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, published in 1957) Eugene Carter Anderson states that "The Anderson Extension, Biglow, El Oro, Snake, Black Peak, and Portland properties were worked for short periods in 1950 and 1951. In 1952 the district produced 125 ounces of gold." (p. 124)

In "Mineral Belts in Western Sierra County, New Mexico..." Lovering and Heyl noted that "Outlying jasperoid samples, outside the main district, have been collected from the following localities: "...an outcrop on a north-northeast-trending range-front fault in a saddle at the western end of Black Peak ... Outcrop samples from the fault zone west of Black Peak, with silicified Fusselman Dolomite limestone to the west, consist of aphanitic grayish-red to medium-gray breccia fragments cemented by a matrix of fine- to medium-grained, locally vuggy, medium-dark-gray jasperoid, and the samples are slightly anomalous in silver (3 ppm), beryllium (2 ppm), and tungsten (50 ppm)." (pp. 13-14)

George T. Harley (reference above) describes the reason for the interest in this area: "The original discovery of placer gold is said to have been made in Wicks Gulch late in 1877. Wicks Gulch heads in a drainage basin of very small area on



the southeast slope of the Animas Hills, and in a short time the source of the placer gold had been located in the Wicks vein, which can be traced along a dike from the highway leading into Hillsboro from Hot Springs, through to the south slope of Black Peak, where it disappears under the basalt capping of that hill. It is probable that workings on the north side of Black Peak are located on the same dike and fracture zone...Other old workings on this vein system (ed.: Wicks Canyon) include the Black Peak mine, opened by tunnels and shafts on the south slope of Black Peak." (pp. 157-158)

The summit area of Black Peak, northeast of Hillsboro, New Mexico, was extensively mined, as late as the early 1950's. Most of the trenching and other mining is now caved but beams are still easily found along the eastern edge of the peak (photo at the bottom right on page 1-3).

As you travel up the road to the summit area there are numerous trenching sites, road off-shoots, and leveled places for equipment, sheds, or cabins. The walk from NM-152 to Black Peak, up North Wicks Canyon, offers several mining road and overland variations.

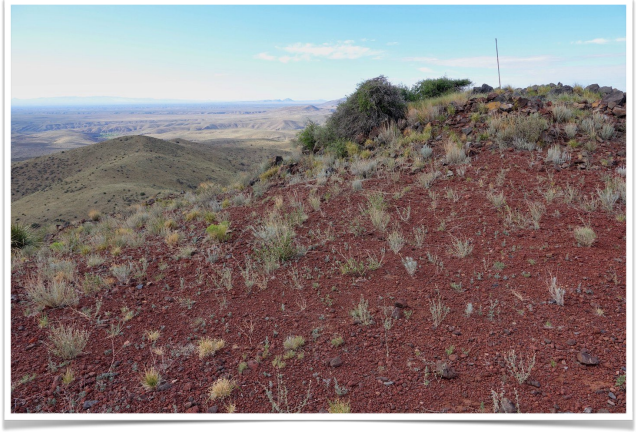
As you walk up North Wicks Canyon, from NM-152, you will see an old house (see page 1-4) along the wash to the east of the main mining road. The house photographs date from March 22, 2014.

North Wicks Canyon, Black Peak at the center horizon.

Looking west from the summit of Black Peak, the Black Range along the skyline. The road to the peak is visible snaking up North Wicks Canyon.

Where the grade begins to get more serious and a continual climb is in order you will pass through an old fence where there was once a gate.

Looking northwest from the summit of Black Peak.



There are "twin peaks", which are close together, at the summit of Black Peak. The photograph above was taken from the more southwestern of the peaks.

Summit of Black Peak.

See the "Mines of the Black Range" for videos, including aerial material, of this area: Wick's Mine.

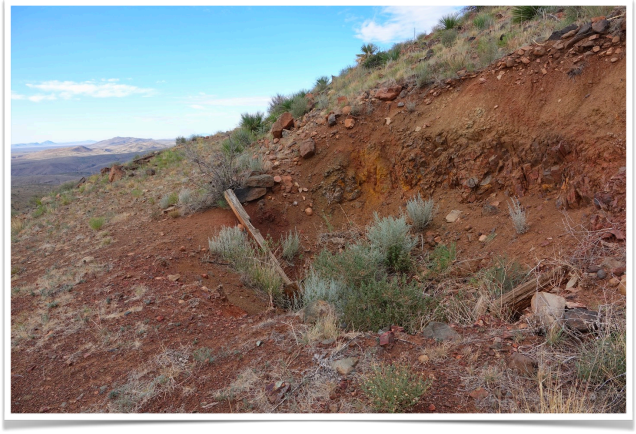
Looking northeast from the summit area of Black Peak. Animas Peak is at the upper right, the diggings of the Copper Flat Mine are below it.

The mining road which runs close to the summit of Black Peak is becoming more obscure with time.

Looking southwest from just below the summit of Black Peak. Cooke's Peak is on the skyline about a 1/3 of the way in from the left.

It is not clear if the digging shown above from the south slope of Black Peak was an adit or trenching, in either case it is now caved and the yucca are in the process of obfuscating history.

North Wicks Canyon, looking south from Black Peak. The road up North Wicks can be seen at the center right.



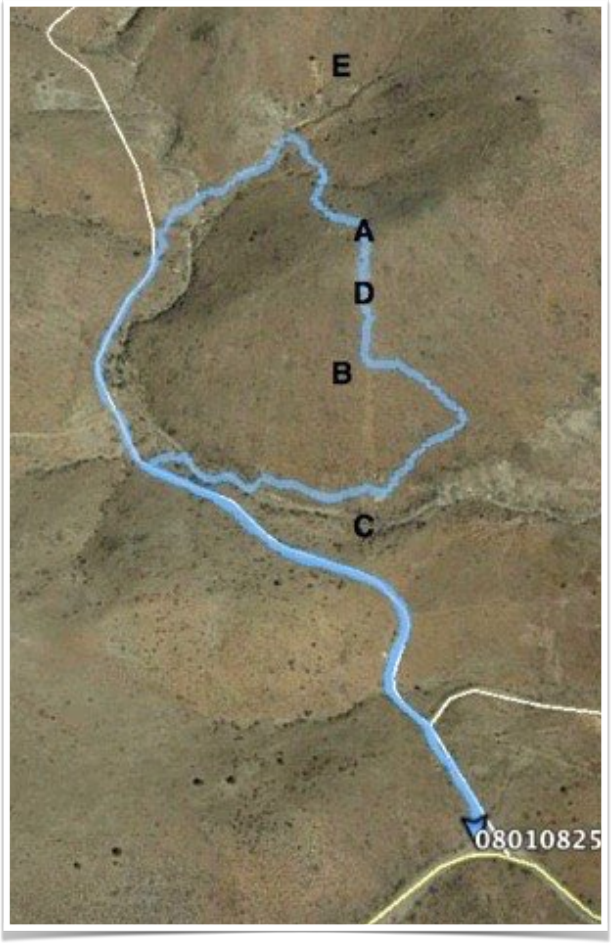
Diggings near the summit of Black Peak, east of Hillsboro, New Mexico, USA.

On September 12, 2014, the walk below was mapped and described as follows: NM-152 is at the bottom of this map. At the gate, located in a large turn-around on the north side of NM-152, follow the old mining road north (N to NNW). The route shown on the map below is 3.9 miles round-trip with about 600′ of elevation gain (5,366′ to 5,975′). There are a number of side routes which are variants to this basic walk. The mining road generally provides unobstructed walking, in places it is washed out and stones in the roadway may create footing problems. A little over a mile from the gate, this route cuts across the wash to the east and joins a mining road which traverses the hill slope to a pass, from there the route is cross-country until it joins the main road up the canyon for the return to the gate. The usual suspects are on-the-scene; rattlesnakes, Coyote, and Cougar are all possible - but not likely.

There are "active" mines along this route, in addition to abandoned adits and pits, all are dangerous.

In season, this is an excellent walk for wildflowers and birds.

2. East Slope of North Wicks Canyon



As you approach Hillsboro from the east there is a pull-out on the north side of NM-152 which is often used by locals to make cell phone calls - there is no cell service in the town of Hillsboro. An old mining road runs up into North Wicks Canyon from the gate (as described in Walk 1). Looking north from the gate a prominent dike running up the hillside immediately to the north (just right of the line in the photo below) is visible. If you were a miner you would refer to this dike as a vein, and there are numerous diggings along its length. On the other (west) side of North Wicks Canyon there is another dike (vein). Wicks mine is located along that vein. Both dikes radiate from the Copper Flat area.

The diggings along this vein are mostly trenches and start in the wash at the southern base of this hill ("C" on the map at the right). Until you return to the road, all of this walk is "cross-country". Continue up the hill, at the crest of the hill there is shaft. Continuing down the north side of the hill there are additional trenches which continue up the south slope of the next hill - there are also some shafts in this area.

I have yet to find a named mine along this dike - more an indication of the lack of historical records than an indication that these diggings were not named.

The walk which is outlined above is 3.1 kilometers long, has a maximum grade of 22%, and there is a net elevation gain of 83 meters. The maximum elevation is 1710 meters. Part of the walk is along the old mining road, part is down a wash, and the rest is cross country across rocky slopes. This is good snake country, especially in the summer, lots of opportunity to twist an ankle or even fall down a shaft. Exercise due diligence. This survey was conducted on August 1, 2016 and the photographs which describe this walk were taken on that date.

The photograph at the top left on the following page is the shaft at the top of the ridge, "A" on the map to the right. The photograph at the right shows the orientation of the dike along the area shown as "B" on the map. The photograph at the top left on the following page is the most southerly of the workings along this dike, in this area, "C".

George T. Harley, in *The Geology and Ore Deposits of Sierra County, New Mexico* describes these workings as: "On the ridge east of Wick's Gulch some recent (ed: Bulletin 10 was published in 1939) work along a well-defined dike uncovered a vein from which small shipments of commercial ore were made." (p. 158)

The middle left photograph on the following page shows trenching near the crest of the hill, "D" on the map.

Looking north from the crest of this hill, trenching on the south side of the next hill north is visible, "E" on the map.

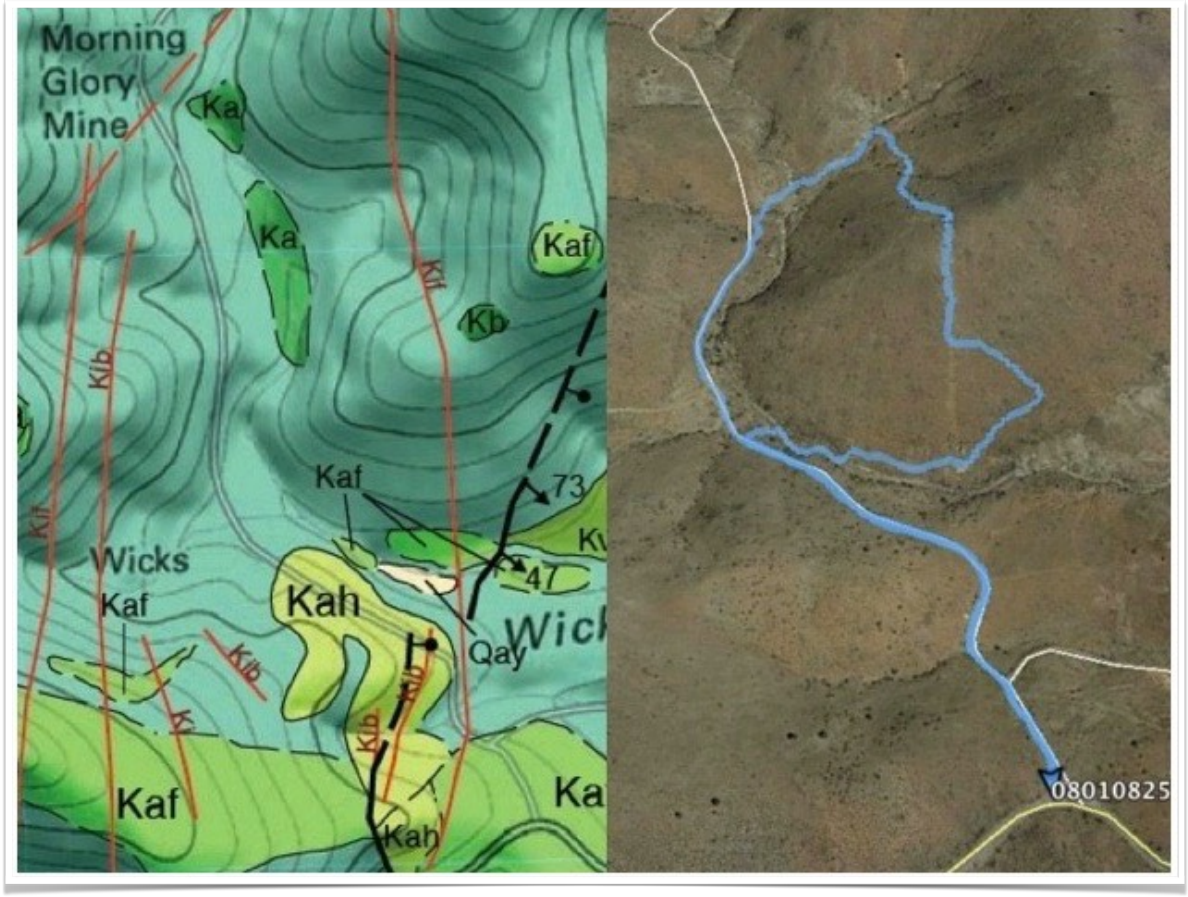
This dike is shown on the geology map detail at the bottom of the following page. The right most red line marked "Kif" locates the dike referenced here. See T*he Black Range Naturalist*, Volume 8, Number 4 for a full description of the geology of this area.

See the "Mines of the Black Range" for videos, including aerial material, of this area: Wick's Mine.

East Dike North Wick's Canyon, East of Hillsboro

East Dike North Wick's Canyon, East of Hillsboro

Debris in the wash at the base of the East Dike, North Wick's Canyon, East of Hillsboro


Morning
Glory
Mine
Ka
Ka
Kaf
Kb
Kib
Kif
Kif
Kif

East Dike North Wick's Canyon, East of Hillsboro

Above: East Dike, North Wick's Canyon, East of Hillsboro

Left: Claim markers, of various pedigree mark the area, East Dike, North Wick's Canyon, East of Hillsboro

Kif Dike, East Dike North Wick's Canyon, East of Hillsboro - looking south from near the summit of the hill.

3. West Slope of Wicks Canyon and Wick's Mine

NOTE: The original description of this walk and the accompanying photographs were published a decade ago. The headframe which is pictured no longer exists at the site.

There are several "walk variations" in the section of Wicks Canyon which is just north of NM-152. One of these walks is to the Wicks Mine which is featured in Mines of the Black Range (video portfolio). This is the second edition of this video and contains material from 2015 and 2025. The mine is located on the east slope of the ridge which borders North Wicks Canyon on the west. The map to the right shows this route.

The headframe and of the shaft framing were still present at the main shaft of the Wicks Mine when the first edition of this work was published. They no longer exist and are shown here for historical purposes. Photographs date from April 30, 2015.

The photograph below shows two of the cement pads which are to the east of the main shaft at Wicks and the headframe. One was probably used as the foundation for the winch which was used to raise and lower miners and to raise ore. The pads were still present on the publication date of this edition. The "historical" headframe is shown at the top right on the following page.

During the recording of the original video of this site, on April 30, 2015, we were not able to lower equipment down the interior of the framing. However, a substantial cave-in had occurred immediately adjacent to the framing and we were able to take video of the outside of the frame - a unique perspective.

Some residents of Hillsboro remember being lowered down the shaft, in a bucket, when they were children. Others worked in the mine during its latest incarnation. Stories about the bucket tilting and almost dumping family members down the shaft bring a shake of the head.

George Townsend Harley reported (*The Geology and Ore Deposits of Sierra County, New Mexico*) that the "original discovery of placer gold is said to have been made in Wicks Gulch late in 1877 … the source of the placer gold had been located in the Wicks vein, which can be traced along a dike from the highway leading into Hillsboro from Hot Springs, through to the south slope of Black Peak, where it disappears under the basalt capping of that hill." (p. 157)

The photograph at the bottom right shows the workings along the vein southwest from the main shaft of Wicks Mine.

Harley believed that the workings on the north side of Black Peak were on a continuation of this vein (p. 158).

The main shaft at the Wicks Mine was 300' deep and had several tunnels and pits. Immediately adjacent to the vein worked by this shaft was another parallel vein which was mined via a 200' deep shaft. At the time of Harley's report he noted that the total production at this site was about $150,000 and that "some placer mining is conducted in Wicks Gulch from time to time, but most of the placer gold seems to have been recovered from what was at best a very small area of concentration."

In Bulletin 39, *The Metal Resources of New Mexico and Their Economic Features Through 1954*, Eugene Carter Anderson (State Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, published in 1957) states that "The Black Peak Mining Co. operated the mine in 1941 and shipped ore to El Paso." (p.124)

The trail to Wicks Mine (see map at the beginning of this entry) starts at the pull out on NM-152 (at an elevation of 5,509') and follows the main road up North Wicks Canyon. This road is easy to walk on and has only minor elevation changes. Just short of 1/2 mile from the start (at an elevation of about 5,480') turn west toward obvious diggings on the hill side. Proceed up hill, gaining roughly 100' in elevation, until you reach a large pit with a stock pond, which may be dry during drought periods. In the photograph of the workings along the vein (below right) this is the pit in the middle of the photograph. The walk described as "Ready Pay to Wicks" (see later in this work) runs diagonally across this photograph, just above the pit. At this point, it is .68 miles back to NM-152. The trail continues, more steeply and rockier, uphill to the headframe at the Wicks Mine. The shaft is at an elevation of about 5,720' and is about .86 miles from the start at NM-152.

There is a fair amount of discarded equipment laying around the site of the Wicks Headframe (see below).

Photographs of the headframe area are found on the following pages.

Photographs immediately above and below: Steve Elam lowering video equipment (2015).

West Slope of North Wicks Canyon

The mine workings along the west slope of North Wicks Canyon (other than the Wicks group and the Morning Glory) are typically adits and trenches, like the ones pictured here. Photographs in this description, which depict the west slope of North Wick's Canyon, were taken on August 5, 2016.

Above: Shaft north of the main Wicks Mine.

George T. Harley, in *The Geology and Ore Deposits of Sierra County, New Mexico* describes these workings as "on the east side of the long ridge which separates Wicks Gulch and Ready Pay Gulch on the west. Some ore was taken from these workings in years past, but except for sporadic reopening similar to that of the Morning Glory operations, these mines have been idle and are largely caved." (p. 158)

The photograph to the right shows two of the workings on the west slope, at the top arrow the working is the same as that pictured at the bottom left of this page. The photograph at the bottom right is the working indicated by the lower arrow.

The photograph at the top of the following page shows North Wicks Canyon as seen from Black Peak. The ridge which starts at the center right of the photograph and extends almost to the center left of the image is the west slope of the canyon (east slope of the ridge). The two workings shown in the photo-graphs here are just barely discernible about a quarter of the way in from the right edge of the image. The Morning Glory Mine is about one quarter of the way in from the right edge of the image.

See the "Mines of the Black Range" for videos, including aerial material, of this area: Wick's Mine.

4. Ready Pay to Wicks

This walk starts at the first gate on the north side of NM-152 after you leave Hillsboro and climb the hill to the east. It ends at the next gate on the north side of the road as you continue east. (Or vice-versa.)

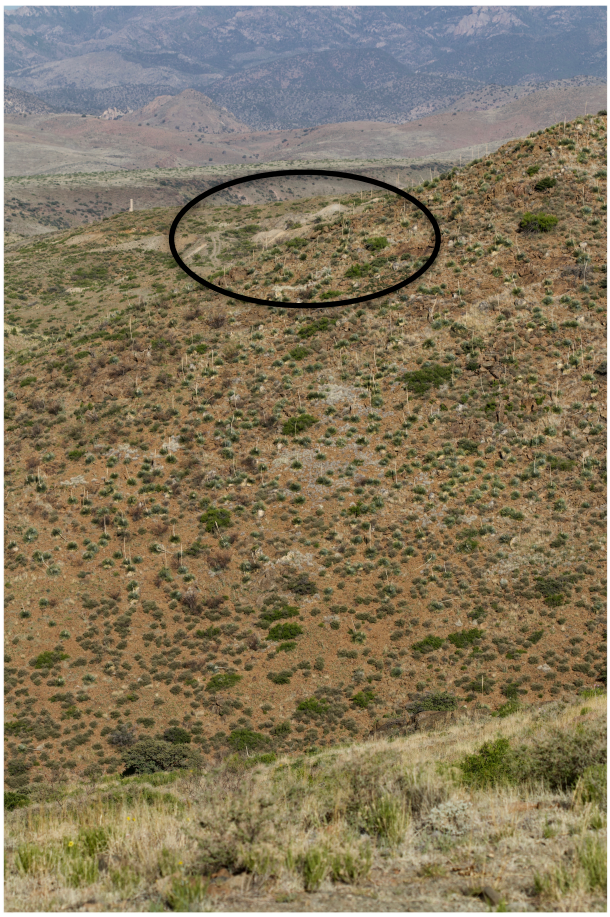
The first gate on the north side of the road out of Hillsboro provides access to the routes like "Opportunity", "Stowaway", "McKinley", and "Ready Pay". The second gate on the north side of the road out of Hillsboro provides access to "North Wicks Canyon" as referenced previously.

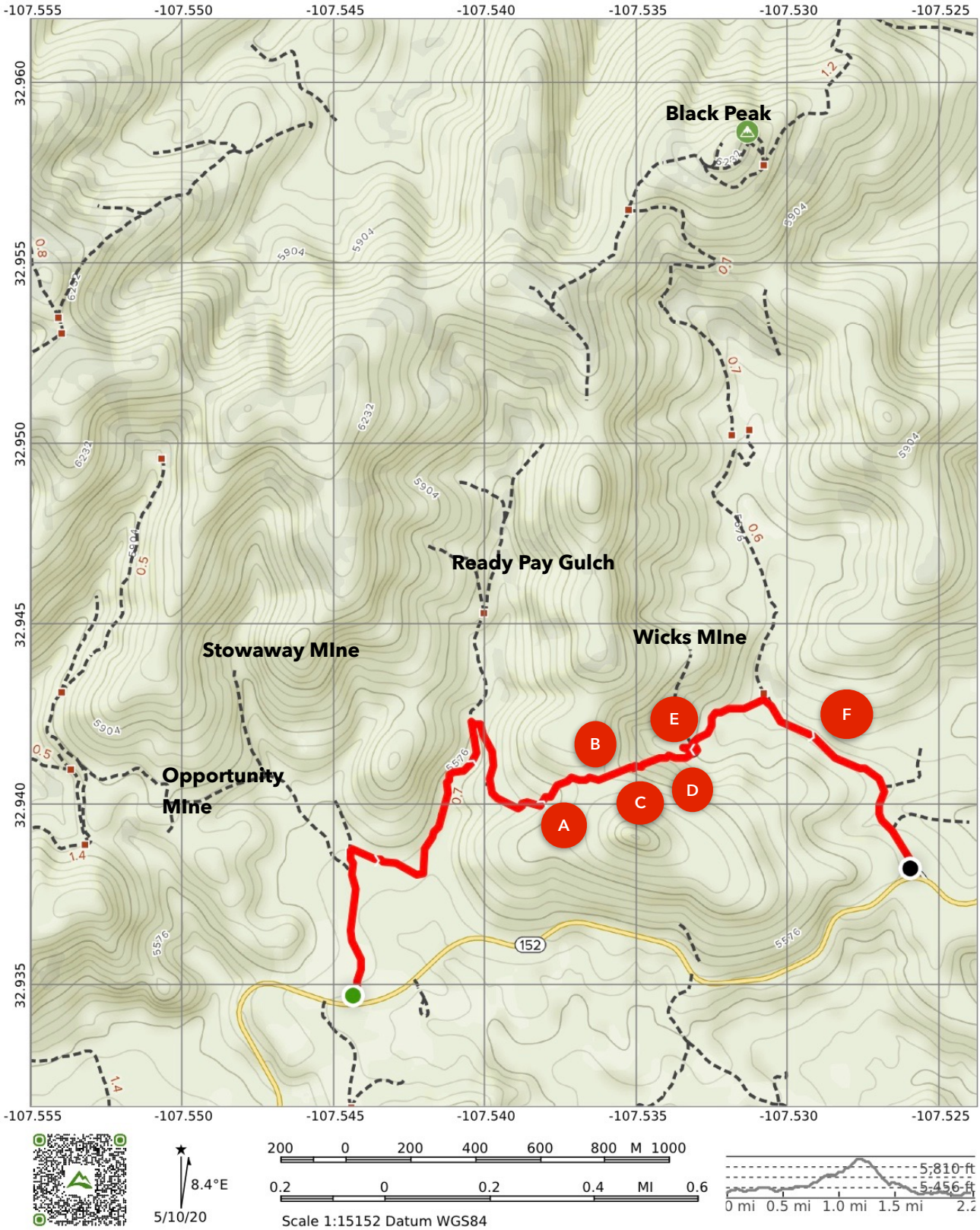
This walk starts at the first gate and heads up the Ready Pay Gulch walk option. Shortly after entering the main gulch it turns east and crosses the ridge into Wicks Canyon, passing the Wicks Mine workings (this part of the track is clearly visible at the "top edge" of the pit (see "E" on the map on the following page and in the photograph at the right) and ends at the second gate. In all, this walk is 2.2 miles each way with an elevation gain of about 350'. Part of the route is on old mining roads and part is a cross-country walk uphill. There is the possibility that you could twist an ankle, run into a rattlesnake, etc. - so watch your step.

Looking west from the crest of the ridge between Ready Pay and Wicks Gulch, the Opportunity Mine is visible about a quarter of the way from the top within the ellipse of the photo at bottom right.

Mimosa quadrivalis var. occidentalis, **Western Sensitive Briar, grows on the west slope of the ridge the walk crosses. Early May. At "A" on the map on the following page.**

Rhus trilobata, **Lemonadeberry. Several individuals were growing along the old mining road on the east side of the ridge. Early May. At "C" on the map on the following page.**




Black Peak
Ready Pay Gulch
Stowaway MIne
Wicks MIne
Opportunity MIne
A
B
C
D
E
F
152
-107.555
-107.550
-107.545
-107.540
-107.535
-107.530
-107.525
32.960
32.955
32.950
32.945
32.940
32.935
8.4°E
5/10/20
200 0 200 400 600 800 M 1000
0.2 0 0.2 0.4 MI 0.6
Scale 1:15152 Datum WGS84
5,810 ft
5,456 ft
0 mi 0.5 mi 1.0 mi 1.5 mi

There is an old mining road, quite overgrown, which connects the area at the crest of the ridge to the Wicks Mine shaft (see "B" on the following page). It is possible, therefore, to make a loop which starts and ends at the pit referenced above.

There are not many places where *Typha latifolia*, Broad-leaved Cattail, grows in the Black Range. At the point where the road up to the Wicks Mine heads north off of this trail there is a year-round pond, created by mining excavations, a perfect place for the Cattail. At "E" on the map,

See the "Mines of the Black Range" for videos, including aerial material, of this area: Wick's Mine and Mines of Upper Ready Pay Gulch.

***Solanum elaeagnifolium*, Silverleaf Nightshade, is also known as Purple Nightshade - the flowers come in two color forms, white and purple. The white form is much less common than the purple. This specimen was found growing next to one of the shafts along the North Wicks Mine road. At "F" on the map.**

5. Ready Pay Mine

For the most part there are no names for the walks in the eastern foothills of the Black Range. This walk holds true to that fact. This walk description covers two "destination points", one the Ready Pay Mine on the western side of the valley and the other a mine adit on the eastern side of the valley.

On the map to the right, NM-152 enters at bottom left - coming up the grade out of Hillsboro. After you top the grade and start through the low hills there is a gated road on your left (north side of road). The route starts at the gate.

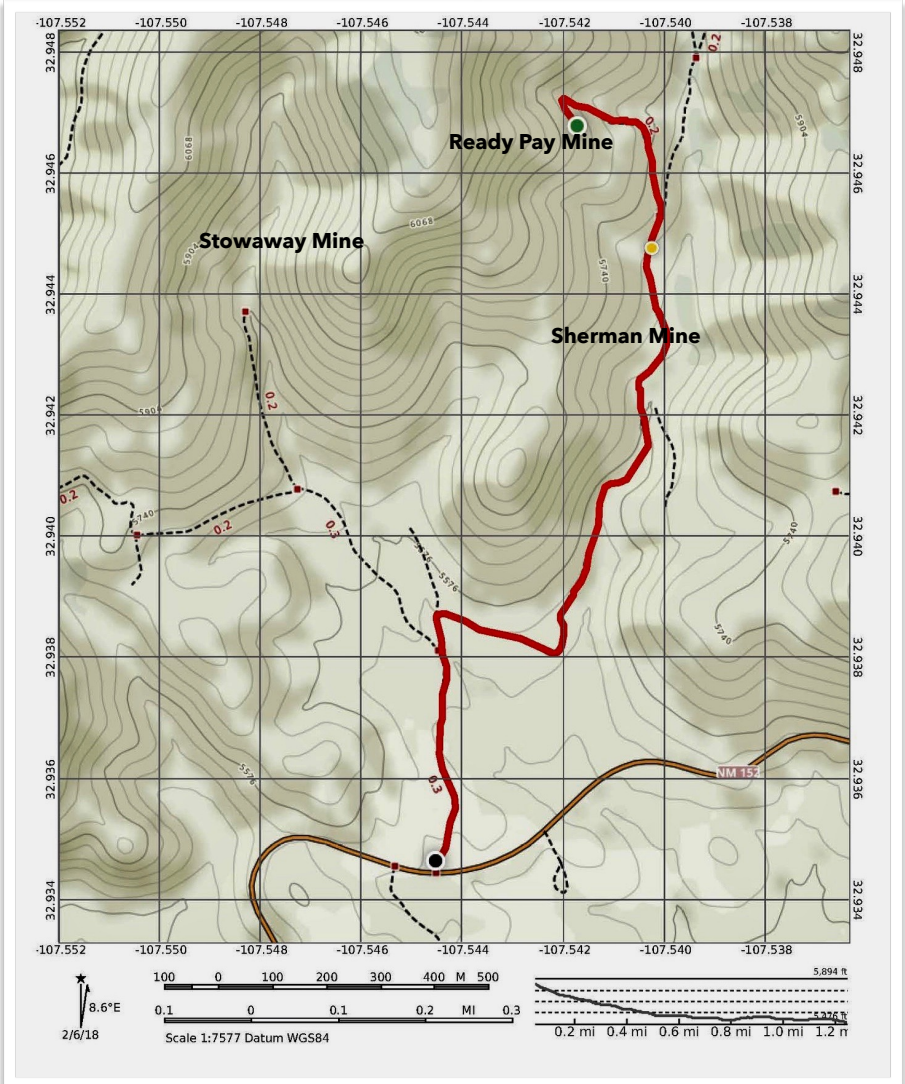
This walk starts up the road to the Snake Mine ruins (southeast approach). Just past a water tank the road forks to the right and drops down into a wash. (The left fork goes up to the Snake Mine ruins.) Take the right fork. On the other side of the wash (just a few yards) the road turns right (east) and leads to the eastern most wash of the Ready Pay Gulch system of washes which are on the north side of NM-152. The road then turns north and you enter the wash proper where the road is badly washed out. As you head north up the wash the ridge line to your right separates you from North Wicks Canyon.

The map at the right shows the route to the Ready Pay Mine, on the west slope of the valley. This walk is just over 1.2 miles, each way, and has an elevation gain of about 375 feet. In reading the elevation profile on this map, the start of the trail at NM-152 is on the right and the mine is on the left. It is a walk up (or down) a steady grade.

The usual suspects are on-the-scene; rattlesnakes, Coyote, and Cougar are all possible - but not likely. As with all walks in this area be especially careful around mines and adits - these are potentially very dangerous places.

In addition to the abandoned truck there are other "artifacts" along the trail, like the pick shown at the right. At the mine, itself, there is a rotten headframe and rusty winches.

Across the gulch and a bit farther north there is an adit, shown at the top of the following page.



A video of the mines in this gulch may be viewed here.

The Ready Pay Group was patented in 1914. It has been known as the Gold Star, Scandia, and Unicorn. The primary commodities taken from the site were gold, copper, and silver in ores of chalcopyrite, argentite, and bornite. The first year of production for this site was 1885 and the last was 1934. In 1914 Fanny Garrison Villard was the owner, in 1934 Edward D. Tittman (see Diary of a Hunt) of Hillsboro owned the site. "The estimated value of production from the site between 1885 and 1931 was about $10,000 USD...workings reported in the 1930's consisted of a 160 ft. vertical shaft, a tunnel 500 feet in length and about 200 ft. of drifting". (USGS website)

East fork of Ready Pay Gulch, North of NM-152 East of Hillsboro

Ready Pay Mine, Ready Pay Gulch, NE of Hillsboro
The Ready Pay Mine site is one of the better sites in the area. As always, open shafts and old structures can be dangerous and the usual critters are about - a good area for Western Diamondback Rattlesnake, for instance.

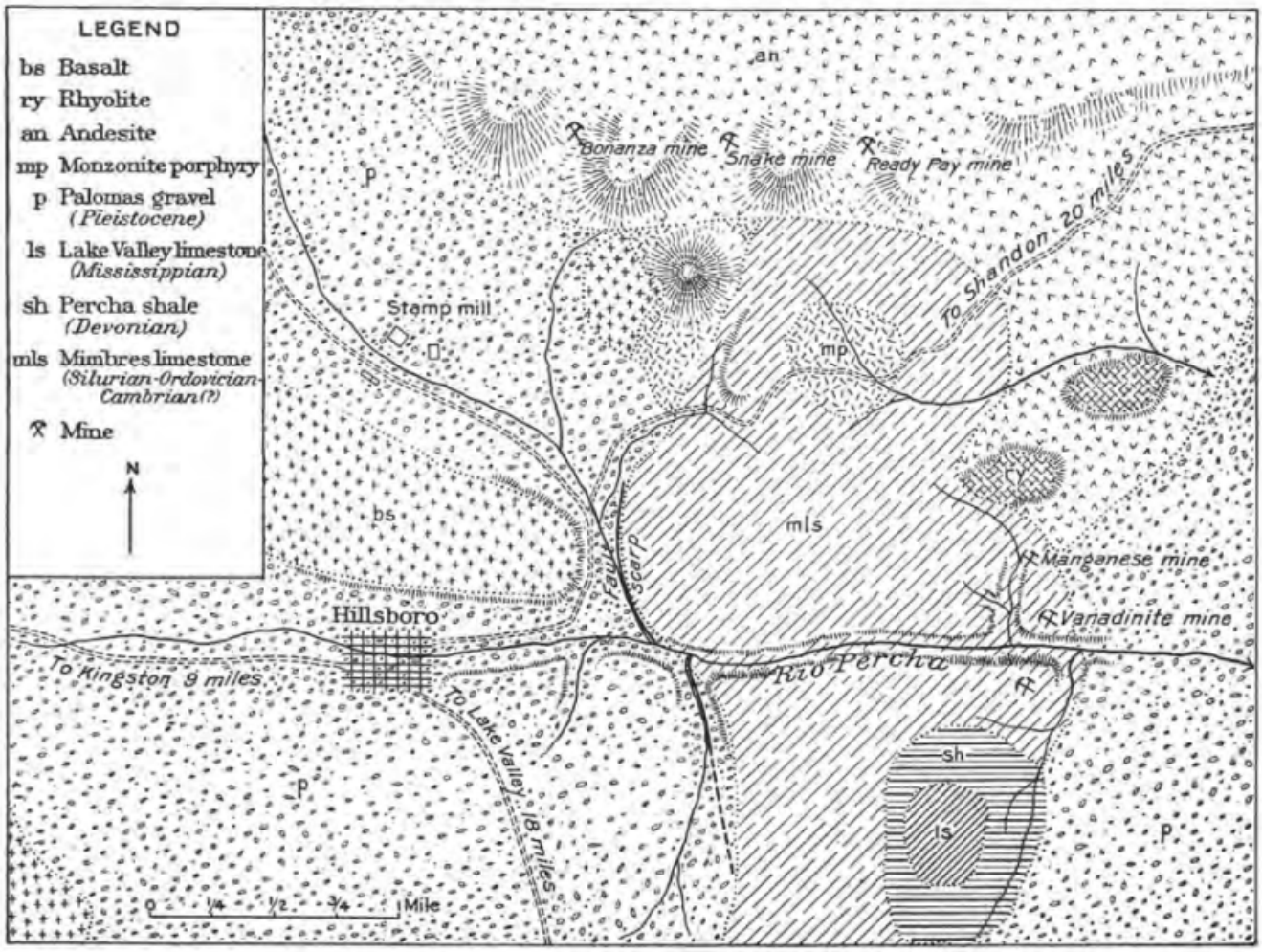


FIGURE 22.—Sketch map showing geologic features of Hillsboro district.

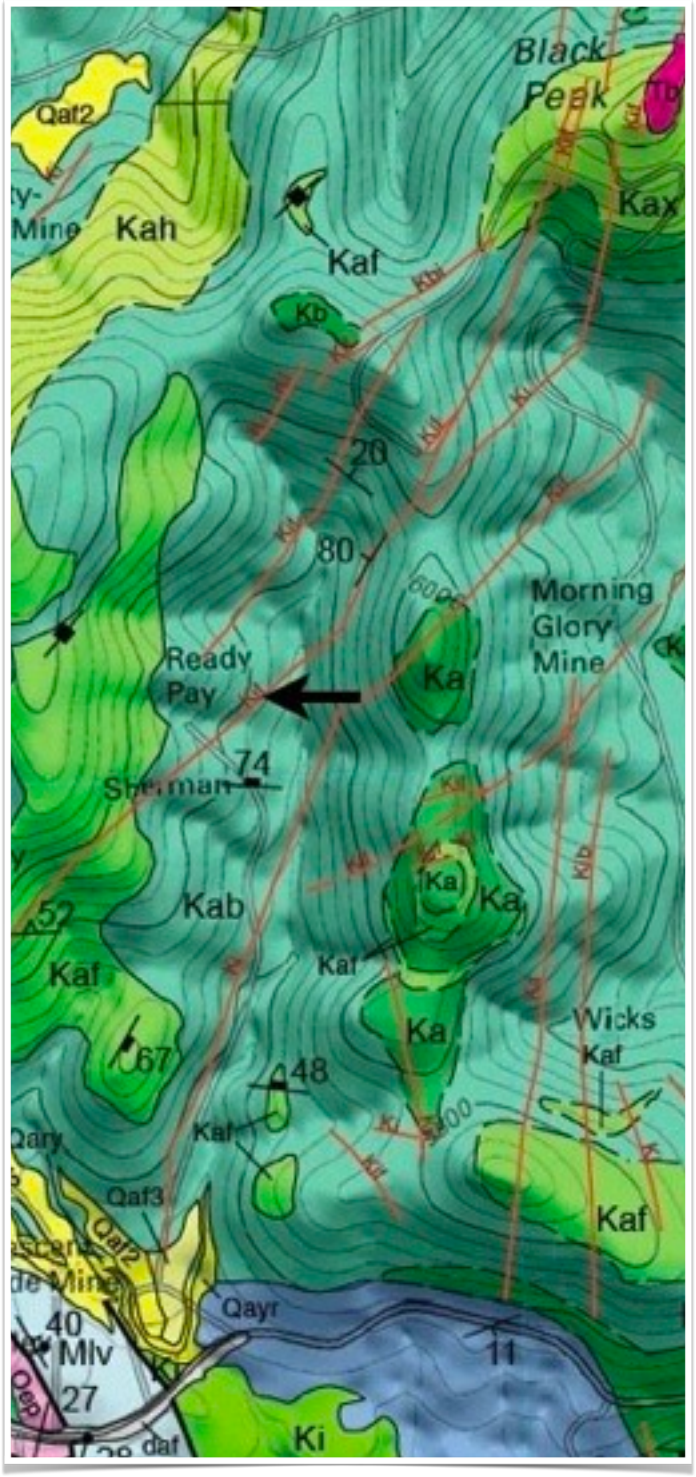
The Ready Pay Mine is one of the mines shown on the sketch map (shown above, p. 273) from 1910 in "*The Ore Deposits of New Mexico*", Professional Paper 68 of the USGS by Lindgren, Graton, and Gordon.

D. C. Hedlund's 1985 (preliminary) report for the United States Department of the Interior Geologic Survey, *Economic geology of some selected mines in the Hillsboro and San Lorenzo quadrangles, Grant and Sierra Counties, New Mexico* describes the Ready Pay Vein on pages 9 & 11. "The Ready Pay vein is located in Ready Pay Gulch where it has been intensively mined and trenched over a length of about 5,000 ft (1,500 m). The vein strikes N. 15°-20° E. and is an anastomosing fracture zone 10-15 ft (3-4.6 m) thick that contains abundant quartz veins. Pyrite, bornite, chalcopyrite, and free gold have been reported to occur in the subsurface at the Ready Pay shaft. Minor amounts of placer gold have been mined from the south end of Ready Pay Gulch."

George Townsend Harley's 1934 paper, *New Mexico State Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, Bulletin 10, The Geology and Ore Deposits of Sierra County, New Mexico*, is a seminal work on the geology and mining of this area. At page 140 he notes that mining and/or development work was being done at the Ready Pay site during 1931-1933. At page 157 he describes the operations at Ready Pay as:

> **"The Ready Pay vein is located in Ready Pay Gulch. Near the south end it is on the west sidehill below the Sherman vein, but about half way to the head of the canyon it crosses the creek bed and then continues up the slope on the east side. The main shaft, old millsite, boiler house and campsite are located in the canyon. The plant is completely dismantled and the shaft is caved, and the mine workings could not be entered. From the surface, however, it could be seen that the vein is a fractured zone in andesite breccia, varying from 10 to 15 feet in width, and that this zone is traversed in all directions by stringers of mineralized quartz. The ore is said to occur within the vein in shoots, one of which was 400 feet long on the levels. Hard lumps of bornite up to 2 inches in diameter were said to have been found in the vein, which would average $110 in value per ton.**

Operations on the property were discontinued in 1908. The plant at that time consisted of a steam-driven hoist and a 30-ton amalgamation and concentration plant. The ore was ground in two Huntington mills and then treated on two plates and two Wilfley tables. The plant handled 24 tons per day for six months, during which time the full width of the vein was mined and treated. The mill heads ran $8 a ton and the tails $2.50, resulting in a saving of about $5.50 a ton. The ratio of concentration was about 12 into 1, and the concentrate assayed about $66 per ton. The direct cost of producing a ton of concentrate is given as $23.50, of which labor accounted for $19.50 and fuel $4.00."

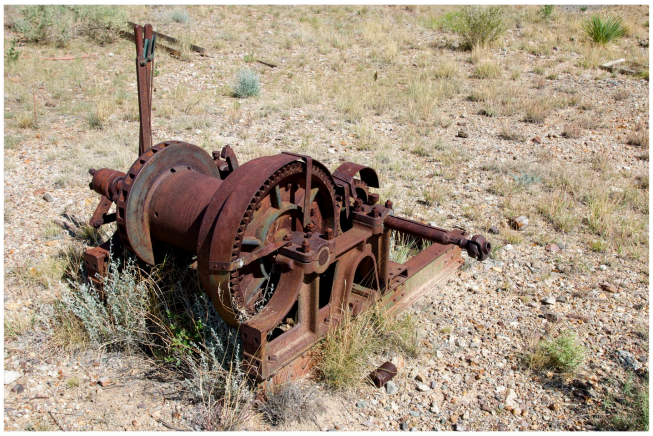


In the 1957 Bulletin 39 of the State Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources - *The Metal Resources of New Mexico and Their Economic Features Through 1954* - Eugene Carter Anderson notes that (p. 124) "lode mines that operated at intervals during the period 1935-1938 were the...Ready Pay."

The photographs shown here were taken at the upper and most southerly of the shafts at the site. The photograph on the previous page shows the headframe and equipment (primarily old winches). The photograph at the top of the next page shows the concrete foundation for one of the structures at the site and other items of interest. The photographs on the previous and following pages were taken on May 31, 2016.

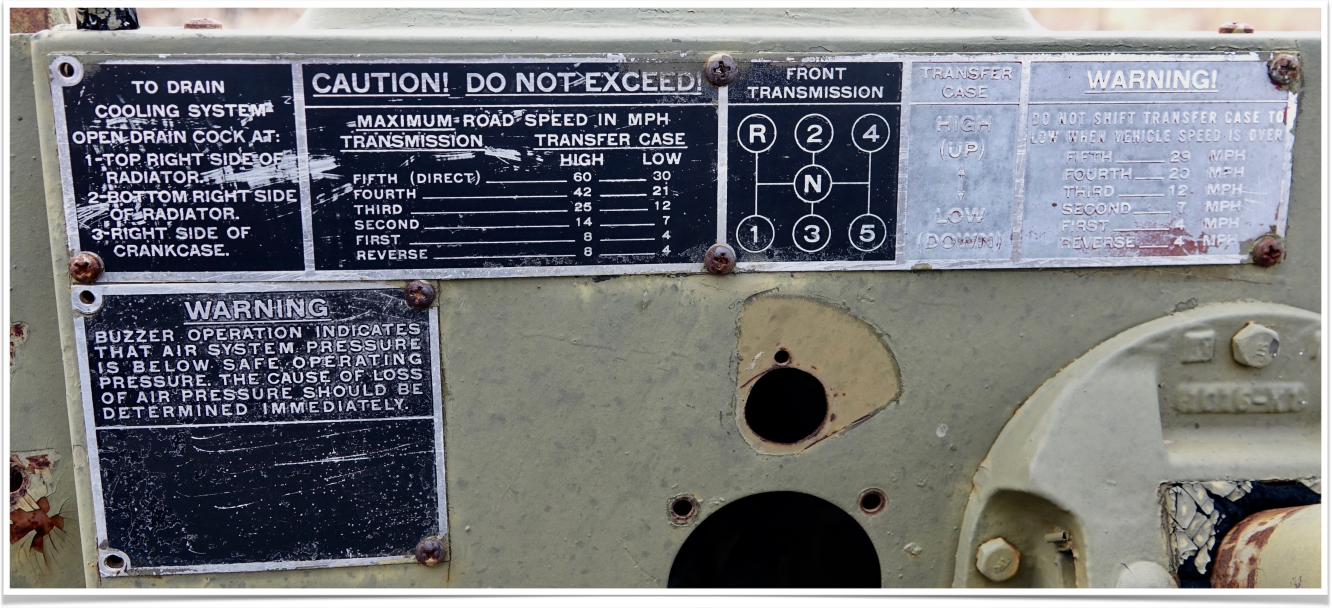
See the "Mines of the Black Range" for videos, including aerial material, of this area: Mines of Upper Ready Pay Gulch.

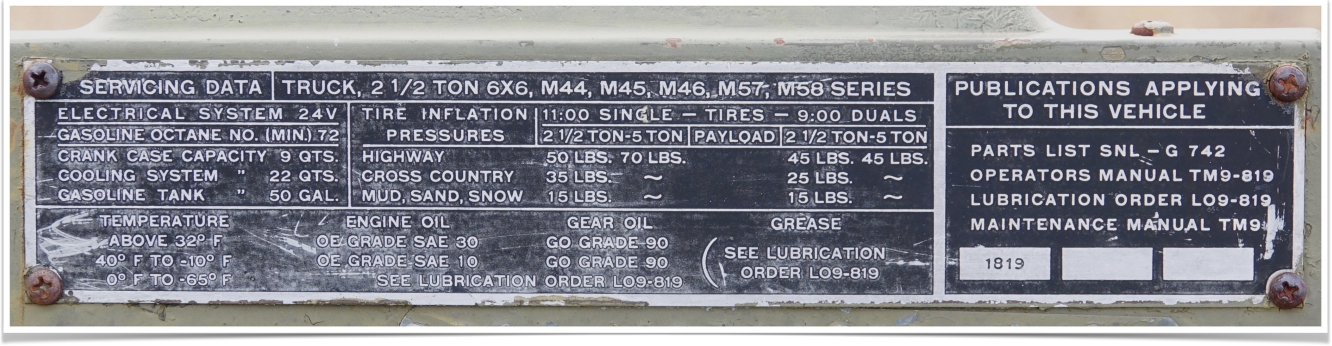
The above photograph was taken at the Ready Pay Mine site and looks to the northeast. The foundation in the draw below is probably the millsite. On the other side of the gulch are other workings of the mine.



The four photographs at the bottom of this page and those on the following page are of the abandoned haul truck and ore wagon in Ready Pay Gulch.

Photographs immediately above and below - stone work to make level area for a mining shack etc. in Ready Pay Gulch.





The video of the mines in this gulch may be viewed here. It contains rather dramatic aerial views of this truck.

The photographs on the following page are of the adit on the east side of the gulch, north of the Ready Pay headframe.

Sherman Mine

The Sherman Mine site, discovered in 1885, lies on the western slopes of Ready Pay Gulch east of Hillsboro, New Mexico, USA (see the detail from the Hillsboro Geologic Quadrangle and Google Earth view, both earlier in the description of this walk). The commodities taken from the Sherman site were gold, copper, and silver - primarily in ores of chalcopyrite and argentite. The host rock at this site is andesite. The Sherman Mine is also known as the Sherman Group and/or the Caballero Group. The Sherman Vein is one of several radial veins associated with the Copper Flat Monzonite Porphyry. It was last mined in 1941 when it was owned by B. Caballero and operated by William Abbott, both of Hillsboro. The deposits at the mine "occur in a vein of fractured andesite averaging 4 ft. in width and containing irregularly distributed small stringers of ore-bearing quartz".

George Townsend Harley's 1934 paper *New Mexico State Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, Bulletin 10, The Geology and Ore Deposits of Sierra County, New Mexico* - often simply called "Bulletin 10" is a seminal work on the geology and mining of this area. At page 140 he notes that mining and/or development work was being done at the Sherman site during 1931-1933. At pages 156-7 he notes that "The Sherman vein or 'lead' as it is called locally is on the west sidehill above Ready Pay gulch and strikes slightly east of north. It has been opened by 400 feet or more of underground workings, which are now either caved or filled with water. Some stoping has been done on this vein, but the amount is not known. The vein at the surface is a 4-foot fracture zone in andesite, through which small stringers of quartz are irregularly distributed. The dump from these workings is said to consist of 6,000 to 7,000 tons, over 50 per cent of which will pass a 10-mesh opening without further crushing. According to small-scale tests, these fines contain nearly all of the gold and assay $5 per ton. In 1932 this dump was under lease, and the operators were engaged in installing a second-hand Plat-table, upon which, they said, laboratory tests indicated that a concentrate worth $100 per ton in free gold and sulfides could be made."

In the 1957 Bulletin 39 of the State Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, *The Metal Resources of New Mexico and Their Economic Features Through 1954,* Eugene Carter Anderson notes that (p. 124) "lode mines that operated at intervals during the period 1935-1938 were the... Portland-Sherman-Caballero...A small amount of ore from the Conner Boy-Bank and Sherman was treated in a mill at Hillsboro in 1937."

D. C. Hedlund's 1985 (preliminary) report for the United States Department of the Interior Geologic Survey, *Economic geology of some selected mines in the Hillsboro and San Lorenzo quadrangles, Grant and Sierra Counties, New Mexico*, page 11 describes the Sherman Vein as - "The Sherman vein is west of Ready Pay Gulch and strikes N. 45U E. The vein is slightly mineralized over a distance of about 4,000 ft (1,200 m) and is about 2-4 ft (0.6-1.2 m) thick. Numerous small stringers of vein quartz follow thin fracture zones within the andesite; oxidized pyrite was the only ore mineral observed on the outcrop."

In 1899 *The Mining Reporter* noted that "Jeff Owens, lessee of the Sherman Mine at Hillsboro, is making a 60 ton shipment to the Porter Mill." (p. 129)

There is an open shaft (see below) some filled shafts and surface workings at the site now. Nearby are old ore trucks (see preceding pages).

6. McKinley Mine

The McKinley Mine (also known as the Caballero Mine, Caballero Claims, or McKinley Mine 1880's, in some sources - note the Sherman Mine also went by Caballero) is in the draw to the west of the Ready Pay Mine and east of the Stowaway Mine (see 1909 quadrangle map with names added, top right, and trail map bottom right). This pattern of mining (every draw has a mine) seems to prevail on the western and southern flanks of the mountains on the southern and western edges of Copper Flat.

The McKinley Mine produced gold, copper, and silver from various ores, including: calcite, quartz, gold, copper, silver, chalcopyrite, and argentite.

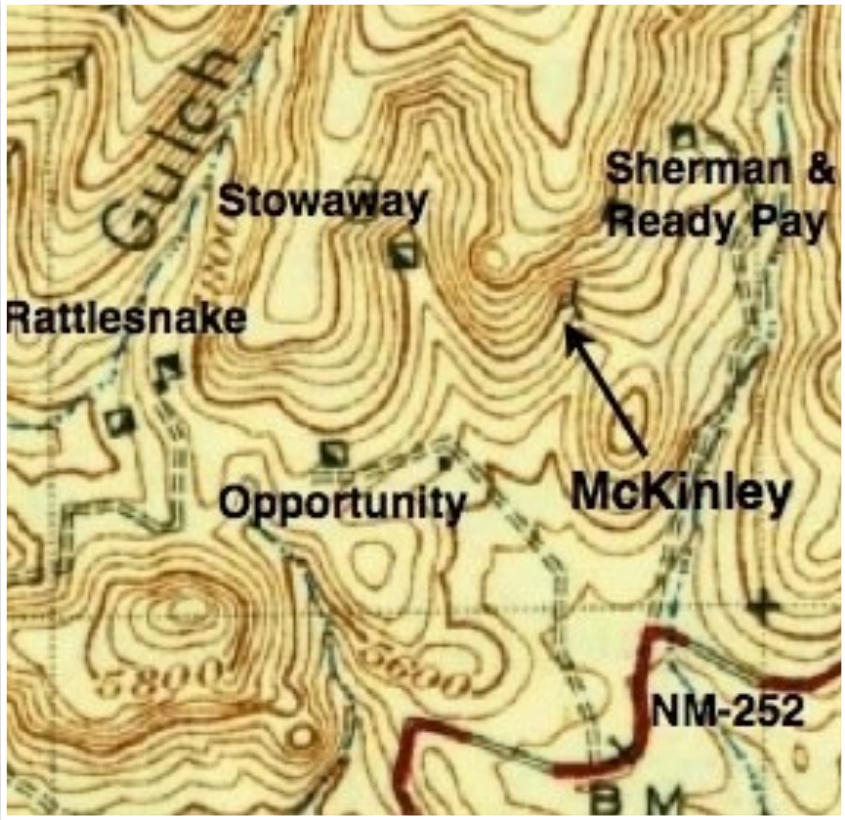
The McKinley Mine operated, at times, between 1885 and 1928. It was owned by Tom Arnett of Santa Rita, New Mexico and Martin Conoby of Hillsboro, New Mexico.

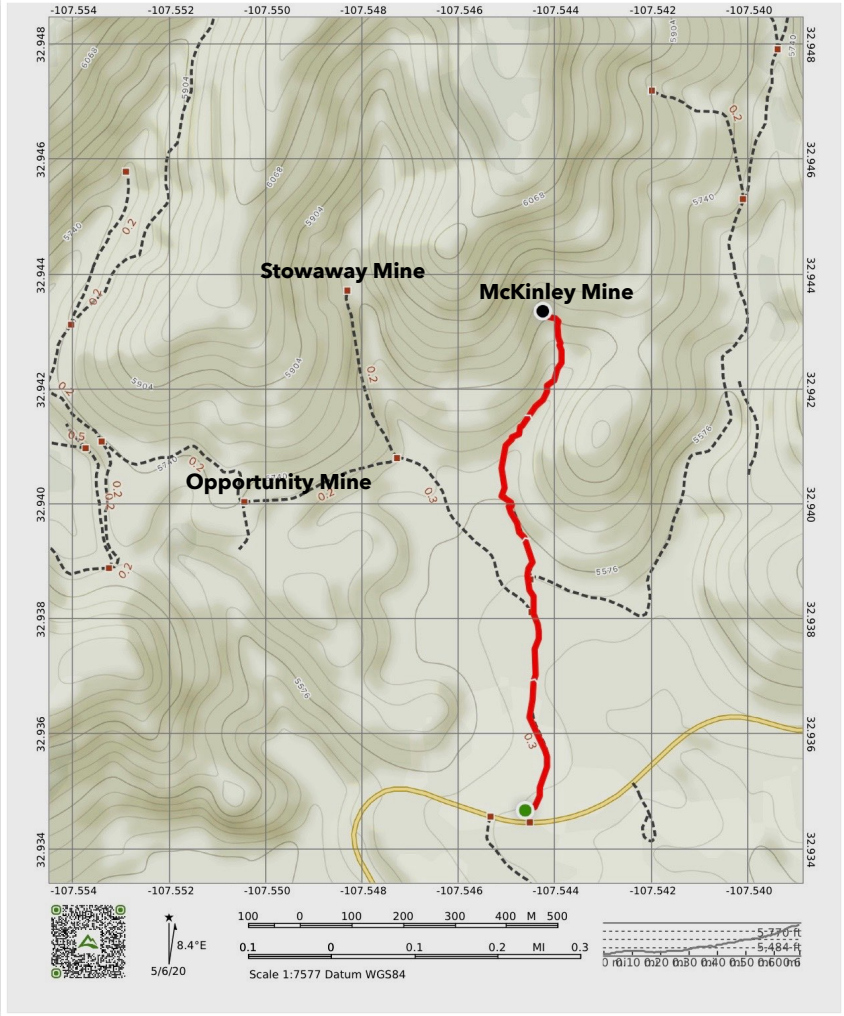
***Western Mining History* provides these comments about the mine: "Deposits occur as shoots in a northeast striking vein ranging from 3 ft. to 4 ft. in width. High-grade seams of ore within the vein range from stringers to 18 in. in width. Shoots of ore were reported to be 15 ft. to 30 ft. in length and 10 ft. to 20 ft. in height … Vein is part of a radial system of veins associated with the copper flat monzonite porphyry … Workings reported in 1934 (see Harley, Bulletin 10) consisted of a 500 ft. tunnel, another short tunnel, a raise which connects the two tunnels, some drifting and stoping." (A raise is an excavation which joins two levels of a mine, it may be vertical or inclined in orientation.) The photographs on the following page show the interior of the upper adit (tunnel or mine), including the opening of the raise (June 12, 2016).**

Outside the lower adit (in particular) there are a few pieces of old mining equipment, including part of the ventilation system. Keeping mines "dewatered" (yes, mines on the side of the mountain would often flood) and well supplied with air was a constant challenge for the miners in this area. Equipment is of varying age.

Video of this area, and mine, may be viewed at this link.

This is a modest walk of .7 miles (from NM-152 to the mine) and an elevation gain of about 225 feet. The route follows an old mining road which is rocky in the upper



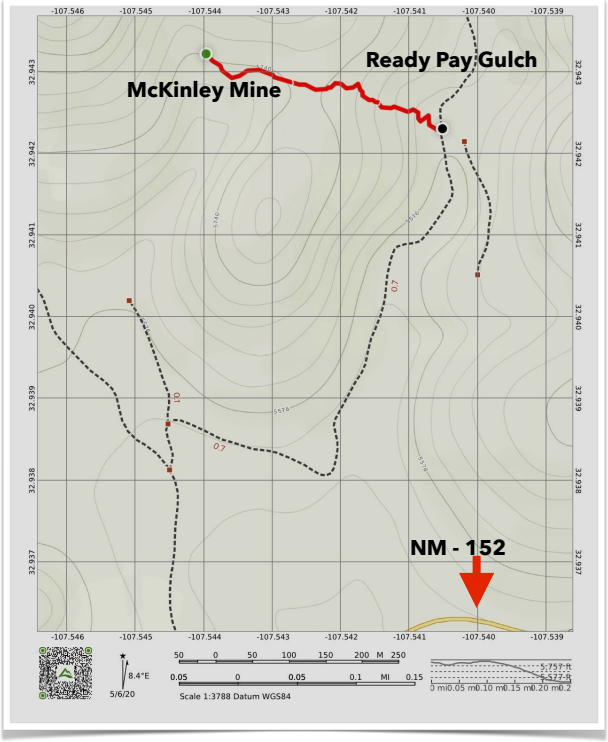


reaches. This is snake country so exercise prudent "snake watching" as you place your feet carefully.

We have combined this walk with a .3 mile walk to the east (see next page), across a saddle and down a couple of hundred feet into Ready Pay Gulch. We then headed back to the gate on NM-152, making for a 2 miles round-trip.

The photograph immediately above is of the interior of the lower adit. The exterior is shown below. (Both photographs from June 12, 2016.)

Mines in this area are unstable and there are many examples of caved adits and crumbling shafts. They are inherently dangerous.



Ipomopis longiflora, Trumpet Gilia, at the gate on NM-152, at the start of the walk. May 2.

Mirabilis linearis, Ribbon Four O'clock, shown below left and on the following page made quite a show in May. This species can be difficult to separate from White Four O'clock, shown below right, *Mirabilis albida*. We found this species as we wandered down Ready Pay Gulch on our return to the trailhead.

Gomphrena caespitosa, Ball Cover, is common in this general area in early May.

View south from McKinley Mine.

7. Stowaway Mine

The Stowaway Mine is an abandoned gold mine at 32°56'40.73" N by 107°32'53.77". The short trail (.84 miles each way) to the mine shaft shown on the following page starts at an elevation of 5,496' at a parking area just off of NM-152, east of Hillsboro, New Mexico. Near the end of the walk, the trail reaches its maximum elevation of 5,787' (see elevation profile on the following page).

The walk is entirely on an old mining road with the usual loose cobbles and small stones. The usual culprits and dangers are present so be watchful. Route finding is obvious. There are a couple of washouts on the road so there is a bit of clambering required. The trail shown here ends at the main shaft, it is possible to follow the wash uphill. Since there are remains of an old road I suspect that there was additional mining above this point.

It is possible to follow the wash as an alternate, a more interesting route.

There is very little information about the mine itself. There are some surface trenches in the area but no apparent adits, what appears to be the main shaft was framed (much of the side framing appears to still be in place) and either a structure above the shaft has collapsed onto it or lumber has been piled on top of the shaft (see photos). Just north of the shaft is a concrete platform with pipes embedded - this was probably the location of the winch which was used to raise and lower miners and raise ore and rock. There are a number of scrape metal pieces about.

In late 2025, aerial video of this mine was added to the Mines of the Black Range showcase.

The view from the mine, the trail (road) is at center right. The photographs shown in this entry were taken on August 30, 2015.

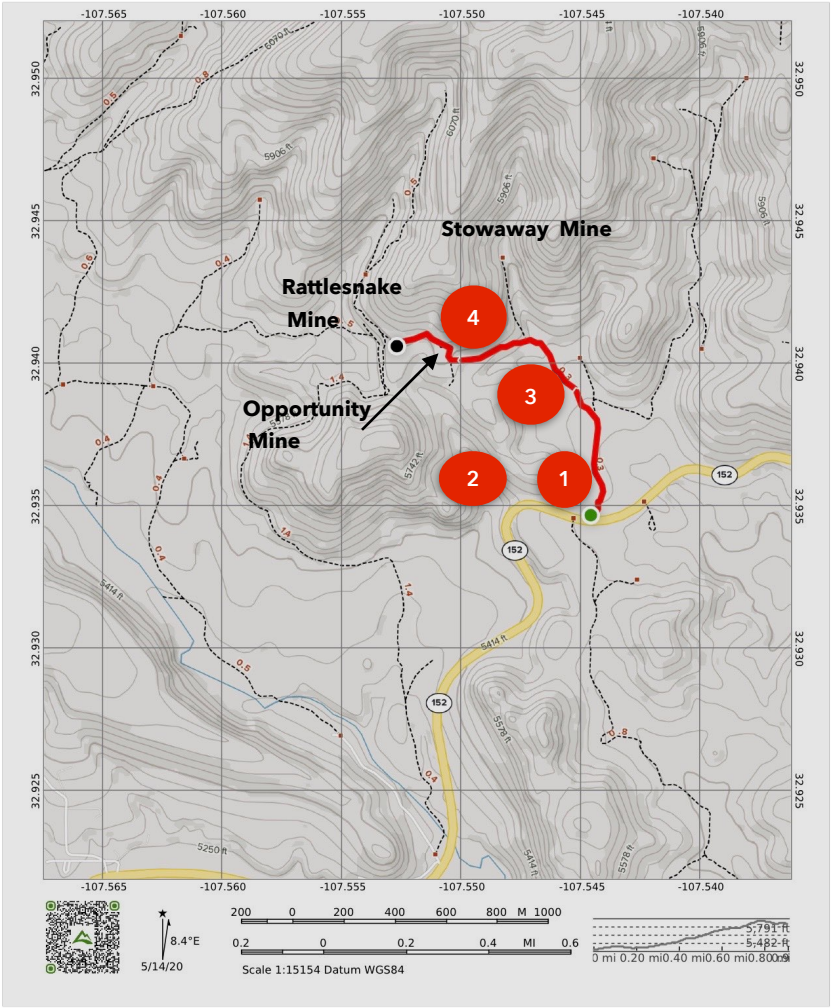
5496 ft
Tour Guide
0.10 mi
0.20 mi
0.30 mi
0.40 mi
0.50 mi
0.60 mi
0.70 mi
0.84 mi

8. Opportunity Mine

This walk starts at a pull-out on NM-152 (the first gated road on the left - north - after you crest the hill coming out of Hillsboro) and ends near the Opportunity Mines. From the parking area, pass through a gate and proceed north up the road. Just past a barbwire gate a road forks to the right and crosses a wash, this trail is listed as Ready Pay - North of NM-152, in our inventory. For the walk described here, stay left at this fork and continue uphill, staying to the left at the next road intersection.

Just before a relatively level section of road the Opportunity Mine and a miner's cage (see photo at right - 4 on the map) is just off the uphill side of the road (your right). Workings of the mine can be seen uphill and downhill from this point.

If there has been some rain in the recent past there is a good chance that Ocotillo, *Fouquieria splendens*, will be in bloom at the start of the trail (1). Pictured below.



The description of the walk to the McKinley Mine, in particular covers some of the natural history along the first part of the walk - from the gate on NM-152 to the barbwire ranch gate. This section of the walk is of particular interest because it crosses a section of exposed limestone. Ocotillo grows well on limestone.

On the ridge to the west of the road, growing in the cracks of limestone, there are young *Agave parryi neomexicana*, New Mexico Agave, just getting a start, see center left on the next page and "2" on the map.

McKinley Mine is visible at the upper right in the photo above, taken from the location where the Agave are found.

At the top of the pass there are ruins from the mining operations (see later photographs). There is a 300 foot elevation gain along this walk which is .9 miles in length.

***Mimosa aculeaticarpa var. biuncifera* (Wait a Minute Bush) grows all along this walk (see top of the next page). It can be a pain to walk through but in mid-May when it is in flower, the smell is wonderful. It is especially common in the area marked as "3" on the map.**

The Opportunity Mine

The Sierra Consolidated Gold Mining Company may serve as an example of the mining model of the early 1900's. "*Moody's Manual of Railroads and Corporation Securities*" (1906) description of the Opportunity Mine and its operations is shown on the following page.

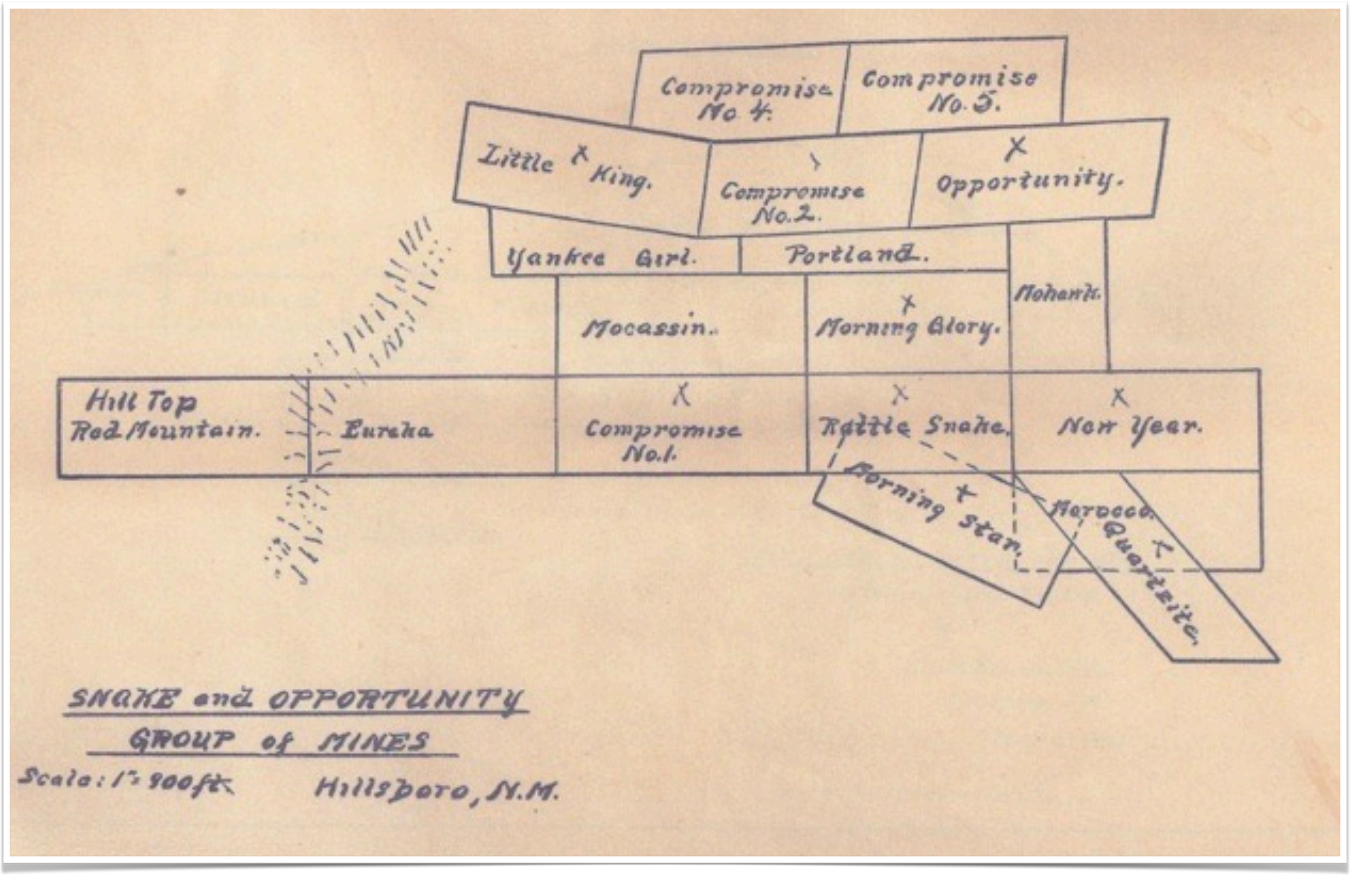
Operations of the Rattlesnake and Opportunity Mine groups had been combined by the Sierra Consolidated Gold Mining Company. The Mining Company's prospectus showed the consolidated claims, see bottom image on the following page.

Individual claims were often considered insufficient to warrant mining operations and were combined into various "groups" (north is to the left on this map).

Sierra Consolidated was incorporated in West Virginia on December 1, 1902 (for a term of 50 years) with a place of business listed as Hillsboro and a capitalization of $3,000,000. It acquired the Snake and Opportunity properties from Henry M. Porter of Denver shortly after incorporating and began selling shares and interest ("*Report of the Director of the Mint Upon the Production of the Precious Metals in the United States During the Calendar Year 1902*", Washington, GPO, 1903, p. 175). When the term of the corporation expired, the state of New Mexico simply listed it as delinquent - along with page after page of mining and milling companies formed in that era.

The Opportunity Mine was the last of the shafts which Steve Elam and I visited on March 12, 2015 (the date of the next two photographs) and documented in the video: "Mines of the Hillsboro Mining District - Volume One".

The Opportunity Mine is adjacent to the Rattlesnake Mine to the west and lies at the southern end of the Animas Hills. In *The Geology and Ore Deposits of Sierra County, New Mexico* George Townsend Harley reports that the Opportunity produced $670,000 in ore.



Office, care of Storer & Co., 46 Cedar Street, N. Y. C.

SIERRA CONSOLIDATED GOLD MINING CO.—Incorporated in 1903, in West Virginia. Mines located near Hillsboro, Sierra County, New Mexico, comprising the Rattlesnake Group and opportunity Group, in all 19 full and fractional claims. The properties have been worked in the past in a desultory and non-scientific way, and under the crude methods used, have produced between two and three million dollars, and there is said to have been left on the dumps, and in the stopes ore of a lower grade, to the value of about $1,500,000. The company is proceeding with development work, and purposes erecting a stamp mill and plant in connection with the Rattlesnake Group, capable of treating 200 tons of ore daily, and a pumping plant of sufficient capacity to furnish water to treat at least 500 tons of ore daily. The development of the Opportunity Group will follow, which, when accomplished will place the company in position to treat 400 tons of ore daily.

Capital Stock.—Authorized and issued, $3,000,000. Par, $1. Full paid and non-assessable. $1,000,000 of the stock has been donated to the treasury of the company,

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for the purpose of development of the mines, purchasing of adjoining properties, and the general business of the company.

Bonded Debt.—Authorized, $1,000,000 6% cumulative registered five year bonds; due Jan. 2, 1908. Equitable Trust Co., New York, Trustee. The company can dispose of these bonds at par only, but it gives with the bonds thus issued, an equal amount of treasury stock at par as a bonus. The capital of the bonds is divided into 20 equal instalments of 5% each, represented by coupons attached to the bonds. The company can at any date when interest is payable, viz., either on July 2, or Jan. 2, call in these coupons and pay them off, and it is bound to do so within the life of the bond. Bonds are in denomination of $100 and multiples.

Management.—Officers: Warner Miller, Pres., New York; Robt. H. Hopper, Vice-Pres., Hillsboro, N. M.; William Buchanan, Vice-Pres., New York City; Max Miller, Treas., Herkimer, N. Y.; Louis Chable, Sec., New York City.

Office, 100 Broadway, New York City.

SILVER KING MINING CO.—Incorporated in Utah, Aug. 23, 1892. Property

At the time of our visit (and as of January 2026), the cage was still located near the shaft. This is the cage which was used to lower and raise miners, toward the end of mining here a large crane was apparently brought in for the effort.

Standing by the cage, you can see the workings above the main shaft where the miners were following a vein (photo next page). If you turn around and look down slope, you can see additional workings (shafts and trenches) where the vein was followed downhill to the southwest.

In late 2025, aerial video of this mine was added to the Mines of the Black Range showcase.

What was happening at the Sierra Consolidated properties during the company's existence? Or more particularly what was being reported? The prospectus was being heavily marketed in the years following incorporation (starting in 1903) and operations at the mines began, and the selling of shares continued, see *The Ore Deposits of New Mexico*, Waldemar Lindgren et al., Professional Paper 68 of the United States Geological Survey, Washington, 1910, p. 210.

In 1906, *The Mining Reporter* noted that Sierra Consolidated was "retimbering the three compartment shafts on its Snake and Opportunity groups and is making a number of other improvements. A traction line is to be built from Hillsboro to Osceola and a large milling plant is to be erected." (*The Mining Reporter*, Volume 53, p. 121, February 1, 1906). Two weeks later "*The Mining Reporter*" noted that "A traction engine and cars have been delivered at this company's" (Sierra Consolidated) "property and will be used on the road which will be built either from Lake Valley or Osceola to Hillsboro. The company is preparing to unwater its Snake mine and to erect a hoist on the main shaft of the Opportunity. It is also reported that the company will, as soon as possible, erect a fifty-stamp mill." (*The Mining Reporter,* Volume 53, p. 181, February 15, 1906.) Three months later *The Mining Reporter* was reporting that "Work on the traction road from Osceola to Hillsboro will commence soon and will probably be concluded before the rainy season sets in." (*The Mining Reporter*, Volume 53, p. 501, May 17, 1906.) And, a few months later, February 21, 1907, *The Mining Reporter* was reporting that "according to local reports, this district is more active than it has been in years. The most extensively operating companies are the Sierra Consolidated Gold Mining Co. and the Empire Gold Mining & Milling Co.." (*The Mining Reporter*, Volume 55, p. 192, February 21, 1907.)

An image from the video, this is not an embedded video and it is not a link. In February 2025 we produced a video of aerial footage of this mining operation.

Just a year later, however, on March 26, 1908, *Mining American* was reporting that "E. S. Neal, receiver of the Sierra Cons. Gold M. Co., has headquarters at Hillsboro, NM." (*Mining American*, Volume 57, p. 328, March 26, 1908) and that (May 14, 1908) "leasers are profitably operating on the Snake and Opportunity Mines, with occasional shipments of high-grade ore." (*Mining American*, Volume 57, p. 478, May 14, 1908.)

Two years later, (March 3, 1910) *Mining American* noted that "The Statehood Mines Co., which took over the late Sierra Consolidated at receiver's sale, will unwater the old workings and rumor has it that shortly after this work is done actual operations on the property are to begin." (*Mining American,* Volume 61, p. 213, March 3, 1910.)

Eight years later (March 11, 1916), *The Engineering and Mining Journal* reported that "John M. Sully and associates, of the Chino Copper Co., have taken an option on the Snake and Opportunity mines. Consideration, $75,000. Force of workmen has been set to work unwatering and retimbering the main shaft. New shaft is being sunk on Snake, from which crosscuts will be extended to tap veins. This mine formerly produced several million dollars in gold and copper." (*The Engineering and Mining Journal*, Volume 101, p. 500, March 11, 1916.). A week later, (March 18) it was reported that a "Big Diesel engine being put in shape for operation...hiring skilled labor and engineers ... preparatory to beginning unwatering." (*The Engineering and Mining Journal*, Volume 101, p. 540, March 18, 1916) And on April 22, "Diesel engine now in operation. Station at 300-ft. level Opportunity mine being retimbered." (*The Engineering and Mining Journal*, Volume 101, p. 554, April 22, 1916)

In 1920, *The Mines Handbook* reported: "Sierra Consolidated Mining Co. (is) out of business. Property taken over by Statehood Mines Co., both of which companies were reported into bankruptcy through incompetent management and spectacular get-rich-quick financing. Mine now operated by the Snake and Opportunity Mines Co." (see excerpt top right - *The Mines Handbook*, by Walter Weed, Volume. 14, 1920, p. 1258.)

These mines changed hands frequently, with each new owner reporting the same activities and the same prospect of substantial profits. What was happening? See "Played Out In Minneapolis: The Rise? and Fall? of a Hillsboro Mining Venture" by Mark Thompson, for one possible scenario (February 2014 issue of *Guajalotes, Zopilotes, y Paisanos* - Newsletter of the Hillsboro Historical Society). Was Sierra Consolidated plagued by bad business decisions or was it just another mining fraud?

Much of the mining money of the west was made from (not by) investors responding to prospectus like those floated by Sierra Consolidated. Ferreting out the real from the fraud was often very difficult. At roughly the same time that the Sierra Consolidated Gold Mining Company was circulating its prospectus, "the post office department lately issued a fraud order against the Hillsboro Consolidated Mines Co., alleging that the company purchased a defunct mine in the Hillsboro camp for $9,950, capitalized the company for $2,000,000 and sold a large amount of stock, the money from which went into the pockets of the promoters rather than into the development of the property." (*The Mining Reporter,* Volume 56, p. 411, October 31, 1907.)

SNAKE AND OPPORTUNITY MINES CO. NEW MEXICO

Address: 50 Broad St., New York City, N. Y. **Mine office:** Hillsboro, N. Mex.

Officers: H. L. Carr, pres.; E. F. Carlson, v. p.; E. L. Kerstetter, sec.-treas.; N. C. Sheridan, mgr.

Inc. June, 1919, in Delaware. **Cap.**, $1,000,000; $1 par; 800,000 shares outstanding. Company is controlled by the Mines Holding and Operating Corporation of New York, through ownership of 450,000 shares of stock together with an option on 200,000 additional shares.

Property: 28 claims, 5 patented, about 400 acres, near Hillsboro, Sierra county, formerly owned by the Sierra Consolidated Mining Co. and later by Statehood Mines Co., both of which companies were reported forced into bankruptcy through incompetent management. Property contains 3 gold bearing fissure veins in andesite.

Development: by 3 shafts, 570', 458' and 240' deep. Company reports 170,000 tons of low grade ore, assaying $5-$10 per ton, broken in the stopes, having been left by former operators as filling.

Equipment: 50-h. p. gasoline hoist, compressor, 100-gal. pump and oil engines.

Reported that property produced over $2,000,000 gross, previous to 1901. Present company expects to ship in 1920.

There are many who will claim to see parallels between the past and present. I simply note that it is often difficult to tell bad business decisions from fraud and hopes/aspirations from reality. In the end, however, there are more than a few crooks in our local history.

9. South of the Opportunity

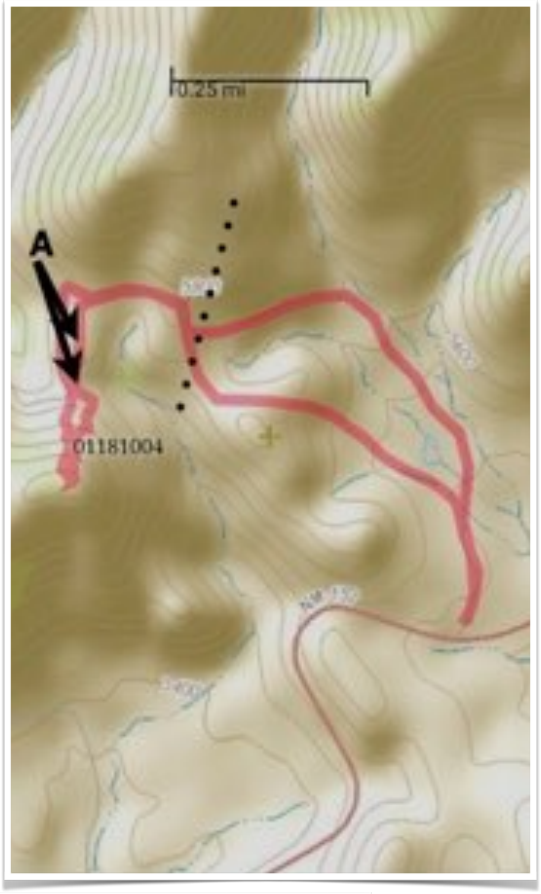
On January 18, 2017, we took a walk up to the top of the hill southeast of the Opportunity Mine, west of the Virginia Claim, northeast of Hillsboro. The hill is unnamed and has a summit of 5,856′. The walk was 2.2 miles and has an elevation gain of about 360′. The walk is shown in red on the topographic map to the right. The walk starts at a parking area on NM-152 east of Hillsboro (first gated road on the north as you crest the hill leaving Hillsboro).

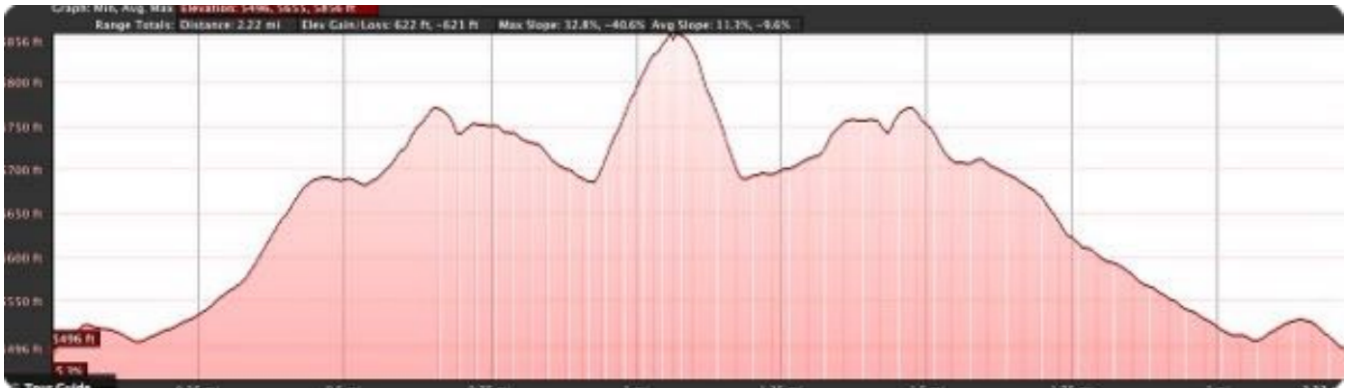
The purpose of the walk was simple enough, we had some rain in January and in the Black Range it snowed. So we were off to a high point to see the range.

In addition to views of snowy peaks we had nice views of the major mines in the area. The small size of claim sites, and of the mining areas generally is really reinforced when you are afforded a "birds eye view" of the countryside.

The elevation profile for the walk is shown at the bottom of this page.

The walk crosses several of the geologic units platted on the Hillsboro Quadrangle Geologic Map, as shown immediately below.





The diggings of the Opportunity Mine are shown by the dotted line on the map on the previous page and on the photograph to the right.

Mining was along veins which radiated from the Copper Flat area in the Hillsboro Mining District so claims were simply made at various points along the vein. Over the ridge from the Opportunity diggings, for instance, is the Stowaway Mine. Both are on the same vein which originates at Copper Flat.

The topographic map with route overlay on the previous page shows the location of the two structures pictured on this and the following page ("A"). There are several structures scattered about the area which were associated with the mines. I am not certain if the structures shown here were part of the infrastructure of the Rattlesnake Mine (which is located roughly where the "A" is on the diagram and which has several structures associated with it) or with the Opportunity Mine (given the joint ownership of the mines, at times, this may be a moot question). The chimney shown below right presents interestingly on Google Earth. The aerial images used by Google are vertical, the chimney does not have any features which allow the algorithm used by Google to translate it into a "ground view", so all you can see of the chimney on Google Earth is the very top of the opening and the shadow. If you sweep to ground view there is nothing there.

Snow in the Black Range, January 18.

10. Warm Springs Wash (South)

Studying the geology of the Hillsboro area is a great excuse for taking a walk. In this case, a short walk which parallels NM-152 east of Hillsboro. Not only is this walk a wonderful example of the cross-country options of this area, but it meanders through several geologic units. The walk begins at the crest of the hills east of Hillsboro and heads down slope to the windmill* at the beginning of the Hillsboro Transfer Station Road. The distance (one-way) is only 1.2 miles and the elevation drop is only 320 feet. It is an easy amble across loose rock, so the typical precautions should be taken and typical "dangers" are present/possible (e.g. twisted ankles and rattlesnakes).

It is also a trip through time. p€g is Proterozoic (as in a billion years ago), Oep is Ordovician (485 - 443 million years ago), Kwsm is late Cretaceous (ca. 70 million years ago), Tsf is from the Miocene (ca. 20 million years ago), Tb is from the Pliocene (ca. 2.5 million years ago), Qca is from the late Pleistocene (150,000 years ago), and the other "Q's" are from the Holocene (generally younger than 100,000 years old). In more recent times, the "Virginia Claim" existed near the beginning of the walk (roughly beneath the arrow at the box with a cross). In addition to gold; cerussite, Ilmenite, vanadinite, and wulfenite were found at that location.

Just north of the "Qca" indicator on the map, there are examples of the type of "improvements" that miners, from the late 1800's and early 1900's, made in this area to perfect their claim (photo above right).

During the colder months, walks in this area are about the geology. As summer approaches more and more of the walks are about biology. Something for every season here.

***The area at the windmill (roughly where the blue arrow is on the map to the right) is now a habitation and the gate is closed with a no trespassing sign.**

11. Rattlesnake Mine From NM-152

This walk starts just east of Hillsboro. It follows an old mining road, ruts and rocks are the only obstructions which you will encounter. The usual suspects are on-the-scene; rattlesnakes, Coyote, and Cougar are all possible - but not likely.

The walk starts (see map on the following page) near the intersection of NM-152 and the Hillsboro Transfer Station Road, on the eastern edge of Hillsboro. Enter the wash, head north, and take the first "road" to the right.*

*** The area at the windmill (where this walk starts) is now a habitation and the gate is closed with a no trespassing sign. Seek permission.**

There are two primary "objectives" for a walk up this route. The first objective is at the crest of a saddle where there are remains of structures associated with the old Snake Mine. These structures are shown in the "South of the Opportunity" Walk write-up. The round trip walk to this point is 4.1 miles, with about 500' of elevation gain (5,149' to 5,692').

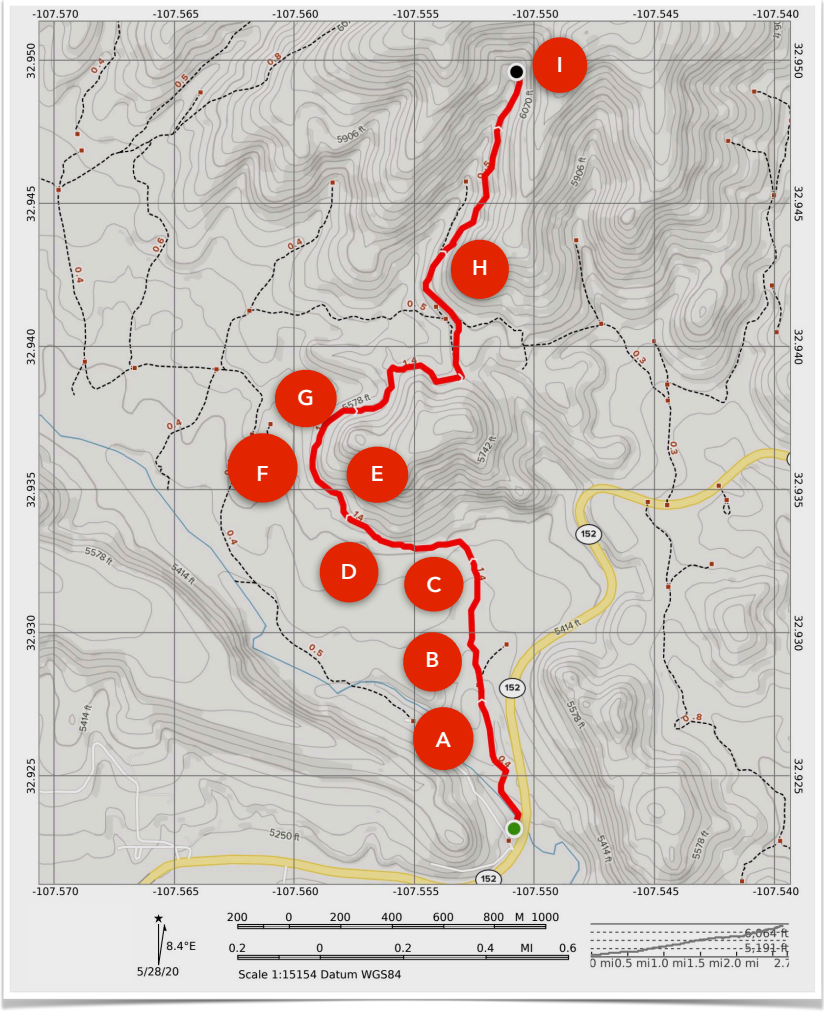
It is possible to continue up the road from the saddle heading roughly northeast at this point to the diggings above the Eureka Adit. The round trip walk to this point (the route shown on the map on the following page) is 5.3 miles with an elevation gain of about 875'.

This walk is very good for wildflowers, as are all of the walks east of Hillsboro - if there has been rain. It can be good for a variety of insects as well. Birds are typical of the area; Black-throated Sparrow is the most common bird, Cactus Wren, Curve-billed Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird are likely, and Black-chinned Sparrow has been seen here.

On stormy days, views along the walk can be quite dramatic.

A video of these mine sites can be viewed here.

A. In July, the *Desert Millipede, Orthoporus ornatus*, is abundant in this area. This species is found in the U.S. Southwest from Arizona east to Texas. Its range extends southward to San Luis Potosi in Mexico. It can be as long as six inches and feeds on both living and dead organic material, although it seems to prefer decaying matter. Although it can be found easily, in season, it is generally nocturnal and spends a great deal of time underground. It curls into a coil when frightened.



B. Also in July, and in the same habitat, the *Red Velvet Mite, Trombidium sp.* is fairly common. The individual shown here is possibly the Giant Red Velvet Mite, *Dinothrombium magnificum*. These creatures often emerge, from the ground, following the monsoonal rains. They prey, primarily, on termites and it is thought that their emergence is timed to coincide with termite blooms. Both the larval and adult stages can be cannibalistic.

C. Also in July, and in the same habitat, the Round-tailed Horned Lizard, *Phrynosoma modestum*, is common, feeding on Honeypot Ants (photo also at "C").

D. *Rhus microphylla*, Littleleaf Sumac, is one of the common shrubs which grows along the old mining road as you approach a gate in the fence line. This photo was taken in mid-May, earlier in the season it is covered in small white flowers.

E. *Echinocereus fendleri*, Fendler's Hedgehog Cactus, is one of several cactus species found in the area.

F. In mid May, *Menodora scabra*, Rough Menodora were just beginning to express themselves. In the United States, plants of the *Menodora* genus are limited to a range within the southwest. The range of *M. scabra* extends into Baja California and central/northern Mexico.

G. Clammyweed, *Polanisia dodecandra*, were just beginning to express themselves in mid May.

As you approach the saddle between the Opportunity and Rattlesnake Mines the concrete structures described in the Opportunity and South of the Opportunity walks become visible. At one time these structures were the on-site headquarters for the mines and even housed a restaurant.

Walking past the main Rattlesnake Mine shaft and the structures described in the Opportunity Mine walk you are presented with an opportunity to take the lower fork to the Eureka Adit or to take the right fork and head up-hill to the workings at the top of the canyon. It is the later which is mapped above.

H. At the fork you will probably find several examples of *Plantago pagagonica*, Wooly Plantain, as shown above from mid-May. This plant is common in the foothills east of Hillsboro. Unlike some of the other species shown here, this one has a range which is widespread. It is especially prevalent in the Rocky Mountains and Great Plains.

I. Near the end of this walk you will find the highest workings of the Rattlesnake Mine, most appear to be adits. In the case of the one shown here, there is a continuation of the tunnel to the rear of the photographer. It is not clear if the hole was created intentionally, to shorten the walk into the adit or if it is a cave in. Given the absence of a road to the tunnel entrance shown above I suspect that this was a cave-in. Cave-ins were not unusual in the adits of this area. In many cases, these tunnels followed veins which were not far below the surface – as opposed to others which were very deep and very long.

The Rattlesnake Mine

The Rattlesnake Mine, or simply Snake Mine, is located in the southwest portion of the Animas Hills near Hillsboro. There are a number of tunnels and shafts at this location. It is "right around the corner" from the Opportunity Mine. The photograph at the top of the following page is one of the classic "old photos" from the Hillsboro Mining District, it shows the Rattlesnake in about 1900.

SPECIAL NOTE: Right of access and trespassing restrictions seem to change frequently at this mining site. Follow the current rules please.

The Rattlesnake Mine, and the Eureka Tunnel in particular, is documented in *Mines of the Hillsboro Mining District - Volume One* which may be found in the *Mines of the Black Range Video Portfolio*.

A number of claims are in this area (see the Sierra Consolidated prospectus - in the Opportunity Mine discussion - for an idea of the claims which are the basis for the operation pictured on the following page). As with most of the mines in this area, mineralization occurred in the veins which extend from the Copper Flat site. The veins generally terminated at the major fault which runs down Warm Springs Canyon, crosses NM-152 about half way down the curves into town, and heads south crossing Percha Creek near the old mill site.

The diagram of the mine (at the bottom of the next page) is from *The Geology and Ore Deposits of Sierra County, New Mexico* by George Townsend Harley, p. 152. It shows

Along Warm Springs Wash, view from Snake Mine Road, east of Hillsboro, New Mexico

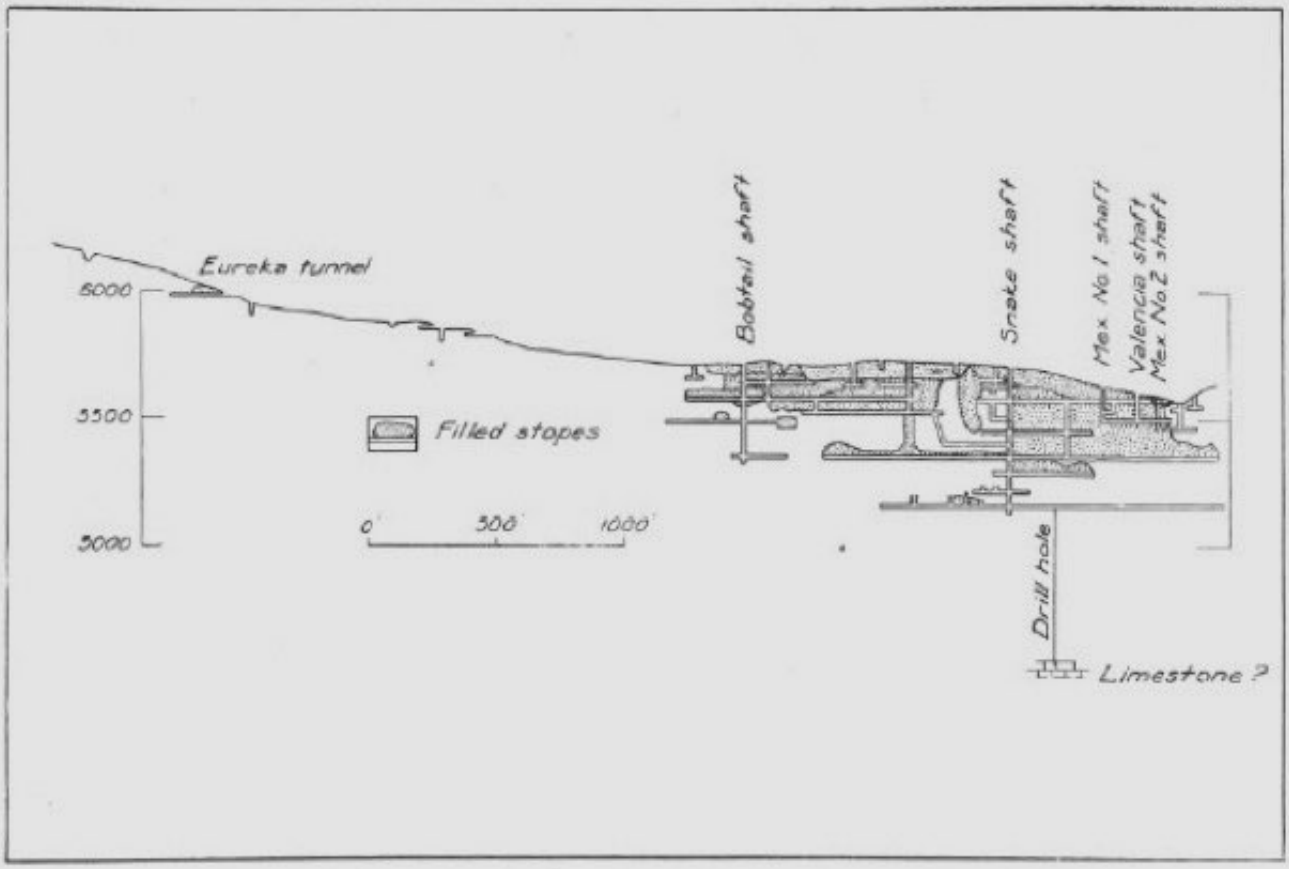


FIGURE 13.—Longitudinal section along Rattlesnake vein, showing old stopes and last development done before shaft and other workings caved. Looking east.

According to private reports seen by the writer the per-ton cost of mining was $1.04, milling $1.19, hauling $0.24, a total of $2.47. Assuming $2.50 as an average cost of working the ore and fill, thus neglecting all costs of developing new ore reserves, and taking an average of the old mill recovery figures of 75 per cent, there would be a local operating profit in treating the mine fill of $1.25 per ton or $125,000 ; for treating the ore in place $3.50 per ton, or a total of $210,000 ; and for dump ore there is an indicated profit of $15,000, making a total local operating profit on the above reserves of $350,000. Transportation costs to the railroad at Lake Valley when this mine was working were $4.00 per ton ; today they would be $1.70 to $2.00 per ton. Freight to El Paso is $1.00 per ton. In a mill of modern design a concentration ratio of 10 tons of ore into one ton of concentrate may be safely assumed.

the extensive working which went into many of the mines in this area. Harley reports (ibid. p. 153) that $1,500,000 worth of ore was taken from the Rattlesnake Mine. At page 156, Harley attempts to determine profitability of the workings (see top right).

Flooding was always a problem in the Hillsboro Mining District. At the time of our visit the Eureka adit was flooded, at some point piping and hoses had been left, doubtlessly as part of a "dewatering" effort. The ceiling of the tunnel was covered in wire "fencing" held in place by expansion bolts. (See photo above - the video referenced earlier provides an excellent perspective of the situation in the tunnel.)

The flooding in the Eureka Tunnel is (was) a common phenomenon in the mines of the Hillsboro Mining District.

As noted above, "dewatering" was always going on and obtaining and running the pumps that were required to purge the mines of water was an expensive endeavor. On numerous occasions we have found shafts and adits flooded relatively high on the side of the mountains. It is not uncommon to find old hoses and piping used in relatively recent times to dewater the mines.

At the same time, water is required for the processing of ore and there was always some attempt being made to provide the mines with water, "The Pipeline Trail" description (see later) notes some excellent examples of some of the work which was done. The water problem was mostly one of timing, the mine had to be dewatered for mining to occur, but the water pumped out of the mine could not be stored effectively. When ore processing was taking place there was no water.

Area outside the Eureka Tunnel

Above: Eureka Tunnel Entrance
All other photographs on this page: Buildings and shaft, down the road from the Eureka Tunnel, toward the main workings of the Rattlesnake Mine.

Shaft and buildings at the Eureka Tunnel and Rattlesnake Mine site. Steve Elam lowers video equipment into a shaft, see video.

12. Rattlesnake Mine From the Hillsboro Transfer Station

The western trail to the Rattlesnake Mine and Eureka Tunnel starts at the Hillsboro Transfer Station and heads northwest before turning generally northeast. Eureka Tunnel, in the upper right hand corner of this map is 2.3 miles from the Transfer Station. The route is entirely on old mining roads, the portion of the route which runs from west to east (about a quarter of the way from the top of the map) is the roughest and the last section of that portion is the steepest part of the walk.

The starting elevation is 5,195′ and the trail ends at 5,788′. There are several up and down sections along the walk so the total elevation gain on the walk is closer to 600′ than to the net gain of 508′. The main shaft of the Rattlesnake mine is at about 5,719′.

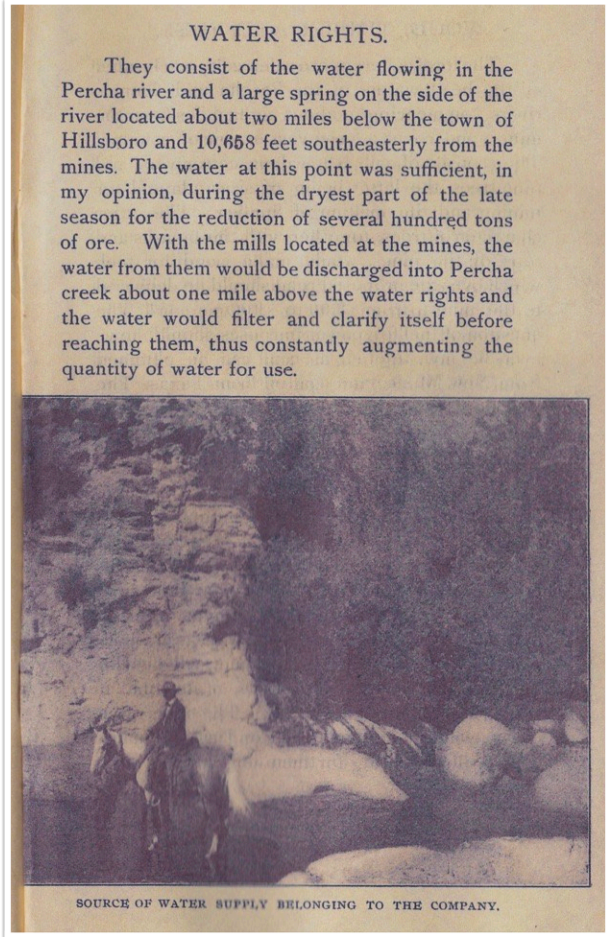
For most of the route the walking is very easy. Portions are quite rocky, however, and care should be taken. The usual natural culprits are possible along the trail. There is no shade on this route, take water as appropriate. The route ends at the Eureka Tunnel which is a flooded adit, part of the Rattlesnake complex. Access rights around the mine are unclear, we had permission from the curator of the mine to enter the Eureka Tunnel at the time we mapped this route.

Videos of the mine site may be viewed in the Mines of the Black Range showcase.

The Role of Water in the Rattlesnake and Opportunity Mine Groups

"*Moody's Manual of Railroads and Corporation Securities*" (1906) describes the Rattlesnake and Opportunity Mine operations of the Sierra Consolidated Gold Mining Company. It notes: "The company is proceeding with development work, and purposes erecting a stamp mill and plant in connection with the Rattlesnake Group, capable of treating 200 tons of ore daily, and a pumping plant of sufficient capacity to furnish water to treat at least 500 tons of ore daily." The company's prospectus (p. 5) notes that "It will also erect a pumping plant at the source of water supply which it owns and lay a pipe line of sufficient capacity to furnish water to treat at least 500 tons of ore daily."

The prospectus of the Sierra Consolidated Gold Mining Company includes a report by a mining engineer named William M. Farish. At page 39 of the prospectus, Mr. Farish discusses where the water needed for the mining operation is to be obtained.



WATER RIGHTS.

They consist of the water flowing in the Percha river and a large spring on the side of the river located about two miles below the town of Hillsboro and 10,658 feet southeasterly from the mines. The water at this point was sufficient, in my opinion, during the dryest part of the late season for the reduction of several hundred tons of ore. With the mills located at the mines, the water from them would be discharged into Percha creek about one mile above the water rights and the water would filter and clarify itself before reaching them, thus constantly augmenting the quantity of water for use.

SOURCE OF WATER SUPPLY BELONGING TO THE COMPANY.

13. Bonanza Mine

This walk starts at the Hillsboro Transfer Station and follows a mining road to the entrance of the Bonanza Mine. Total distance is about 3.4 miles (RT) with a gross elevation gain of about 360′, to roughly 5660′ in elevation. There is some up and down on this walk so the total gain/loss is somewhat greater than 360′.

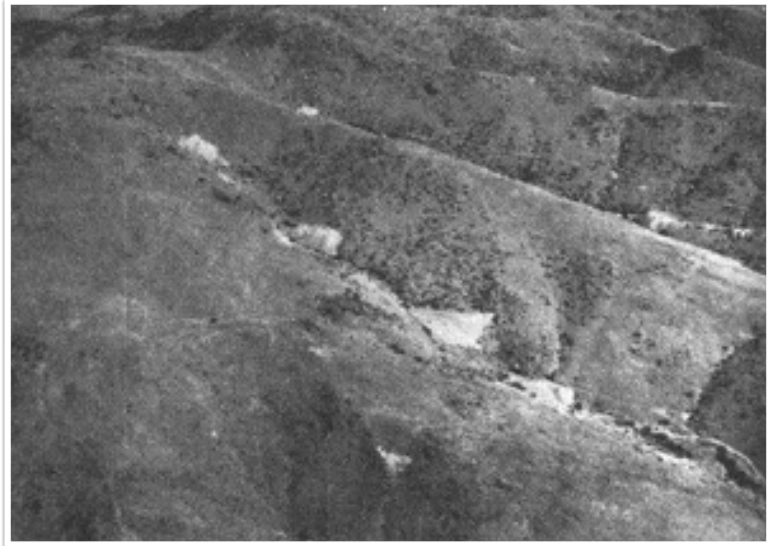
There is some loose rock and sand along the road but walking is relatively easy. The usual suspects may be present, including rattlesnake and Cougar - but you are not likely to encounter them. There is no shade along the route so summer hikes should be done early or late. In the spring, especially, the area is subject to strong winds.

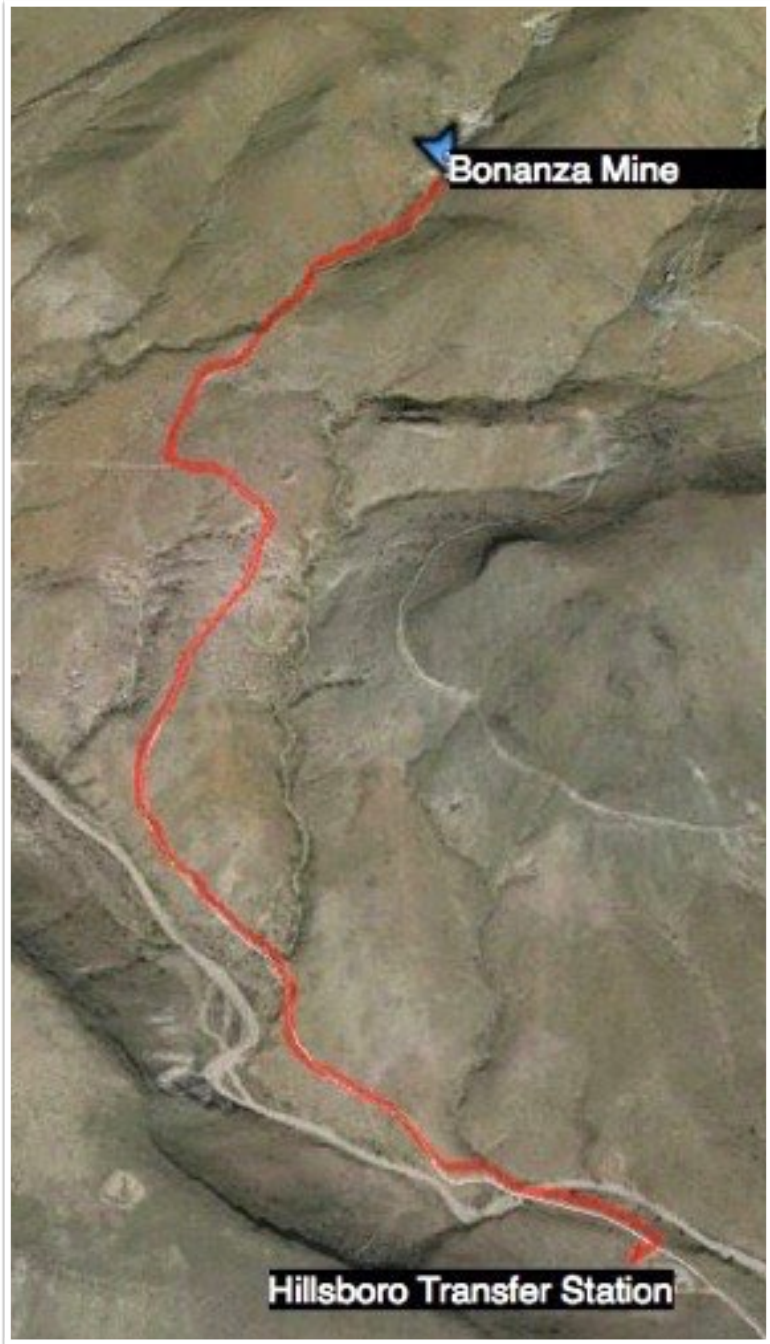
Do not enter the mine shaft (adit), there are several cave-ins in this shaft and evidence of substantial rock fall. Videos of the mine site can be viewed here: "Bonanza Mine" and "Mines of the Hillsboro Mining District - Vol. 1".

Bulletin 10 describes the location of the Bonanza as "in the arroyo east of the Garfield-Butler and Bigelow groups and west of the arroyo in which the Rattlesnake vein is located" (p. 148). An aerial view of the Bonanza (center of photograph) prior to 1934 is shown at the top right. Just over the ridge to the upper right (in the next wash) is the Rattlesnake.

Bulletin 10 describes the Bonanza as having three tunnels, one of which was caved in at the time of that report (1934). The two remaining tunnels, as of that date, were 3,500′ in length (caved in at about 2,200′) and 2,000′ in length (caved in at 1,800′) and were about 500′ underground at their deepest. Subsequent to that date, additional cave ins have occurred. At about 100′ the current tunnel has caved in, creating a hole which reaches the surface (see image below).

The major mineral taken from the mine was Gold. However, a variety of other minerals were found in the mine, including; acanthite, calcite, chalcocite, chalcopyrite, galena, limonite, pyrite, quartz, and sphalerite.chalcopyrite, galena, limonite, pyrite, quartz, and sphalerite.



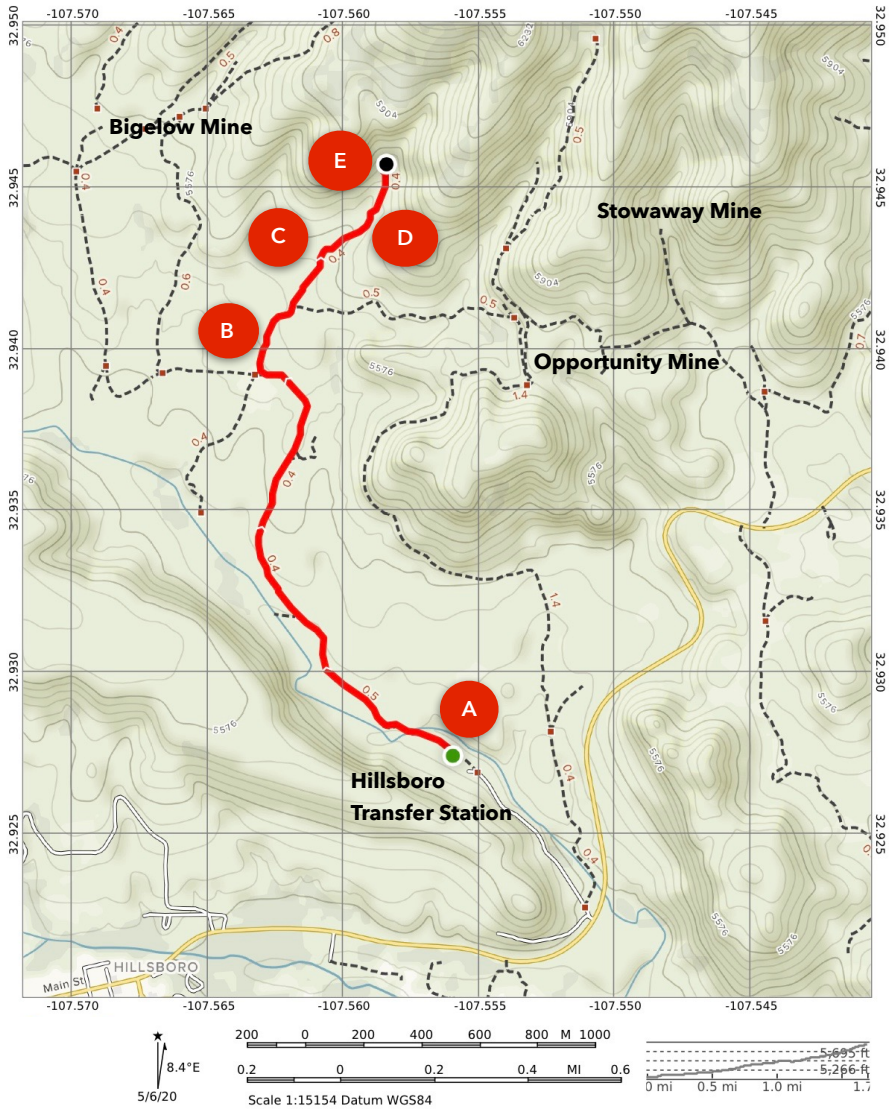


The nature of the veins that the miners followed varied, sometimes significantly within the same tunnel. In one of the Bonanza tunnels, the vein was a fracture zone 2-8′ wide in one spot and a shear zone 80′ wide in another.

The nature of the mineralization varied within a tunnel as well. The upper part of the veins tended to be oxidized. Oxidization "enriches" the ore by a natural chemical process. It was in the upper part of the veins that free-milling gold was found. "Free-milling gold" is that which has been effectively separated from other minerals, meaning that it could be recovered by concentrating methods without using chemical treatments. Such situations sometimes produce specimen gold. Harley (Bulletin 10, p. 149) reports that at the time of his survey he found "numerous pieces in which broken pyrite crystals were prevented from falling apart by heavy wires of gold". It is safe to say, that all of that is gone now. Now it is hard to find pyrite crystals period.

Although the shape of the production between 1877 and is not known by me, we do know that "The deposits in Snake and Wicks Gulches were mined by hand methods, mostly during the years immediately following the placer discovery in 1877." (p. 26, *Placer Gold Deposits of New Mexico*, by Maureen G. Johnson, Geological Survey Bulletin 1348, USGS 1972). Tunneling through hard rock by hand is hard work, even when some blasting is possible. In the middle of the photograph at the top of the next page, beneath the rope, a haul cart is visible. Rock, all of the rock excavated to make the tunnel, was loaded into carts like that pictured and hauled out of the tunnel, sometimes donkeys or mules were used to do the hauling, sometimes it was human power.

Mining is dangerous work, especially where the veins vary in size. Sometimes the vein was higher than the tunnel. In such cases, scaffolding was built inside the tunnel so the miners could stand on something higher than the tunnel floor and mine out the vein above. The scaffolding also provided some protection from rock fall, a leading cause of injury and death. The internal scaffolding shown at the top of the next page is at the point of the first cave-in in the Bonanza tunnel (the cave-in opened a hole to the surface).



The Bonanza Mine is in the Hillsboro Mining District. It was first mined in 1877. The entrance to the Bonanza mine, photo above, is located at:32°56′43.76″N 107°33′31.01″W.

A mill was constructed at the Bonanza in 1904, initially with 10 stamps - later increased to 20. In 1932 the mill was remodeled, "consisting of a grizzley, small jaw crusher, automatic disc feeder, a small gyratory crusher, and 10 stamps." (Harley, Bulletin 10, p. 151). The cost of the remodeled mill was between $25,000 and $30,000 (1932 dollars).

Ore from the new mill was processed as follows: "pulp from the stamps was fed into a patented shaking amalgamator, where the free gold was saved, thence to concentrating tables, where the sulfides were recovered and a final tailing product made" (Harley, Bulletin 10, p. 151).

From December 1904 to September 1905 the net proceeds from the mine were $34,721. That is equivalent to roughly $825,000 dollars in 2015, using simple inflationary adjustments. Using an equivalency model based on the price of gold the figure is close to $3.3 million (34,721/18.96 [1904 price of gold] = 1835 oz., 1835 x 1797+ [current price of gold - July 2020] = 3.3M). W. H. Bucher, who was the vice-president of the Sierra County Bank in Hillsboro, which handled the ore shipments from the Bonanza, said the value of those shipments was in the range of $700,000 (700,000/ 18.96 = 36,920 oz.) This data bit is not precise as to time or value but using it as a rough estimate of the production of the Bonanza, the gold produced by the Bonanza would fetch in the range of $66.1M in today's market (36,920 x 1797 = $66.1M.) (Note, however, that some sources report production of 21,900 oz., which would yield a value of $39.3M.) Harley (Bulletin 10, p. 140) reported that "During 1931-1933, activity was more general and more persistent in the camp, and mining and development work was done in the Bonanza... but most of the richer runs had already been discovered and removed, and it was only occasionally that such small-scale operations netted the worker more than a bare subsistence."

By the Second World War, mining had become so unprofitable in the mines of the Hillsboro Mining District that most of the rails, seen along the bottom left edge of the photograph to the right, were removed from the mines to aid the war effort.

Very little information is available about production costs (the mill costs referenced above are a rare bit of data). Wages were very low, still lower if you were Mexican or Chinese, there were no "benefits". Environmental and worker protections were non-existent. Even with greater mechanization, it is likely that production costs are (comparatively) significantly higher now than during the major mining periods of the late 1800's and early 1900's. Increased production costs and lower quality ore, more than likely, overshadow the increases in the price of gold.

In "*The Ore Deposits of New Mexico 1910*" (p. 276) Lindgren, Graton, and Gordon note that "The Bonanza Mine is operated by the Ameranza Mining Company... The Bonanza is the only mine which was producing ore in 1905. The ores are free milling, with sulphides of copper carrying gold and silver values. Smelter returns of gold, silver, and copper are made. The lower-grade ores are treated in the company's mill, located in the valley three-fourths of a mile north of Hillsboro, and the concentrates, together with the shipping ores, are sent to the smelter at El Paso . . The smelter returns on three car lots of rich shipping ore, as taken from the company's records, are as follows:

September, 1905, the net returns on ores from the Bonanza mine were as follows: Bullion, $23,801.51; concentrates, $4,821.02; shipping ore, $7,099.29; total, $35,721.82."

A Rock Screen, used to separate rock ore by size is still found outside of the mine entrance.

Smelter returns on ore from Bonanza mine, Hillsboro.

	Silver (ounces per ton).	Gold (ounces per ton).	Copper (per cent).	Iron (per cent).	Insoluble silica (per cent).	Sulphur (per cent).
1	27.0	8.20	10.8	13.4	55.80	17.2
2	32.8	8.35	14.7	16.6	45.01	17.1
3	37.1	9.40	16.5	17.1	41.60	16.2
Average	32.3	8.65	14.0	15.7	47.47	16.83

Quartz is the chief gangue mineral. In places the lode consists of a single vein from 2 to 8 feet in width; in others, of a branching system of thin seams occupying a shear zone from 2 to 7 feet wide. These lead out into the country rock on the foot-wall side. The dip is to the west at a high angle-nearly vertical. The ore bodies occur along the walls, here on one side and there on the other. Some distance in from the portal of the tunnel the vein branches, but the branches come together again farther on. At 2,000 feet from the portal of the lower tunnel the vein splits up into several small veins, branching out into the foot walls. At this point the main vein becomes barren, and at the time of visit (1905) crosscutting was in operation in the hope 'of locating the lode'. Mining operations here consist chiefly in drifting on the lode. Some of the upper tunnels extend through the hill and the lowest is about 2,000 feet in length. In 1905 forty men were employed, of whom twenty-five were at work underground. The mill, which had 10 stamps, was found insufficient and has been recently increased to 20 stamps. It began operations December 1, 1904, and up to

Large pieces of processing and ventilation equipment are sometimes found outside the mines in the Hillsboro Mining District. This equipment and the foundation work is outside of the Bonanza Mine.

Mine tailings follow the vein uphill at the Bonanza Mine.

A few flowers found along this walk in early May are shown below.
Letters correspond to those on the trail map shown earlier.

A. Prickly Poppy, Argemone pleiacantha, is a common flower of this area but finding one before it has opened can be quite an event.

***B. Allionia incarnata*, Trailing Windmills, early May**

***C. Glandularia bipinnatifida*, Dakota Vervain - Early May**

***D. Hoffmannseggia glauca*, Hog Potato, on the road below the Bonanza Mine, early May**

E. *Datura wrightii*, Jimsonweed, at the Bonanza Mine entrance, early May.

14. Bigelow Mine

There are a number of variations in the spelling of this mine's name; Bigelowe, Bigelow, and Big-Lo being the major variants that you may encounter. This walk starts at the Hillsboro Transfer Station and follows an old mining road for a little over 2.1 miles (4.2 miles RT) on the route depicted in the map (below right) or alternatively via Route 2 for about 2.35 miles (4.7 miles RT) on the map on the next page. This walk ends at the shafts of the Bigelow Mine. The net elevation gain is about 400 feet, there is some up and down along the road so the gross gain/loss in elevation is somewhat greater than 430 feet. The mine is at an elevation of 5,677 feet.

At about 1.6 miles from the Transfer Station, on the shorter route, there are foundations for structures associated with the near-by mines. The foundations are shown as a way point, yellow circle on the map, and in the photograph below.

Loose rock and sand present the greatest difficulty along this walk. The walking is easy but there is no shade on the route. During the summer try to do this route early or late in the day. In the spring, especially, this route is subject to strong winds.

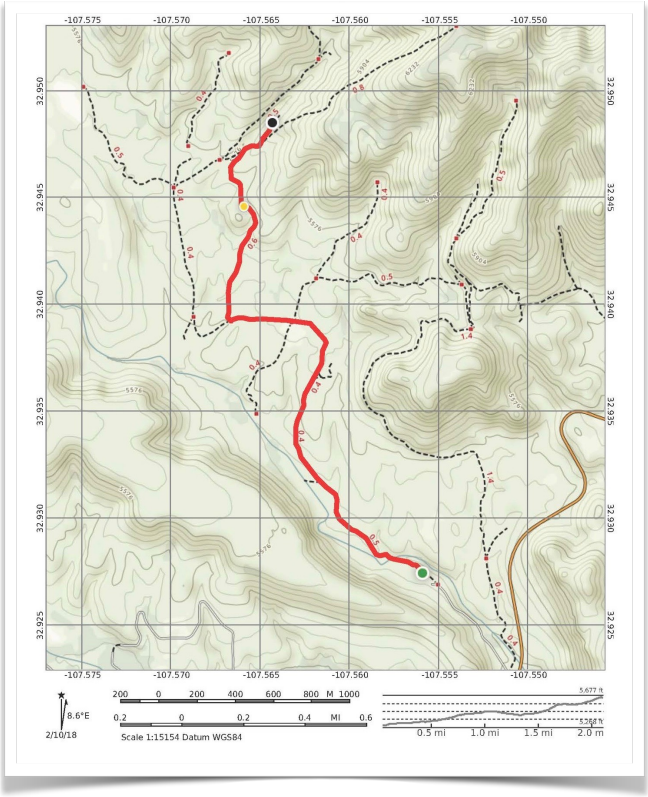
You may encounter rattlesnakes, Cougar, etc. but it is not likely. The largest fauna you are likely to see is Mule Deer.

The photograph at the top of the page was taken on May 3, 2015, looking west from the mine site.

Videos of the mine site can be viewed here: Bigelow Mine; Mines of the Hillsboro Mining District - Vol. 2; and Mines of the Hillsboro Mining District - Vol. 1. Federico Antonio Chavez Luna describes working at/in this mine in his video interview.

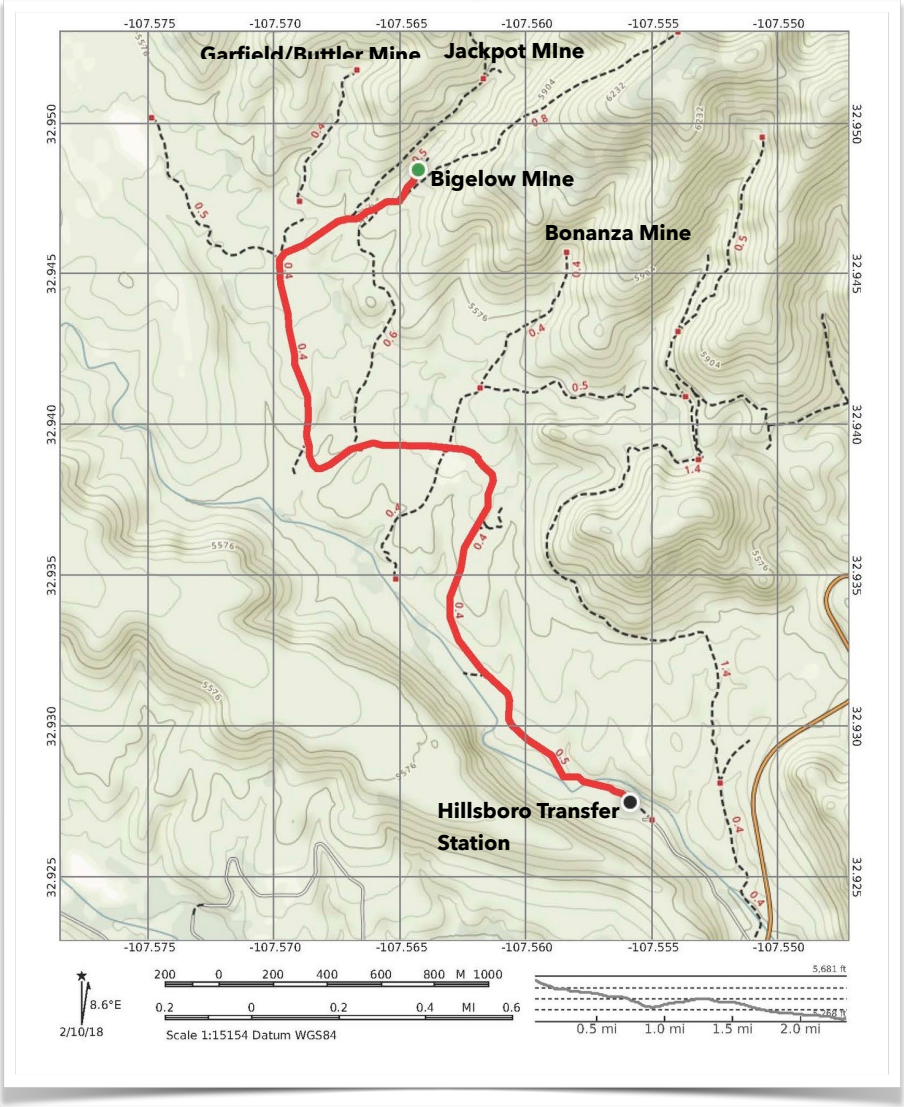
The Mine

In "The Geology and Ore Deposits of Sierra County, New Mexico" by George Townsend Harley this mine is referred to as the Bigelow Group (p. 144). The Bigelow claims were in a valley at about 6,000 feet on the west slope of Richmond Mountain. The valley to the north is where the Garfield/ Butler Mine Group was and the Bonanza Mine was located in the valley to the south. Harley (ibid. p 145) believed that the vein that was worked at the Bigelow Mine was an extension of the vein mined at the Mary Richmond Mine on the east side of Richmond Mountain.



On March 12, 2015, the main shaft at the Bigelow Mine was found to be finished by boards on all sides for the first 90 feet (framegrab at the bottom is from video taken by Steve Elam at about 90 feet).

In Bulletin 39, "*The Metal Resources of New Mexico and Their Economic Features Through 1954*" (the State Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources - published in 1957), Eugene Carter Anderson notes that "The Anderson Extension, Biglow, El Oro, Snake, Black Peak, and Portland properties were worked for short periods in 1950 and 1951. In 1952 the district produced 125 ounces of gold." (p. 124)



The "Diggings" website notes that A. L. Bird (Frederico Antonio Chavez Luna's step-father) owned this mine from 1935 until 1950. In 1950 Manuel L. Trujillo obtained ownership. The mine first started production in 1885 and the last year of production was 1950. Gold, lead, and zinc are all present in the mining group. "The Bigelow claims consist of two northeast trending parallel oxidized veins which follow along latite dikes emplaced within fault-fracture zones. The western vein was reported to be 3 feet wide. The eastern vein was reported to be 12 to 18 inches wide and mineralized the full length of a 400 foot tunnel. The mine consists of three unpatented claims."

The gold ore specimen from the Bigelow Mine shown at the top left on the next page is housed in the Mineral Museum of the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology in Socorro, New Mexico.

Next to the headframe (see photo top right) of the main shaft is a stone hut (photos from March 12, 2015) which housed the winch which was used to lower and raise miners and ore. The winch is gone but in March 2015 a barrel stove was located in the corner (second photo from the top, at the right).

There are two shafts at the Bigelow Mine, both are deep and vertical. The sides of the shafts are unstable so great care is warranted. A fall would be fatal. The photo at the right is of the second shaft, which does not have a headframe. The fencing around the shaft is in disrepair. The sides of the shaft have calved over time and are very unstable. This shaft is about 100′ deep and appears to have a lateral mine to the north at that depth.

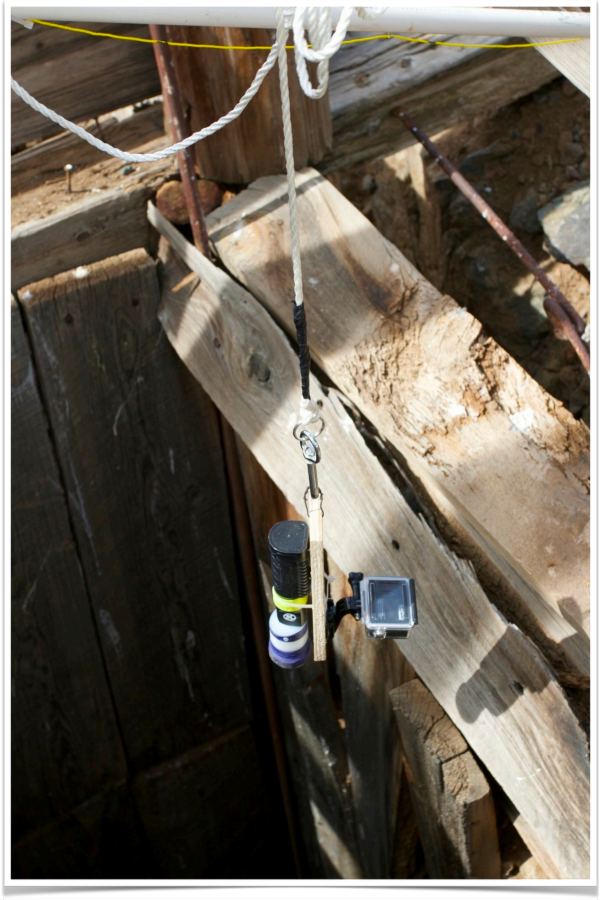
The bottom right photo is of the main shaft, below the headframe.

The photograph below and the one at the top of the following page were taken from across the ravine to the north and show the mine on December 16, 2017. Two views of the headframe are shown on the next page.

Images on the following pages show the headframe and shafts at the site. Steve Elam is shown working on the video recording for Mines of the Black Range. Elam is shown working with the equipment harness which he invented to enable these recordings.

There are several recordings of mines in this area. See the Mines of the Black Range video portfolio.

MERCATOR
MINERALS



15. Jackpot Mine

Like nearly all of the mines of the Black Range, the Jackpot Mine is nothing more than a hole in the ground these days. It is located on the southwest flank of Empire Peak (Lat: 32.95500 Long: -107.56167), roughly across the ravine from the Bigelow (Biglow or Big-Low) Mine.

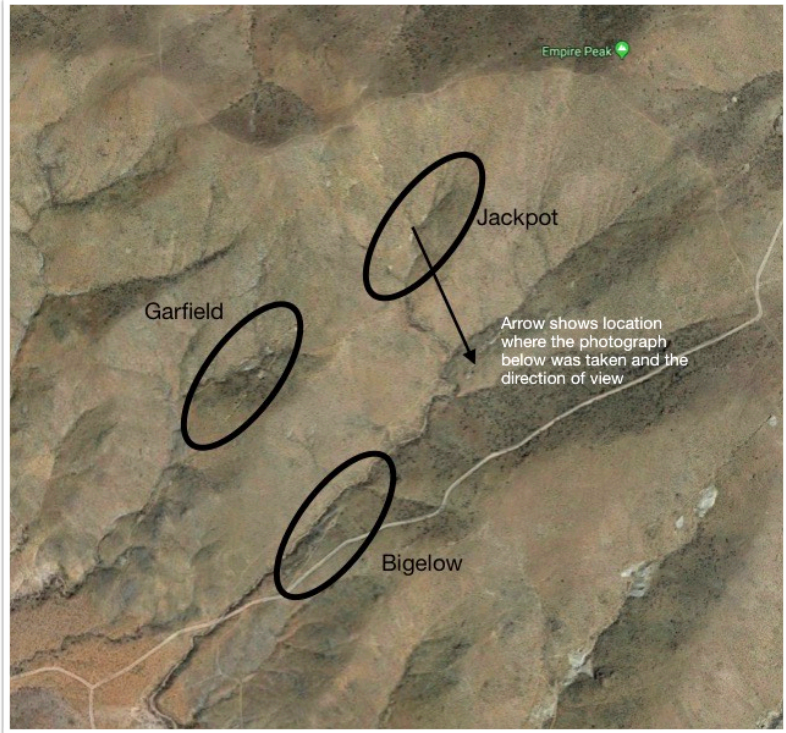
These holes, most of which are filled or caved, hide a lot of work underground. In 1963 the underground workings of the Jackpot Mine were reported as a 120 foot shaft with drifts at 60 feet and 120 feet. A tunnel (adit) which followed the vein for about 120 feet and a few shallow trenches completed the mine site.

The photograph below shows the entrance to one of the adits. There are at least four unpatented claims at the site. The Jackpot Mine went into production in 1885 and last produced in 1939. The last assay reported 0.36 ounces of gold per ton, 1.3 ounces of silver per ton, and the ore had 0.25% copper (one-quarter of one per cent) per sample. No references to the mine were found in the general references.

Minerals found in the gangue & ore included calcite, quartz, bornite, chalcopyrite, galena, gold, malachite, and silver. These minerals were found in veins of the andesite flows of the area.

I did not explore the adit at the time of my visit. It appeared to be a typical hard rock adit with no supports, other adits in the area have been prone to cave-ins.

Aerial video of this site may be viewed at this video showcase; Garfield, Butler, and Jackpot Mines.



16. Garfield/Butler Mines

The walk to the Garfield Mine Group starts at the Hillsboro Transfer Station and follows old mining roads for most of its 2.9 mile distance. The net elevation gain is 542′ (from 5,115 to 5,657). Gross elevation gain is in the range of 700′ and the maximum grade is 14%. The walk follows the alternate route to the Bigelow Mine for most of its distance. At 1.7 miles from the transfer station, at an elevation of 5,545′, there are cement foundations of an old mill site (see Bigelow Mine description).

At 2 miles from the start, at an elevation of 5,587′, the walk turns southwest down a gulch, still on an old mining road in good condition although it becomes more rocky.

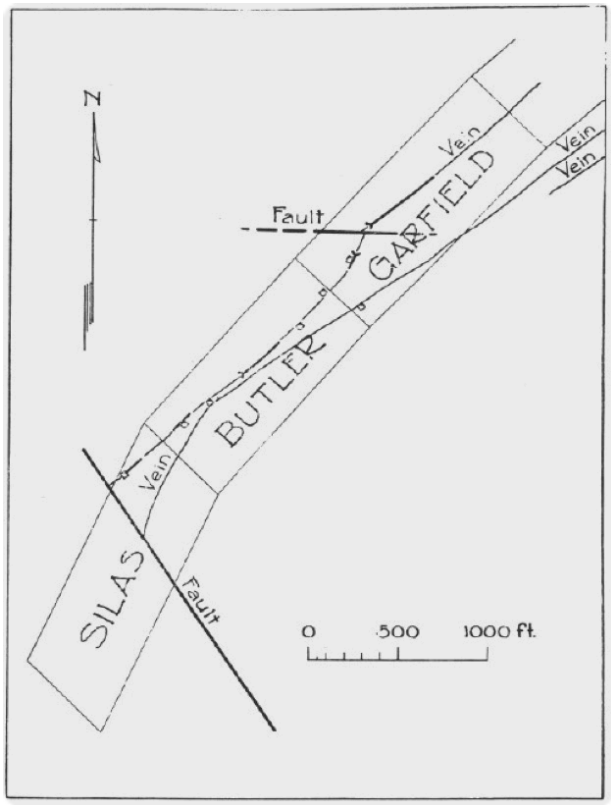
The walk to the Garfield Mine Group continues southwest for a quarter of a mile and then turns north and uphill. As the walk climbs the slope the road degrades significantly, although it (as of June 2015) is still passible by ATV.

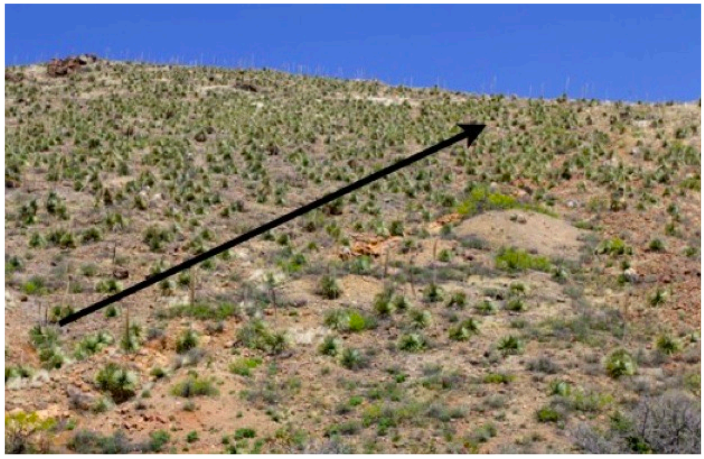
At about two and three-quarters miles from the start the road terminates and the mines are accessed by game trails.

See the video of the mine site here.

Workings along the vein above the mine are shown below. Workings on the vein, shafts, and adits at the mine site are shown on the next three pages.

The Garfield/Butler mine group is southwest of Empire Peak in the Animas Hills northeast of Hillsboro. There were three claims in this valley. The lowest shaft is probably the Silas claim, the shaft now has water in it at about 60' of depth. The next major shaft on the south side of the valley is probably the Butler, and the highest claim in the valley is the Garfield. The dike of latite porphyry which the claims cover is still clearly visible as it runs up the side of the mountain (see photo at the top right on the next page).





The claim map shown above is from "[The Geology and Ore Deposits of Sierra County, New Mexico]" by George Townsend Harley, p. 143.

Gold, silver, and copper were the main sources of income from these mines. Pyrite, chalcopyrite, galena, sphalerite, chalcocite, malachite, azurite, and sulfates of copper and zinc were all present.

Jose Arelet mined ore from the surface of the dike from 1878 to 1879, making a profit of $10,000. "From 1897 to 1900, Robin and Macy drove the tunnel on the vein and stoped out ground about it...(stopes of 150')...still later, A. L. Bird of Hillsboro extended this winze to a depth of 60 feet below the tunnel level. At 40 feet he encountered a quartz veinlet which was followed to the northeast for 108 feet, and from which ore worth $4,000 was shipped in two products..." (ibid. p. 144) A. L. Bird was the stepfather of Federico Antonio Chavez Luna and is referenced in [Mr. Luna's interview].

17. Empire Peak

This walk starts near the Big-Low (aka Bigelow) Mine and follows an old mining road up the south side of the "valley" to the saddle below Empire Peak. This area is north of the Hillsboro Transfer Station and northeast of the town of Hillsboro. See the Bigelow Mine Trail description for details about the walk to the mine from the Transfer Station.

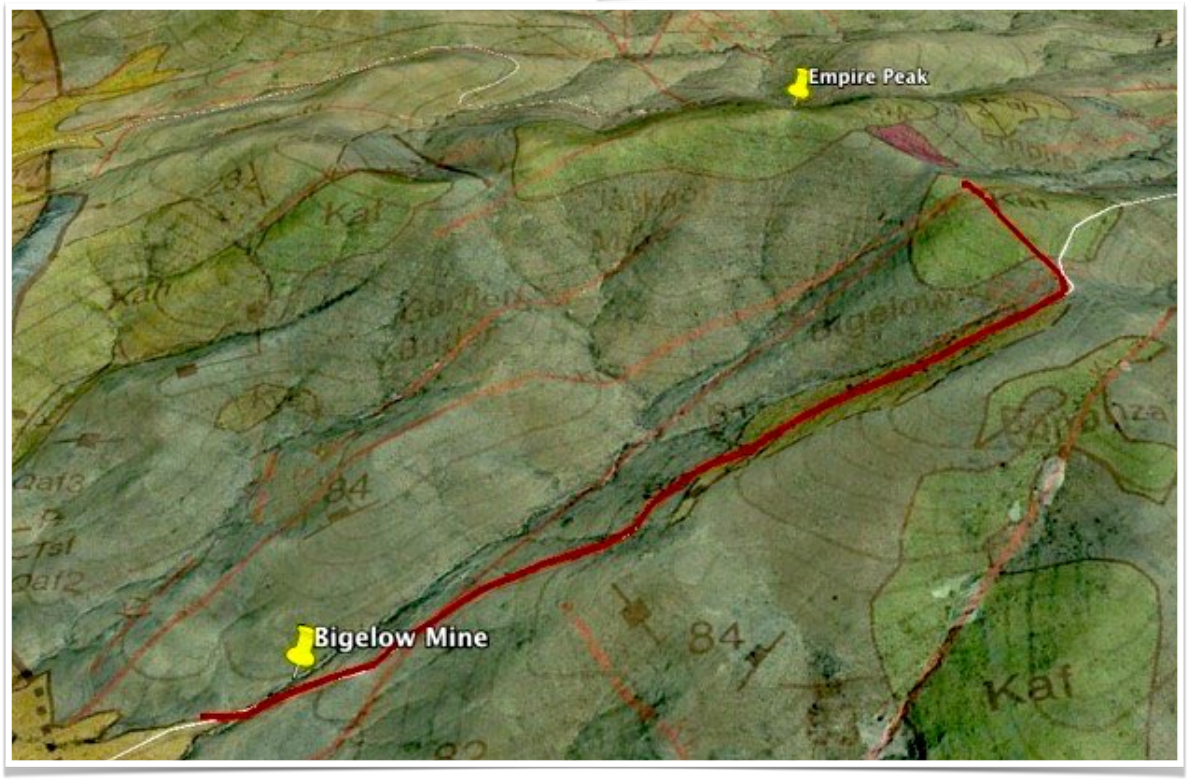
Geologically speaking, this walk begins in the Kab geologic unit, passes through some Kah, and ends in a Kaf unit. See the Google Earth map with the Hillsboro Quadrangle Geologic Map overlay below.

This is a short walk at about 2.25 miles roundtrip but is basically up and back down having an elevation gain of 776 feet. See the elevation profile of the walk at the right.

The walk is that typical of old mining roads in this area, loose stones make slipping and the twisting of ankles distinct possibilities. The typical critters are present so be mindful of rattlesnakes, etc. There is no shade on this walk, be sure to take water, especially if you are walking in the hotter periods of the year.

The first photograph on the following page was taken a short way up the road on this walk, the head frame of the Bigelow Mine is visible at the lower left, the upper part of Warm Springs Canyon lies beyond, and the snow covered Black Range crest is seen beyond that.

The photograph below that is the view from the Empire Peak Saddle, looking east. The peak on the left is Animas Peak (below it is the Copper Flat pit, filled with water) and the peak on the right is Black Peak.



18. El Oro Mine & Andrews

The abandoned mining town of Andrews has some of the most intact "early (Anglo) buildings" in the area. Here we provide a treatment to the site, not a description of the walks which are possible - and there are many.

Northeast of the Copper Flat Copper Mine, which is itself northeast of Hillsboro, is the old mining town of Andrews. The El Oro, or Golden Rule, mine workings were the major mine in town and were in the center of town.

Andrews has more "intact" structures (below) than the usual ghost town in this area, which typically are evidenced by some old nails and a few pieces of wood. The photograph at the top of the next page is of the same building as at the center bottom of the photograph below. An aerial video of this area may be viewed at this link.

In the photograph at the top of the next page, most of the slope going down into town from the right is part of a Kap geologic unit. The Hillsboro Quadrangle Geologic Map describes Kap as "Plagioclase-phyric andesite flows of Copper Flat – gray, porphyritic, fine- to coarse-grained andesite. Forms ledges atop ridges of Kaf. Phenocrysts include 20-25% plagioclase, 4-7% pyroxene, and trace biotite. Contains 2-5% lithic fragments and trace to 3% disseminated magnetite. Non-vesicular and moderately foliated."

Of the sites in our area, Andrews is the most worthy of maintaining. Not only are there several buildings at the site, but there are significant mine workings. The mine workings are diverse and apparent, something quite rare in our area, and could "easily" be translated into the mining history of the Hillsboro Mining District.

The drive to Andrews is the subject of an auto tour video, which may also be accessed through the Roads of the Black Range video portfolio. A map of the route followed in the road video is shown at the middle of the next page. To get to Andrews when traveling along NM-152, turn west at MP 55, and travel 3.2 miles westward and then northwestward as indicated in the map below. The second half of the road requires a high clearance vehicle. There are a number of building foundations, some standing walls, and several mine shafts at the location.

At the turn off from NM-152 there is signage for the Copper Flat Mining Facility owned by THEMAC, a Canadian-based (Australian owned) mining company. Do not be fooled, this is a public road. The route is fairly straightforward, take the first clear road to the right and then stay left anytime there is an opportunity to do otherwise.

Andrews is named after William Henry Andrews. Andrews moved to Sierra County after losing an election in Pennsylvania. He was elected to the New Mexico Territorial Council in 1903. He was a Delegate to Congress from the

Andrews, El Oro Mine, Kap geologic formation. The old mining town of Andrews, northeast of Hillsboro, New Mexico, USA. The mine buildings (lower right quarter of the photo) are from the Golden Rule (or El Oro) Mine. Most of what is visible in the photograph is part of a Kap geologic formation.

New Mexico Territory from 1905 until 1911. He had great aspirations to a Senate seat when New Mexico became a state but Thomas B. Catron and Albert B. Fall apparently got in the way. His arrival date in Sierra County varies with the source, Wikipedia (7/9/2015) gives it as 1902. "The Report of the Governor of New Mexico to the Secretary of the Interior" dated September 12, 1900, which covered the fiscal year ending June 30, 1900 states that:

"Andrews entered the field of mining in New Mexico in 1897. He purchased and bonded a large number of claims in the Hillsboro district...retained...El Oro, Golden Rule...Situated on the El Oro are the company's buildings, which consist of a hotel, store, corral capable of stabling 30 head of horses...(Andrew's home)...and a bunk house. The latter has just been completed, and is unique in its arrangements. Every employee is supplied with an iron bedstead, mattress, and pillow. There are reading and toilet rooms, the former supplied with the latest periodicals and newspapers, and the latter with towels, soap, etc. Each occupant is assessed 10 cents per week, which defrays the expenses of the janitor and subscriptions to the magazines and newspapers. All the buildings are substantial and comfortable.

"The improvements are under way and contemplated are a schoolhouse, which may be used on Sundays for religious services, an electric plant, capable of furnishing power for 400 16-candlepower incandescent lights and 10 arc lights, and the enlargement of the corral." (pp. 424-425)

Harley (Bulletin 10) was able to visit the site in the early 1930's (p.163). Apparently the shafts had been flooded, dewatered, flooded, dewatered etc..... His opinion was that "the surface plant and improvements in progress were larger than justified and that they represented an ill-advised expenditure of money in view of the very small amount of ore actually blocked out in the mine." He estimated that the total production of this part of the Hillsboro Mining District, from its founding to the time of his report in 1933, was not more than $285,000.

The remaining walls of the hotel/dancehall, which stands on the hillside across the wash from the mine workings, are shown on this, the proceeding page, and the next page.

During prohibition the hotel was rumored to be a "speak easy" - it was certainly easy to see the sheriff coming from miles away. The get-a-way car might need a tune-up, however. The mine infrastructure was extensive. Like so many operations in the area it is difficult to know if they were based on hope or fraud.

Additional photographs from Andrews are included in a photo gallery on the Black Range website.

19. South Wicks Canyon

This trail starts just south of NM-152 and continues SSE for 2.6 miles to Percha Creek. The total elevation drop is 422'. This is a wash hike so expect sand and rocks. In a number of places shallow slots are forming where the water is eroding through the conglomerate. From start to finish it is conglomerate which forms the bed and sides of the canyon on this walk.

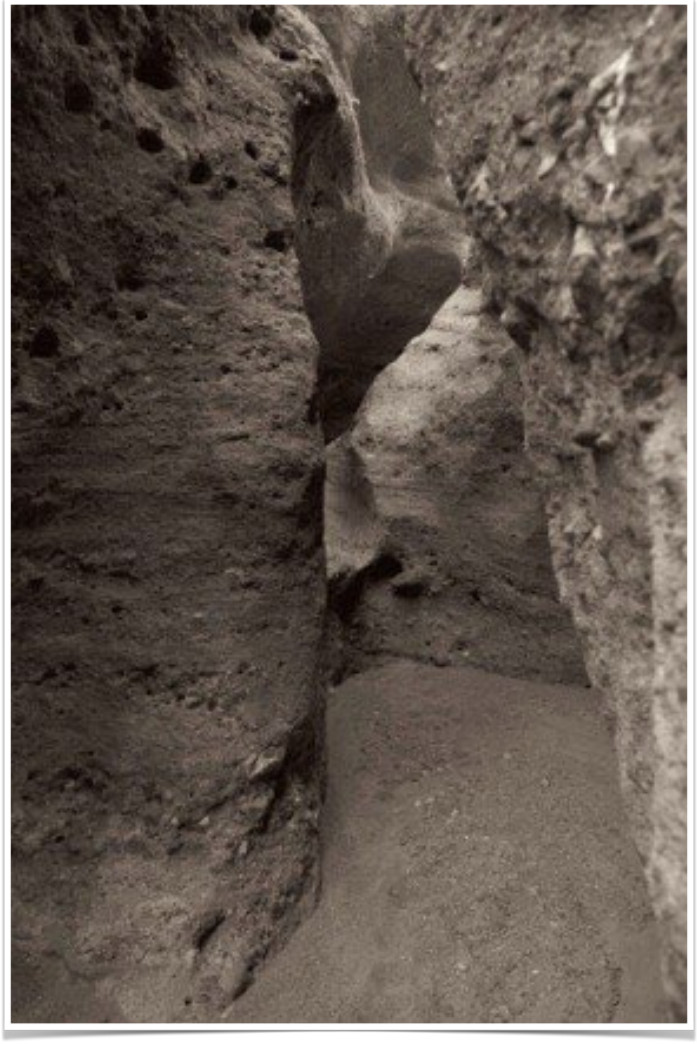
The last 50 yards or so is through a slot canyon of the classic style, sometimes no more than 3' wide and 30'+ high (see following photographs). This slot canyon has several drops in it which (as of 1/12/26) were well over head high and would require a bit of effort to get down or scale. At times they may not be passable without climbing aides. The degree of difficulty varies with the last flood, hand and foot holds come and go as nodules are scoured from the rock, the holes gradually wearing away. The rock is quite slick but "bridging" may be effective in the more difficult "pitches". Coming from NM-152, the exit of the slot is at Percha Creek. At this point, Percha Creek flows through a narrow canyon with high straight walls on either side. If you are unable to scale the drops in the slot, to return to the starting point, you will need to hike upstream in the Percha looking for an exit point that will get you up onto the hill tops. Once that is accomplished, you may be able to walk cross country and reenter Wicks Wash as you wish.

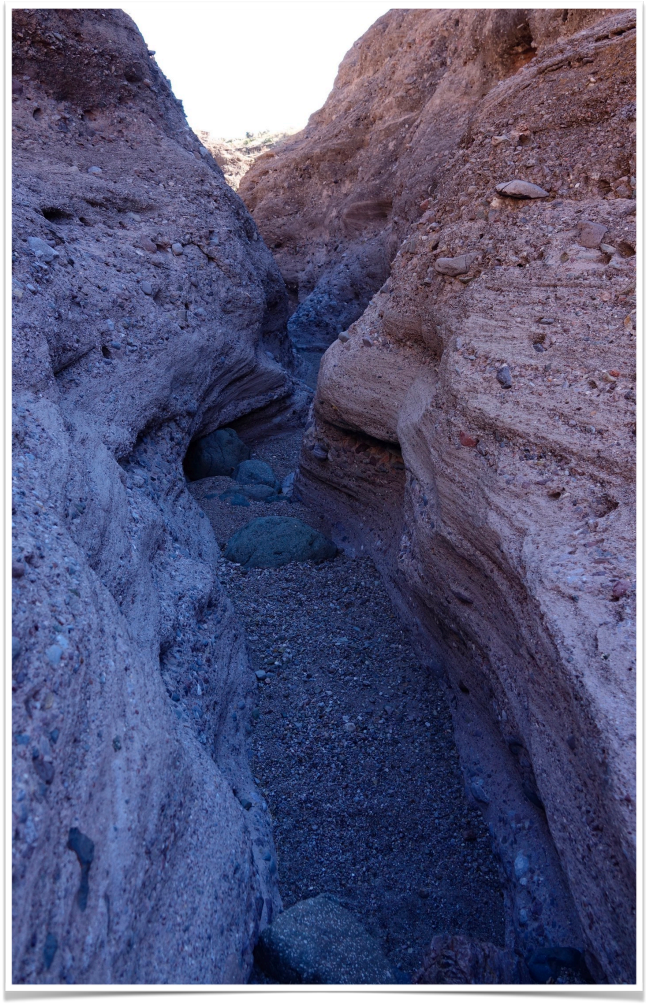
In the summer this can be a very hot walk because there is little shade until you enter the slot canyon. In most places the canyon walls are high enough to protect you from the brunt of the spring winds. If you travel in this wash during any period when rain is possible exercise caution, flash flooding occurs here. Sometimes it is not possible to scurry up the sides of the canyon if the need should arise.

There is no potable water along the trail. The usual desert fauna are possible, including fox, coyote, bobcat, rattle-snake, etc. Evacuation would be problematic, especially in the lower sections of the canyon if you should have an accident.

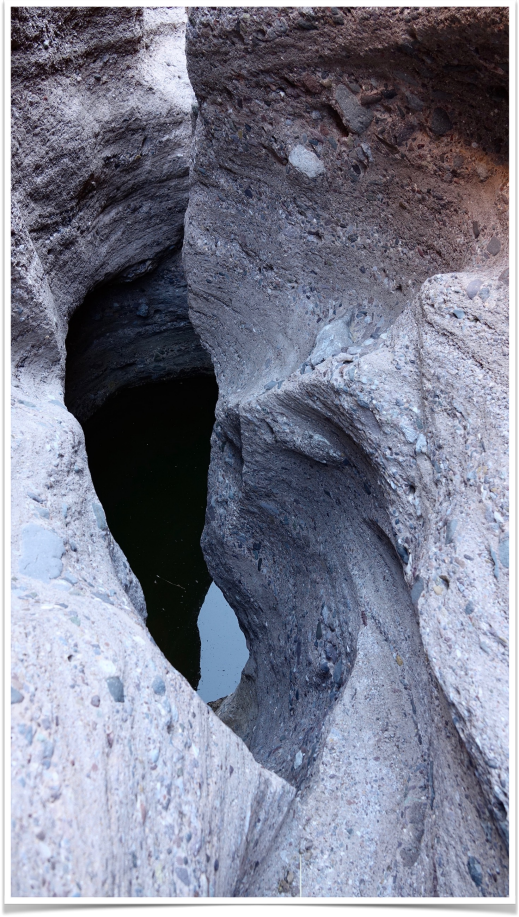
This is a very enjoyable walk, especially during the shoulder months - and before the spring winds.

The July 2024 issue (Vol. 7, No. 3) of *The Black Range Naturalist* included an in-depth discussion of the slot at the end of this walk.





Confluence of South Wicks and Percha Creek, the end of the slot canyon, March 9, 2010.



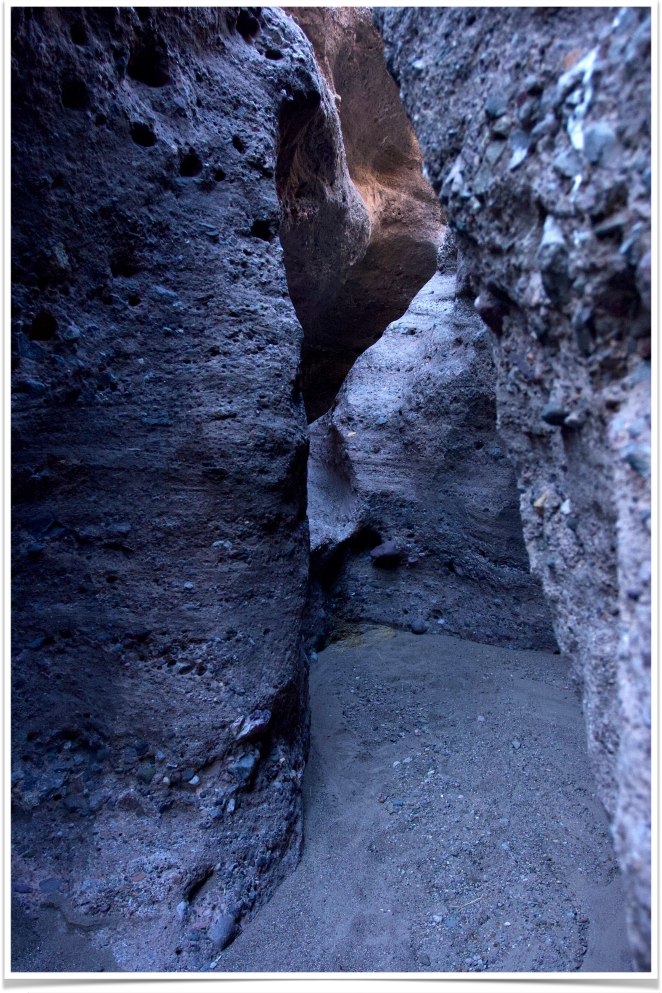
The canyon is developing more of a "slot" feel, from the windmill southward, than it has had in the past. The rains have washed out more of the sand exposing more of the "mini-slots" (shown above right) along the walk. More beautiful than in the past from my perspective and with more exposed bedrock the walking was easier. On January 12, 2026 this effect was even more pronounced.

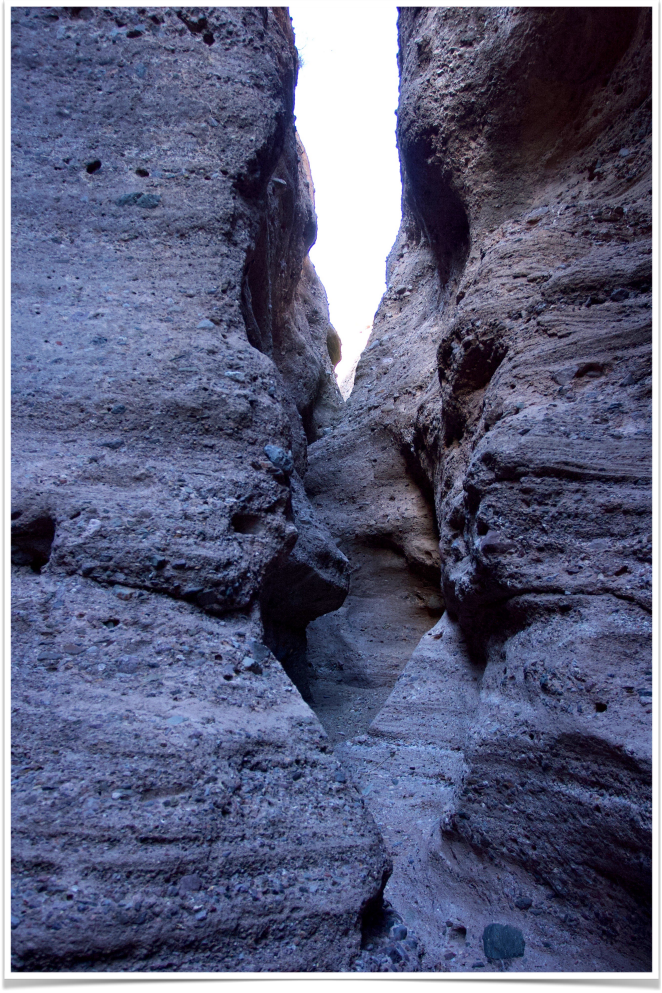
In 2018, the surprise came at the mid-point of the walk as we entered the main slot near Percha Creek. At the first high drop we encountered a deep pool of water which completely filled the base of the canyon, making further travel problematic at best (meaning I did not want to go on a swim in cold water in January). The slots have always been changeable but this is the first time we have seen water in them.

The canyon has always been good for owls, primarily Great-horned, Long-eared, and Short-eared. We encountered only the last in 2018. The Short-eareds flushed easily and were generally seen flying away - always flying away.

Like many walks in this area, it is easy to slice and dice your routes. The walk here can be extended up or down the Percha to make a longer, and even more intriguing outing.

Hiking in this area may involve private land, always obey access postings.





Left: Looking upstream on the Percha just west of the confluence with Wicks Canyon. March 9, 2010

20. Percha to Wicks

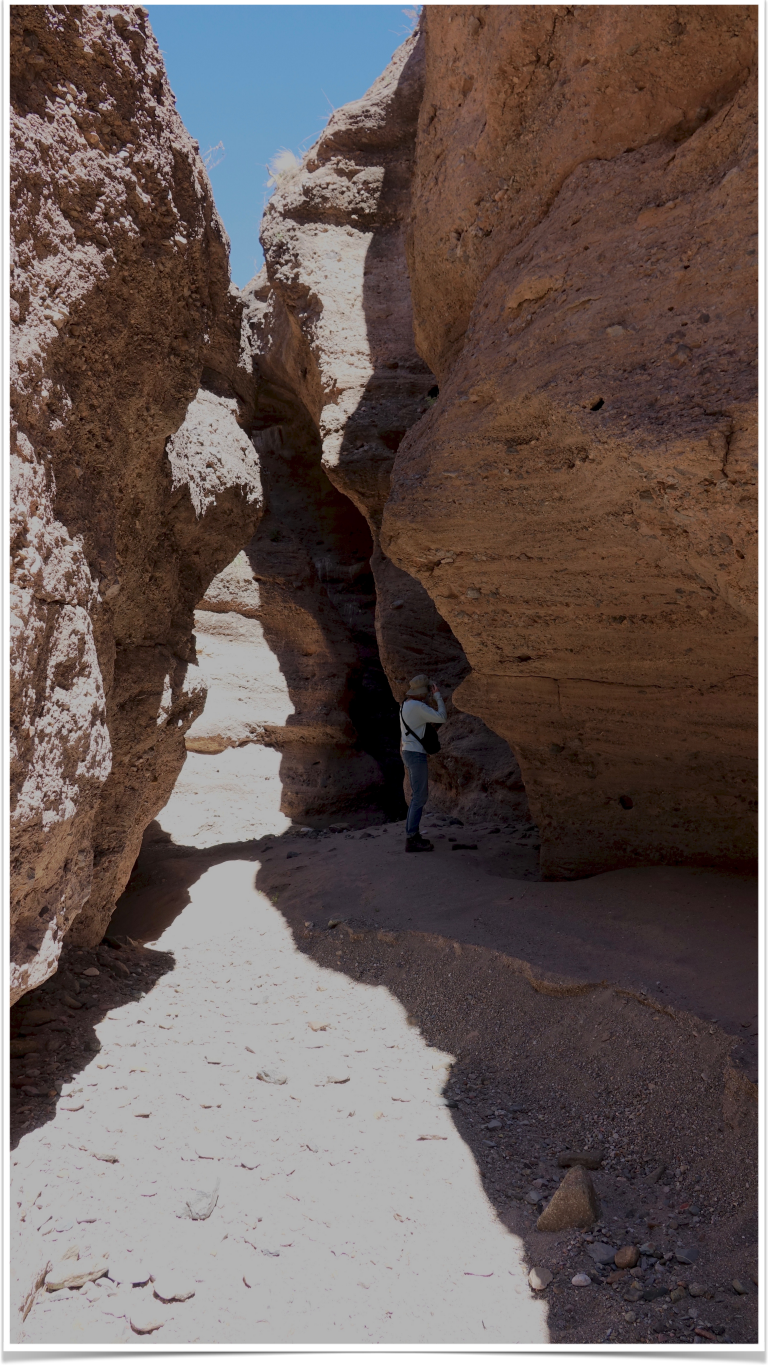
This walk starts in Ready Pay Gulch and follows the most northerly of the major washes on the south side of NM-152 ("Canyon A" in the Follow the Contours Video Portfolio) to the Percha Box and then downstream to the Wicks Canyon confluence. On the map on the following page, the left side of the elevation profile is at the green dot.

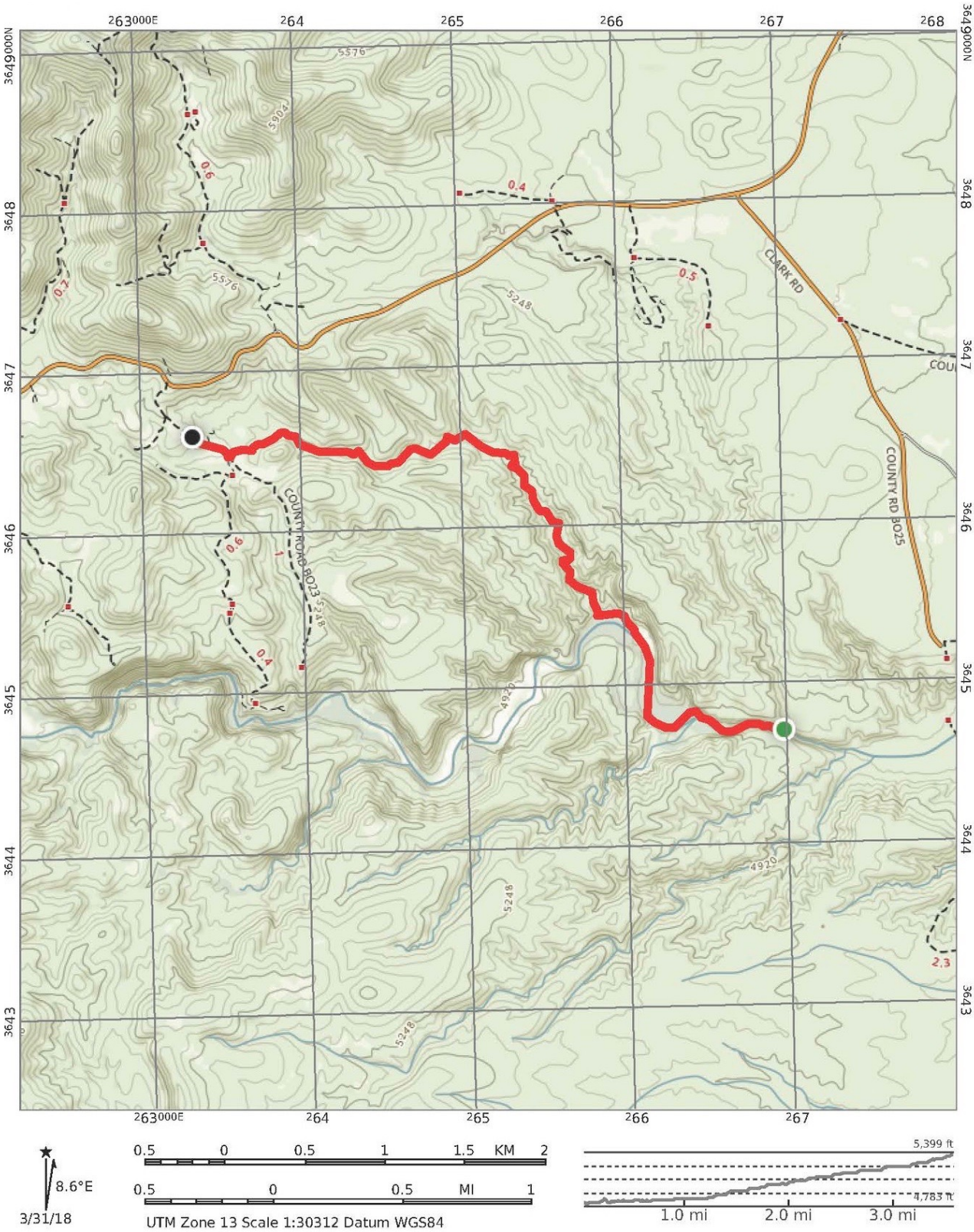
This walk is 3.6 miles each way making for a total round trip of 7.5 - 8 miles.

The water level in Percha Creek is variable, dependent on how intense the last rain upstream was and the groundwater flow. It may be completely dry for substantial stretches or it may be difficult to ford. As a result, it can be difficult to determine how easy this walk will be at times.

On March 31 of 2025 butterflies were beginning to make their appearance, no snakes were observed, and several lizards were out and about. In the Percha near Wicks there were numerous Black Phoebes and Lincoln Sparrows. Killdeer were present and acting as if they were nesting. Several species of flora were beginning to bloom, including two species of Mimulus.

The photograph to the the left was taken at the Wicks Slot. The photograph below was taken in the "Canyon A" portion of this walk. Following the map, there are two other photographs from the slot at the end of Wicks Canyon, only feet from the Percha. The first is looking up one of the drops in the slot, this is slick rock and can be difficult to climb up.

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CLARK RD
COUNTY RD 3025
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5576
5904
5248
4920
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0.5 0 0.5 1 1.5 KM 2
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UTM Zone 13 Scale 1:30312 Datum WGS84
5,399 ft
4,783 ft
1.0 mi
2.0 mi
3.0 mi

21. Ready Pay Gulch to Percha Box Loop

This walk begins either at a parking area on NM-152 (east of Hillsboro) or at a parking area where two mine roads fork (blue arrowhead on map below). The loop, from arrowhead to arrowhead is 5.4 miles. This loop starts at the same parking area as the previous walk. Follow the northern canyon until it terminates at Percha Creek.

This walk is a great one for studying the flora and fauna of the area. Major fauna like Mule Deer (photo p. 21-3) and Coyote are quite possible, you will most certainly see sign of Javelina and fox, possibly sign of Elk, bear, and Bobcat. The active hive described below was interesting and there is a seep on the west wall of the canyon about 200 yards before you reach Percha Creek. There are often bird nests to be found, like the one in a cholla, pictured on the next page.

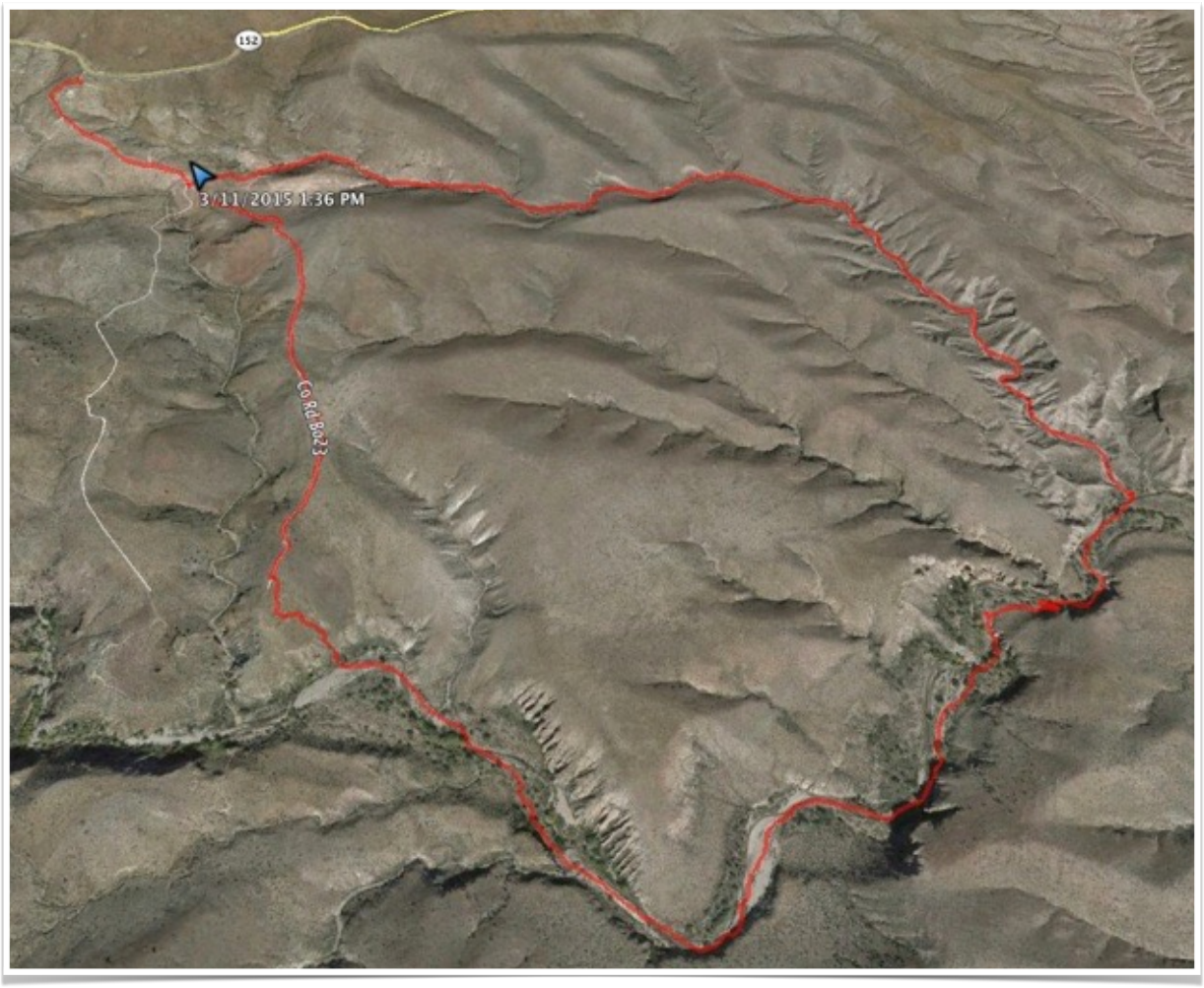
This walk once passed a bee hive in a rock alcove. One of the first stories that James Rutledge (J. R.), once of Kingston, told me was how he encountered a hive of bees while trimming a tree. High in the air, and with the bucket truck controls not working, he jumped - shattering his ankle and other bones. When J. R. and I told stories there was a lot of laughing. The occasion of this story telling was no different and perhaps established the tradition.

The story worked at many levels. The image of J. R.'s 6' 9" frame (or whatever he was) in a small bucket thirty or more feet in the air was a start. Watching the bucket jerk back and forth as he tried to lower it, while trying to get away from the bees, was a fine second act. The finale, lurching from a bucket high in the air made no sense and was a great ending. It was the laughter of, "yea - I've been there - how did we ever live to be this age". Great laughter, the kind were the tears roll down my cheeks.

None-the-less, there had always been an element of - "Come on, J. R..", you could have toughed it out, when I recall the story.

Until April 9, 2014. After that I really understood the story. It is still a good story and in the weird world where old men tell stories and laugh heartedly as they shake their heads, it is a great story.

But on the 9th I found a bee hive (photo at the top left on the next page) tucked backed in a rock alcove in the canyon at the start of the walk. A great photo opportunity if ever I saw one and the fact that I only had a wide-angle lens with me was not going to stop me from getting a good shot. So I crept forward until I was about two feet from the hive and framed the shot. I could hear a significant roar from within the cliff, it was a big hive. The outside of the hive looked like wet cow manure (and was probably made from the stuff). As I snapped the first shot I felt excruciating pain in my upper lip and knew at that instance that these were not stingless bees. I ran, flapping and cussing, for about a hundred yards up the wash until they stopped chasing me - and then ran some more for good measure.



The sting created a unique sensation, or rather set of sensations. First of all, my whole upper lip and part of my right cheek and lower lip felt like they were full of novocain. But at the same time it felt like dental work was being done without novocain. The two sensations were quite odd. I walked back to the car, returned home, removed the stinger and had a swollen lip for several days.

I learned two things at the moment the bee stung me in the wash. The first is that I need to return to the hive with a zoom lens. Secondly, I understand why J. R. jumped.

And that, my friends, is why we walk. The constant plod of the footsteps eventually drums some sense through our thick skulls creating a flash of enlightenment, something like a bee sting.

The walk down the canyon and up Percha Creek is characterized by sand, rock, and sometimes bedrock. In places, the trail down the canyon follows a route which will eventually be a slot canyon (photo right). A short 360° video clip, which can be viewed at this link, provides an excellent introduction to these slots.

This walk turns right as you exit the canyon and follows Percha Creek upstream, past three side canyons discussed in Walk 21A and several natural arches which have eroded out from the conglomerate walls of the canyon. The arches are downstream from a cabin (see photos on the following pages). Photographs of the arches, the enclosure in the canyon wall, and the cabin were taken on January 5, 2014. In January 2026, all appeared much the same as the photographs shown here.

Given the matrix, these arches are quite remarkable, stunningly unexpected. In this same area there is what appears to be a storage area dug into the canyon wall. It's exact use and age is unknown to me. It is located not far downstream from the cabin referenced above and I am not sure why an additional storage place was necessary. Perhaps it was cooler than the cabin. (I am assuming that the cabin and storage area date from the same time and were used by the same person [people] - other than proximity there is no reason to believe that assumption is accurate.) The storage area is simple, the right side walled in with stone and adobe, a lintel forms the top of the entrance. There is no evidence of how it was closed, no framing which would have been useful if the door was wooden, for instance. If stones were used to cover the opening then it would not have been a handy place to access.

I am ignoring the possibility that it was some type of burial chamber, a use that occurred to me at the site. That type of burial was never very prevalent in this area and the interior (which sloped upward with a floor of rock) did not seem to be compatible with that use.

There is an old rock cabin on the floor of the box just upstream from the alcove. The roof has fallen in, parts of the walls have crumbled, and its origins and use are unknown to me. Although there are some accounts which assert that it may have been inhabited by a "wood gatherer", there does

not seem to be anything known about its history which is indisputable. Unlike Ft. Cummings, which has a relatively well documented history, this old cabin has none. Unlike Ft. Cummings, where relatively little can be ferreted out by walking the grounds, quite a bit can be guessed at by walking around this cabin.

The walls seemed high for something of this period (and we are guessing that it is from the early 1900's), the side walls appear to have been about 7+ feet high, the ridge line may have been 10 feet off the ground. That may indicate that the person who lived here, or who used the cabin intermittently, was relatively tall. There are bits of ceramic scattered on the ground. That probably indicates that it was a permanent habitation, they appear to be from plates and jars. There is a hand dug well near by, lined with rock. It has a bottom at about thirty feet - dry, well above the stream bed of Percha Creek, which was dry at this point in the canyon, in January. It was probably deeper when regularly used. Like many homes of the time, it was small by today's standards, not more than one hundred square feet. It had a wood burning stove, I am sure, for heat and to cook on, a bed, most likely a chair or two, and some hooks in the wall. The person(s) who lived here lived a hard and humble existence. In the morning the sun would shine on the hut relatively early and and in the afternoon it would leave the site late. That would have been nice in the winter. In the summer the thick walls and high roof would have helped mitigate the heat. The view, at any time of year, would have been stunning, but the door faced the side of the canyon where a track comes down from above, not the other way which had stunning views. There is no indication of an outhouse. The occupant may have simply used the wash, waiting for the monsoons to flush for him.

Looking at that small cottage I could imagine the aching muscles, hands dry and cracked, feet that were sore, and boredom that was consuming in its oppression.

I can imagine the joy of a breeze coursing through the sweaty hair on his head (and most likely it was a he). The disdain at the thought of beans again and the pleasant happiness that the stomach was full. There may have been a donkey about. If there was, there was the concern about the lion tracks in the wash. There was probably a rifle in the cottage, but not a handgun. Handguns were for people who want to kill people, rifles were a tool which was used regularly.

All of this from an area the size of the small reading room at the Hillsboro Community Library. And much of what I imagined is probably true. But like the piles of clay that were the adobe walls of Ft. Cummings, the history of this cottage will pass into time in a short while.

This section of the walk requires a number of stream crossings. Since the stream flow in the Percha is extremely variable it is difficult to predict what experience a hiker will have along this walk - regardless of the season. The walls of the canyon

A storage area?

the canyon often have standing spires which might crumble at any time, the arches, numerous alcoves in the walls, and many swallow nests may also be transitory. It is along this section of the walk that we encountered a flock of turkeys (Merriam's Wild Turkey) in December.

After two miles or so the walk climbs up a slope and returns to the starting point on an old mining road.

The top photo on the following page was taken from midway up the slope you must slog up to exit the Percha Creek drainage (near the Macy Mine). There are no technical

requirements associated with this walk and this particular section is the most difficult physically. The photo is of a portion of the Percha drainage that the walk follows. It is an area with many tall old cottonwoods and willow and salt cedar along the creek proper. There is no defined path when you enter the Percha drainage, walk cross country, the only (minor) route finding issues are determining where and when to cross the stream. Your feet are likely to get wet and if that is okay with you it will make the walk easier.

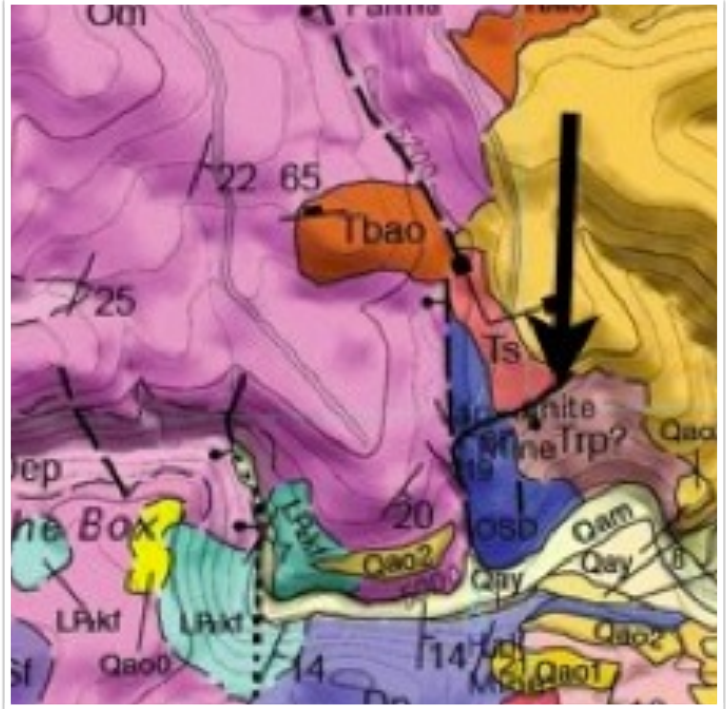
The Macy Mine

This mine overlooks the Percha Box. It is known by a variety of names, including; the Macy Mine, the Percha Mine, the Vanadinite Mine, the J. C. Macy Claim, the Barking Frog, and the Bobbee De Claim. On the Hillsboro Quadrangle Geologic Map the mine is named the Vanadinite Mine. On the Ready Pay Gulch - Percha Box Loop walk map (see next page) the location of the mine is shown by a green star. The arrow on the Geologic Map detail on the next page shows the location of the mine in relation to various geologic units.

The Macy Mine, above, is located in an OSD geologic unit, the steam bed is Qam and the bed above the stream is Qay.

A number of minerals were taken from the mine, including; Arsenatian Vanadintie, Calcite, Cerussite, Descloizite, Fluorite, Galena, Heulandite, Melanotekite, Mimetite, Quartz, Vanadinite, and Wulfenite. The Black Range website has a photo gallery of mineral specimens collected in the Black Range and a listing of minerals from the mining districts in the Black Range.

Vanadinite is a secondary mineral found only in arid regions of the world. It forms from the oxidation of lead based minerals. The Hillsboro Mining District is the type locale for Arsenian Vanadinite.



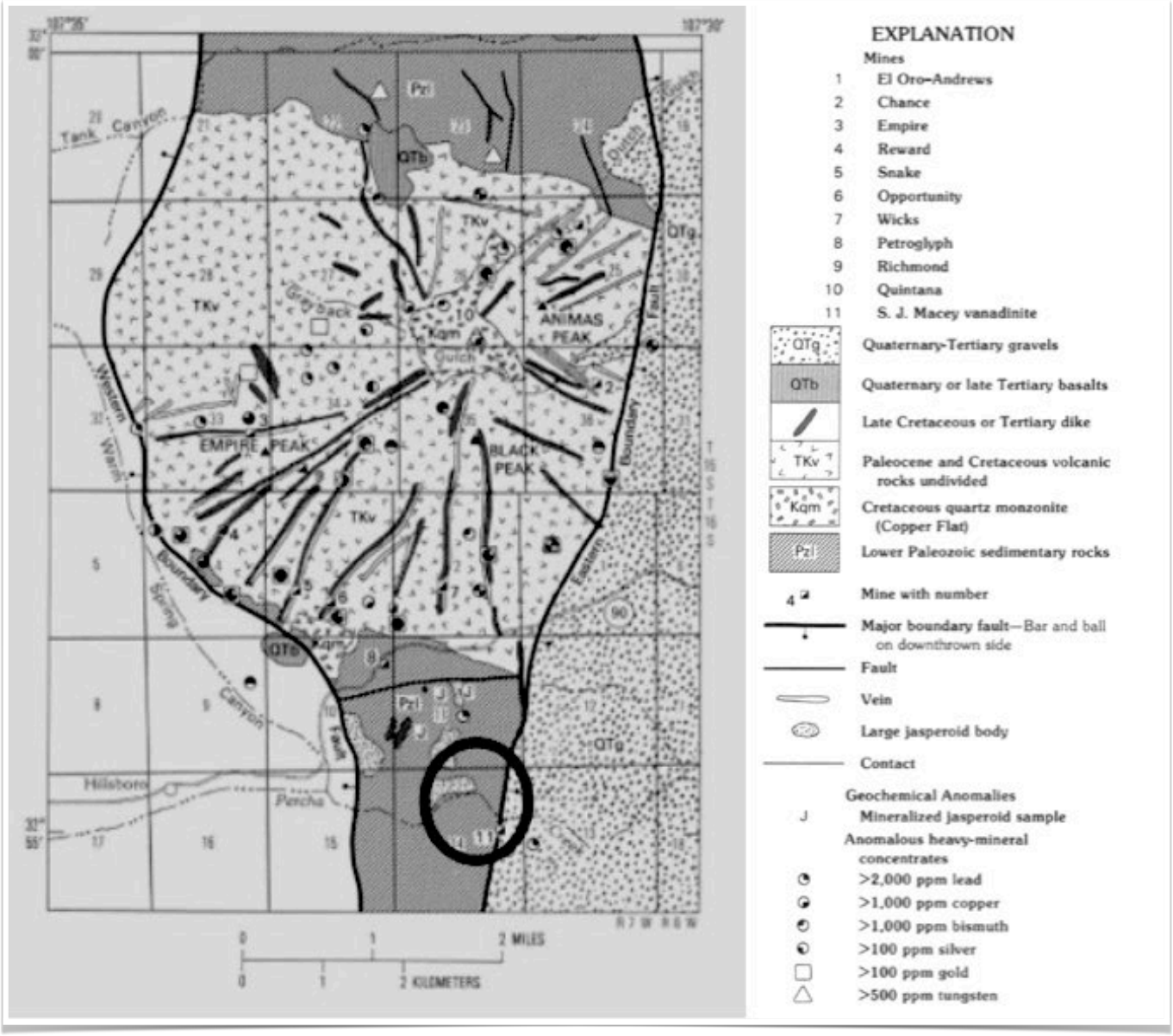
Wulfenite $PbMoO_4$ - Macy (Vanadinite) Mine, Hillsboro Mining District Sierra County, New Mexico.

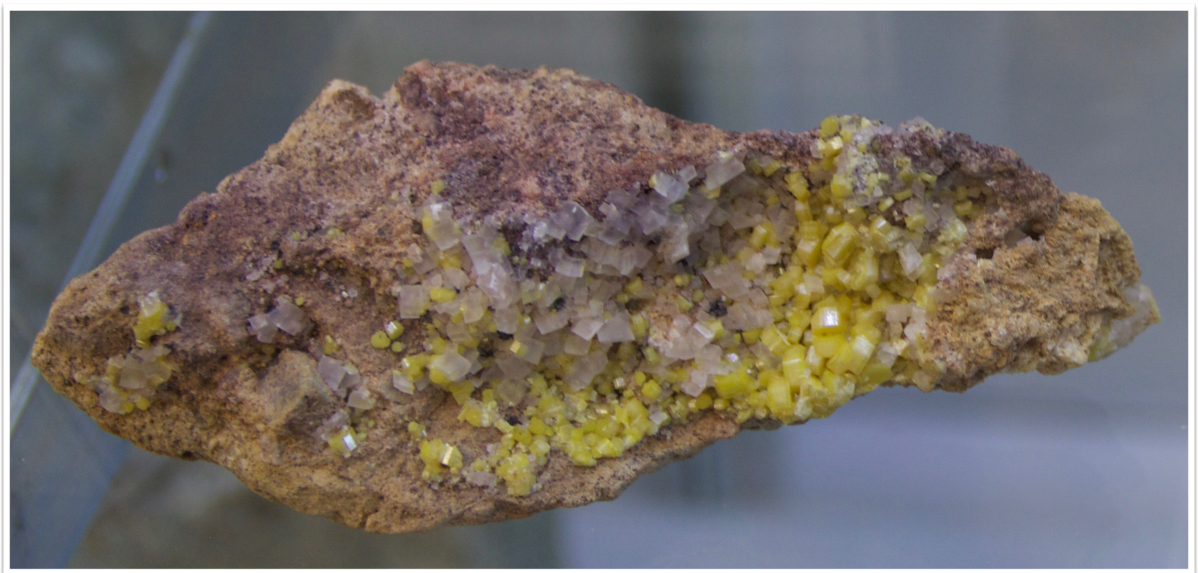
The main shaft at the site is covered partially by boards from the mine frame (see photograph upper right - taken on March 27, 2016). This is an open shaft and caution should be exercised in its proximity. There are other diggings near the shaft, including some trenching.

The map and legend (see next page) showing the Vanadinite Mine in relationship to other mines in the immediate area is from The US Geological Survey Bulletin 1876, *Mineral Belts in Western Sierra County, New Mexico, Suggested by Mining Districts, Geology, and Geochemical Anomalies*, 1989, p. 34.

A photograph of a Wulfenite specimen, $PbMoO_4$, from the Macy (Vanadinite) Mine is shown at the right. The specimen is at the Mineral Museum, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, in Socorro, New Mexico. Photographs of minerals were taken on April 6, 2016.

Vanadinite and Calcite were also mined at the site and other specimens from the mine are also shown on the next two pages. They are part of the collection of the Mineral Museum of the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology at Socorro, New Mexico.



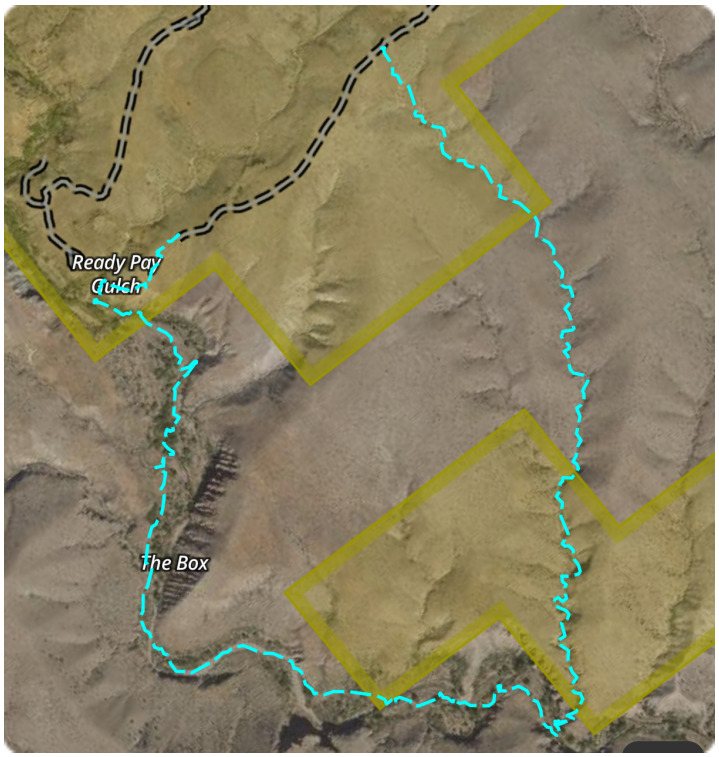


Vanadinite var. Endlichite $PB_5(VO_4)_3Cl$, Macy (Vanadinite) Mine, Hillsboro Mining District, New Mexico. Specimen at Mineral Museum, NM Institute of Mining and Technology, Socorro, NM

Right: Calcite $CaC0_3$, Macy Mine, Hillsboro District Sierra County. Mineral Museum New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology Socorro, New Mexico.

Below: One of the mining techniques used in the Hillsboro Mining District is called trenching. That is a descriptive and rather obvious term. Veins of ore were not always deep underground, sometimes they were at or near the surface. When that occurred it was much easier and more economical to simply trench along the vein extracting the ore until it was necessary to develop an adit. This trench at the Macy Mine is a perfect example of the technique.

21A. Side Canyons into the Percha Box



From January to March 2026, videos of three side canyons on the northern side of Percha Creek were recorded.

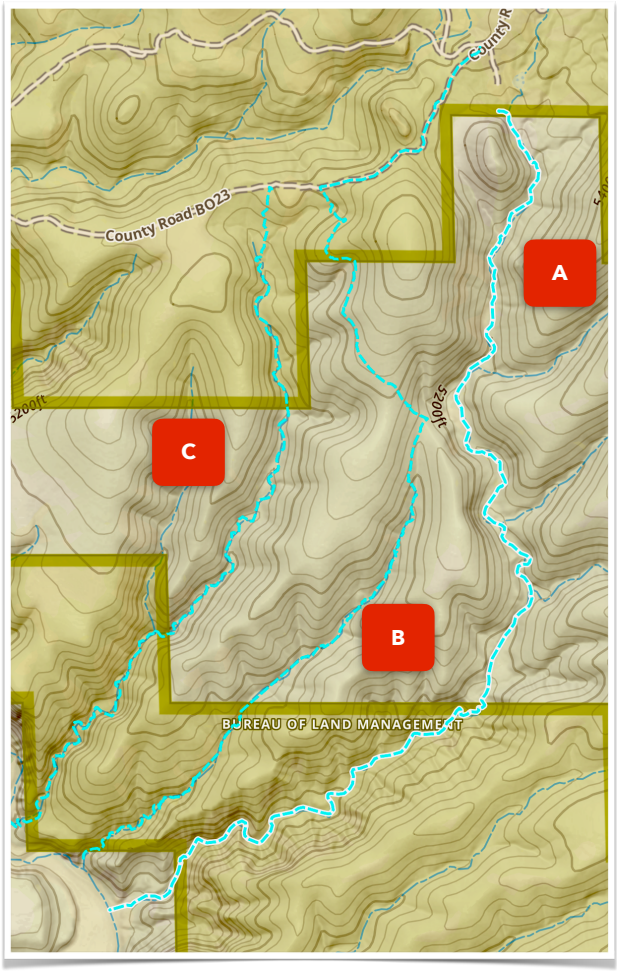
The side canyon referred to here as Canyon A is the most northerly of the three canyons and is the one described in walk 21. This walk is 2.19 miles long (one-way) and has an elevation change of about 400′. Two "walking videos" were recorded of the Canyon A walk. The first may be viewed here. Through the wonders of editing the video of this walk only lasts 15 minutes. The second video is a 360° video of one of the "micro slots" in the canyon. In this video it is possible to move your cursor around and view the video from a number of different angles and perspectives. Aerial video of this canyon is part of this video.

Canyon C is the most westerly route of the three canyon walks. The route, depicted at the right, is a slightly "lesser" version of the walk shown as "Walk 21". The eastward section of the walk which is 1.2 miles in length and runs north to south, is just west of the canyon portion of "Walk 21". The Percha Creek portion of the walk (which is about 2.2 miles in length) is the same as "21". See "A Percha Creek Side Canyon" posted on The Natural History Blog of the Black Range Website (January 4, 2026) for a description of this section of the walk.

A frame grab from one of the videos of Canyon C is shown below. Although not quite a slot, the canyon is very narrow in places. Four videos of this canyon may be viewed at these links:

- **Percha Creek Side Canyon from County Road B023 to Percha Creek;**
- **Percha Creek Side Canyon (a walk down the last one-third of the canyon listed above);**
- **Percha Creek Side Canyon C (a shorter version of the video listed directly above); and**
- **Percha Creek Side Canyon B&W filter (the video listed directly above, mostly in black and white).**

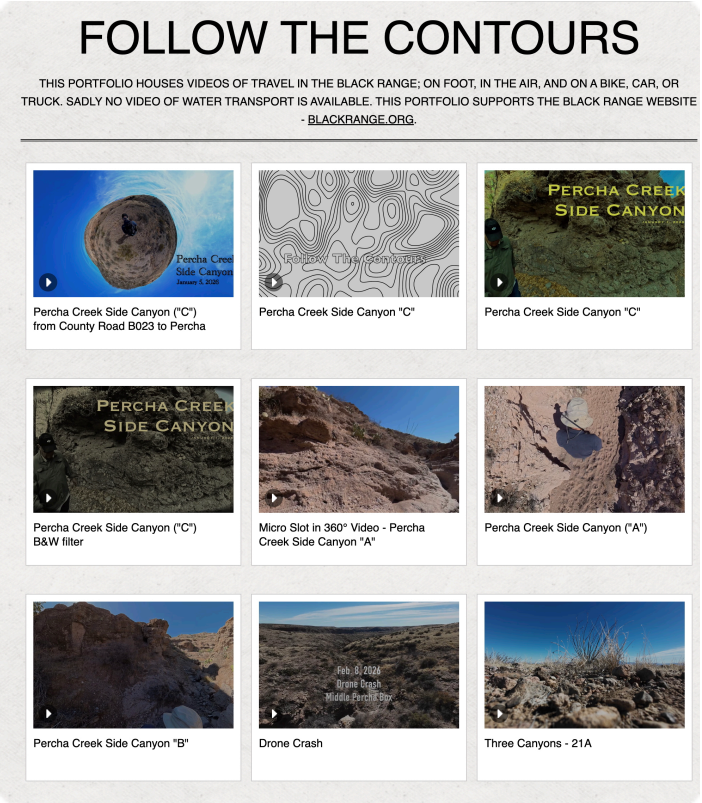
Aerial video of this canyon is included in this video.



Canyon B, the middle route of the three, was the last to be recorded. The walking video of this canyon may be viewed at this link.

Aerial video of this canyon is included in this video. Recordings like this sometimes do not go as planned. Aerial video of the lower part of this canyon, followed by a crash, may be viewed at this link. The framegrab shown below is of the lower part of the canyon.

All of these videos have been included in the Follow The Contours page on the Black Range website.



22. National Defense Mine/Walk

East of Hillsboro and south of NM-152 in Ready Pay Gulch are the manganese mines variably referred to as "National Defense Group 1958", "Tittman Mine 1950: Claims", and "National Defense Nos. 1 to 11". These mines first began production in 1945. The last year of production was 1958. The ores listed for these mines are pyrolusite, psilomelane, wad, and rhodochrosite. Photographs in this trail description were taken on January 23, 2017.

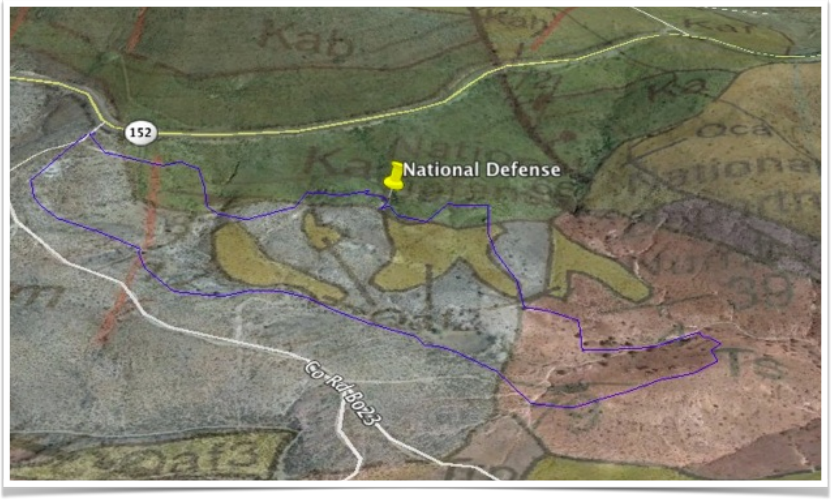
Western Mining History (see link above) describes the site as: "Workings reported in the 1950's consisted of a 70 ft. shaft with about 30 ft. of crosscuts, another shaft with a stoped area about 70 ft. in length, another shallow shaft and several open-cuts ... Deposits occur along a sinuous east-striking fault zone which is manganiferous for about 800 ft. along strike. Sheet like masses of ore in a zone ranging from 6 ft. to 12 ft. in thickness extend downdip...11 unpatented claims."

The owner of the claims is identified as Margaret Tittman, Millite Mining and Development Co. on the Western Mining History website. The mine was not significant.

In the detail from Google Earth with the Hillsboro Quadrangle Geologic Map overlay (top right) the main workings are shown at the pin. On the surface the operations are located in a Ka geologic unit (an andesite flow/breccia from the Copper Flat eruptions). This unit is adjacent to a large unit of the Magdalena Group and alluvial fan deposits. The walk crosses a Ts geologic unit which is Sugarlump Tuff.

The walk to the mine is fairly short, 1.37 miles, with an elevation gain/loss of 360 feet. The elevation profile of the walk is shown in the right column, as is the Google Earth image of the area, without the geologic overlay.

One of the indications of the age of these mines is the fact that rails are still found at the site (see photos on following pages). Rails were removed from old mines during World War II when the metal was needed for the war effort. If a mine has rails present, it is usually an indication that work was done at the site after World War Two.



Access into the shafts and adits are generally caved at this site. This site is very unsafe.

Most (All?) of the mining references for this area make no mention of these mines although the mining of manganese in the area is referenced.

23. Hall Mine

The current name for this mine, which is located on the south rim of the Percha Box east of Hillsboro, New Mexico, is the Hall Mine. In the past it was also referred to as the Macy Mine and as the S. J. Macy Claim. As such it was probably associated with the Vanadinite Mine which is in the vicinity (but on the north rim of the Percha Box).

The trail to the mine (see right) follows an old mining road which starts in Ready Pay Gulch south of NM-152. This walk is 1.67 miles each way and has the elevation gradient shown below. The map shows the route superimposed on a Google Earth image with an overlay of the Hillsboro Quadrangle Geologic Map. The geologic overlay shows that the route starts in an IPm unit, crosses units of Trp, Om, Qao2, and Qay, before arriving at the DP unit where the Hall Mine is located. See the October 2025 (Vol 8, No. 4) issue of *The Black Range Naturalist* for geologic unit descriptions.

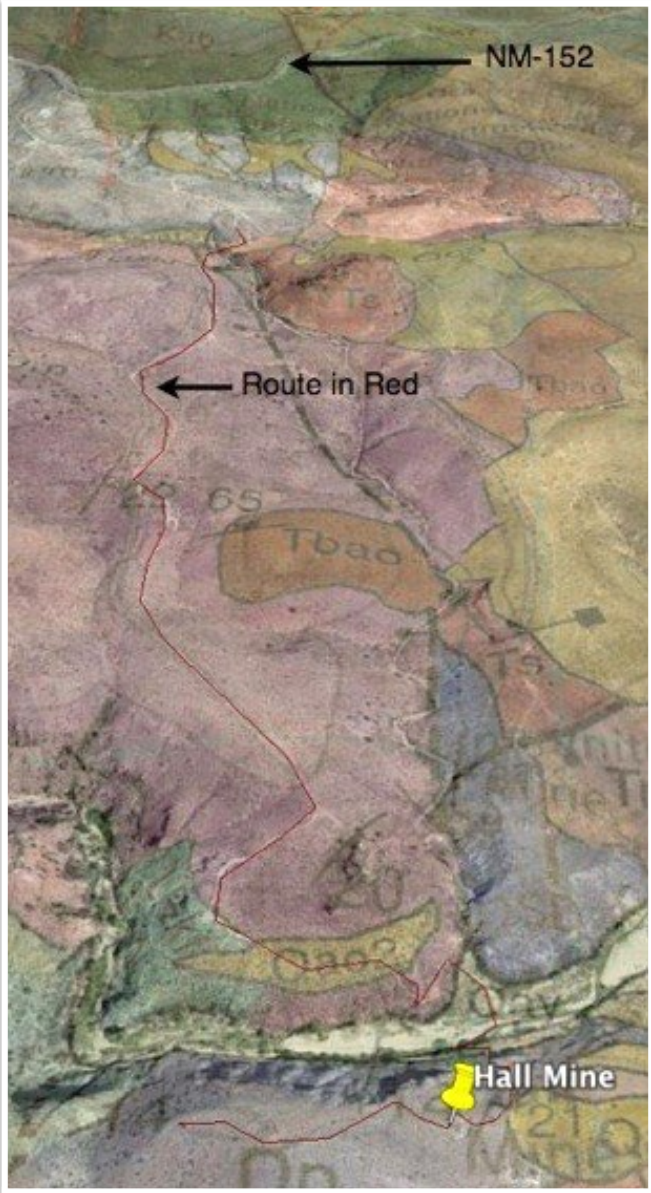
Western Mining History lists lead as the primary mineral from the mine with zinc, vanadium, silver, and copper being listed as secondary minerals. Mindat list vanadium ores for the mine. Diggings lists vanadium as the major mineral of interest from the mine with lead and zinc deposits listed as well.

Diggings list the age of the host rock for the mine as late Silurian, this is the Dp unit. The mineralization occurred in Pliocene rock, probably in a fissure.

At page 276, Lindgren et al. (*The Ore Deposits of New Mexico*, 1910) notes that "Some vanadium ore is said to have been produced in the Hall mine."

Harley, in *The Geology and Ore Deposits of Sierra County* (Bulletin 10) describes the host rock (Dp being Percha Shale) as follows: "Percha Shale – Overlying the Fusselman limestone and in unconformable contact with it, is the Percha shale of Devonian age, which is 200 to 250 feet thick. It consists of a lower greenish-black part barren of fossils, and an upper grayish or light greenish-gray part. The outcrops of the Percha shale are restricted to two or three small residual patches on the dip slope of the Fusselman limestone, and to a larger area about half a mile south of the Rio Percha and about due south of the S. J. Macy vanadium mine. Where this formation overlies the silicified Fusselman limestone, the base is silicified and converted to a form of jasper, probably by the same solutions that silicified the underlying limestone." (pp. 126 - 127) He does not describe the Hall mine.

When I visited the mine on January 5, 2017, I found two shafts. The photographs on the next page are from the most northerly of the shafts. It had lateral workings just a few feet below the surface.



Diggings lists the major ores as descloizite (lead and zinc vanadate), endlichite, and vanadinite. The website states that "fissures and faults provided path for mineralized solutions emanating from shallow igneous mass. Overlying shale formed a barrier trapping the mineral solutions".

24. Pipeline Bridge Walk

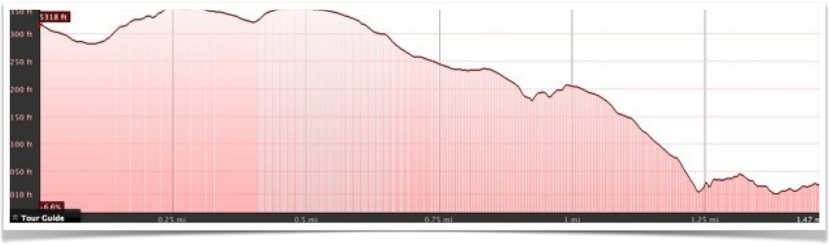
As you travel east from Hillsboro you climb a significant grade and then enter a series of curves. The third gated road on the south provides access to the southern reaches of Ready Pay Gulch.

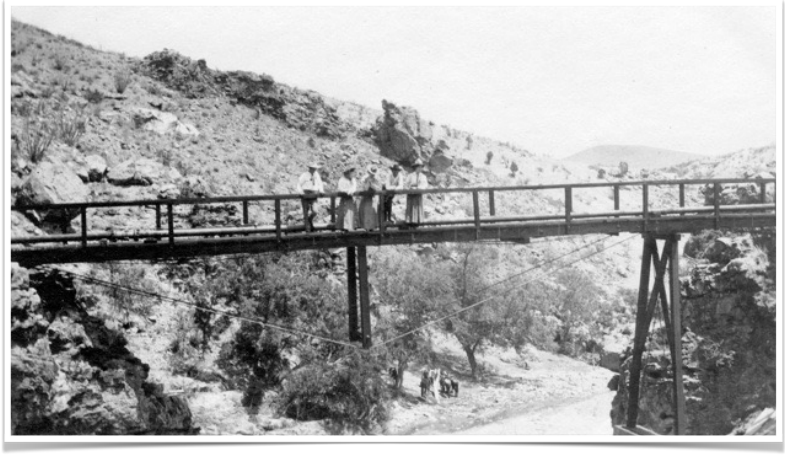
There are a number of walks which are possible in the Ready Pay Gulch area. After you go through the gate the road to the fork in the road (starting point of walk) is rutted and rocky, travel by low clearance cars is not recommended. The usual suspects are on-the-scene; rattlesnakes (typically Western Diamond-Back), Black Bear, Coyote, and Cougar are all possible - but not likely.

At the fork referenced above there are three major walk options. To the east lies a wash walk, No. 21A - A. There are two roads at the fork which lead south, this route is the more westward of the two roads.

This is an old road which may be impassible to vehicles at some point. Most of this route is along an old mining/ ranching road, there are often cobbles in the road so footing should be watched. As noted on the elevation profile below, the trail has only moderate elevation changes during the first half mile. After that the trail is basically uphill or downhill, depending on if you are coming or going, the steepest part of the trail is between 1 mile and 1.25 miles. With that said, the net elevation change is only about 300' (5,350' to 5,050'). The distance from the fork to the location of an old pipeline bridge is 1.47 miles (roughly a 3 mile round trip). The end point is arbitrary since it is possible to walk up or down the Percha Creek drainage with relative ease. One of the photographs which follow is of what appears to be a dam, it is actually a geologic dike found just south of where this trail joins the creek bottom.

The photograph at the top of the next page is taken from Percha Creek, looking eastward, toward the location of an old pipeline bridge. The south foundation of the bridge is visible in the photo along the skyline on the right. This bridge, see old photo below that, was in existence in about 1900 (assumed date of photo). The nature of the pipeline or even the purpose of the photograph is unclear and the subject of additional research. As noted elsewhere, fraud was sometimes associated with mining in the Hillsboro Mining District. As part of those frauds, infrastructure which was not what it appeared to be was built or planned/ advertised. The bridge may be supporting a pipeline which extends beyond the picture or it may not. The photograph may be a "Sunday Outing Snapshot" or part of a stock scam. There is no particular reason to believe that this photograph is anything other than what it purports to represent. It is often difficult to determine history from the ruins which we find along the trails we walk. The photograph of a bit of concrete on the side of a cliff is part of the pipeline bridge





Palma Mine Group

The Palma Group is located in Ready Pay Gulch on the south side of NM-152, see the detail of the Hillsboro Quadrangle Geologic Map, in the Hillsboro Mining District, on the next page. Silver, Gold, and Manganese were the primary minerals mined at this site, found in ores of pyrolusite and wad. Mindat also lists calderónite as a mineral from this location and includes a photograph of a specimen from the Palma Group. Operations at this site began in 1885 and the last year of production is listed as 1954 at the Western Mining History (WMH) site, mining was not continuous during this period. The production in 1953 and 1954 consisted of "41 long tons of hand-sorted ore averaging 20.6% manganese" (WMH website). Apparently some work was done in 1961, "3 open cuts of up to 40 feet long, a few pits, and some inaccessible underground workings" were done at that time. (WHM website) Cited information is apparently from the Mineral Resources On-Line Spatial Data page for this mine, maintained by the USGS.

foundation, clearly what is left of the bridge depicted directly above. But what is it beyond that?

Photographic close-ups of the foundation work are from both sides of the bridge. There are, what appear to be, pipeline mounts on the hillside to the north of where the old pipeline was placed.

The Palma Mine Group is along this route, see red star on the route map on the preceding page.

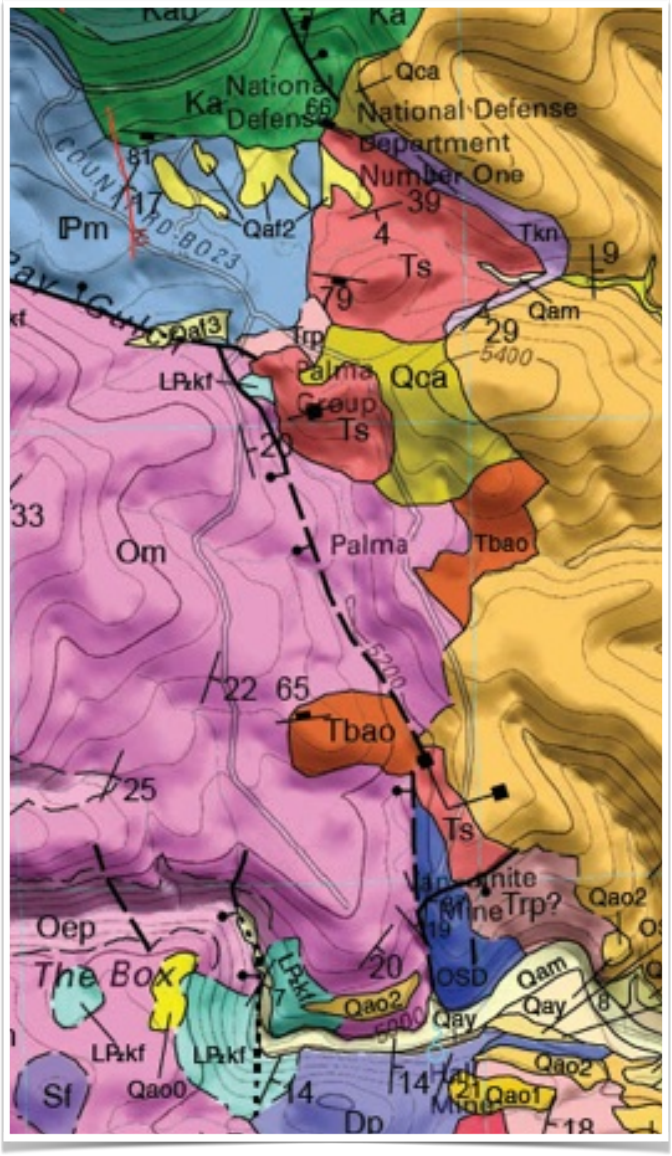
The Palma Group is not listed in Bulletin 10 (*The Geology and Ore Deposits of Sierra County, New Mexico*), *The Ore Deposits of New Mexico* (1910), or *The Metal Resources of New Mexico and Their Economic Features Through 1954*.

The photographs at the right are of an adit in the upper central part of the map detail, see below. The Hillsboro Quadrangle Geologic Map, see *Volume 8, Number 4 of The Black Range Naturalist*, was produced by the State of New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources (see link page). A report accompanies the geologic map. See *The Black Range Naturalist*, Volume 2, Number 4 for a description of other geologic maps covering the Black Range.

The adit opening shown at the right can be seen roughly in the middle of the photographs at the right.

Paul Benavides is listed as the owner (since 1960 perhaps since 1958) at the WMH site. Many sites in this area are abandoned.

Photographs shown here were taken on September 4, 2016.



25. Vulture Road (Percha Box Overlook)

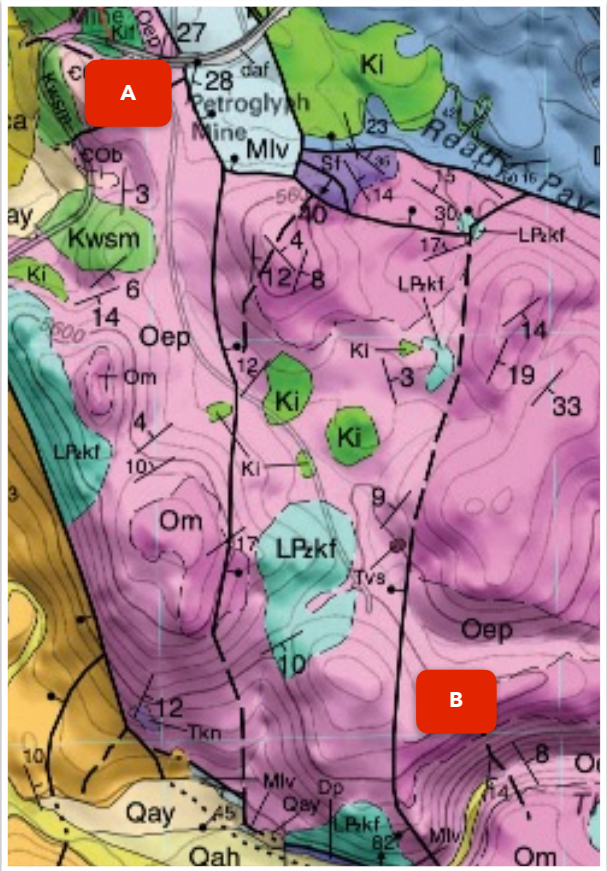
This walk is along an old mining/ranching road. It starts at a gate on NM-152 (MP 50.4) and goes south to an overlook of the Percha Box.

East of Hillsboro there are a number of old mining roads which make for nice short walks across the hills in this area. They also provide access to a number of wash walks.

"The Vulture Road" is the first gated road on the south side of NM-152 after you top the hill coming out of Hillsboro. It is 1.5 miles long. Its elevation ranges between 5,325' and 5,480'. This is an easy walk although portions of the road are rocky. The hills on either side of the road make good cross-country excursions. The usual suspects are on-the-scene; rattlesnakes, Black Bear, Coyote, and Cougar are all possible - but not likely.

"A" on the detail of the geologic map is at the gate on NM-152 while "B" is at the overlook. The geology of this area is rich - but obscured. Note the location of the Petroglyph Mine on this map, it is discussed at the end of this route description.

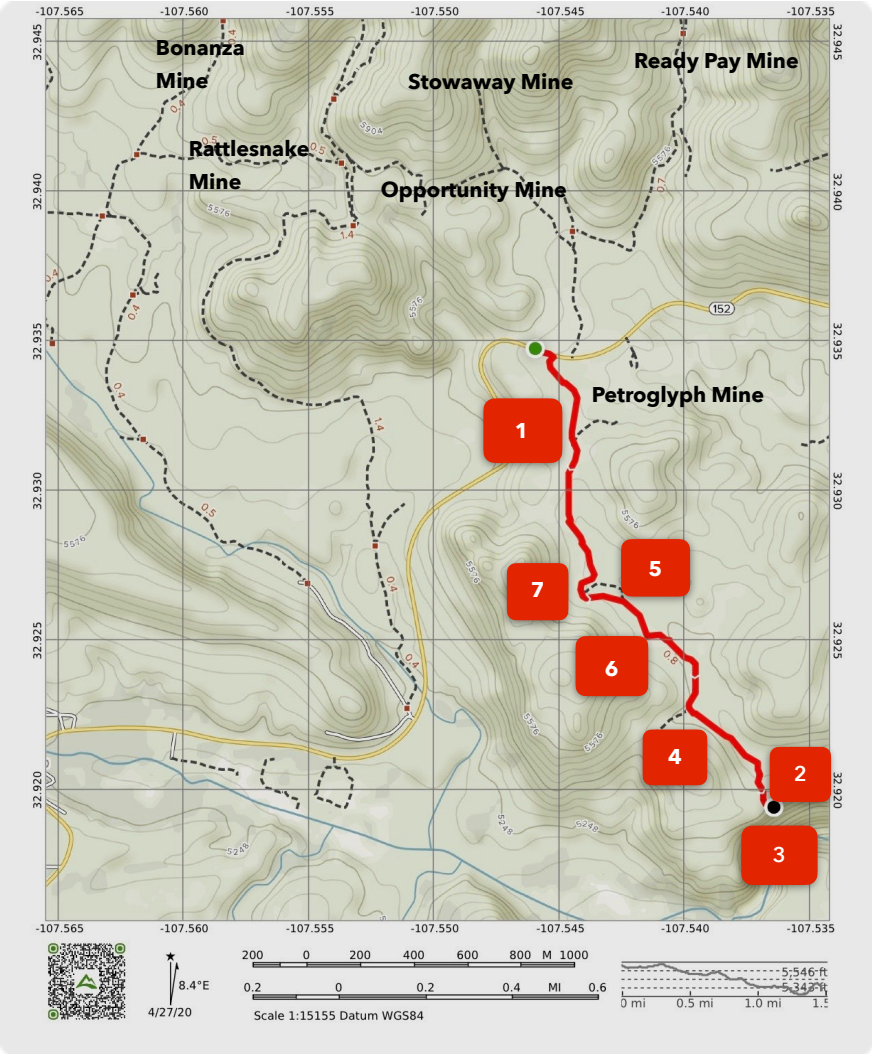
This route does not have any shade and can be brutal in the mid day sun of June. It ends at an overlook of Percha Creek, allowing great looks down into the Percha Box.



The numbered entries are keyed to the map at the top left on the following page.

Banana Yucca, Sotol, and Ocotillo are all common along the route adding a bit of height to the riot of wildflower color which can sometimes be found here.

August 31, 2014, looking south.



We have yet to find a Turkey Vulture nest in this area but have often thought that the area around the overlook is a likely location for one.

Percha Box, looking east from the end of the walk. August 31, 2014.

The local name, "Vulture Road" derives from the fact that Turkey Vultures are often cruising back and forth above the creek, during the summer. On a recent walk in August, it was not Turkey Vultures, but rather Common Raven that were flying back-and-forth above Percha Creek.

When there has been rain, this is a very good walk for wildflowers and birds. Evening primroses (multiple species), Great Plains (or Downy) Paintbrush, mesquite, penstemons, ... cover the ground from March to September (yearly variation due to rain). Ash-throated Flycatcher, Cactus Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Canyon Towhee, Black-throated Sparrow.... are present during season.

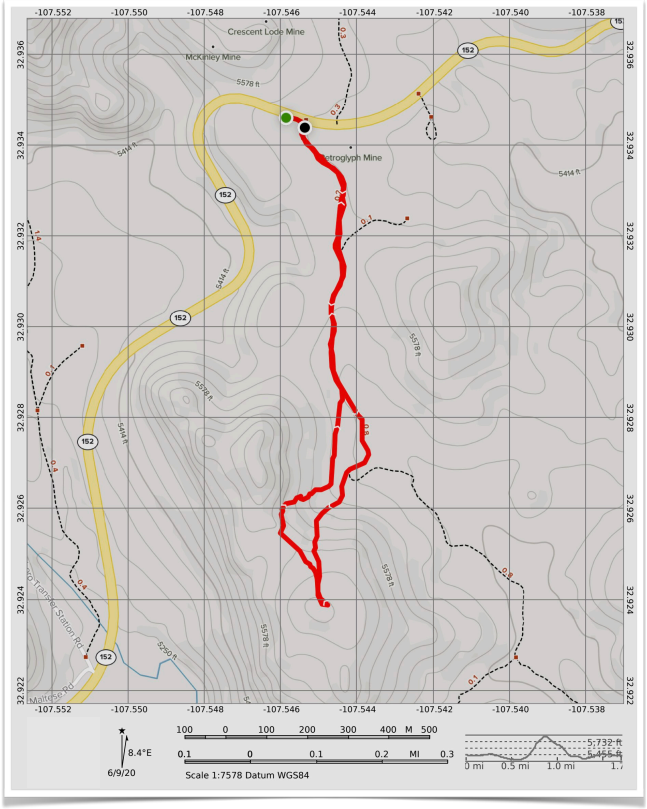
Banana Yucca - Yucca baccata

This is a prime area to study evening primroses during the spring, with many individuals of multiple species often in bloom in April. Fendler's Sundrops, *Oenothera hartwegii fendlerii*, pictured at the top left of the following page were numerous on a walk on April 27.

In early April it is easy to find penstemon along the road and a variety of other species, like Puccoon, *Lithospermum incisum*, pictured immediately above.

Perhaps my favorite Paintbrush is *Castilleja sessiliflora*, Downy Paintbrush. It is along this route that I saw it for the first time and it is here that I see it in profusion every year. *Zinnia acerosa*, Desert Zinnia, is typically found early in the season and *Baileya multiradiata* dominates the landscape later. The Plains Zinnia, *Zinnia grandiflora*, can be found here on any walk in season. (2026 Note: The last two years have been miserable for wildflowers east of Hillsboro because of the ongoing drought.)

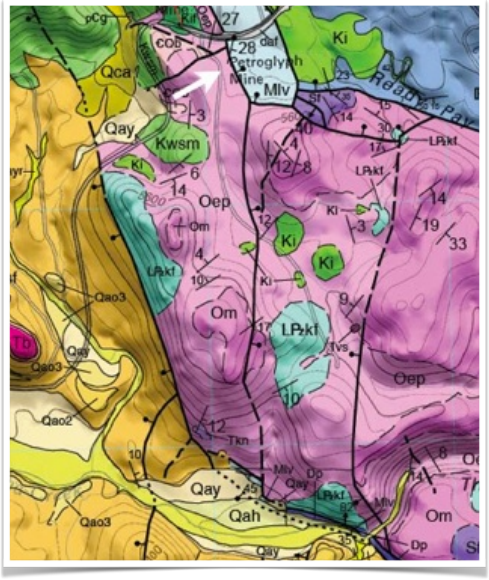
This is a nice conditioning walk, just three miles round-trip, a bit of elevation gain/loss, good footing (most of the time), and beautiful scenery.



This slight variation of the basic walk is 1.74 miles long. The southeastern portion of the route follows a steep track (up to a 48% grade) to the communications facilities at the top of the hill. The walk up this hill gains a little over 300 feet of elevation. The southwestern part of the track crosses slopes with many loose stones and is not recommended.

Petroglyph Mine

The Petroglyph Mine is located, in the Hillsboro Mining District east of Hillsboro. On the detail from the Hillsboro Geologic Quadrangle (below) the shaft is at the head of the white arrow. mindat.org gives the location of the mine as: Latitude & Longitude (WGS84): 32° 56' 2'' North , 107° 32' 39'' West OR Latitude & Longitude (decimal): 32.9338888889, -107.544166667. It is undoubtedly



named after the petroglyphs and bedrock mortar holes (see photo below right) which are nearby.

Like many mines in this area, this mine has been called by various names - in this case, this mine is also known as the Miners Dream Mine. Lots of mine names indicate the wealth to be had - the dream was rarely realized.

Among the minerals taken from this mine are: Anglesite, Aragonite, Baryte, Calcite, Cerussite, Descloizite, Goethite, Hemimorphite, Melanotekite, Mimetite, Mottramite, Quartz, Vanadinite, Arsenatian Vanadinite, Wad, Willemite, and Wulfenite.

The Petroglyph Mine shaft is shown below and at the upper right. mindat.org describes the mine as: "Workings visible from the surface (January 2008) include a small inclined opening on the south end, which quickly drops vertically (ladder length deep). A shaft, of unknown depth, is located not far to the north and a second shaft is open in line with the other two openings. Overall, the length of the area containing the openings is about 100 feet (30 meters), or less. The surface around the northernmost opening has the remnants of a small ore pile on its western side. The overall footprint of the mine is barely visible from the highway despite the fact that it is near the top of an open hillside."

May 22, 2016.

Vanadinite, $PB_5(VO_4)Cl$ from the Petroglyph Mine, Hillsboro Mining District, Sierra County, NM. Specimen at the Mineral Museum, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, Socorro, NM. Photograph taken on April 6, 2016.

Wulfenite, $PbMoO_4$ - From the Petroglyph Mine, Hillsboro Mining District, Sierra County, N.M.. Specimen at Mineral Museum, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, Socorro, New Mexico. Photograph taken on April 6, 2016.

26. South of Percha Box

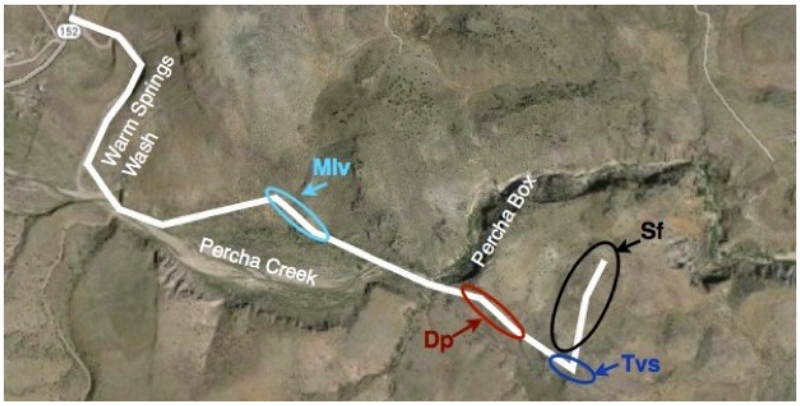
The geologic ramble described here was for the purpose of gathering information on the Fusselman Dolomite ("Sf") Formation which overlooks the Percha Box. On the map to the right, the walk to the "Sf" site is shown as a white line, starting at the culverts under NM-152, east of Hillsboro. The walk follows Warm Springs Wash to Percha Creek and then downstream to the entrance to the Percha Box. At that point the route turns southeast up a well defined wash and then uphill (first southeast and then northeast).

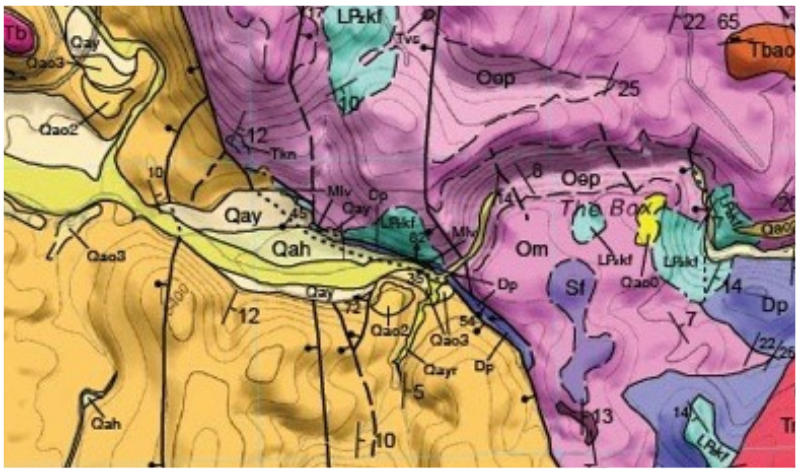
Along the way there were stops at a "Mlv" (Lake Valley Limestone) geologic unit, a deposit of "Dp" (Percha Shale), a "Tvs" geologic unit (volcaniclastic deposit from the Oligocene), and finally the Fusselman Dolomite ("Sf") unit on the top of the hills. A bit of blooming cactus, in this case Claret Cup growing on the top of an Mlv outcrop (shown on the map above) - photo right - added greatly to the experience.

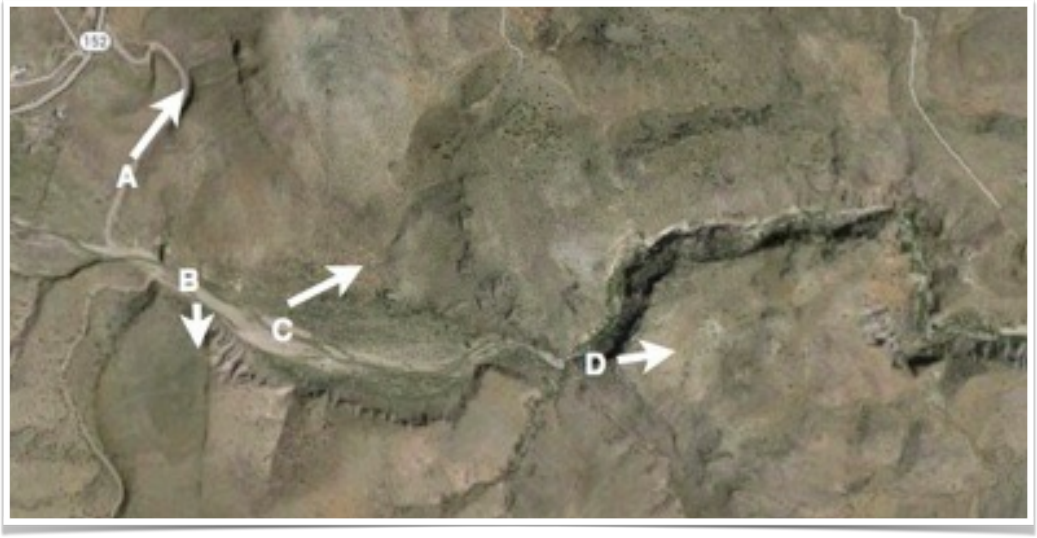
There is a great deal of geology along this walk. The photo key map, below, shows the point where the following photographs were taken and the direction of the photograph.

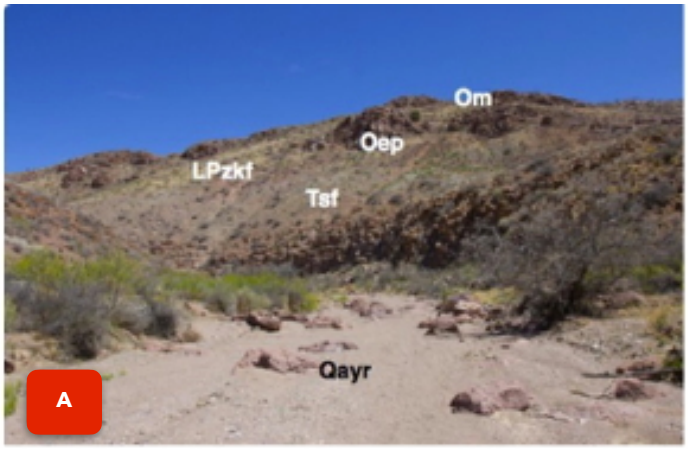
In the photographs on the next page, "A" shows the view looking up Warm Springs Wash, in the area where it has opened back up. "Om" is the Montoya Formation, "Oep" is the El Paso Formation, "LPzkf" is karst fill from the Cretaceous, "Tsf" is the Santa Fe Group predating the Palomas Formation from the Miocene, and "Qayr" is alluvium (middle Holocene to present).

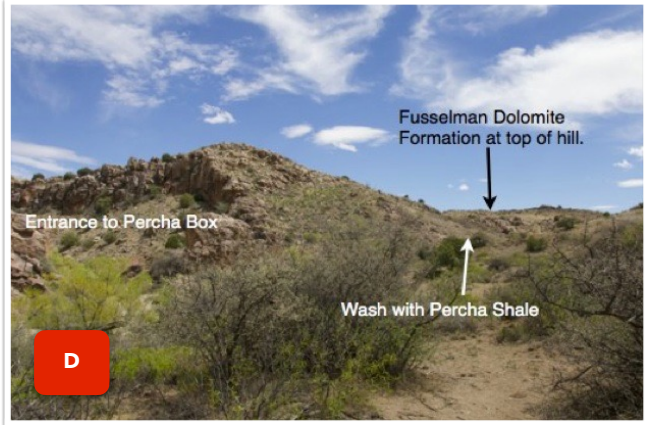
Photograph "B" and is of the Western Boundary Fault of the Animas Uplift.

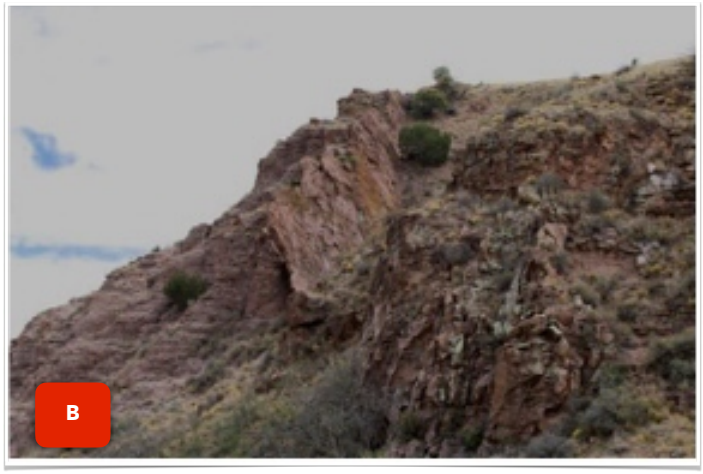




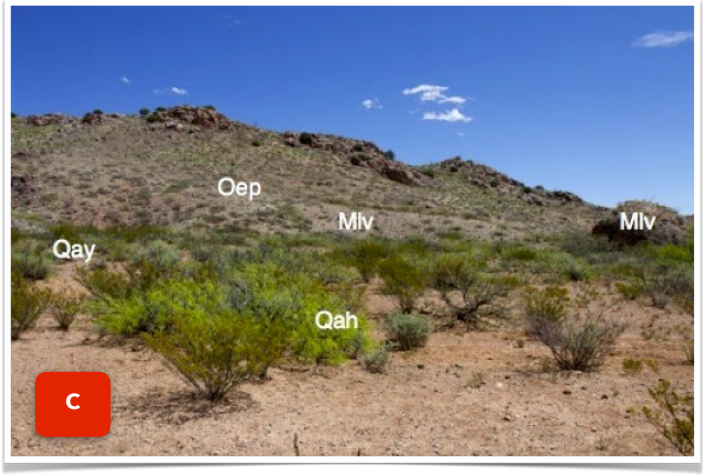








But remember, there is more to life than geology, even when there has been pitifully little rain.



The photograph above was taken from location "C", near the ruin of a small rock and adobe structure with well. The units shown here have been discussed above, except for "Qay" which is alluvium from the middle to upper Holocene and "Qah" which is historic alluvium.

The last photograph in this series (above right) was taken from location "D". The entrance to the Percha Box is shown on the left, the wash with Percha Shale is shown immediately ahead, and the Fusselman Dolomite unit is shown at the top of the ridge, center right.

27. Mesa Walk South of Hillsboro

The walk shown here is not a trail per se, more of a route. As such it is typical of many a walk in the Black Range; a starting point, rocks and stones along the way, and an end point. This route starts from Hillsboro and makes a loop, gaining a little over 700 feet in the process. The route is 6.1 miles long.

In much of this area, land ownership is very clear, especially if you are using an app which indicates ownership. Private, State, and Federal lands are intermixed. In some cases it is not clear where the ownership rests. Even, as in the case of this route, where there were no postings it is prudent to ask around and ask permission if that is necessary.

The route is shown to the right, the photo was taken from the ridge west of the Hillsboro Cemetery. It climbs gradually to the high point, goes down hill into a wash, and joins a track for the return to NM-152, west of Hillsboro.

In the second photo to the right, taken at roughly the point where the route turns back to the right in the "route photo" to the right, the high point of the route is on the ridge line at the left.

In the bottom photo, taken from just below the high point on the trail, looking across the wash to the south slope of the hill to the north, the road that the route follows back to NM-152 cuts across the top half of the picture.

At the north end, this road connects with NM-152. To the south it becomes County Road B010, eventually joining NM-27 south of Hillsboro. Sierra County road maintenance logs indicate that B010 (Gold Dust Road) is 1.1 miles long and is graded twice a year (or on some schedules yearly) - most likely when someone squawks. It passes thru Trujillo Park Canyon before "terminating". Just before the canyon, the road follows the stream bed.

28. Apache Peak (Hill)

Video: Lake Valley Mining District/Monument Peak (December, 2025)

This a very short walk of just over one-half mile with an elevation gain of about 325 feet. It starts on the east side of NM-27, at a cattle guard north of the Lake Valley townsite. There are great wildflowers here, in the right season and with the right amount of rain. At the top of the peak there are fossils in the rim rock.

From the road, walk cross-country up the hill to the east. Once you reach the ridge line, turn left and head northeast up the ridge to the summit of Apache Peak.

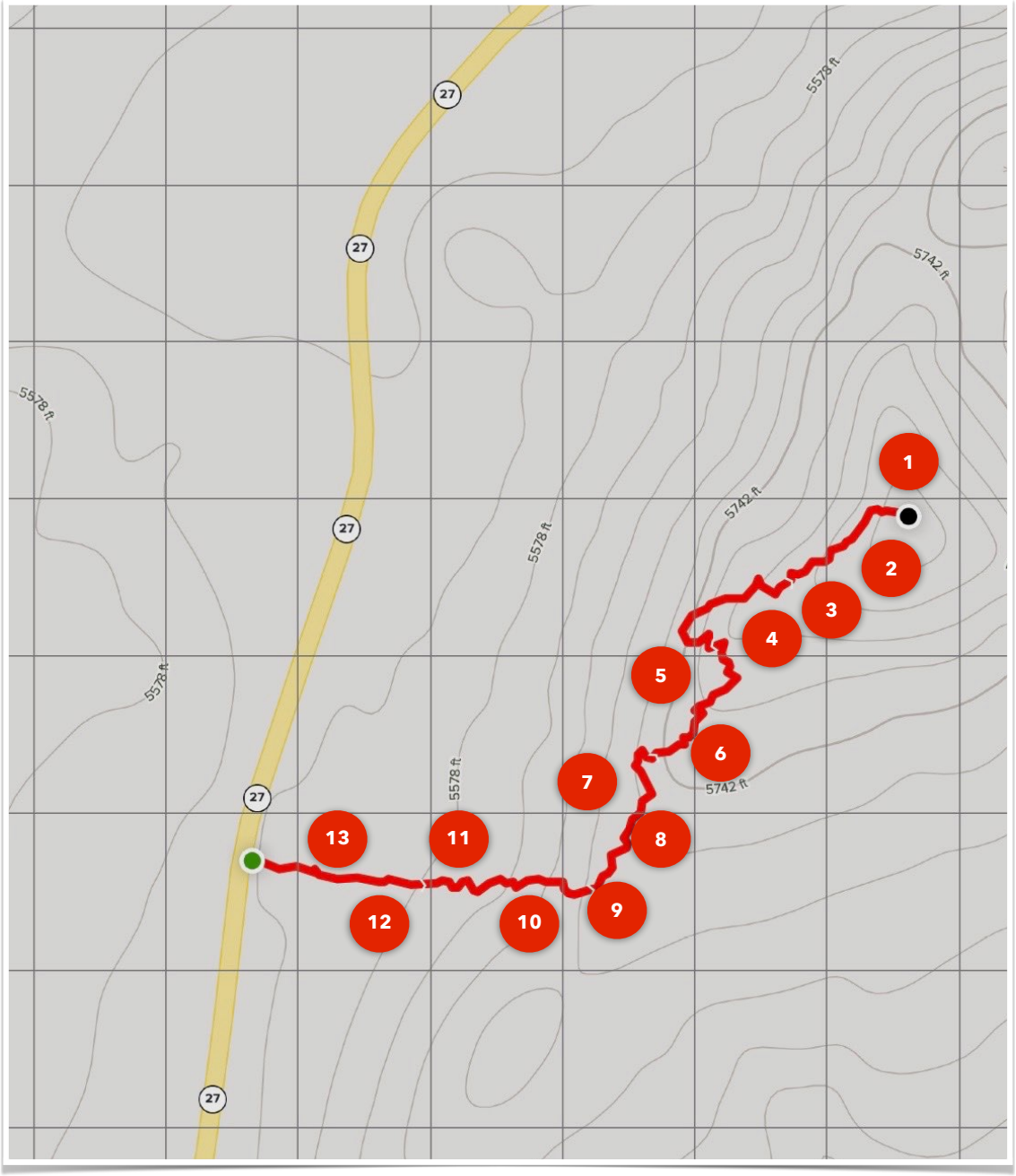
The Lake Valley Mining District was rich but small in size. Apache Hill marked the northern boundary of the district and Monument Peak marked the eastern boundary. The geology of this area is complex and the area is riddled with faults.

Overlying the Percha Shale at Apache Hill, in ascending order, are the more resistant Mississippian Caballero Formation, Lake Valley Limestone, small patches of Love Ranch Formation, and the oldest volcanic rocks in the area. The ore-hosting Lake Valley Limestone makes up the dip slope of the ridge including Apache Hill and adjacent low ridges. (From *Geologic Investigations in the Lake Valley Area, Sierra County, New Mexico* - it contains an excellent an extensive description of the geology of this area.)

1. Once you top the ridge, the views to the east and south are spectacular. Here, Monument Peak and Lizard Rock are visible above the Lake Valley townsite.

2. In mid-April I found many Echinocereus coccineus, Scarlet Beehive Cactus (aka Claret-Cup Cactus, Scarlet Hedgehog Cactus, Kingcup Cactus, . . .) in bloom below the summit.

3. Chamaesaracha sordida (Dunal) A. Gray, Hairy Five Eyes, were growing just below the summit.



4. Above the saddle, there are fossils in the rock beds, including what appear to be crinoid heads, like that above.

5. Koeberlinia spinosa var. spinosa, **Crown of Thorns or Crucifixion Thorn, was growing near the fence on the ridgeline, as well as midway up the hill at the start of the walk.**

6. *Phacelia integrifolia* Torrey *var. integrifolia,* Gypsum Scorpionweed, was growing on the east side of the summit ridge.

7. *Glandularia bipinnatifida* (Nuttall), Dakota Vervain, is a common plant in mid-April in the foothills, here it was growing on the summit slope.

8. Cactus can be difficult - That said, this is probably Chihuahua Pinapple Cactus - *Echinomastus intertextus* - growing just above the saddle on this walk.

9. Top Right: *Giliastrum acerosum,* Spiny Blue Bowls, were growing at the saddle where the walk turns northeast to head up to the peak.

10. Center Right: *Linum puberulum* (Engelmann), Plains Flax, was growing from the road to the saddle.

11. Bottom Right: The year 2020 was very good for phlox. The hillsides were often covered with them. There were many specimens of *Phlox triovulata* - Three Seed Phlox - on the walk up the hillside to the saddle.

12. Top: *Streptanthus carinatus* Wright *ex* Gray *subsp. arizonicus* (S. Watson) Kruckeberg, Rodman & Worthington - Arizona Jewel Flower - was growing profusely on the slope of the hill leading up to the saddle.

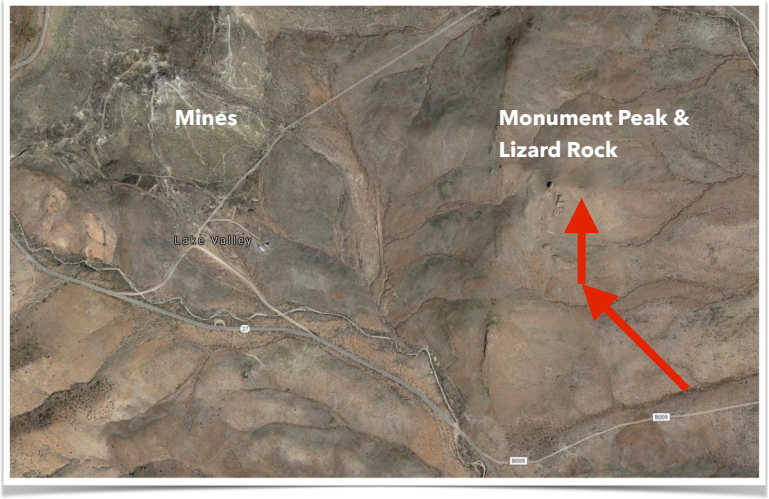
13. Bottom: *Dalea formosa*, Torrey, Indigobush or Feather Plume is often overlooked because it is a small plant which hugs the ground. It can be very striking when in full bloom. Near the road.

29. Monument Peak/Lizard Rock

Video: Lake Valley Mining District/Monument Peak (December 2025)

This short walk starts at a pull out on county road B-009 and heads cross country and up hill to Lizard Rock and on to the summit of Monument Peak. This area is littered with loose volcanic rock, watch your step, easy to turn an ankle and lots of good places for rattlesnakes. The photographs in this entry were recorded in March. The upper reaches of the hike provide excellent views of the Lake Valley townsite and the mining operations just north of town.

See the Apache Hill walk for links to reference material for this area.

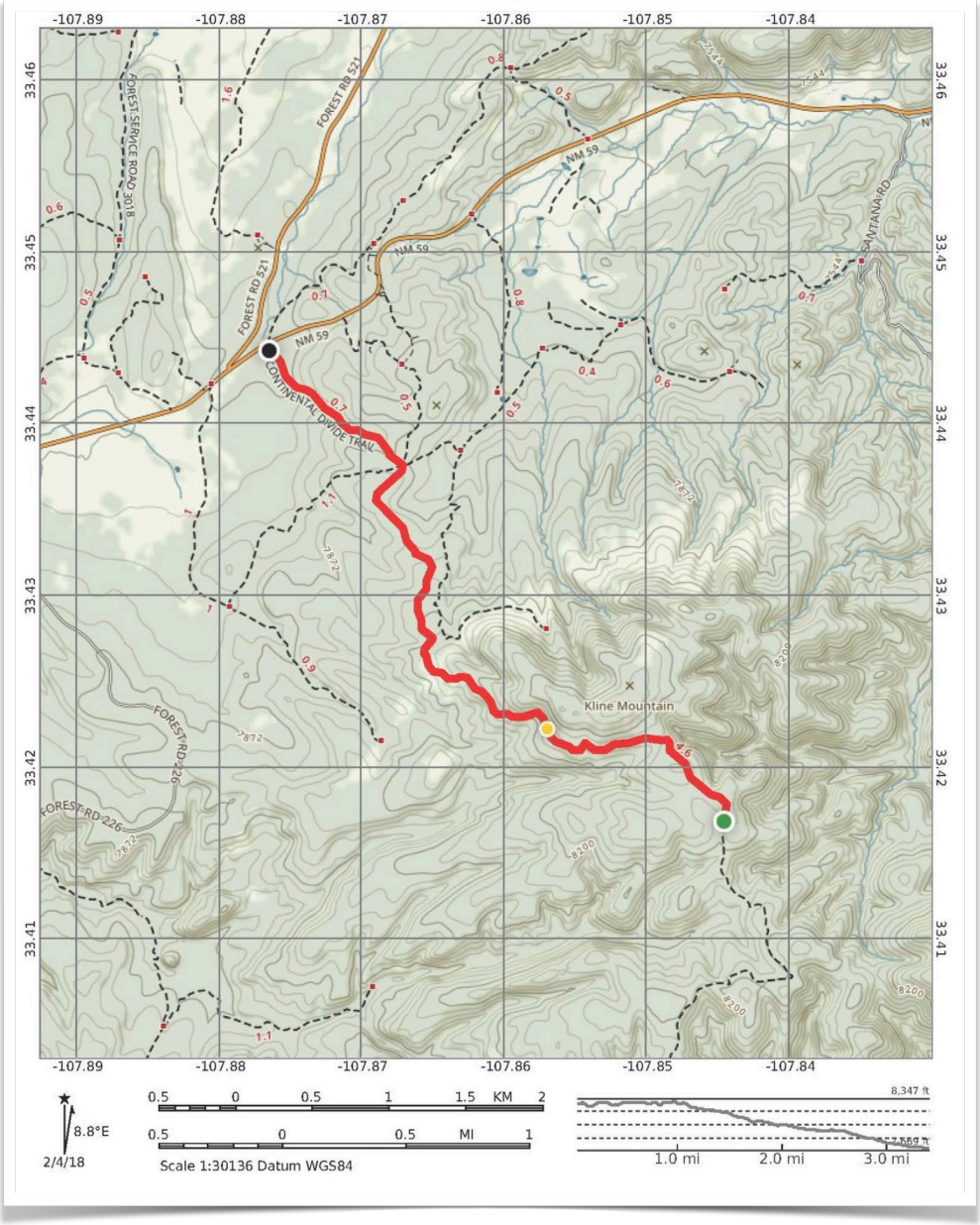


The peak and rock from the high saddle.

The start of the walk, Monument Peak and Lizard Rock are on the skyline on the right. Lizard Rock is the formation below the Peak.

The summit boulder above and Lizard Rock below.

30. Continental Divide Trail at Kline Mountain



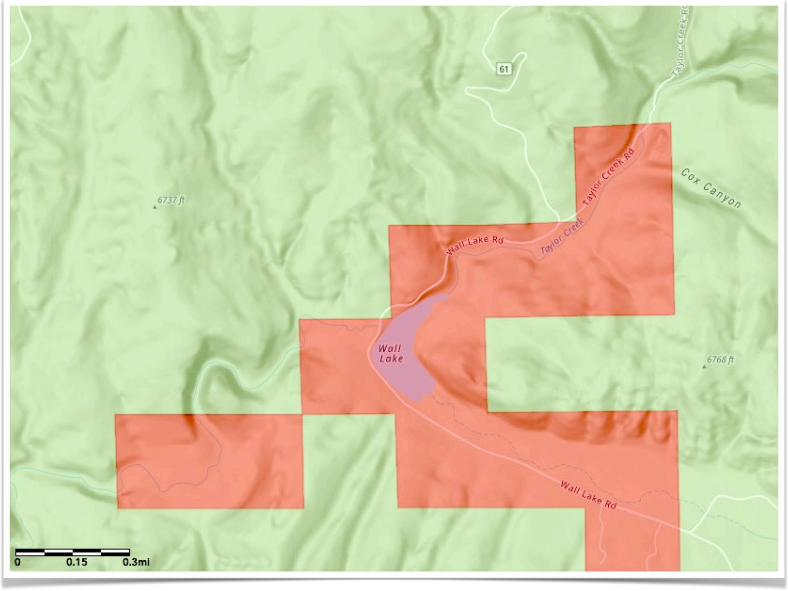
On February 3, 2018 we hiked a short section of the Continental Divide Trail in the northern part of the Black Range. The trail head is on the south side of NM-59, west of Poverty Flat. Kline Mountain is the prominent feature along the trail at this point. Our walk on this day was time-limited, it is more than two hours from our home in Hillsboro to the trail head. In former times we might not have considered that significant but now, when we can take a five minute drive from our home and walk all day without seeing anyone, we do. Even though it was a drive, we took our time, enjoying the lovely scenery along NM-52 and NM-59.

We have walked this section of trail several times in the past and because of that were able to assess how this area is recovering from the fires of the recent past - and it is recovering very well. In the past we have seen Elk, Abert's Squirrel, and Grace's Warbler along this section. Today there was little of that (although the Bluebirds, both Mountain and Western, were in their usual flocks along NM-52 and NM-59). There were a few small patches of snow along parts of the trail. The trail is obvious, with large cairns and Continental Divide markers for those who might stray. The trail base is mostly needle duff at the northern end, quickly changing to rocks, back and forth between the two as you walk along.

This walk is "out and back", we started the track recording at the southern end of our walk. Therefore, the elevation profile for the trail starts at the southern end of the trail (left side of profile) and proceeds to the trailhead (right side of the profile) - why is it "backward" - operator error.

This walk was 6.8 miles long (3.4 each way), with a climb from 7,669' to 8,347' as you head south. The gross elevation gain is something over 600 feet in the course of 3.4 miles, and the grade is fairly constant - so easy. The indicated waypoint (yellow dot) indicates the location of a fire road which is not on the map. The walk took us about two hours and 15 minutes.

31. Taylor Creek & Whitewater Canyon -
Contributed by Devon Fletcher



Red hue indicates private property.

I've been wanting to see Taylor Creek/Whitewater Canyon for many years. Once, back in '04 I think, we drove over to Wall Lake (which is fed by Taylor and Hoyt Creeks). There was a chain link fence keeping people out of an area that had once been used for camping. I guess by that time the lease agreement, allowing people to fish and camp there, between New Mexico Game and Fish and the property owner was no longer in effect. I remember the lake being very shallow and climbing down to Taylor Creek below the dam where there were thousands of huge tadpoles in the water. We drove past the area heading home from camping at Black Canyon on another trip.

The hike described here was in October of 2020. The private property around Wall Lake is still private and has new owners who run a guest ranch that features horse riding trips into the Gila National Forest with one of the premier destinations being Taylor Creek. It seemed unlikely that they were giving people access on the road through the property (they aren't), so I devised a route that would bypass the private property and get to the canyon bottom entirely on Gila National Forest land.

If you are wondering, we did this hike while camping in the dispersed camping area in lower Corduroy Canyon about a dozen miles away. It is just too far from my home in Las Cruces for a day trip.

We drove through the dappled shade of the pines along the endlessly twisting FR 150 (shown as 61 on these maps). After crossing the mesa top, we got to a deep U-shaped curve in the gray gravel road part way down the descent to the valley where there was enough room for parking and we set out on foot onto the piñon and juniper covered mesa. In retrospect this wasn't the best place to start as there is ample parking just a short way back on the mesa top, which I would recommend. At a high point with a clearing, we could look down into the canyon.

I didn't feel like it was going at all well with the first side canyon being way too rugged to descend, but we stuck with it and found a cow path (and some cows) that took us around the upper end of that drainage and then back onto a second hill where we soon were looking down into a second side canyon. This one, I knew contained some old mining prospects and a road (!), that had serviced them, that went all the way down to Taylor Creek, intersecting it at a point beyond the private property boundary. Once we caught sight of the old mining adits we headed downhill. It was a steep pitch for sure, and rocky to boot, through patches of brown grass between the conifers, but we made it down to the road and then it was easy walking to the creek. I was a little uneasy when we had to pass through an open gate in a fence line, even though I knew, using 4 different maps and my On-X app that we were at least 1000 feet away from the property line. Before reaching the bottom we could see a tall precarious looking wall built into a cave with some pine timbers lodged in the opening above it. At the bottom, I saw a man walking off to the west. There a were old corrals and cabin nearby too. None of which helped my anxiety. Even though I knew I was on the Gila NF, I was not looking for any confrontation and so I was happy to get moving to the east and leave this part of the hike behind.

The tiny spring fed meadow creek is an absolute miracle in this dry country. Running clear, maybe two feet wide, and almost that deep in many places, we began to make the first of many muddy and wet crossings. The water isn't all that cold though. I saw gray forms, tadpoles and tiny fish, scurry about in the pools. Our dogs (short-legged Scotties) hilariously leaped for all they were worth to get across. Several times as we continued, though, they found themselves performing a short swim.

Huge cottonwoods, plus the occasional ash, willow, and box elder provided the glowing yellows, while five leaf ivy vines winding around trunks burned a vivid red. Oaks, with their orange and gold leaves beginning to take to the air, were here and there along banks, hidden in cool recesses against the cliffs. Early on, a large alcove/cave appeared in a vast

cliff of crumbling conglomerate on the north side, the first of many recesses we spied. Some had still standing walls built inside them, others didn't.

It was warm as we moseyed on, but the hike was mostly in shade past the initial long meadows. The trail was easy to follow, and there were a few alternate routes that provided variety on the return walk. We looked up to rock towers high, high above the tallest pines, and looked down to the dusty ground for any artifacts left from the time of the ancient peoples who surely utilized this valley.

After going around several bends in the 700 foot deep canyon, we noticed the once babbling stream had become a shallow, wider slough where the water's movement was barely perceptible.

Farther on from there, the water disappeared altogether, replaced by bleached cobbles. The riparian species were no more as well, and we found ourselves in a more typical hot and dry Gila woodland dominated by desert junipers. We turned around.

On the return we met a trail riding excursion from the guest ranch, whose horses got a bit spooked by our little group. The wrangler was sure enough surprised to see anyone in this canyon. He may have had his doubts as to how we accessed the canyon, even as I explained, but remained diplomatic, perhaps knowing that there was little to say given that we were all on public land at the moment.

We rested in the shade of a cliff and some oaks and ate our bars. We wet our shirts and I, my cap, and filled water bottles from the stream for our dogs, all in preparation for the long hot climb back to the mesa top. We made frequent stops in the meager shade of scrub oaks, piñons and junipers as we went up and up.

Overshooting our original trajectory by using the road too long, we corrected and found ourselves back on the cow path that had originally assisted us. We found the cows too, for which I am grateful, as running into them put a quick halt, to a jackrabbit pursuit by the Scotties that had briefly put us in a panic. Back at the 4Runner everything was good.

Early in the morning we had seen a bull elk crossing the FR 150 on our drive over. In the canyon of Taylor Creek in the heat of the day, there were only jays, juncos and woodpeckers to liven up the scene. On the ground however was evidence that this is a lively place at other times. Tracks and scat of elk, deer, bear, plus fox and coyote were all visible.

This place is most definitely worth the trouble it took to get to it. If you are not inclined toward the trail-less scramble we used to get to the trail in the creek bottom, you can always ask the property owners for permission to pass through, the worst that will happen is they will say no, or if

you like to ride horses, staying with them for few nights is an option too.

Taylor Creek can be accessed more easily much further upstream from FR 226, but from that starting point it would be too long for a day hike to reach the deepest and prettiest part of the canyon (and the permanent part of the stream). The un-maintained FR 696 parallels (sort of) the canyon along the mesa on the north side. Accessing the creek bottom from some point along this road is feasible, but would surely be an adventure similar to the one we had getting there.

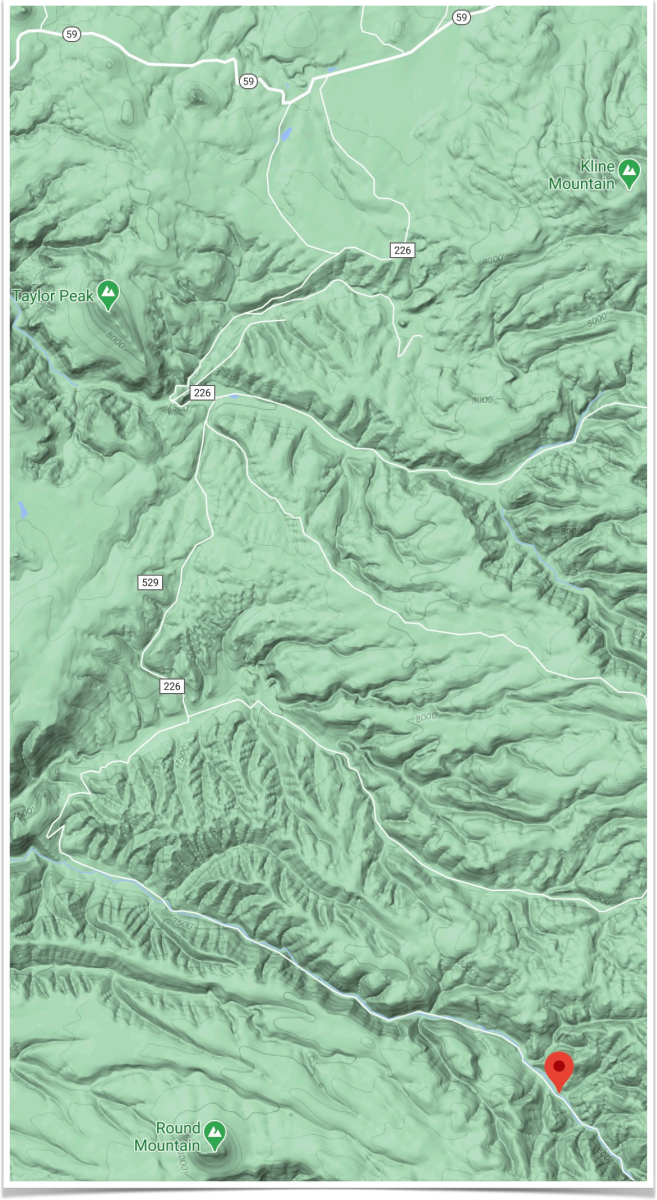
32. Turkey Run/Diamond Creek - Forest Trails 42 & 40

Contributed by Devon Fletcher

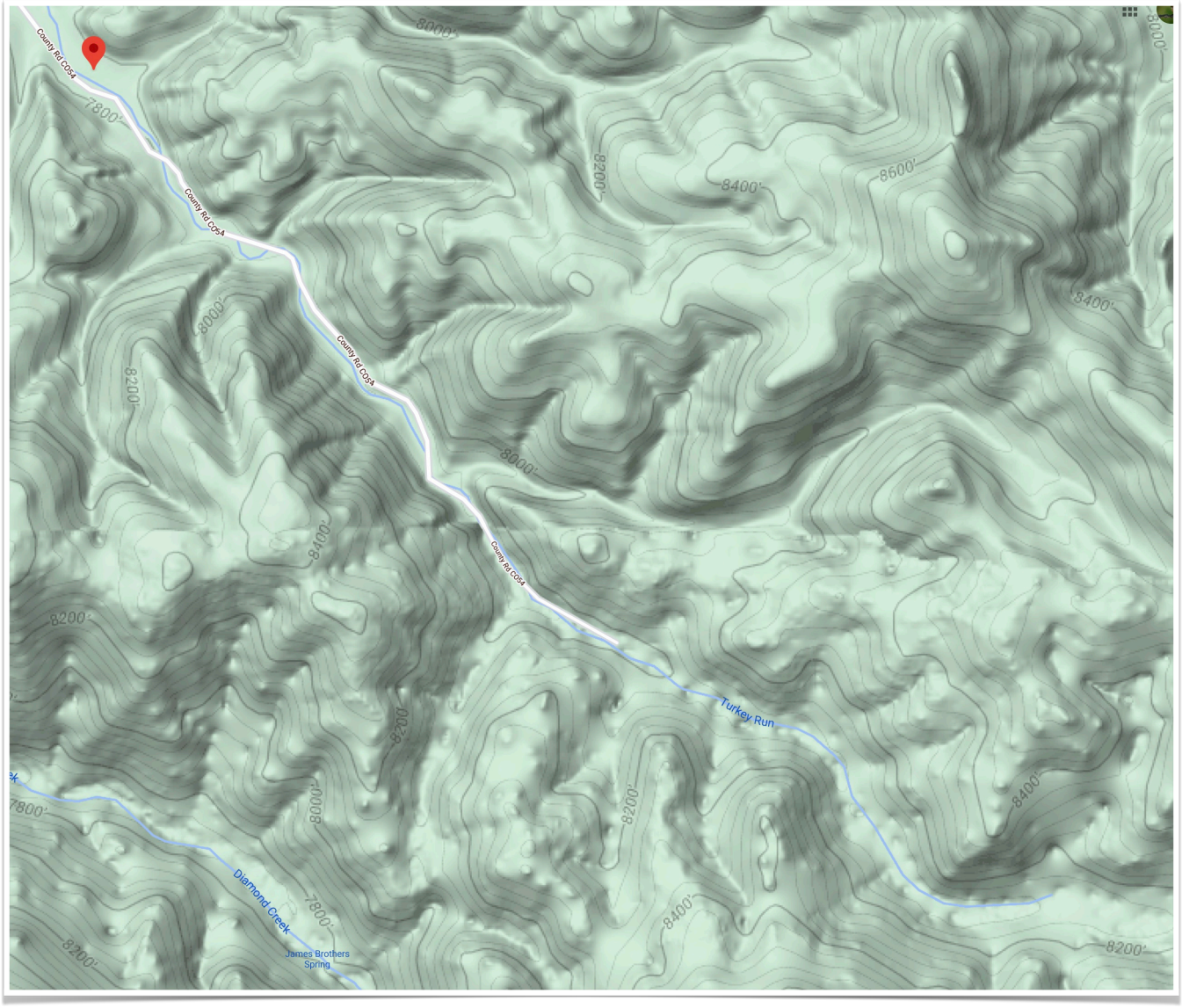
In mid July, quite a few years ago, we headed out for Turkey Run, a small, remote creek that forms the northeast border of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness. It was, and of course still is, a long drive from Las Cruces. NM-59 is winding, but paved. Once we got of off NM-59 at the Lookout Mountain turn-off, the last ten or so miles of our drive was on increasingly lower standard roads (FR 226, FR 500). Eventually we found a suitable spot to set up camp not too far from Turkey Run Well. In the morning I saw elk along the road. One evening we saw a mama bear and 2 cubs scamper up a nearby hillside. We hiked up the road with our dogs to the springs that are the headwaters of Turkey Run. At the dead end of the Turkey Run Road, we found there is ample room for parking and camping. This is also the trailhead for FT 42 which goes up along a piney side creek to the south. It tops out on ridge a few a hundred feet above Diamond Creek. After passing a usually dry waterfall, the trail zig-zags steeply beneath skinny hoodoos of volcanic rock down to the stream. Two consecutive days we did this short (.75 miles) hike down to tiny Diamond Creek, venturing downstream one day and upstream another on little used FT 40. The creek, beneath firs and pines, with willows crowding its banks, was low. Monsoon rains had yet to swell it to a more pleasing flow. The canyon is very narrow in these uppermost reaches, however, and it can rise very rapidly with a single storm. We relaxed creek side one afternoon, and I fed black flies to the hungry Gila Trout in the shallow pools. Be aware there is still no fishing in this stream, as it protects one of the five recognized pure relict populations of this rare fish.

Since this is wilderness, I don't think much has changed here, except that the Forest Service has done some trail work on the uppermost reaches of FT 40, which had almost disappeared completely. The roads leading to the trailhead may be a different story. A friend who visited the area back in the Spring of 2016 reported he had to push fallen trees off of FR 500 with his Jeep. Fire, which has altered so much of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness and the Black Range in the 22 years I've been coming to the Gila, has not affected this area in recent years.

It was a good trip back then, but because this area is so remote, and requires such a substantial commitment of time, I have not been back in the intervening years. Of course, if they were ever to open up Main Diamond to fishing, I'd probably be out there in a flash. Think of this area not in terms of a day trip, but as place to camp and explore, because once you've made the long drive, you'll want to stay a few days to before heading home.



Turkey Run Well at the red marking.


County Rd CQ54
Turkey Run
Diamond Creek
James Brothers Spring
8000'
8200'
8400'
8600'
7800'

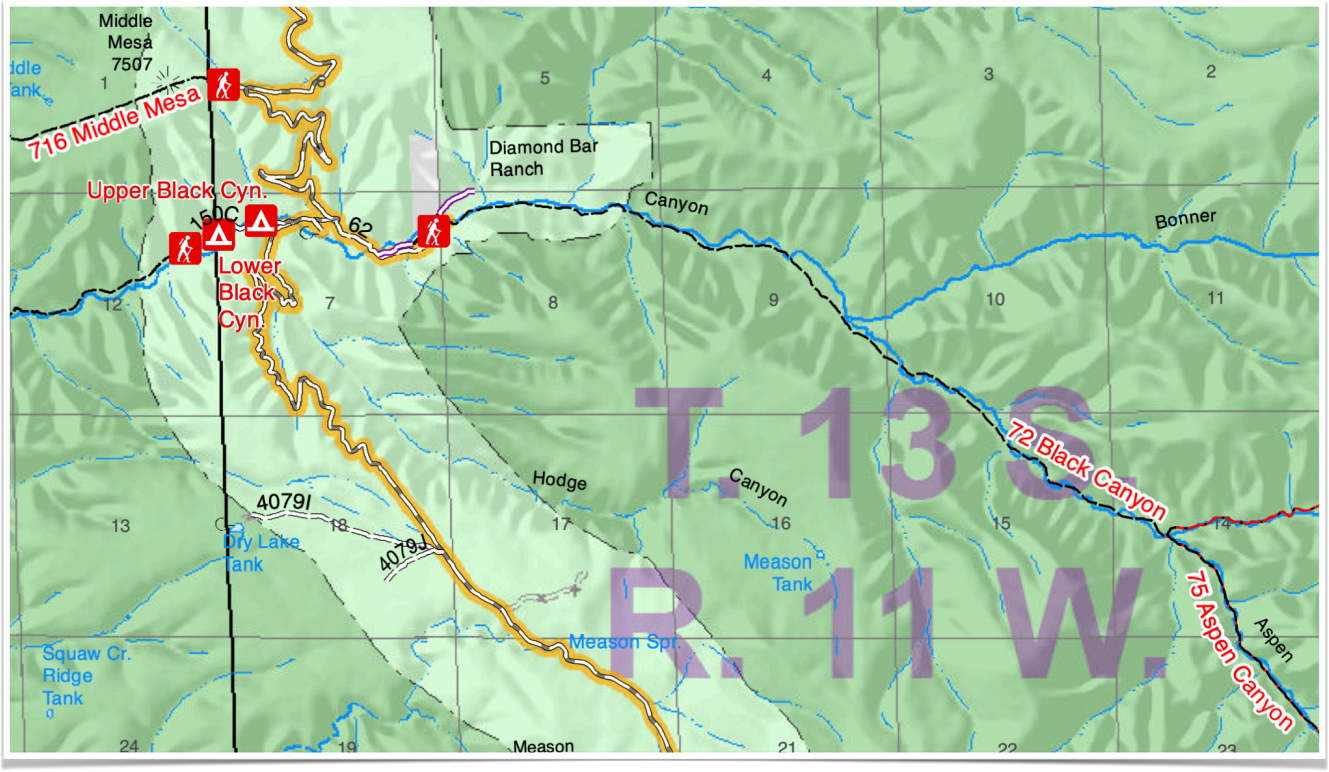
Turkey Run Well
26
25
42 Caledonia
Trail 42
Trail 40 And
Diamond Creek
35
36

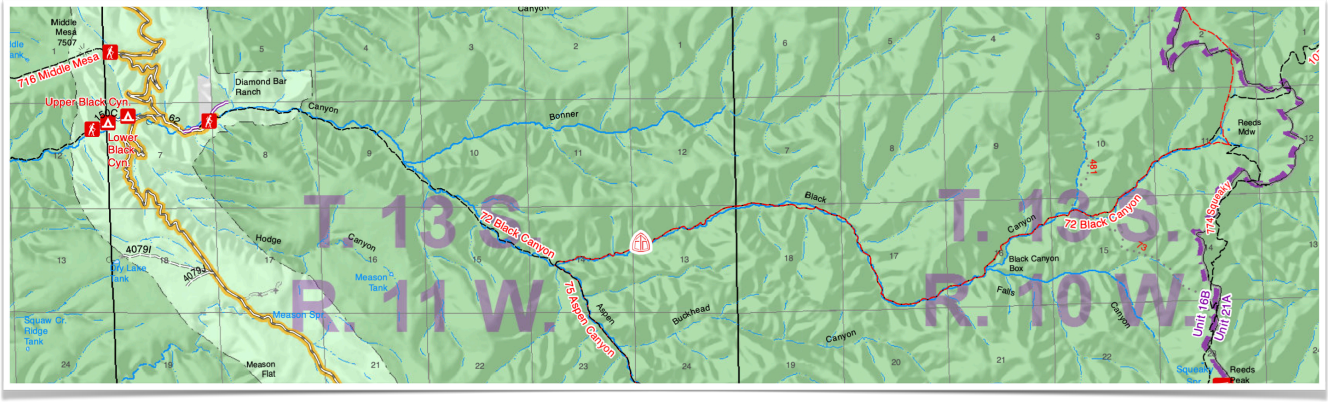
33. Upper Black Canyon Trail - Forest Trail 72

Contributed by Devon Fletcher

I have hiked the Upper Black Canyon Trail (FT 72) three times. My real purpose for two of these trips was fishing, more specifically fishing for the rare Gila Trout. The other time was the first when we were camping at the small campground just off of FR 150. We set out on a chilly spring morning that turned into a blissfully warm spring afternoon with us ambling along the rushing creek in the wide valley, and then picnicking in the sun looking up at the pale pock-marked cliffs with their many mysterious caves and alcoves. We were also blissfully unaware at the time of the enduringly confusing and frequently contentious situation regarding the trail passing through about 200 yards of private land which has changed hands several times over the years. Indeed, subsequent trips had me climbing around dangerously on the southern rim of the canyon in order to bypass the sliver of private inholding, or literally sprinting the distance and successfully avoiding detection. Others have not been so lucky and have been confronted angrily by the landowners. The Forest Service finally took action, sort of, and has designated a "trail " that leaves off of FR 150 and follows along the northern rim of the canyon before descending precipitously along a ridge to the canyon bottom. Similar to the situation that plagued the Mimbres River Trail, this new route adds around a mile and a half of distance and 600 feet of elevation change to circumvent 200 yards of easy walking in the valley. I have not tried it, and I don't know how many have bothered. One day it may become the accepted route, but for those who know of and have hiked the old route, it just seems like a pain.

This is not to say that Black Canyon is not worth the effort. It is as beautiful a small stream valley as you will find in the Gila National Forest in its first few miles east of the road. Fall can be particularly compelling with aspens and oaks providing glorious color all along the way. I've never made it too much farther than the Aspen Canyon confluence. When the fishing is good or sometimes even when it's bad, I tend to cover less ground. I would like to make it up to the falls in the Black Canyon Box one day, but the new additional hiking mileage and always slow drive on FR 150 are conspiring against even considering this destination as a day trip.





34. Circle Seven Creek Trail - FT 107

Contributed by Devon Fletcher

The Circle 7 Creek Trail begins on FR 730 which is about 18 miles south of Winston (and NM 52) on a well maintained section of FR 157. Your vehicle, determination, and the less than abundant parking opportunities will determine how far along the narrow and unmaintained FR 730 you will start your hike, but please do not attempt to drive all the way to the wilderness boundary which would entail driving in (not just crossing) the creek itself and doing damage to the recovering riparian community of plants and animals.

Our trip started out on a perfect spring morning: windless, cool and cloudy enough to keep the sun off us and our black dog. We had hiked the lower couple of miles more than ten years ago on an unseasonably hot, early fall day when the creek was dry, but now the green of the willows, the budding cottonwoods, and good flow of clear water in the creek made all the difference in the world. After leaving the road behind, there isn't much room for a trail at first and we crossed the creek many times in a very narrow section of the valley that cuts through solid rock, watching our Scottie drink and cool himself as we went.

When the terrain opened up again, the trail reappeared. Seamus disappeared in the previous year's lush growth of bunch grass that grew in large meadows near the Upper Circle Seven Well and corral, which is the boundary for the Aldo Leopold Wilderness. For short distances above and below this well and one short stretch at the beginning of the burn, were the only sections of the creek that were dry.

The forest here is mostly an open deciduous oak (still bare at this time of year) and juniper woodland with occasional cottonwoods and alders along the stream. Walnut trees (also bare) are here also, as well as, cypress, pines, and the occasional fir. The evergreens provide the only, and welcome, shade this early in the season.

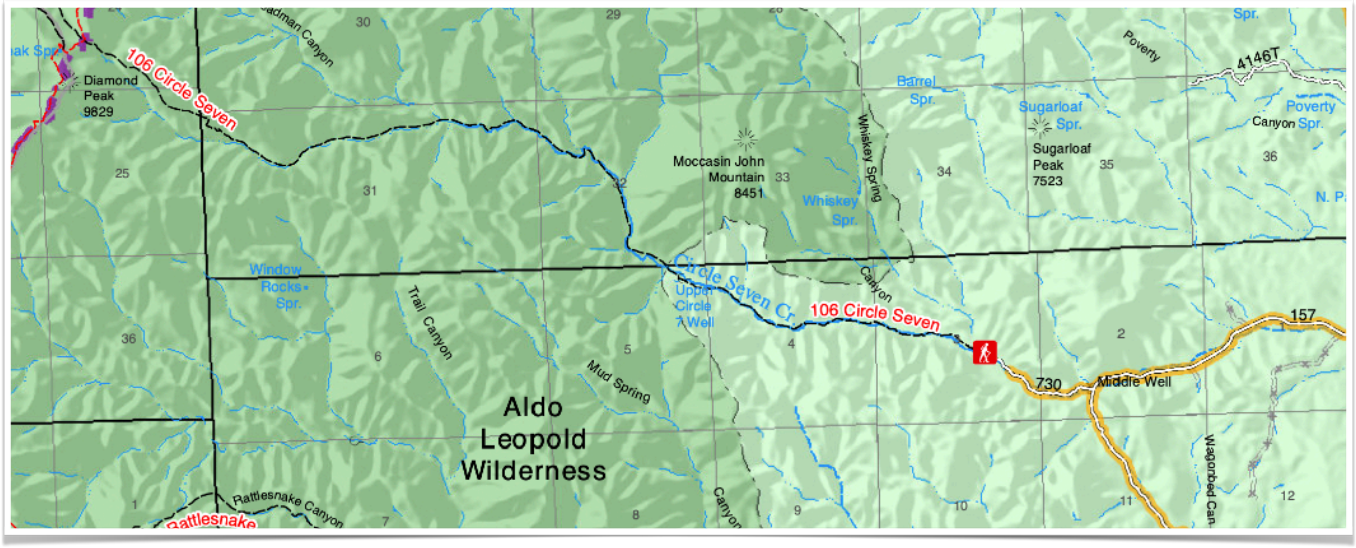
This open section ends at the mouth of the North Prong which was flowing as well. The route is a bit confusing at the confluence of the two creeks (they are very similar in size). To stay on the trail, as it stays with the main creek, take a sharp turn to the south. The North Prong has no trail but would make for fun exploration itself - the cliffs and rock formations rise high and steep over the tiny piney valley. Circle Seven Creek now became a much different place. Big vistas of hills and massive cliffs were hidden now, but trail and creek took on an intimate, utterly charming beauty with small cascades and deep clear pools. It looked very much like the trout streams I've fished in other parts of the Gila, and that it may have once been.

At Deadman Canyon, which was also flowing, there was a bit of trail finding again as our trail again turned sharply to the south. The even narrower little canyon of Deadman might make a fun hike as well, and I've been told there is a hundred foot waterfall way back where the slopes of two mountains collide.

Past Deadman things began to open a bit again, on the dry south facing slopes were scrub oak, mountain mahogany and low juniper. The north facing slope had only a sparse growth of evergreens and the yet to leaf out low growing shrubs. It has been this way for a while unlike areas further south in the Black Range which had a thick growth of pine and Douglas fir before the Silver Fire a few years ago. Really this entire area is a very dry part of the already dry Gila. The riparian areas are the only really lush parts of the forest.

Then we entered the burn area. The riparian growth of large trees was gone replaced by the aforementioned brushy oak and thorny locust. The gray-brown hillsides were thick with a low growth of Gambel oak punctuated with hundreds of black pine snags. It would've been a much prettier scene had the oak and locust leafed out already, as it was, it looked wild, desolate and very much like a place that people don't belong, at least not for long. The trail was gone, as were most of the blazes. There were occasional cairns and a bits of blue tape tied to shrubs, but they weren't really all that helpful as our speed was most likely cut in half now, and our momentum lost. We stopped to eat in a grove of tall, tall pines that had escaped the flames.

After lunch, the now trail-less hike only became rougher as we searched for blazes, cairns and short stretches of tread, but mostly followed the ground disturbed by cattle and elk. Along the way there were leafed out chokecherry and lemonade bush on the creekside, providing a bit of



electrifying green to the drab scenery. My wife decided to stop at a sweet little area where the stream cascaded between huge boulders and a few large pines still lived amongst the dead.

I continued on now very steeply up hill and high above the creek bottom, still finding the occasional blaze or cairn and even some rusty spools of barbed wire, as I slid on gravel, climbed over downfall and pushed through brush. A huge cone of rock, with large alcoves at the bottom, topped a huge mountain that would not have looked out of place in the desert, on the north side, of the valley. On the south was the high ridge of the Black Range looking gray. I gave up and stopped at an old blaze on an alligator juniper. At least a mile and a half and 1600 feet below our destination. I could not even see Diamond Peak, but I did spy a small grove of small aspen in a pocket below the ridgeline which brought a smile to my face.

It was not meant to be today. The clouds had made getting this far possible. Had the sun come out, it would have been unbearable in this completely open terrain. I reunited with my wife and we began our long descent. The sun did come eventually, but luckily we were already back in the shady stretches. We rested more often and still marveled at the pretty little stream, the first growth of wildflowers and our good fortune to be in this magnificent setting on this perfect day.

NOTE: As you may have gathered I can't really recommend this route as a way to access Diamond Peak or the CDT trail. Still, I may try it again one day. Also understand that this hike was done in early April after a winter with above average moisture. The flow (or lack thereof) of the creek can be wildly different depending on the year and the time of year.

35. North Fork Palomas Creek, Upper Box

Contributed by Devon Fletcher

The parking area to begin this hike is about 15 miles south of Winston, NM on FR 157 not too far after the road crosses (the usually dry) North Fork of Palomas Creek. I'm calling this the"upper box" to distinguish it from a second box canyon further downstream right before its confluence with the South Fork of the Palomas. This walk is about 4 miles round-trip.

One Easter Sunday morning we headed out to this box canyon which cuts through layers of Paleozoic sedimentary rock. The North Fork of Palomas Creek is a major drainage running in between the Cuchillo and Circle Seven Creeks. Its upper box canyon is somewhere close to 900 feet deep from the hilltops to the creek bottom, but unfortunately it's open to the sun and accessible to livestock which meant there were only a couple of bends that had a few puddles of water instead of a flowing stream as with Circle Seven's box, just above its confluence with South Palomas. Riparian trees were limited to scattered willow clumps and mostly older cottonwoods.

We started out parking at a camping spot along FR 157 that sits 30-40 feet above the creek. We headed down the bank where the dogs began bounding through the flats covered in tall, dry grass and past some big stream side cottonwoods just beginning to bud. We began to walk in the dry, gray gravel where my Seamus began picking up sticker after sticker. We had to stay to the most recent channel to avoid those as we went on.

Our first stop was a small shelter cave. Nearby, on the same side of the creek was another cave opening hidden in the leafless vines. I investigated in on the way back but my weak little LED flashlight was useless in trying to see into its black depths. I wonder if anyone has ever investigated it.

We came upon a few mossy puddles of water in the bedrock of the first bend and then began making our way through turn after turn. Chipmunks and squirrels ran in and out of the crevices in the limestone making my terriers more than a little excited. The walking in the stream bed was mostly in flat gravel but occasionally through boulders and bedrock. It was wide enough, however, that we were able to use cowpaths on the banks at times to bypass some rougher passages. Spring was coming on late in this dry year, so the scenery lower down, lacking any greenery, was not the best, but high above our heads it got better and better. Massive cliffs, sparsely covered with desert vegetation on the south facing slopes, and painted with piñon and juniper on the north facing ones, had us craning our necks.

At the deepest bend was an alcove formed where a layer of shale is eroding more quickly than the layers above and below. Nothing remarkable was found when I investigated, except the piles of flood debris about 15 feet above the floor of the canyon.

Eventually, the netleaf hackberries, to my mind a tree of the lower desert, appeared and the heat seemed to rise. We sat in the branch shade of a huge cottonwood (alive but leafless still) and then made our walk back, much more slowly.

36. South Palomas

Contributed by Devon Fletcher

NOTE: As described here, this hike is around 10 miles roundtrip. It could be made slightly shorter by driving all the way to the lower corral (I parked on a hill just above the canyon bottom deciding the last ¼ mile or so looked a little risky even with a 4Runner and 4WD), or a couple of miles longer by foregoing the nearly non-existent "road" I used that goes up Curtis Canyon just east of Hermosa and parking just off FR 157.

Places like this in the Gila, especially in the Black Range are the essence of the ineffable for me. Still, I try to find the words, and I diligently take the photographs that I know will never transmit the feeling that I have when I am at the bottom of this deep lonely canyon with the obviously majestic thousand foot cliffs crowned with a myriad of rock formations rising above, while beneath my feet moss growing thickly on the gray bedrock gives way to a plush quilt of fallen bigtooth maple leaves in tan, yellow and red on the banks.

I hear what turns out to be a deer stumbling on the rock glacier, in answer to my own stumbling. I think this is a place so rugged that even the deer have difficulty now and then. I think, I don't belong here, and yet I am here and that creates a giddy sort of dissonance.

I had been in South Palomas once before when we had been camping at either Circle Seven or Morgan Creek quite a few years ago. We only hiked on the trail along the creek briefly before heading off into Marshall Creek to find the springs to cool off our overheated dogs on a warm September morning.

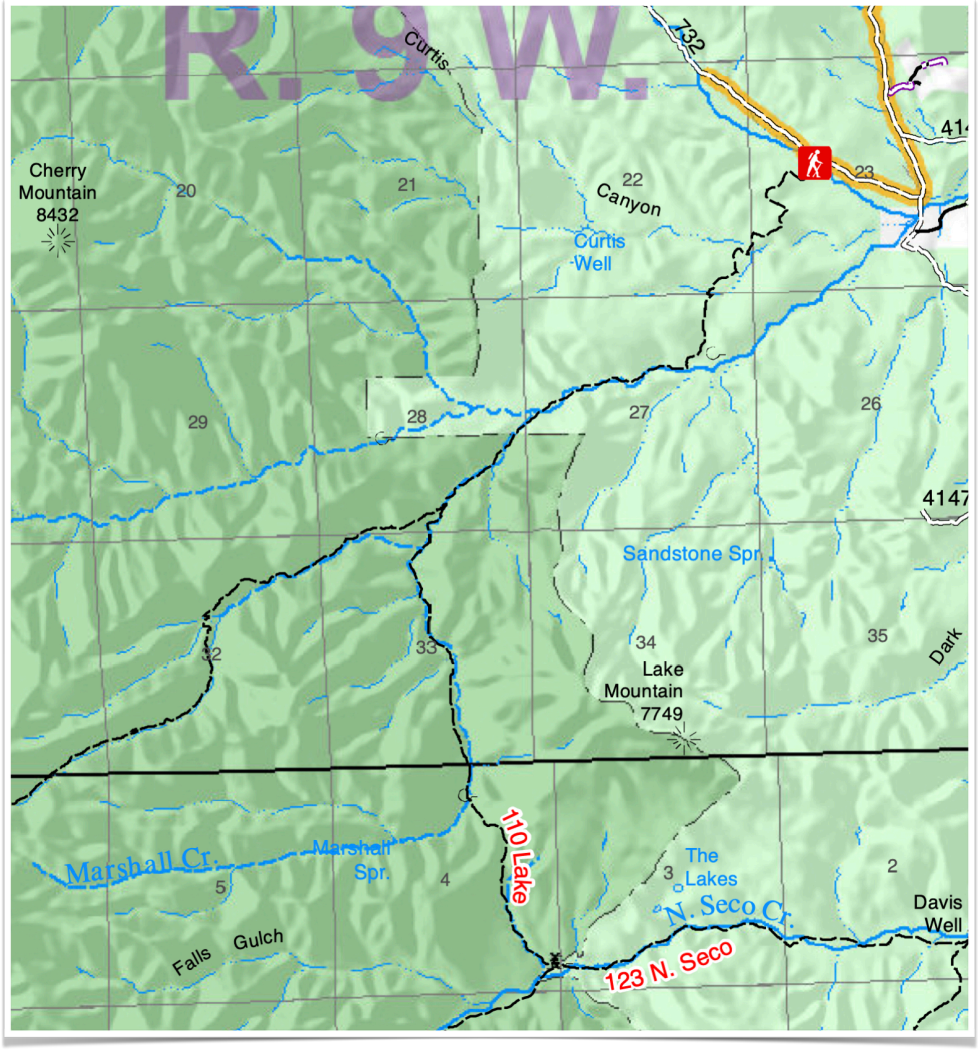
It's a long drive to get there for a day hike: 2 hours and 47 minutes from my home in Las Cruces. The last mile or so on some tracks barely visible in dry grass only increased my anxiety about the feasibility of the whole enterprise. But the morning was pleasantly warm and the skies devoid of clouds as I started hiking out past the old lower corral. In a short distance the good trail I was following headed up Marshall Creek, while the remnants of the Palomas trail became invisible in the tall grass along the creek. I experienced some low grade panic, wondering if I was on the right track, until I found the upper corral of wire and wood and I knew now it was all good.

Somewhere early in this trip I left my aluminum hiking pole on the ground as I took photos of oaks and boxelders in full turn. I picked up several sticks along the way that served well as substitutes. I never did retrieve the pole which I've been trying to lose for some time and now had finally succeeded. I kept a good pace, knowing my time was limited.

An owl flew from its perch and turkeys trotted up the trail in front of me. As I walked on, and the canyon narrowed, I caught a glimpse through the trees of a patch of blue at the base of a rock tower. It was a natural arch formation which would have been so easy to miss had I not looked up at just the right moment.

Puddles lingered in scoured out pools in the bedrock as the creek bed became the clearest avenue of travel. Immense cliffs towered above the north side of the creek strikingly similar to those seen over in the gorge of North Percha, but these were even higher.

I decided a while ago that I would visit in the fall, because of the canyon of bigtooth maples that I had been alerted to by some friends who had hiked up the canyon a year and a half earlier. I am a total sucker for the magic of maple trees in October, so off I went hoping to find them at peak color.

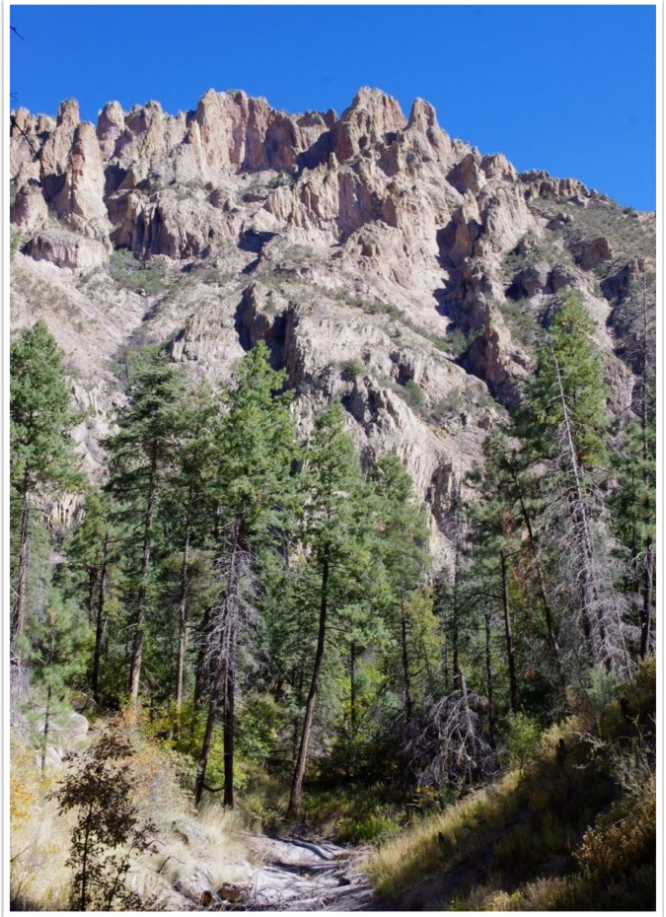


I finally arrived at the mouth of the canyon with the bigtooth maples. To my disappointment the leaves on the first tree I encountered were entirely green. Color was found as I continued up the canyon, which for at least some of the way was a lovely open channel with a smooth bedrock bottom that would have contained many small falls cascading toward the confluence with South Palomas had water been flowing. As it was, water lingered in the discreet pools surrounded by spongy green moss and sprinkled with pale, fallen maple leaves. If you go in early spring, say March or April, there may be waterfalls to see at the head of this canyon, if you are a dedicated bushwhacker and scrambler. Upstream from this tributary there are some falls in South Palomas as well, but don't count on seeing them in dry years.

The many theories I have on the fickle nature of fall colors, and perhaps a few new ones began to dance in my brain, as I made my way clumsily upstream, still hoping there would be a more spectacular display onward. There never was. A few pretty patches and a couple nice little trees would have to do for today.

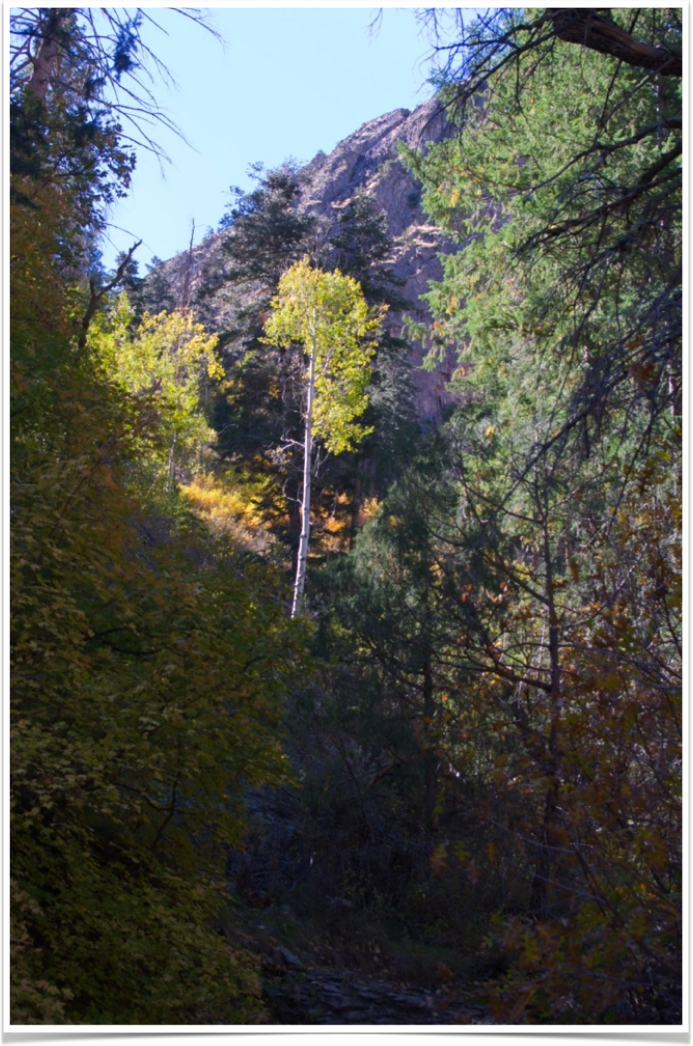
As I finally stopped to rest, I realized it was the only place for me to be in the world at that time, on that day. I drank another bottle of water. Took a photo of myself nestled in the glen, and then headed upstream just a bit farther to where the canyon got extremely narrow, very thick with willows and a few walnut trees, and the maples ended.

I turned around and for the first time, really took it all in as I gazed down Maple Canyon to the nearly 1000 foot cliffs on South Palomas crowned with towers and spires.



I slowed down as I made my legs and feet carry me back to South Palomas, heading a little bit farther west before turning back. I glimpsed a second deer. Disturbed the same owl. Saw the turkeys again too. Touched the biggest ponderosa pine I have ever touched, and contemplated the upright cones of a true fir for the first time it seemed.

I did my best to follow the bits and pieces of trail, but didn't really to do any better than on my way in. Where the valley widened, I waded through the high grass and felt a sadness to be leaving. I took a couple more photos with the yellow tops of narrow leaf cottonwoods along the creek and the shadow of Lake Mountain in the distance. Back at the car I realized I had overshot my time by a little more than hour. I thought about returning someday, camping nearby, getting an early start and doing it all over again, but just a bit more slowly.



37. North Seco Box

Contributed by Devon Fletcher

The North Seco Box trailhead is nearly a three hour drive from Las Cruces, but wherever you are, it will seem far away. The 18 or so miles from the nearest town (Winston NM) will take close to an hour to drive, with the last 3 or so miles past Hermosa, on a rotten coda to the now mostly well maintained Forest Road 157, where the going is tortuously slow right up to the dead end at the locked blue gate past which the last mile or so (seemingly in better shape, but perhaps because it's not driven on anymore) has to be walked down to the creek. (See access maps on the following page.)

So much for convenient accessibility, but it's not a difficult hike. There is little elevation gain or loss, excepting the road walking down to the creek, and the trudge back up to the parking at the end of the day. It is long walk though, somewhere around 10 miles round trip which took about six hours including lunch, a few rests and copious picture taking. It's just a long day of both driving and hiking.

I have time off, and time on my hands in the summer, but this hike, which tops out at an elevation just under 7,000 feet is not really a summertime hike. I started just after 9 and the day warmed up quickly in the wide east facing valley. Trying to keep a steady 3 mph pace on the way didn't help either. Still, I was never really uncomfortable, although I did dip my hat in the stream occasionally and wet my shirt a couple of times on the way back.

All that being said, the reasons I did go, became crystal clear, the day before I went. I wanted a place where almost no one goes, I like it best when I can't find a single picture of a destination on the internet. If there are too many photos I lose interest. If it's anything like the boxes of (the similarly massively inconvenient) South Palomas Creek or Sapillo Creek, or the trips to the waterfalls in East and West Curtis Canyons, all of which I've visited in the past four years, then I knew the magic would be worth it.

The creek was dry at the road crossing, but Davis Well's solar powered pump was filling two small ponds with water, I walked west on the road, hoping perhaps to see some ancient pottery between the dried grass, but being fooled too many times by rocks that had a maddeningly uncanny similarity to ceramics I've found in the past.

One of the things I noticed right away is that cattle are not here, and by the end of my day, seeing the remarkable recovery this place has undergone, I came to the conclusion, that it would a sin to let them back on. About a mile west of the Davis Windmill the stream begins to get more and more shaded with mature alders, narrowleaf cottonwoods, box elder and oaks and lo and behold the stream came to life with a few inches of amber water trickling through the pale stones. Further on, in burnt over sections, beyond the wilderness boundary at Sawmill Well, young alder growth was crowding the banks, keeping things shaded enough for at least some flow, albeit with a couple intermittent dry stretches, all the way to the box.

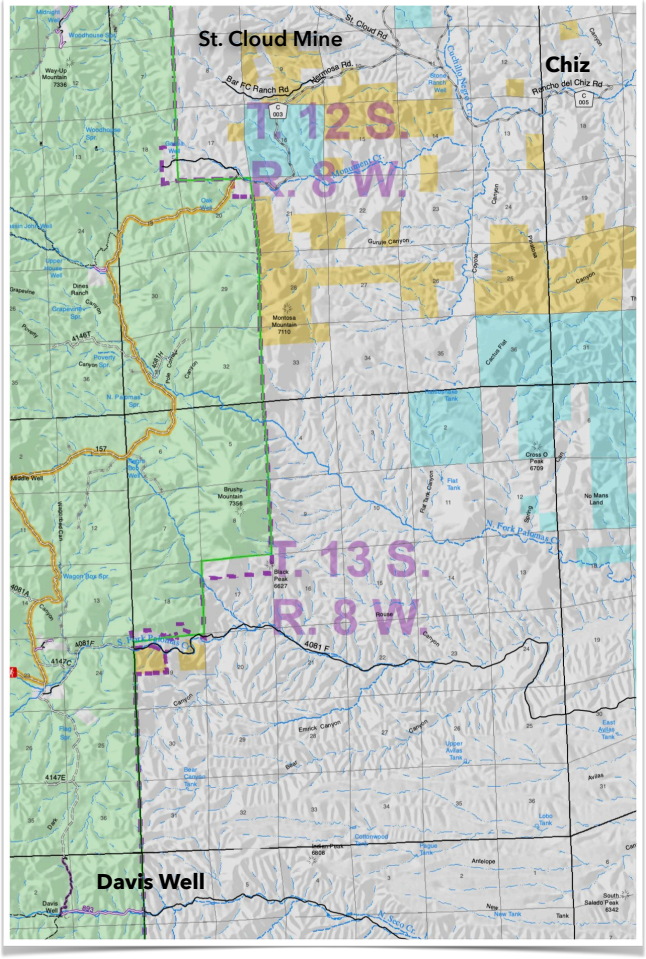
It had seemed so easy and I had made such good time, I could hardly believe I was entering the narrowest section of the canyon, where on the north, gigantic formations of red and tan volcanic rocks grew at the top of steep, nearly bare hillsides. On the south, straight gray cliffs like book spines went up a hundred feet and more. Spruces, pines, alders and firs craned and stretched toward the sky trying to rise above them.

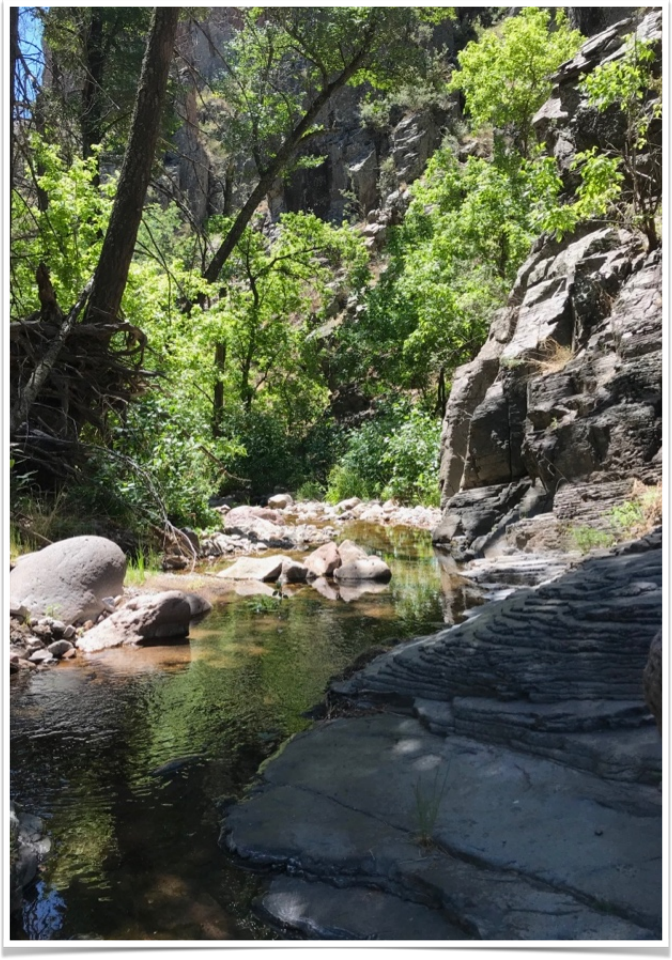
Directly in front of me, however, the jungle of willows, and the dark passage (even with sun almost directly overhead) began. This, I had to push through for the next half mile or so. I didn't mind. At my feet the creek was at a modest gush, with pools, some of which had to be waded through, up to two feet deep where tadpoles wriggled away at my approach. I paused for thought as I did when I visited the Sapillo Box a couple of years, ago: these same passages might be waist deep or higher in early spring. So, maybe the driest time of the year isn't such a bad choice after all.

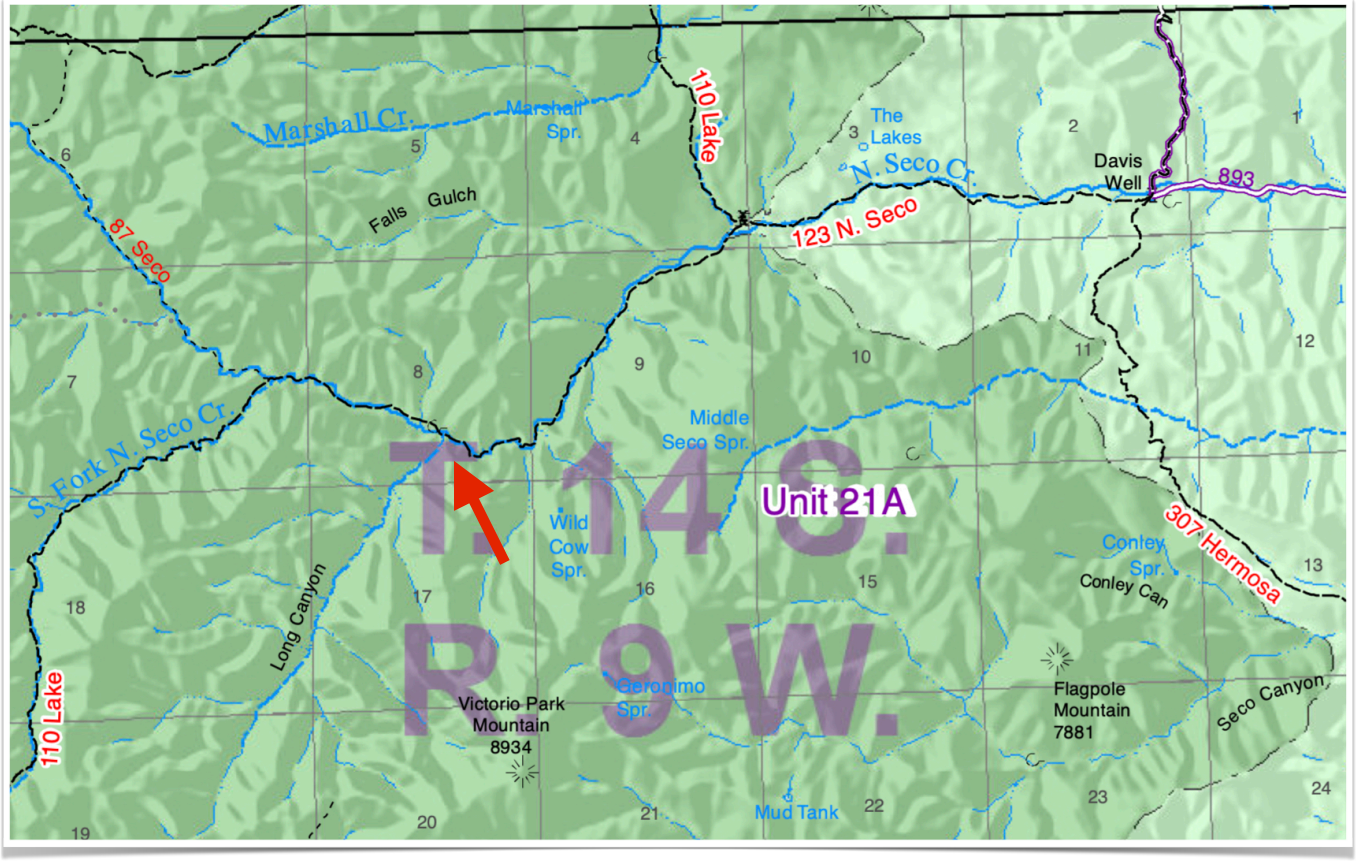
Eventually I got to the mouth of Long Canyon on the south side, beyond, North Seco entered an open, well burnt over section, which would not have been much fun to walk through at the noon hour, and was happily beyond the scope of my plans for this day.

I turned back around and ate my lunch sitting on gray bedrock eroded like the pages of a book, with perfect views of perfect bends in the creek both up and down stream. As I looked around at the quiet stream and green trees I had the feeling I was somewhere else in the Gila, or New Mexico, or the west. Or maybe it just felt like a different time, before all the drought and fires. It was over too soon. I made my way back more slowly now, shaking hands with the grandfather trees, and saying hello to the steller's jays who came to check me out. I purified some extra water.

Back at Davis Well I walked around the ponds, frogs leaping into the water at my every step, then down to the old corral and loading chute, and then down a little further to a small clearing. Walking back up old FR 893, a fox, or maybe even a coyote, most likely after getting a drink at the well, bounded through the brush in front of me. I didn't want to leave.


St. Cloud Mine
Chiz
T. 12 S.
R. 8 W.
T. 13 S.
R. 8 W.
Davis Well




Marshall Cr.
Marshall Spr.
110 Lake
The Lakes
N. Seco Cr.
Davis Well
893
Falls Gulch
123 N. Seco
87 Seco
S. Fork N. Seco Cr.
Middle Seco Spr.
T. 14 S.
R. 9 W.
Unit 21A
Wild Cow Spr.
Conley Spr.
Conley Can
307 Hermosa
Long Canyon
Victorio Park Mountain 8934
Geronimo Spr.
Flagpole Mountain 7881
Seco Canyon
110 Lake
Mud Tank

38. McKnight Cabin to McKnight Mountain Summit

The drive (video) from NM-35 to the trailhead (Trail 79) near McKnight Cabin is more difficult than the walk.

In April and in May 2015, we walked from the trailhead to McKnight Mountain, returning via McKnight Cabin. We also walked the trail in October 2020, starting at the cabin and continuing on past McKnight Mountain to the Powderhorn Ridge Trail.

For most of its length the trail is "soft". It is covered in soil and/or grass and has that spongy relaxing feel that is common to more northerly trails. The distance from the trailhead to the summit of McKnight Mountain is just over 2 miles (see map and elevation profile which follow), returning via McKnight Cabin increases the length to 2.1 miles. The four mile round trip is along the ridge line of the Black Range. The net elevation gain is about 675' (from 9,490' to 10,165') while the gross gain is over 800'. The maximum grade is 16%.

In October 2020 the trail was in great condition, trail work had just been completed from the cabin to some point along the Powderhorn which we did not reach. The trail to Mimbres Lake was a mass of blow down and was beyond our will. Even though Mimbres Lake had been our destination the idea of clambering over fallen trees for three miles (a mile and half down and a mile and a half up) was just too much on that day. The cleared trail was beautiful, often covered by a layer of yellow leaves from the Aspen.

McKnight Mountain, has two "peaks" and is the highest point in Sierra County (one "peak") and Grant County (the other "peak"). The "peaks" are about 70' apart. McKnight Mountain is the definition of anti-climax, it is simply a high point along the ridge.

At McKnight Mountain the trail runs about 40' below the summits on the west side of the ridge. The side trail was not signed on October 12, 2020. It takes only moments to "climb to the summit". Getting there is anti-dramatic - the 360° view from the top is just the opposite, it is almost overwhelming. It is as if the Black Range and most of Sierra and Grant counties were at your very feet.

We have seen no mammals along the trail, although there are generally some significant clumps of bear scat. There are a few birds - Hairy Woodpeckers, Dark-eyed Junco (Grey-headed), and Western Tanagers being the most obvious. Hermit Thrushes were singing along most of the trail, in May. In October we found Clark's Nutcracker at the summit of McKnight Mountain.

The view to the west from trail 79 near McKnight Mountain is shown at the top left on the next page.

On May 30, 2015, the Aspen should have been leafed out - except for the Silver Fire (see top left photo on the next page).

This is a beautiful little walk through Aspen groves and a forest floor displaying numerous flower species - a number of which were in bloom during our walk in May.

McKnight Cabin and Spring Site (April 23, 2015)

McKnight Cabin is a beautiful place to spend some time, especially during the summer (see top and center left photos on the next page). For those who are coming from the desert, this is truly a different world. Trails head to the north and south along the crest of the Black Range and walks up and down the McKnight Cabin Road are enjoyable and almost always unencumbered with traffic.

In the top photo at the right, looking west from the trail, there are burnt trees (from the Silver Fire) in the foreground. The view to the east, middle right photo, is just as dramatic. Over most of the walk there is no evidence of the fire, along the trail. Looking away from the area immediately along the trail provides ample evidence of the event, however.

Three Views of the Trail (October)

To the right, the trail near the top of the first hill north of the cabin. This is one of the rockier portions of the trail but is easy to walk. The trail passes through a mixture of habitats, sometimes evergreens dominate, sometimes Aspen.

The view down the trail and into McKnight Canyon is shown at the top left on the following page. This photograph is about half way along the route described. After walking through Aspen groves you suddenly face a vast vista to the west.

The photograph at the top right on the next page was taken along the trail near the summit of McKnight Mountain. Farther along this section, the Aspen became even more prolific and their yellow leaves covered the trail, making it somewhat slick but a joy to walk on - each step brings a flash

of sound from the rustling leaves. In October, there is often a breeze (sometimes wind) in this area. As a result, the view skyward is full of shimmering (dare I say quaking) yellow leaves and the ground is covered with a confusion of shadows refusing to remain static, making the reds and greens of the plants flash into and out of view, the Aspen forming a background of yellow, sometimes in matte and sometime in gloss. It is a startling beautiful scene which I am ill equipped to capture in image.

In October we found several individuals of *Castilleja nelsonii,* Southern Mountain Paintbrush, growing along the trail (photo right). This is a high elevation paintbrush, most of the specimens we found were at 9,500' or above.

There were a surprising number of flowers still in bloom high on the mountain. Not prolific numbers but more than enough to add interest.

We found one flower of *Helianthella parryi*, Parry's Dwarf Sunflower, along the Powderhorn Ridge Trail (photo right). There were, however, many leaves of this species along the trail. At the height of bloom this section of the trail must be quite striking.

In October, *Iris missouriensis*, Rocky Mountain Iris, announced itself with leaves and empty seed pods all along the upper reaches of the trail north of McKnight Mountain. In May they were in bloom, photo top right of next page. If you are taking the walk to the peak it is well worth continuing up the trail a bit for the sunflowers and iris.

The Quaking Aspen, *Populus tremuloides*, took a real hit in the Silver Fire. In 2015 we wondered how they would fare. Many of the trunks were badly burned and obviously dead. This species grows as a clonal colony, an aspen grove is one individual with many trunks growing from the same root system, and a single individual can cover a large area. One individual, "Pando", covers more than 100 acres in Utah. Five years on, how they fared is becoming more clear. Additional trunks have died but many remain alive and add wonderful color to the trail. This species sprouts aggressively from its root system following a fire and along several sections of the trail you have an eye level view of new aspen growth (photo above).

At the cabin there is a profusion of *Mertensia franciscana,* Franciscan Bluebells. In May (photo directly above) they were in bloom - a week or two later would have been better. We found a few still in bloom in October.

Although the forest trees are dominated by evergreen and aspen there are a few Gambel's Oaks along the way and on the first part of the trail we found Choke Cherry, *Prunus virginiana var. melanocarpa,* photo left (this photograph is from May).

The forest floor had a scattering of *Fragaria vesca bracteata*, Wild (Woodland) Strawberry (top left on the following page) in May, promising a morsel of sweetness later in the year. But all that was white was not edible, Canadian Violet, *Viola canadensis*, was also in full bloom at that time (photo middle left on the next page).

In May and in October we found bear scat along the trail, I suspect that there is at least one bear about much of the time. Other than Mule Deer on the drive up, we have not seen any large mammals on these outings, however.

Mountain Parsley, *Cymopterus lemmonii*, upper right, and Western Yarrow, *Achillea millefolium*, right, were especially prevalent along the upper trail in May.

When manna falls from heaven, you should probably just go ahead and eat it. In May 2015 I spied this parsley and decided to bend my creaky old legs, get a little closer to the flower, and take some photographs.

In my years in the Northwest of the United States I had a fair amount of experience with Desert Parsley and marveled at their diversity. When I started exploring the Black Range I noted the parsley here and put it on the list for future study. On the 30th, the future arrived and I had no choice but to bend to nature. But more of this flower in a bit, for now - the manna.

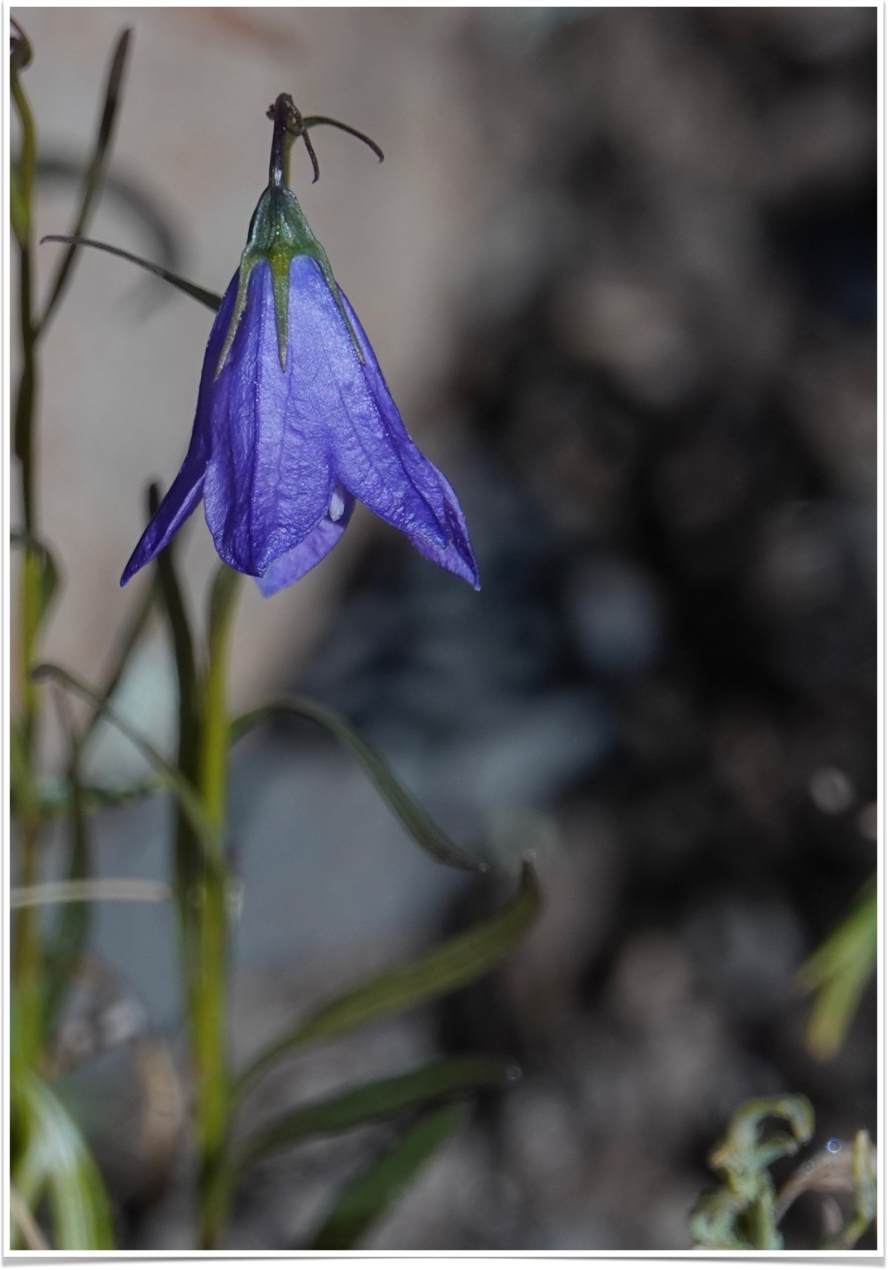
When I got home and started arranging photos I noted the bee at the top of the flower, something I had missed entirely in the field. I have been laughed at more than once for my efforts to capture insects on flowers, I think it makes for much more interesting photographs - but it is hard work. So, coming home to note that I had missed a wonderful opportunity was bittersweet to say the least. Insects are difficult to parse, to identify them to species is often something that should be left to entomologists. I was able to key this bee down to the genus *Agapostemon*, but I dare

not go farther - even if I had a better photograph. The common name for this group of bees is "Metallic Green Bee". Indeed. Perhaps "manna" would work as well.

Within our region, the flowers of this species of parsley exhibit an interesting color variation. Plants from the Burro Mountains have red flowers while those farther north have yellow flowers. The petals of the individual flowers fold backward, giving the flower a very "globular" appearance.

A bit earlier in the year is a good for flowering plants, as well. On April 23, I found *Ribes pinetorum*, Orange Gooseberry (photo top right) in bloom at the cabin. I have yet to see this species in fruit.

In October, we found a few *Campanula rotundifolia*, Harbell (photo right), still in bloom on the Powderhorn Ridge Trail, although many appeared to be feeling the colder weather and were "gone past".



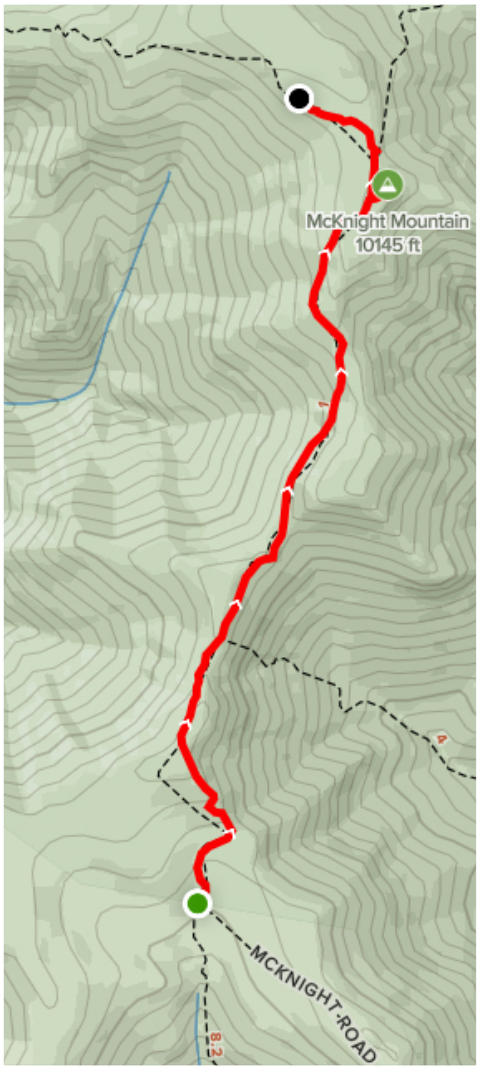
In places along the Powderhorn Ridge Trail, *Pteridium aquilinum*, Western Bracken Fern (photo below), was growing in masses although in October most of the fronds were a mass of brown on the ground.

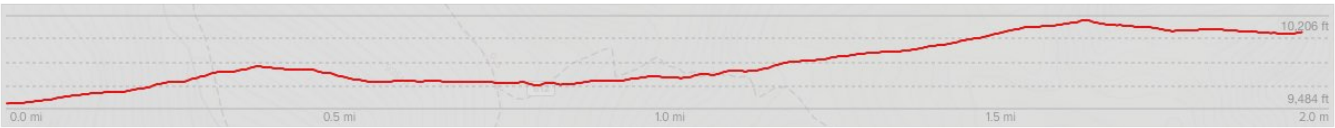
There are relatively few trail signs in the Black Range these days (Nov. 2020). Not that they are needed in this day of a

million trail apps. A few like that at the left add shades of brown to the sea of green and yellow.

This trail is great in any season, assuming the road is open. It has open expanses on one hand and sections of trail completely enclosed in aspen and evergreen on the other. The colors vary dramatically by season so a walk along this section of the Black Range Crest Trail is always new.

The most common birds along the trail always seem to be Dark-Eyed Junco (Grey-headed) but the variety of species is interesting - from Mountain Chickadee and Mourning Dove (photos below) to Clark's Nutcracker.





39. Hillsboro Peak Bypass

Trail condition update as of mid 2025: The downed trees on the trail have been removed. Subject, of course, to more falling.

Trail 79 runs along the crest of the Black Range. At Hillsboro Peak there is a short trail which bypasses the Hillsboro Peak summit, connecting the two parts of trail 79 on either side of the peak. The Bypass Trail is designated trail 412, it has a total length of about 1.3 miles. From the trail junction of 79/412, just above Hillsboro Lake, to the Holden Prong saddle it is about 4 miles. Trail 412 is roughly level, from Holden Prong saddle to the west junction of 412 there is about a 500' elevation gain.

On January 25, 2018, we took this trail as part of a car-shuttle loop starting at Emory Pass and ending at the Railroad Canyon campground, a distance of 10.6 to 11.2 (depending on your source). Above Hillsboro Lake, on the south side of Hillsboro Peak you may find the sign shown top right (we were unable to find it in our last outing to the area). The distances on signage in this area of the Black Range are at best confusing, perhaps just plain wrong.

Heading north and turning left off of the Black Range Crest Trail (Trail 79) we took the Bypass Trail looking for the Junction with the East Railroad Canyon Trail 130, which we did not find. (This description was written three years after the Silver Fire, a substantial amount of the trail network was destroyed or damaged by the fire.) Continuing on we found that the Bypass trail had a lot of blow-down making for some slow tiring walking (photo below). As with all things in the Black Range, things may have changed in the last storm and/or trail maintenance may have been accomplished.

The Bypass trail is relatively level and at this time has a lot of locust growing in and along it, in addition to the blowdown, making it seem like something was trying to poke or grab you at every step. But it is absolutely beautiful.

At the west junction of trail 79 and trail 412 you find the sign shown directly above, indicating that the Holden Prong saddle is 2.5 miles down the way. From this point the trail descends through a beautiful stream valley which has a fair amount of blowdown to Holden Prong Saddle. Once you emerge from the stream valley the trail contours around a peak providing gorgeous views to the west. After reaching Holden Prong saddle we turned left (west off of 79) and headed down Railroad Canyon.

40. Hillsboro Lake

As of late summer 2025 Hillsboro Lake has been dry for several years. There was snow in the Black Range during December-February 2026 (lingering into March) timeframe, so perhaps....

The walk to Hillsboro Lake is about 7.3 miles (round-trip) from the Emory Pass Overlook. Route finding is straight-forward. Starting at the Overlook, walk north on the Black Range Crest Trail (this section is known locally as the Hillsboro Peak Trail) for 3.6 miles. This will bring you to the saddle south of Hillsboro Peak. Turn east and walk down slope for about 100 yards. Sit on some dead tree trunks and enjoy the lake.

In many areas of the world the "lake" would be called a pond but here it is the only natural water body in miles. With proper purification equipment the lake is a good source of water in an otherwise dry area, good camp sites are nearby.

There is a moderate elevation gain of about 1,000 feet between the Overlook and the saddle below Hillsboro Peak. The trail goes through the heart of the Silver Fire burn and standing snags are still falling during high winds. Until all the snags near the trail have fallen, it is not a place to be on a windy day.

Many maps indicate a trail between the saddle and the lake (the upper part of the Ladrone Trail). It does not exist at this time (January 2026). There is a fair amount of wind fall on the steep slope above the lake and brush and grass is growing on loose scree, making for a tenuous trip down and a workout coming back up.

Aspen and evergreens surround the lake making for a beautiful setting, a jewel in the Black Range. Drought and fire damage have had their impact and increasingly you will find the "lake" dry.

Hillsboro Lake is shown at the right.

There are a large number of trail variations in this section of the Black Range, as you will note from the trail entries in this section of the book. The main trunk trail is the Black Range Crest Trail (No. 79) from Emory Pass to Hillsboro Peak. Near Hillsboro Peak you can drop down to spend time at the lake, you can continue up to the forest fire lookout on the top of Hillsboro Peak, or you can take the Hillsboro Peak Bypass Trail.

The Black Range is a fairly long and narrow mountain range which has the Black Range Crest Trail and The Continental Divide Trail running along its crest. From the crest trails there are a number of trails going down the mountain range to the east or west. A number of trail combinations are possible as a result, this area being a prime example of the possibilities.

Additional photographs from this walk can be found here.

41. Hillsboro Peak

See also the Hillsboro Lake Trail which is the same as this one, at least until you reach the lake at the base of Hillsboro Peak.

This trail starts at the Emory Pass Overlook just off of NM-152 and proceeds north (NNW) for 5.4 miles. Elevation gain over 5+ miles is minimal, from 8,067' to 10,020'. This is an improved trail so the walk is straightforward and easy to follow. Water (which should be treated) may be available at Hillsboro Lake and a spring near the peak - much better to carry all the water you will need on this walk. The usual suspects are on-the-scene; rattlesnakes (typically Western Diamond-Back and Black-tailed), Black Bear, Coyote, and Cougar are all possible - but not likely.

Following the Silver Fire there were reports that the trail was devastated by the fire. It now appears that many large trees, including Aspen and Douglas Fir survived the fire and that there is substantial multi-species tree growth (regeneration) occurring. The Mountain Locust along this trail (and the Sawyers Peak Trail, immediately south of here) can be spectacular. Wildflowers in the higher reaches of the Black Range are incredible in some years, both in terms of sheer mass and in terms of diversity.

An observer noted (from 9/11/14) that: "There are many flowers on the Hillsboro Peak Trail...It's an amazing display, and it begins just uphill from the parking lot."

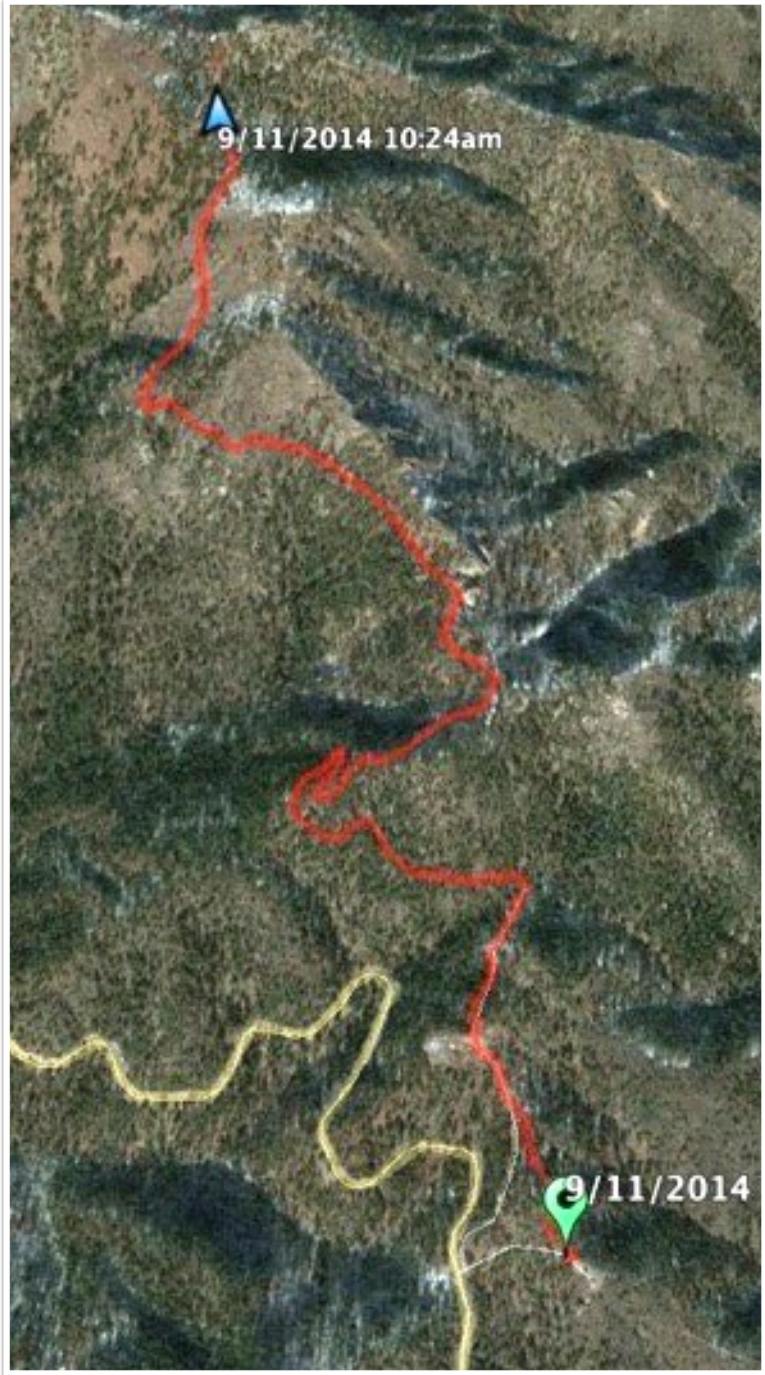
The birdlife along this trail has, traditionally, been very good and that does not appear to have changed. You may see the full array of mountain species, including; Bushtit, Mountain Chickadee, Pygmy Nuthatch, Clark's Nutcracker, Acorn Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Hairy Woodpecker, and Black-throated Gray and Grace's Warblers (the trail provides nice looks into the upper canopy of the trees), and Wild Turkey.

Right: *Clematis columbiana*, Columbian Virgin's Bower

Top of next page: Hillsboro Peak, Black Range, New Mexico 5/15/15

Center Left on the next page: Small snow banks were still present along portions of the walk in March. Near those snow banks there were signs that shrews (most likely Montane Shrew, *Sorex monticolus* - a.k.a. Dusky Shrew) had wintered at the site.

Bottom Right next page: Trail through evergreens and *Populus tremuloides*, Quaking Aspen, below Hillsboro Peak.



Don Precoda served as a fire lookout at Hillsboro Peak for several years. He recounted some of his experiences on the peak in a series of articles which appeared in The Black Range Naturalist: Vol. 1, No. 1, "Experiences of a Hillsboro Peak Lookout" and Vol. 2, No. 2, "More Memories From Hillsboro Peak", for example.

Right: Aspen below the summit.

Reports From Throughout The Year

Report From Spring: "Although we have had some rain, the monsoons will not arrive for a month or so - and it is spring, not fall - so the selection of flowers along the trail was more limited. As we neared the summit, the flowers were more numerous."

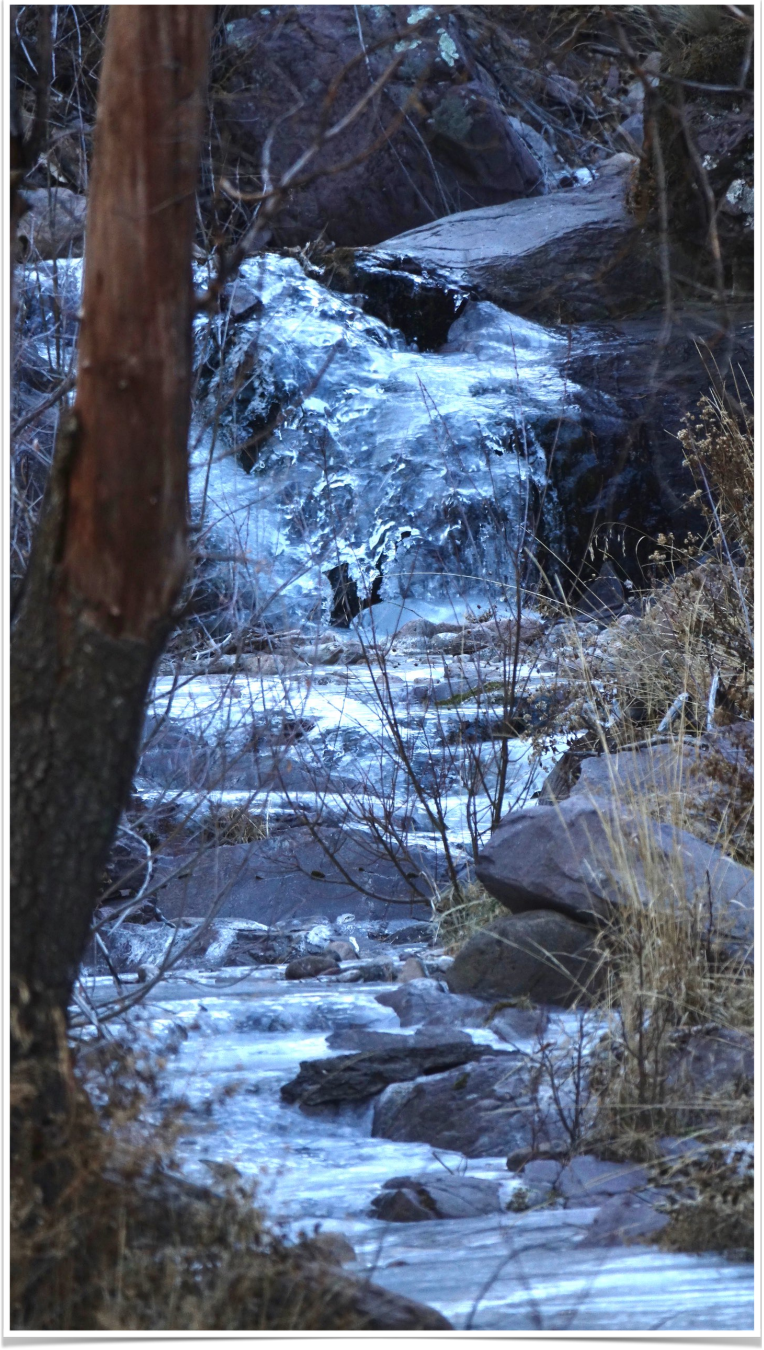
Mid March: "The wind was averaging around 20 m.p.h. for most of the walk but as we started back it began to gust to higher speeds." The wind along the crest trail, for that matter anywhere in the Black Range, can be an issue and present real danger.

The map at the bottom of the page shows the track of Forest Service Trail 79 as it nears Hillsboro Peak. The Hillsboro Peak Bypass trail bypasses the Peak on the south side of mountain.

SUMMARY: A nice walk at just short of 11 miles round-trip (or of any shorter length should you chose to turn around before the peak) this trail requires no route finding experience. At times there is blow down along the trail but since this is probably the most popular trail in the Black Range the Forest Service is pretty diligent in keeping the main trunk trail cleared. With the continuing drought in the southwest there is generally little snow on the route in winter, but when there is it tends to drift on the north and east facing slopes and when it ices it can be hazardous to cross. Bear and cougar sign are seen fairly regularly along the trail and various other creatures are possible. This can be a great wildflower walk, anytime except winter - regardless of how far you choose to walk.

Additional photographs from this walk can be found here.

42. East Railroad Canyon



As described here this walk was 4.5 miles each way (9 miles RT) with an elevation gain of 1700 feet.

During the winter, the Railroad Canyon Campground and direct access to the trailhead may be closed so hikers have to park along the highway (NM-152). On February 11, 2018 we found the lower section of this trail in very good condition. The stream level was low and the many stream crossings were easy (hardly noticeable).

From the highway, the Gallinas Canyon Trail continues north and reaches the junction of the Railroad Canyon Trail at 1.4 miles from NM-152 (the signage indicates 1.5 miles from the trailhead to this junction). At this junction the Gallinas Canyon Trail turns northwest and the Railroad Canyon Trail continues north for another .8 of a mile (signage indicates 1 mile) to its junction with the East Railroad Canyon Trail. The Railroad Canyon Trail continues north (left trail) to the Holden Prong Saddle. The trail to the right is the East Railroad Canyon Trail, it continues northeast to the Hillsboro Peak Cut-Off Trail, a distance of about 2.8 miles.

On the map at the end of this entry I set a way-point (yellow circle) near where I took the photograph at the right on January 28, 2018. At that time the stream was ice, with a bit of water flowing beneath.

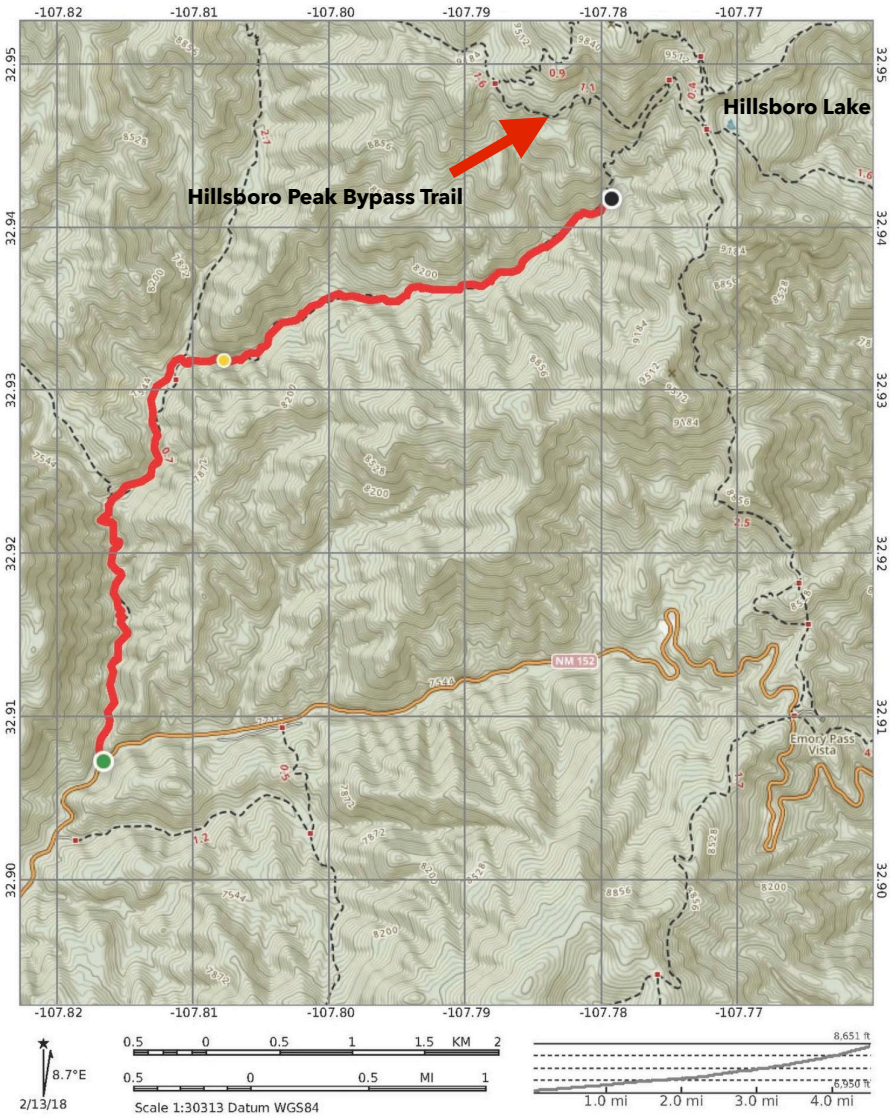
At one time this was a maintained trail through lovely country. We went up this trail for about a mile on January 28, 2018. The trail was a disaster, downed trees were everywhere, there was lots of smaller debris everywhere, and there was loose rock everywhere. Now, at the best of times the trail is nothing more than an overgrown game trail - lots of locust saplings, masses of wild rose, and other vines, grass, and tangles of vegetation. On this occasion the trail did not exist.

We had hoped to walk to the Cut-Off Trail on that occasion but found that our progress was much slower than we had anticipated. As a result, we turned back well short of our goal. Coming back down we found the going much easier because we had an idea of how to traverse the canyon floor. Although it is not that easy to find the general location of the old trail - you can't get lost, the entire walk is in the canyon bottom.

On February 11, 2018 we returned, starting earlier than before and feeling fairly sure that we would navigate the canyon to where we had stopped before in much shorter time.

We made it to a point at 8,671 feet in elevation, about .3 miles short of the Cut-Off Trail (a steep .3 miles according to the map). By the time we stopped, we had gained 1,700 feet in elevation and were very tired, every step seemed to be a fight with locust and roses. The fire and floods had made the canyon a mass of loose rock and boulders, downed trees were everywhere. Bad footing was the norm for more than half the time. The rest of the time it was just bad.

We turned back at this point (4.5 miles from the highway), pretty sure that we would make it out about an hour before nightfall. There had been a couple of falls on the way up so our bodies were both tired and sore. Shortly after we started down, I took a fall down a section of boulders, downward about ten feet to meet one of the boulders face on without obstruction, luckily my momentum was such and the angle of the rock to my face was such, that I pivoted off of the rock, somersaulted over that boulder to have my knees smash into another. Trying not to be overly dramatic here, but it took awhile to assure myself that I was alive and could walk. A very painful walk out (really glad that the water level in the creek was low and the stream fords were



easy). Thus, in addition to a trail description you get a cautionary tale as well. If you are injured in the Black Range it can take a long time to reach a road.

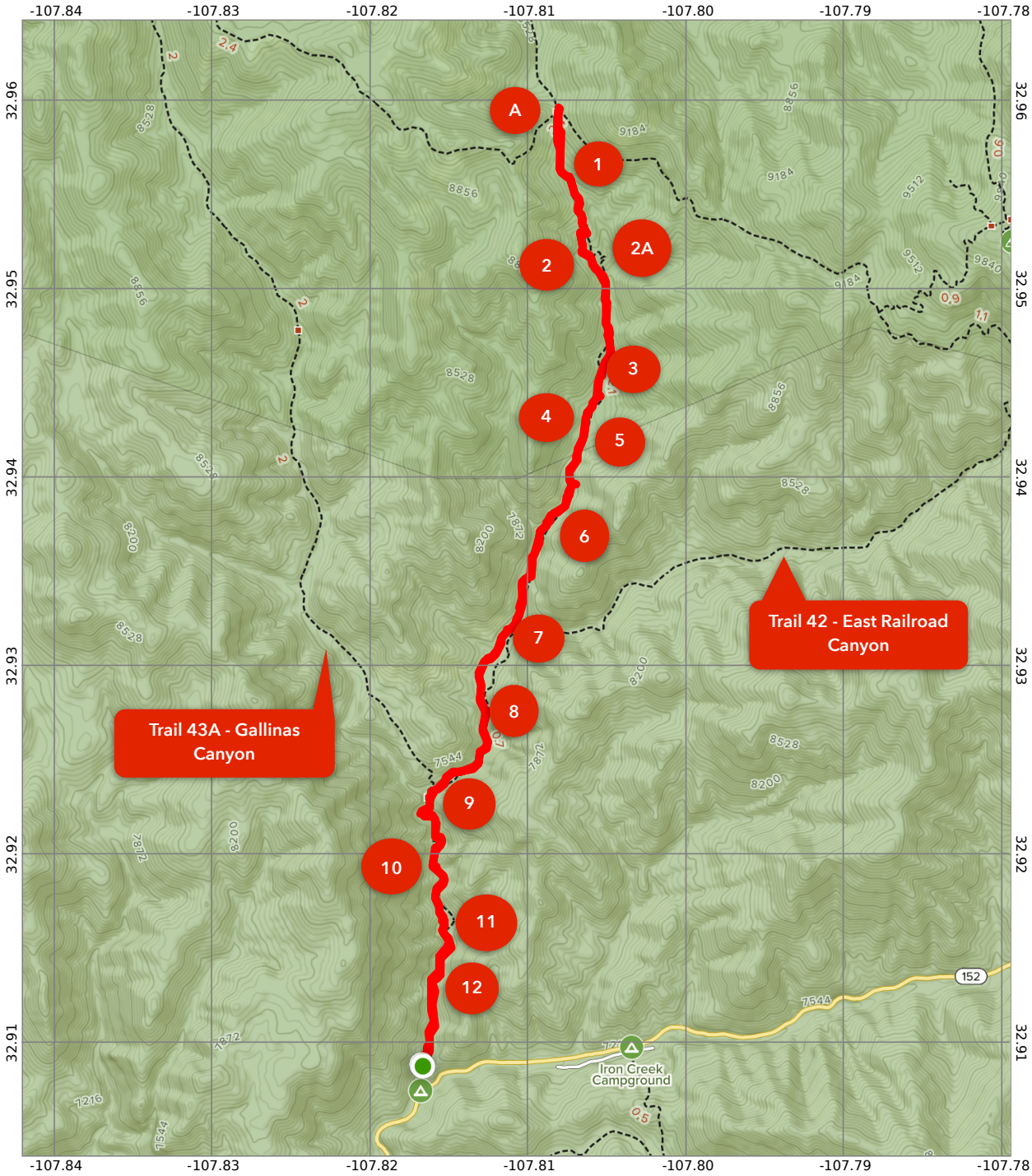
I have not been eager to return to this trail.

The country is very beautiful - and untamed. The map of our walk on February 11 is shown here. Additional photographs of this walk can be found here.

43. Railroad Canyon Campground to Holdon Prong Saddle

This trail starts at the Railroad Canyon Campground and climbs northward to Holden Prong Saddle. The round-trip distance is 8.8 miles with a gross elevation gain of about 1,700 feet. This trail is good for wildflowers, butterflies, the occasional mammal (Cougar has seen cougar at "2"), and insects (all in the appropriate season). Some examples of what you can expect to see along this trail follow. Numbering is keyed to the map below.

This trail starts at the quarry next to Railroad Canyon Campground (just off of NM-152) and proceeds up the mountain valley to the Holden Prong Saddle on the Black Range Crest Trail. Route finding on the trail is straight



forward, although there are two trail junctions along the way. Starting out at the trailhead, Forest Trail 129 follows the stream bed north, mostly level, with insignificant elevation gain/loss. At about 1.5 miles, 129 (the Gallinas Canyon Trail) leads to the left. This junction is the start of Forest Trail 128. Keep straight in the stream bottom on trail 128 (on the ground it will feel like you remain on the main trail). Roughly a mile farther along the trail there is a well marked "Y" junction. The trail to your right leads to the Black Range Crest trail (no. 79 - East Railroad Canyon) south of Hillsboro Peak. The trail to Holden Prong Saddle is to the left. The trail has been relatively level to this point, from here most of the elevation gain on the trail occurs. The trail has a net elevation gain of about 1700 feet.

1. Gentiana affinis (Rocky Mountain Gentian) September 19 - Photograph by Rebecca Hallgarth

2. Fendlera rupicola Gray var. writhtii, Fendlerbush, June 10. Near the site where cougar has been seen.

3. Mecaphesa sp., Crab Spider. A small (smaller than a U.S. 1-cent piece) white spider, June 10.

4. Lonicera arizonica, Arizona Honeysuckle, June 10.

5. Maianthemum racemosum, False Solomon's Seal, June 10. The Honeysuckle and two species of Maianthemum were found within a few feet of each other.

We often walk the lower part of the trail, from the campground, to the Y junction mentioned above. Near the top of trail 128, there are aspen groves which survived the Silver Fire (2A on the map). Aspen groves are generally one individual, the individual trunks are supported by a vast underground root network. Many of the individual trunks did not survive the fire, many are now standing dead trunks. Many others did survive the fire and numerous suckers are growing within the grove area. A photograph from this section is shown at the right (October 17, 2017). At that time the trail was in good shape and always obvious. There is a fair amount of grass and vegetation growing on/near the trail but the trail was not obscured.

In general, I would say that the signage is unreliable as to distance. The photograph above was taken at the saddle ("A" on the map) and indicates that Railroad Canyon campground is 4.5 miles down slope. This may simply reflect a need for rounding on the signs. And, the difference between 8.8 (our GPS recording) and nine miles (round-trip) is minimal. However, other sources indicate that the round-trip may be as much as 9.5 miles. By adding the distance on various signs along the way it is possible to get several other estimates of total distance.

There is ample variety along this trail so it is a good hike any time of year. Additional photographs of this trail, taken at various seasons can be found on the Black Range website at this link.

2A. At the aspen grove you will find a gate, a welcome sight, it means lunch is only a few minutes away.

Right: Rocky Mountain Larkspur, Delphinium scopulorum, Railroad Canyon, Black Range.

6. On one summer walk we encountered a Striped Skunk also using the trail. It wandered off to a snag heap before the camera could be utilized.

7. *Conopholis aplina var. mexicana*, Alpine Cancer-Root, May 9, at the junction with the East Railroad Canyon "Trail".

8. *Limenitis weidemeyerii*, Weidemeyer's Admiral, June 10. There are many butterfly species along the stream, including Western Tiger Swallowtail.

9. *Myioborus pictus*, Painted Redstart, is easy to find in August, as is Red-faced Warbler.

10. *Sciurus aberti aberti*, Abert's Squirrel, July

11. *Scrophularia macrantha*, New Mexico Figwort, July

12. Below: *Hystricia abrupta*, Tachinid Fly, late July

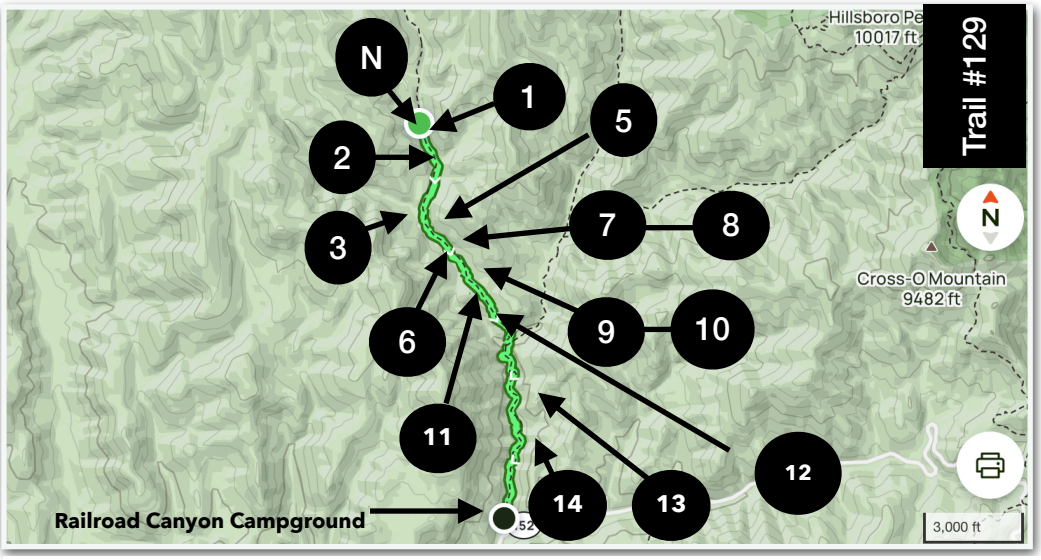
43A. Gallinas Canyon Trail from the Railroad Canyon Campground to Gallinas Canyon

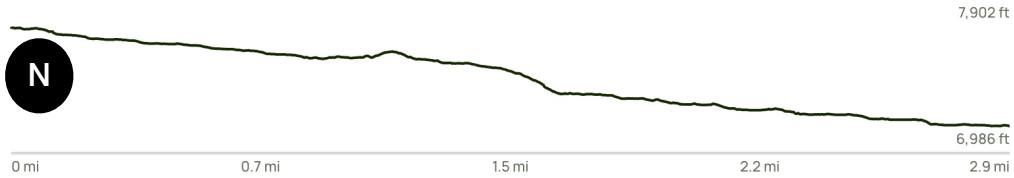
The walk described here starts at the Railroad Canyon Campground and heads upstream for approximately one mile. This section of trail is properly called the Gallinas Canyon Trail. At about one mile the Gallinas Canyon Trail turns west (obscured trail on your left) up a steep section of trail. The Railroad Canyon Trail starts at this point. It is the more obvious trail following the stream, on your right as you make the stream crossing here.

The Gallinas Canyon Trail tops the steep hill following the trail fork (where the Railroad Canyon Trail begins) and continues up a valley to Holden Prong Saddle. In the last decade (since the Silver Fire) the next section of trail has been overgrown, lots of blowdown, and washed out - mostly bush whacking. On June 12, 2024, we found the trail in excellent condition, however. A substantial amount of trail maintenance had been done and we walked along without incident to the spring roughly two miles above the trail fork. This walk is 5.8 miles (RT) with a net elevation gain of just over 900'. The following is a trail report from June 12, 2024.

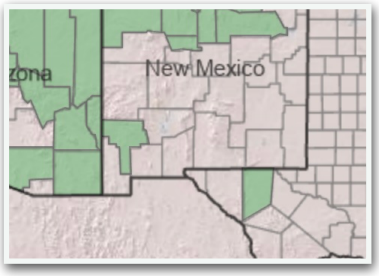
The most significant thing about this hike, on this day, was that the creek was basically dry. There were a few pools of water here and there and a little trickle in places, but dry. Only in the upper reaches of Gallinas Canyon did we find a steady (but small) flow of water in the creek. As a result, we found few flowers in bloom. It was quite hot.

1. The spring is not "maintained" at this point. The pipe from the seep to the trough is gone and the trough has not had water in it for quite some time. There was a small pool of water, from the seep, at the base of the trough.





There were several specimens of *Frasera spiciosa* ([Douglas] Griseb.) (photo right), at the spring site. English common names for this species include Monument Plant, Elkweed, Showy Elkweed, and Green Gentian (this species is in the Gentian Family, *Gentianaceae*). There are at least 10 latin binomial synonyms for this species.



The USDA range map (above, download of 6/14/24) indicates the species is found in Grant but not Sierra County. These plants in Gallinas Canyon are about a mile from the crest of the Black Range (and thus in Grant County). Geographic features, like a mountain range, often serve as barriers to the distribution of a species. In this case, the range map is incorrect, this species has been found in the Percha Creek drainage west of Kingston..

2. Trail section just south of the spring.

3. This is a very pretty trail, often meandering along just above the creek. It is especially beautiful when there is some water about, less so when it is dry.

4. One of the rules the editor (in this case, me) often rails about is the need to have something in an image which provides scale, when you are providing scientific observation. Too bad I can't follow my own advice. This massive fungal growth was on a downed Ponderosa Pine and was just over a foot long. I am not able to determine the species, or genus, of this growth.

5. The aptly named Blue Fungus Beetle, *Gibbifer californicus* (*Cypherotylus californicus* [Lacordaire, 1842] in some sources), was present on this fungus. The range map for this species (directly above) is from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility.

Why do we use the Global Biodiversity Information Facility for range maps? There are two primary reasons: the maps are based on observational points and they are not restricted to political boundaries. If you were to read many US website descriptions of the range of this species it would be something like "native to Colorado and parts of Wyoming, Kansas, Arizona and New Mexico". That is a factual statement but it is not an accurate description of the species' range.

The "background" color of the elytra (the hardshell wing covers of beetles) is light blue here but in other parts of its range it may be anything from grey to purple. Always with black dots, however. The background color is created by a pigment, as you might guess since the other option is structure, as in many bird feathers. As pigments often fade with time, you are likely to enjoy the beauty of these beetles only when they are alive.

As their common name indicates, this species feeds on bracket fungi as well as pollen and nectar. The beetles lay their eggs and overwinter near these fungal growths.

6. *Athyrium filix-femina* ([Linnaeus] Roth ex Mertens) var. *californicum* (Butters), the Southwestern Lady Fern, was growing in scattered clumps along the trail.

7. Some of the Gambel Oak trees along the trail appeared to be infested with powdery mildew. This is a manifestation of several types of ascomycete fungi. Although it is reported to have little effect on the oaks, no definitive studies exist.

8. Growing in the same area were a few young trees which I took to be *Picea engelmannii* ([Parry] ex Engelmann) var. *engelmannii,* Engelmann's Spruce.

9. *Hymenoxys hoopesii* ([A. Gray] Bierner), Orange Sneezeweed, was the most common large wildflower along sections of the trail. See also the top of the next page.

10. There were occasional clumps of *Houstonia wrightii* (Gray), Pygmy Bluets or Wright's Bluets, along this section of trail.

11. *Lupinus argenteus* (Pursh), Silvery Lupine was in various stages of bloom and seed, generally in areas where there would have been water during a "normal" year.

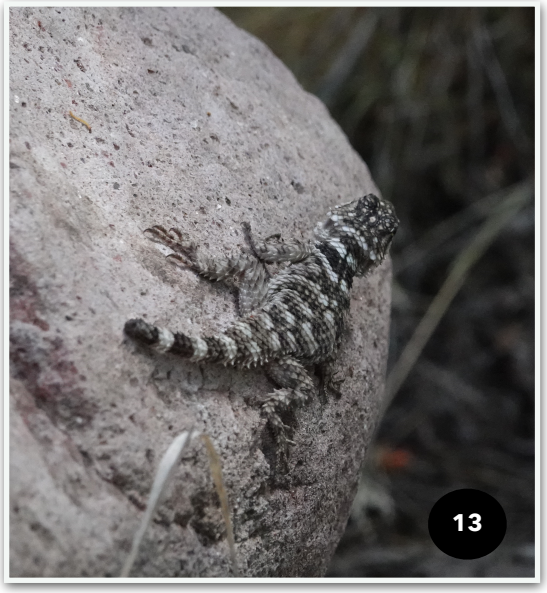
12. There was a small *Quercus hypoleucoides* (A. Camus), Silverleaf Oak, growing at the top of the steep section of trail above the fork with the Railroad Canyon Trail.

13. South of the fork with the Railroad Canyon Trail (on June 20, 2024) we found a very cooperative *Sceloporus p. poinsettii,* Crevice Spiny Lizard (photographs on the following page).

14. On June 20, 2024, we found a Gray Buckeye, *Junonia grisea* beside the trail (photograph on the following page).

And this brought us back to the Railroad Canyon Campground where, on June 20, 2024, a tree came crashing down in a very light wind as we picnicked.

13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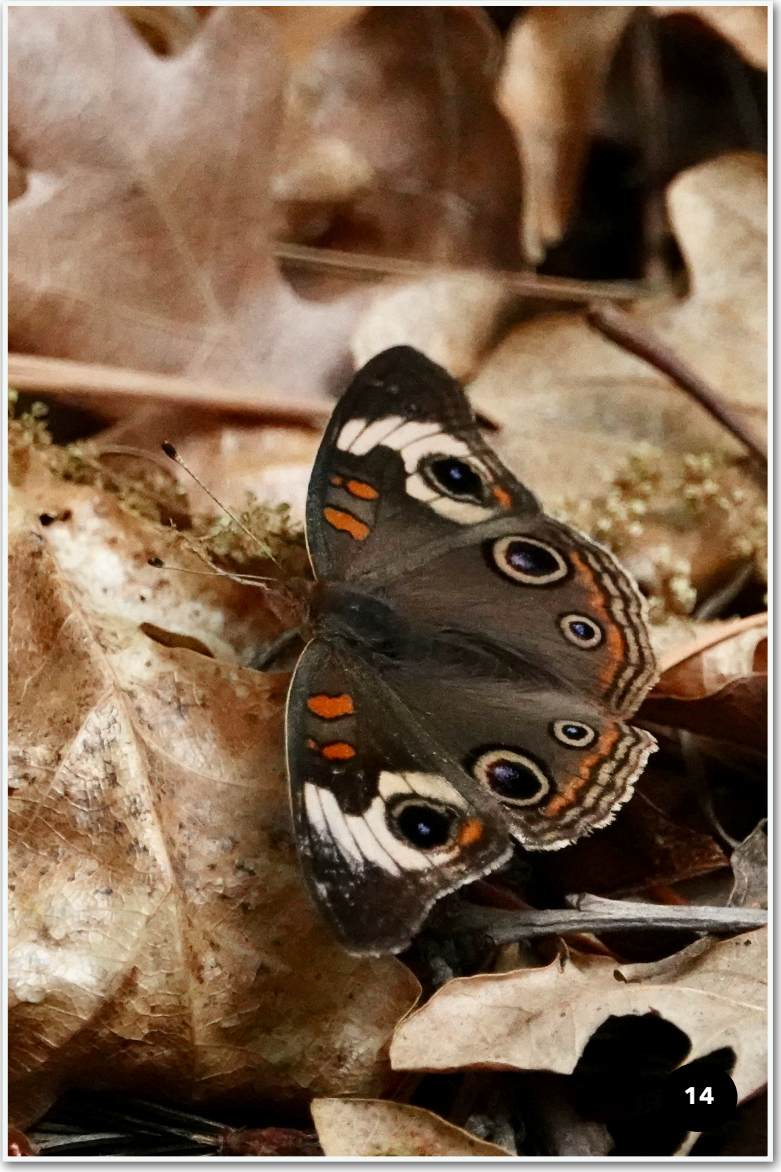
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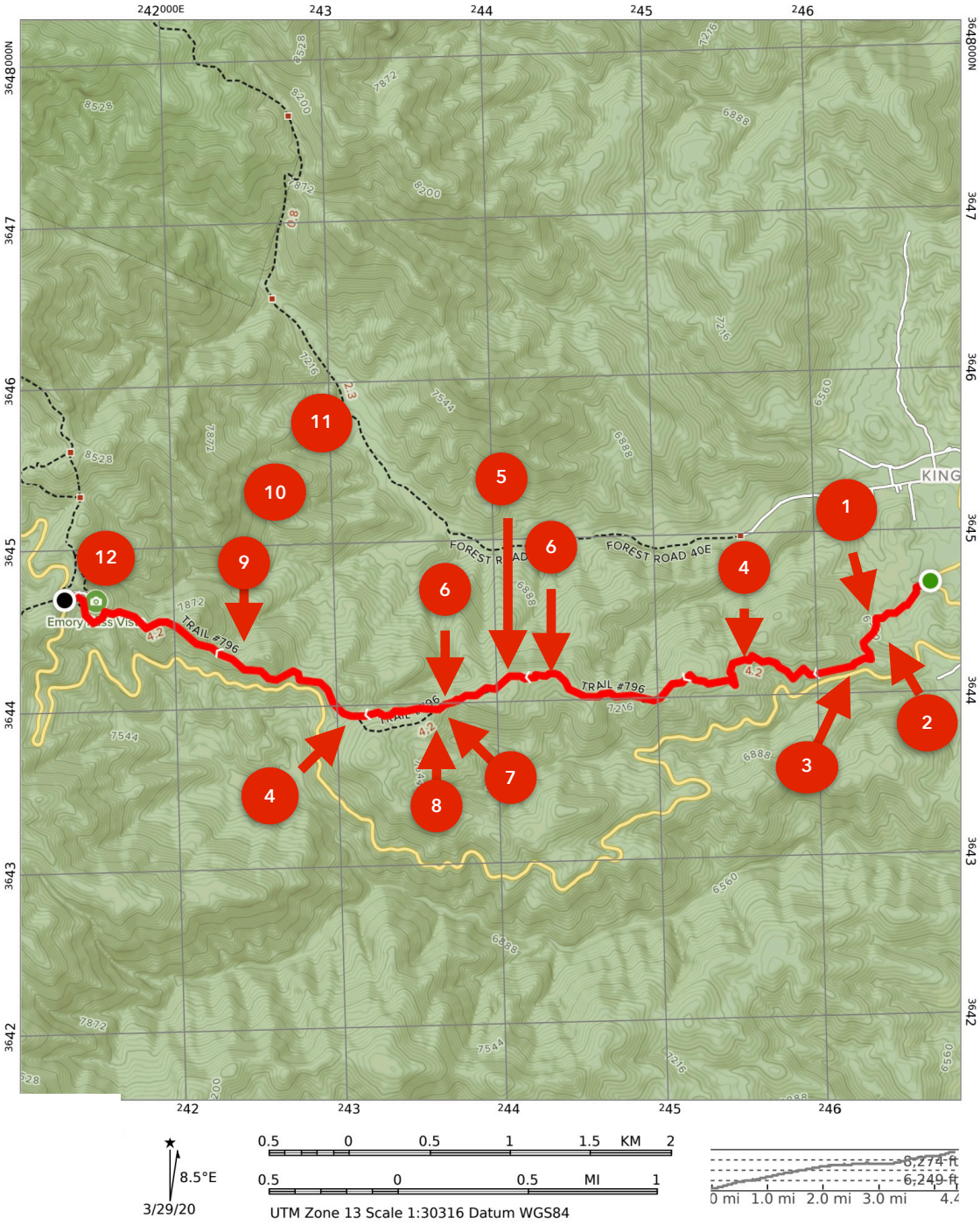
44. Forest Trail 796 - Kingston Cemetery to Emory Pass

It is 4.4 miles from the Kingston Cemetery to Emory Pass via Forest Service Trail 796. The elevation gain is just short of 2,000 feet. Although there are some fairly flat sections along the trail, most of it progresses up the mountain at a steady incline. (See elevation profile on the next page.) The 8.8 mile round-trip can be easily done in a day or it may be done as a one-way walk with a car shuttle. It is best done during winter - snow is possible - or during the shoulder months, because sections of the trail (especially some of the lower sections) have very little shade since the Silver Fire.

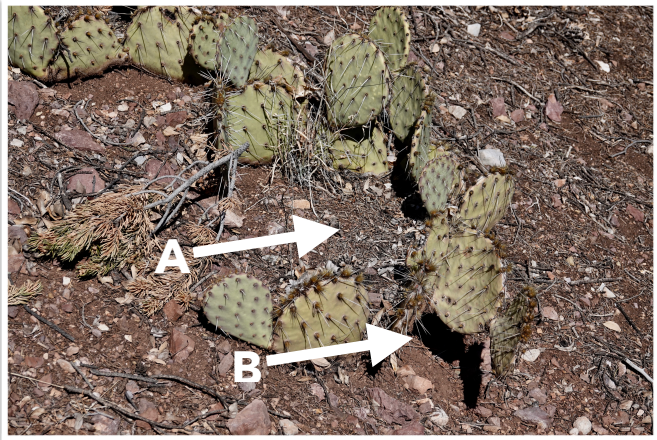
See the map below for a location key to the items referenced below.

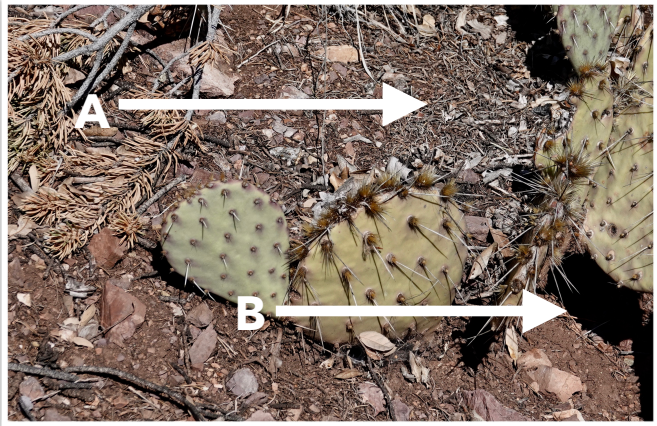
1. The two photographs a the top right on the next page show a simple but effective idea, a concept used extensively by the indigenous peoples of the southwest and shown here by a prickly pear cactus. Check dams were used by the indigenous peoples of the southwest for a variety of purposes: To capture sediment above the dam so that areas for agricultural plantings could be established; to inhibit the rate of runoff (during the monsoons for instance) so that areas below the dam would not be washed away; and to



keep unwanted sediments from washing onto agricultural fields ("The Use of Check Dams for Protecting Downstream Agricultural Lands in the Prehistoric Southwest: A Contextual Analysis", William E. Doolittle, *Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3 [Autumn, 1985], pp. 279-305).

In late March we found this cactus clump demonstrating the concept naturally. The captured soil in the middle of the photograph ("A") is 6 to 8 inches higher than that immediately to the right of the cactus pads ("B"). The captured soil slows erosion and serves as a storage area for water.

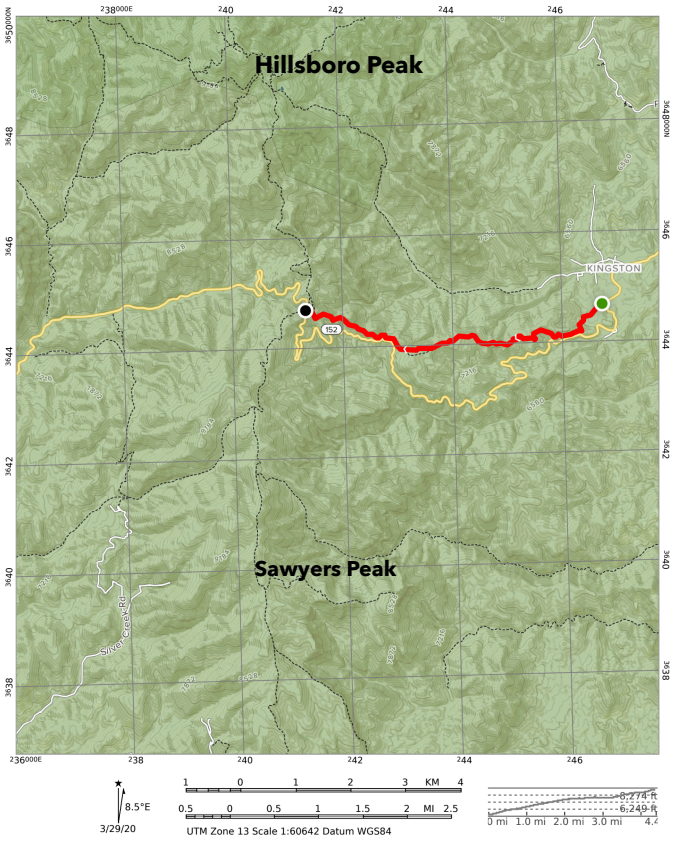




2. Immediately Below: Late March. In the same general area as the cactus, a pine had been bent over and the trunk shattered by the heavy (wet) snow of the past winter - not as we often imagine in this area, by the high winds that sweep down the east slope of the Black Range.

3. Thistle, possibly *Cirsium ochrocentrum* (Gray) var. *martinii* (Martin's Thistle) was just emerging at the end of March (photo below).

4. Cane Cholla (aka Walking Stick Cholla), *Cylindropuntia spinosior*, is rarely found at elevations greater than 8,500 feet, so those found along the trail (and there are many) are near the "top" of their range. The upper left photograph on the following page shows a purplish tint to the stems. This is a response to winter conditions. (Photos were taken in late March.) Cane Cholla, like many other cactus, will reproduce from a segment of stem which is separated from the main plant as well as from seed. *Cylindropuntia leptocaulis*, looks like a miniature version of the Cane Cholla; the two species hybridize.

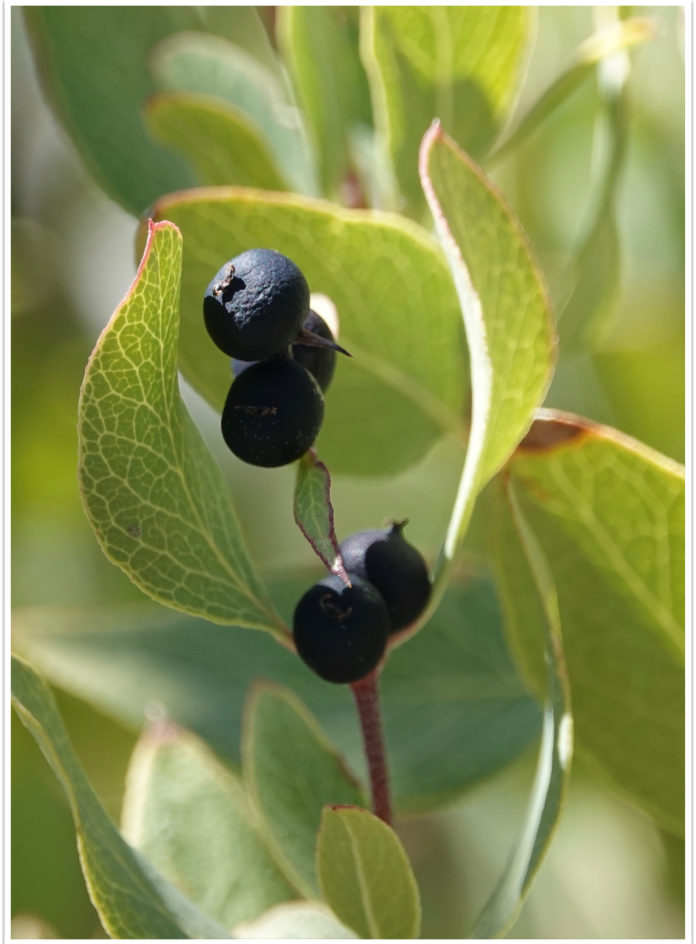


5. Above: Earthstars (genera *Astraeus* and/or *Geastrum*) litter the ground in places. Some interesting fungi for a dry place.

This trail is east-west in orientation and is just north of NM-152. Its western terminus is along the crest of the Black Range. From this point the Black Range Crest Trail may be taken north to Hillsboro Peak or south to Sawyers Peak.

6. Bottom Right, Previous Page: During the last week of March, Fendler Bladderpod, *Physaria fendleri,* begin to bloom in the middle portion of the trail.

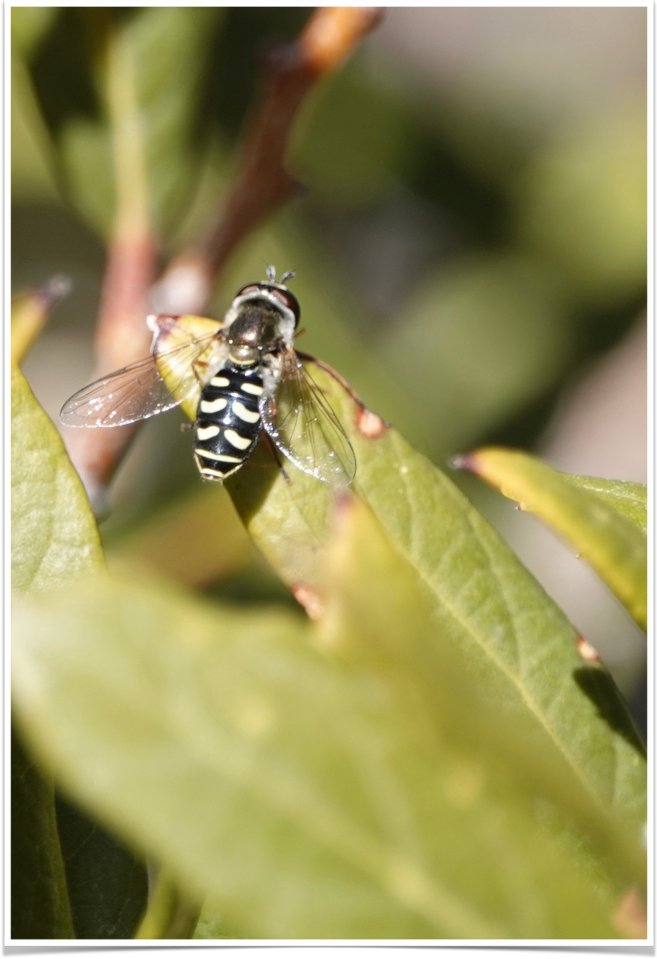
7. Below: Wright's Silktassel, *Garrya wrightii*, is found alongside the trail about half way up the trail. In early March they had not begun to bloom, but the fruit from the previous year was still apparent. The fruit starts out green and turns to purple before becoming black.



8. Wright's Silktassel is often found in association with Alligator Juniper, *Juniperus deppeana*, pictured at the top right. We found the two species together at our lunch spot, on our way down the mountain.

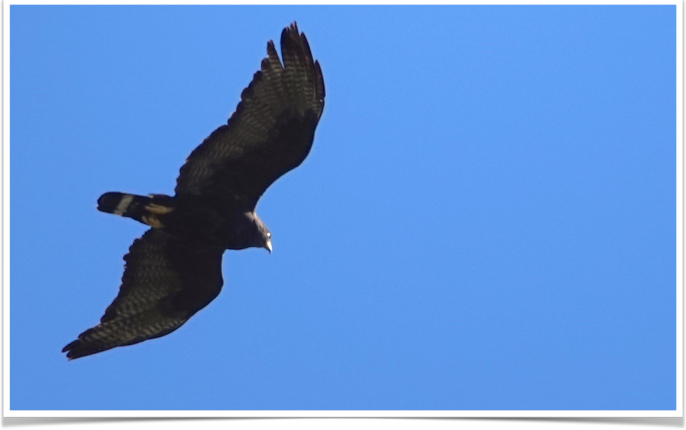
9. Wild Candytuft (aka Fendler's Penny-cress) - *Noccaea fendleri* subsp. glauca - was blooming along the trail on March 28, at the higher elevations. (See bottom right.) The individuals shown here are young; in older specimens the "clasping cauline leaves are evenly spaced all the way up to the inflorescence".

10. At the spot where I photographed the Wild Candytuft there were at least two Western Bluebirds and two other (smaller) flying critters. Bumblebees are large insects and often lumbering in their flight, so they get noticed. At this spot, I was able to photograph two other flying insects, much smaller. The Syrphid Fly (Genus *Syrphini*) pictured at the top right on the next page is of a tribe with more than 140 species in 30 genera in North America. The systemics of



the group are in "flux", so it is probably good that I am not able to name this individual to species - 'cause it might change next week. That said, it is quite possibly *Eupeodes volucris*, the Bird Hover Fly. That species is found in western North America, from the far north well into Mexico.

11. The species shown below and at the top right is probably in the same tribe as the previous fly, in this case possibly the subgenus *Eoseristalis*.



12. Near the crest of the trail there are often many Turkey Vultures flying about and it is not uncommon for a Zone-tailed Hawk, *Buteo albonotatus*, to also be in the area, photo bottom right taken on July 10.

45. Dry Creek

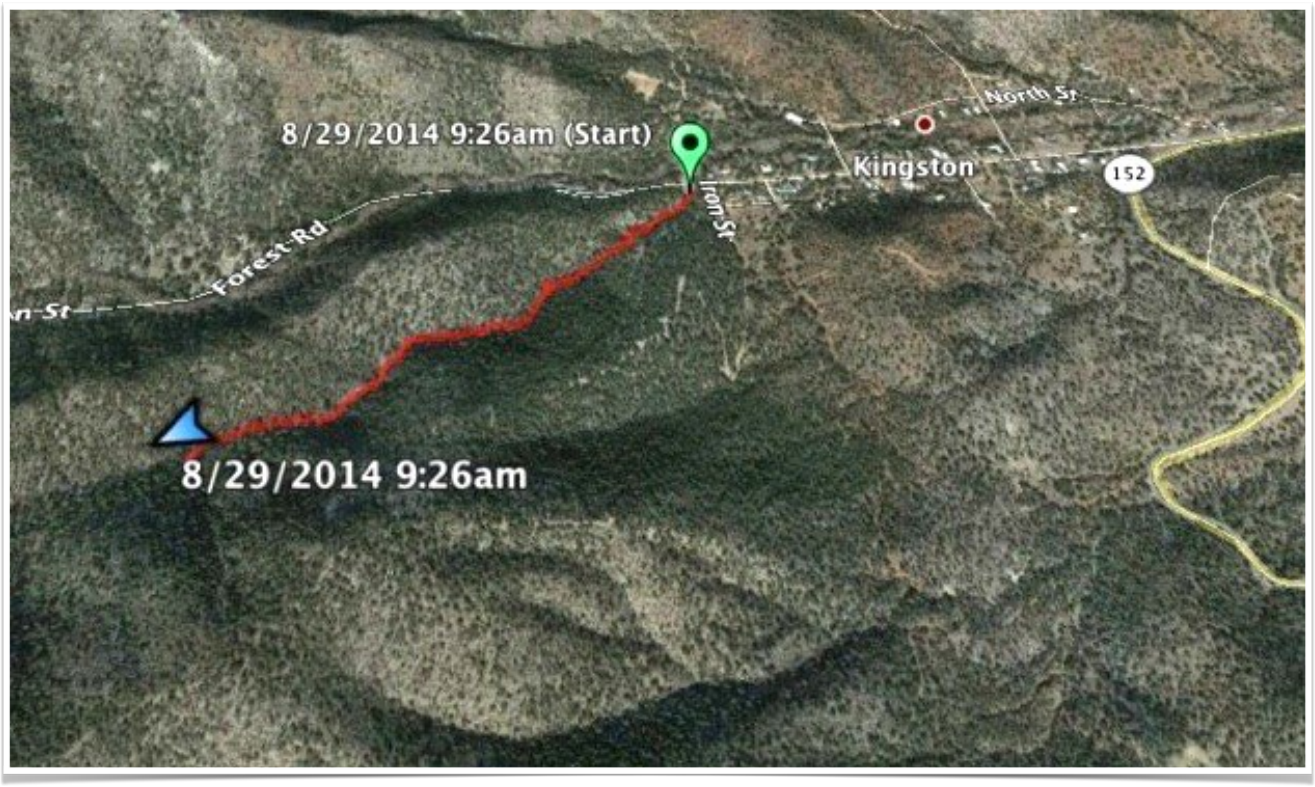
Dry Creek just west of Kingston is not always Dry. On the day of our walk (8/29/2014) the going was easy, floods had washed out any game trails, the creek bottom was rock and wet sand, and in places water still ran. Route finding is not an issue because the route follows the creek bed. The usual Black Range suspects are possible; rattlesnakes, Black Bears, Cougars, skunks, etc..

Just west of Iron Street at the west end of Kingston, New Mexico a creek enters from the south. This is "Dry Creek". The first section of the creek, about 50 yards south from the road it is on private property, be respectful and follow appropriate protocols. A fence crosses the creek bed about 50 yards from the road and a sign indicates that you are entering land managed by the USDA Forest Service.

Limestone strata starts to appear in the creek bed after a short walk. This strata contains fossils (gastropods). Toward the end of the walk the slopes were heavily burned by the Silver Fire. Dark dead snags were outlined by a beautiful blue sky on the day of this walk. The slopes were covered with a mass of green and flowers.

On the day of our walk the creek banks were covered in wildflowers, butterflies cruised the "water course", native bees were about and a gentle breeze blew down the canyon. Altogether a beautiful little stroll in the forest.

The route shown here is only 1.38 miles (RT) with an elevation gain of just over 300'. Although there is no trail the canyon bottom is easy to walk in and it is possible to continue on beyond the point shown on the map below.



46. Middle Percha Loop

The walk up the Middle Percha, from Kingston to the Wilderness boundary, has been frequently traveled for more than a century. A couple who own an in-holding in the forest gated the road a few years ago and refused passage. The Forest Service refused to intervene, effectively taking the side of the owners of the in-holding, despite the established right of passage. Locals took the couple to court and the unlawful taking has been corrected. Be aware, however, that when you get to the gate you must stay on the road until you reach public land on the west side of the in-holding. The road which is an extension of the main street in Kingston is generally in good shape.

The loop walk described here is 3.7 miles long and has a net elevation gain of 550', mostly in a gentle consistent grade. As described later, this track can be divided into two segments. One route is along the Forest Service road, the other along an often used track which runs parallel to the road. If you are walking the side track use an app which shows property boundaries so that you do not enter private property at the east end of the walk.

The loop shown below starts at a cairn beside the road, east of a traditional campsite (black dot) just east of the Forest Service boundary. From the cairn the track crosses the Middle Percha and then west. The campsite/parking area is PRIVATE LAND (as opposed to the road, which is public). Since this has become an issue, this loop can be modified by heading north from the road to join the loop trail, once you enter the National Forest. This will enable a loop walk which is only slightly shorter.

At the waypoint (orange dot) - which is just beyond the Ladrone Trail parking area - you can turn back east on the other segment to make a loop. Of course, you can configure your walk in a number of ways. The two walk segments cross each other, allowing even more variety.

The road segment is 1.7 miles long (from the starting point to the waypoint) while the route along the track which runs parallel to the road (from the waypoint to the starting point) is 1.9 miles long. Of the two segments the track which parallels the road is the nicer. In fact, it is one of the most beautiful and easy to walk tracks in the Black Range, a real pleasure to walk along. Be aware that there are a lot of Ponderosa Pine needles along this segment, so it may be slippery.

Both segments are used by non-human animals with some frequency. During November 2020, for instance, we found evidence of Black Bear, Cougar, Gray Fox, Javelina, and Mule Deer along the track. Rock Squirrels are frequently found in this section of the Middle Percha.

In this trail description we include some natural history photographs without trying to key specific species to the maps. With a gradient this mild and a walk this short, the natural history does not vary much along the route. It is, however, very rich in its diversity.

The track is easy to follow. It is used with enough frequency that cairns have been placed on the route to aid the uninitiated. This walk varies significantly with the season, reason to come back time and time again.

During the summer, the Middle Percha is always a good locale for butterflies, like the *Thorybes pylades,* Northern Cloudywing, pictured at the top left on the following page, but the season extends well into the shoulder seasons.

Many species of flowering plant add to the enjoyment of this walk during the warmer months. And they, of course, attract many insect and bird species.

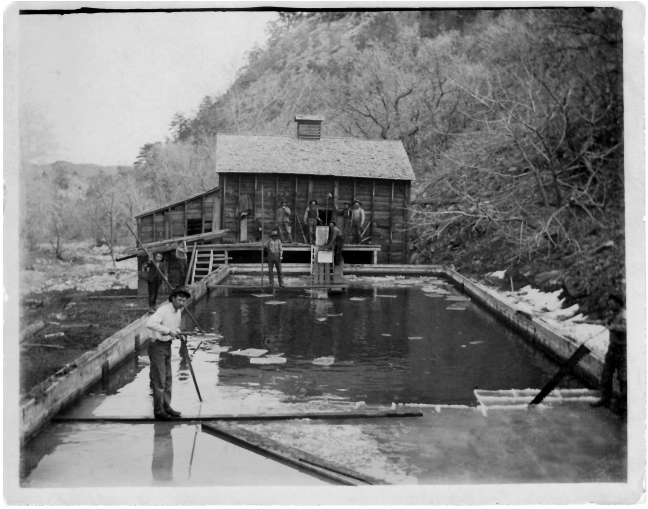
During November 2020, when we mapped this section of trail, the creek was dry - for all intents and purposes the monsoon did not occur during the previous summer. Normally, however, water is found in the Middle Percha. As anyone reading this knows, water is a great attractor of

wildlife in this part of the world. Everything from the smallest of insects, through the butterflies, to the larger mammals can be found along the stream edges in season.

Kingston was a major mining center during the last two decades of the 1800's so there are mines along the creek, usually a bit higher on the canyon slopes and often adits rather than shafts. As elsewhere in the Black Range, these mines are often flooded and some of them have been used to furnish garden water for Kingston.

Although mostly washed away, there is interesting local history, from the mining days to present, to be imagined along the creek. The marker (engraving) on the witness tree shown below is mostly grown over but was a key point in the claiming of land in the creek. It is located between the start of this trail and Kingston.

The witness tree is near the site of the old ice house in Kingston (photo top right). No evidence remains of the structure or operation, but take a moment and imagine what this ice harvesting operation was like in its heyday. The May 2018 issue of *Guajolotes, Zopilotes y Paisanos* (the Hillsboro Historical Society journal) included an article entitled "Put It On Ice". To quote the article; "Kingston had sawdust, Kingston had ice. Ice houses were fairly common structures prior to refrigeration. Not the type of ice house pictured" . . . above right ..."but the kind used to store ice. They were usually thick walled, often sunk into the ground, and generally located in shaded areas. Block ice stored with sawdust in these conditions could last from the last freeze of the year to the first freeze of the next. Not as easy as using an ice dispenser, but it worked. The harvesting of ice, the



methods of storing it . . ." A bit of history imagined along a trail in the Black Range - imagine.

Increasingly, the memories of the Silver Fire are fading from the area, as well. The image at the top left of the following page was taken in July 2013. In 2020, most - but by no means all, of the burned snags have fallen and the holes left where the fire burnt the stumps of trees well into the ground are being filled in.

Rock Squirrel, *Otospermophilus variegatus grammurus*

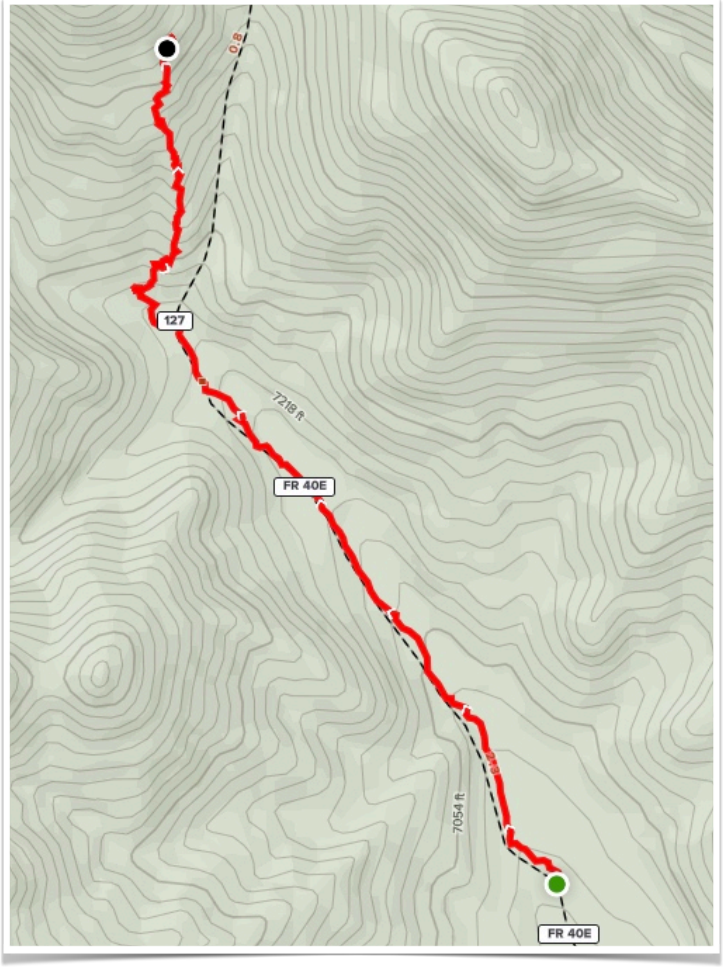
The July 2020 issue of *The Black Range Naturalist* includes Véronique De Jaegher's photographic time series (two from 2013 and one from 2020) of a spot in the Middle Percha.

The changes created by floods and the subsequent filling in by "normal" sedimentation are dramatic. The photograph below was taken on August 2013, after one of the high water events which swept down the valley. The amount of soil and rock washed away in a single event can be astonishing. And as for change, for a few months, the Black Range had another "waterfall".

Flowering starts early in the year along this trail. Some of the flowers, like the Locoweed shown below are not always appreciated by the ranching community. To help in the identification of species like this see New Mexico State University, Circular 557, *A Guide to the Common Locoweeds and Milkvetches of New Mexico* by Fox, Allred, and Roalson. It includes a key and species descriptions for flowers in the genus *Astragalus* and *Oxytropis* which are found in the state. It includes species descriptions, line drawings, and photographs.

A section of the "Middle Percha Track"

47. Ladrone Trail (Trail 157)



This is not really about the Ladrone Trail. It is about what was and what may be.

Historically, the Ladrone Trail started in the Middle Percha drainage and climbed the east slope of the Black Range, passing Hillsboro Lake after a gain of 2,000' in elevation and reaching the Black Range Crest Trail at the saddle south of Hillsboro Peak (after a total elevation gain of about 2,300'). As such, it was one of the more strenuous walks in the Black Range.

The Silver Fire and the subsequent rains washed the trail away. In late November 2020 we took a walk up the drainage - a little way (1.2 miles, 2.4 miles RT).

We parked at the Ladrone Trailhead Parking area (at the west end of the Middle Percha Loop trail) and walked up the Middle Percha, following a track and cairns. We lost the cairns where the old trail turns north, up a stream gully. We wandered up the ridge to the west of the old trail. This ridge was miserable, bushwhacking, slopes of 30+%, loose stone on bedrock. Most of our 810 foot elevation gain was on this section of the walk.

We scanned the slope to the east and as much of the stream bottom as possible trying to find a sign of the old trail. Nada. The rumors persist that the Forest Service will reestablish this trail. Given that most trails in the Black Range are not strenuous, we really do need this one. As of the date of this publication the Ladrone Trail is one of the casualties of the illegal blocking of public access to the area. The Forest Service had been committed to restoring the trail but when the road was blocked the Forest Service curtailed all planned work (even taking down their trailhead parking sign) and has not shown interest in restoring the trail since that time. Public access may have been restored to the area but without a historical trail to sweat up.

48. Picket Spring & Goat Ranch

Picket Spring

Picket Spring is an excavated spring protected by a corrugated steel pipe (photos to the left). At the time of the survey water was standing in the spring. A stick was placed in the spring to allow creatures of various sorts to extricate themselves if they fell in - thus avoiding spring contamination and a needless loss of life. The area around the spring is fenced but the fence is not maintained allowing easy access to the spring by livestock and large native species. The water tank associated with this spring was downstream, in the stream bed. The water tank and hose/pipes from the spring are not maintained.

Picket Spring is depicted on USGS topographic maps, although its exact placement on the maps may be slightly less than accurate.

To access the "trail head" drive north out of Kingston on Italian (Water). This is a wash and animal track walk so expect some bushwhacking.

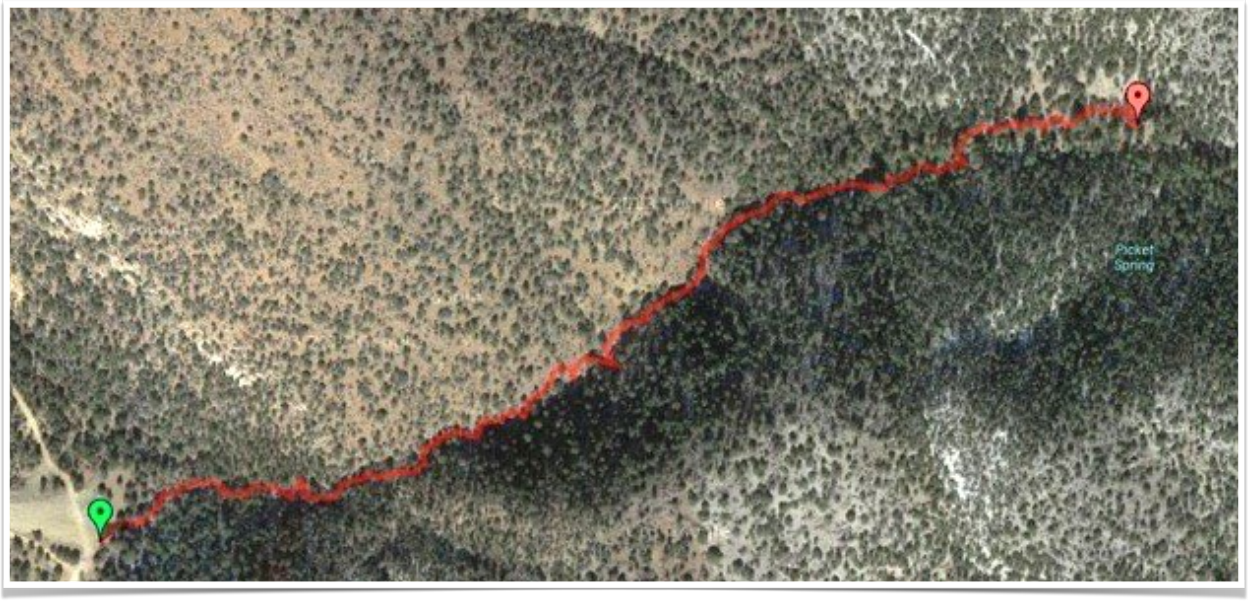
Goat Ranch

The trail head and the first part of this walk is the same as for Picket Spring. To reach the trailhead, we travelled north on Italian (Water) Street out of Kingston, on the east side of the Black Range. At the same trailhead that we used for the Pickett Spring walk, we departed in a generally north-easterly direction along an old trail bed.

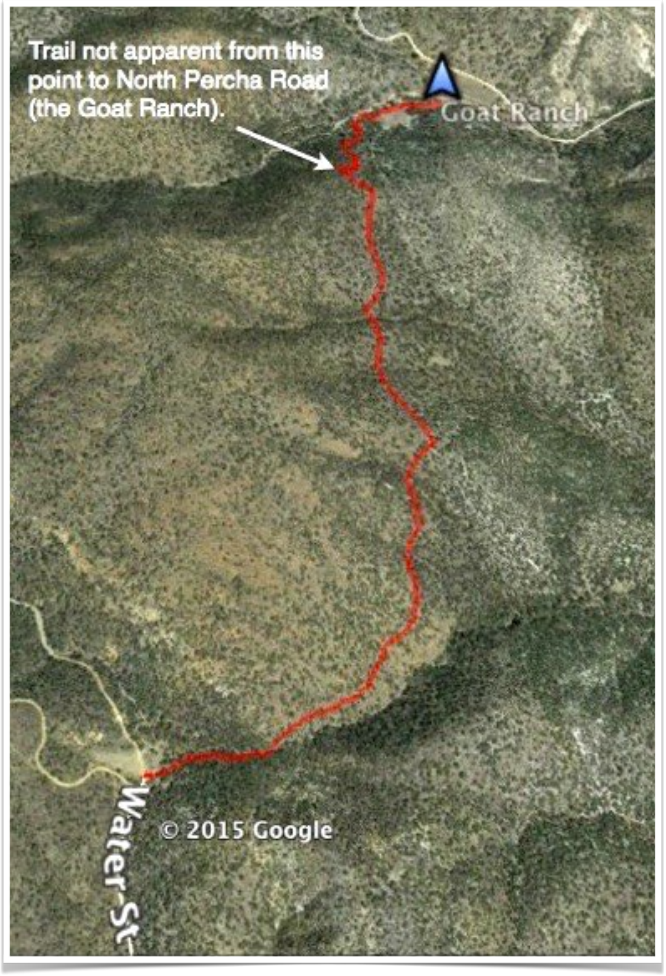
At the parking area, which is just beyond a cattle guard, walk down to the stream bed. Very quickly, an indistinct track begins to ascend the slope on the north side of the stream bed.

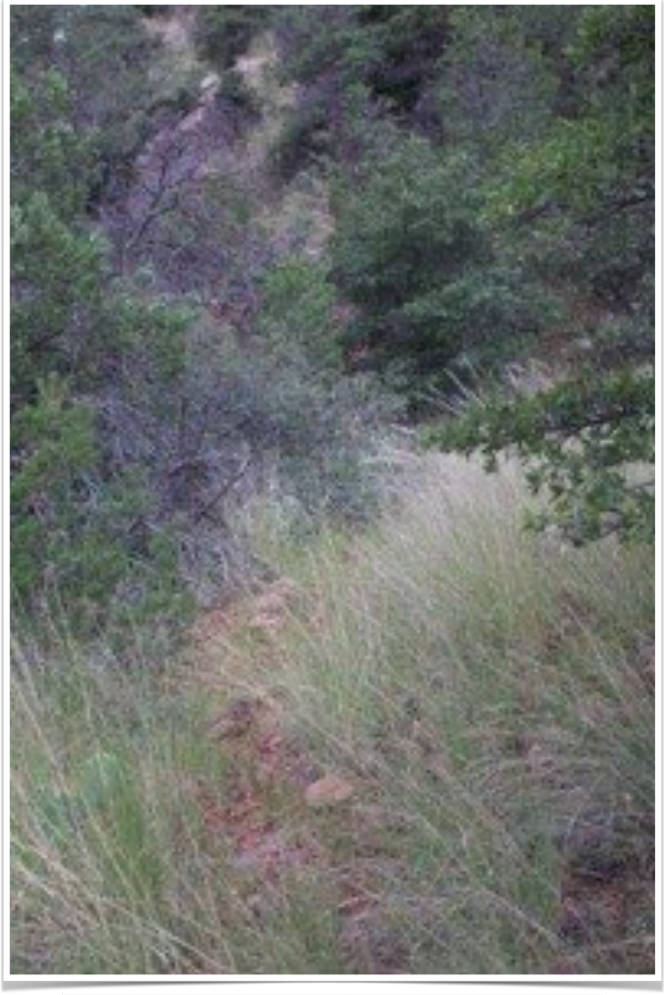
The trail is indistinct and overgrown in sections but is generally easy to follow until you reach the saddle which overlooks the Reed Goat Ranch, at which point it seems to disappear. The trail is rocky in places, presenting opportunities for twisted ankles and hiding places for various rattlesnake species.

The walk is about 1.3 miles each way. The trail is fairly flat, see gradient chart on the following page, but climbs gently until it disappears at the saddle overlooking the Goat Ranch. The difference between the minimum and maximum elevation on the walk is only 300', but this is a bit misleading. When you reach the saddle, the walk down the slope to the goat ranch is on a 15% grade.



Picket Spring is located in Picket Spring Canyon about 2 miles northeast of Kingston.





This trail is one of the historical trails of the Black Range, it is not maintained by any entity. In the late 1890's and early 1900's this was the track used by people at the Reed Goat Ranch (and elsewhere in the vicinity?) and earlier settlements to cross over to Kingston. School kids would take milk from the goat ranch to Kingston and board in Kingston while going to school. (It is not known if they made this trek more than once a week.)

Because it is assumed that the goat's milk was transported by burros (or other beasts of burden) it is very likely that the trail from the saddle to the goat ranch was of a moderate incline, perhaps a series of switchbacks down the steep slope, switchbacks which have washed out in the fairly loose soil of this particular slope -- or maybe the trail went elsewhere.

As a place of historical significance, this trail should be maintained and preserved. Sections of the "trail" are shown to the left and above.

49. Sawpit Canyon & Goat Ranch Spring

Sawpit Canyon

This trail starts at the Reed-Armour Goat Ranch on North Percha Road and proceeds up a canyon immediately to the west. The trail shown here is .9 miles long (1.8 miles round-trip). There is minimal elevation change along the route shown, the elevation starts at 6,356′ (at North Percha Road) and rises to 6,670′ at the end of the route depicted below.

This route follows the bed of a stream which flows through a fairly narrow canyon. The route starts out on a one lane track at the Goat Ranch but once the route enters the canyon there is no constructed trail. Light scrambling, obstructive vegetation, loose rock, and the usual critters are likely to be encountered along the route.

This route was mapped on December 9, 2015, at that time there was a good flow of water in the stream, at higher volumes the trail would be impassable. Ice (see photos) was found along the stream bed at that time and during the winter sections of the trail may be impassable because of ice on the rock. Some pools are present and not appreciated during the winter, but might be very nice during the hot months.

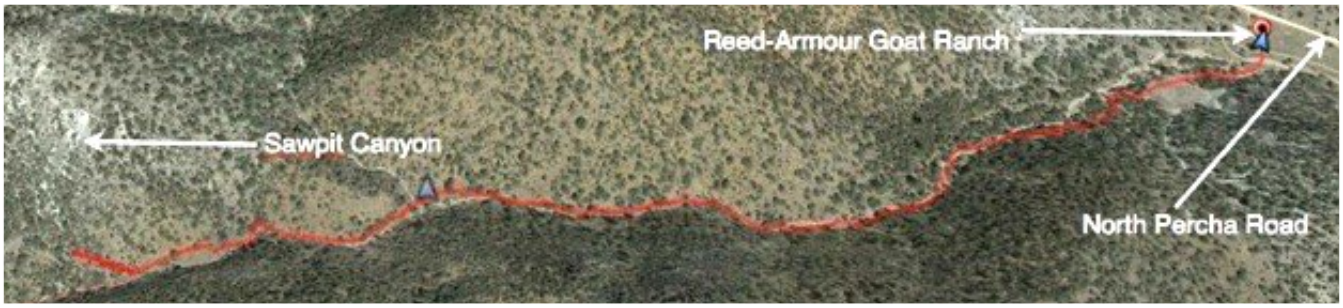
Goat Ranch Spring

This spring is near North Percha Road (a.k.a. Forest Service Road 57 or FR-157), 1.2 miles west of the United States National Forest boundary. If you are locating this spring by watching The Roads of the Black Range - NM-152 to Carbonate Canyon, the turn-out for the walk is "9:43" into the video. A map of the location is provided on the next page (the spring is at the arrow). A photos of the spring may be misleading - depending on whether or not cattle have been allowed to mangle it.

The trail to this spring starts at the home site of Margaret Reid-Armer, the Queen of Mohair. Little remains of the homesite except some foundations and some walls of outbuildings (photo on following page).

Access to the spring is an easy walk up the wash which runs parallel to North Percha Road. When a major fork in the wash is encountered, follow the left course. The walk is only 1300′ and the grade is easy, since this is a wash walk the footing is uneven and the typical dangers associated with walks of this type should be considered.

The spring is located on the left side of the wash, not far above the fork mentioned above. At one time the spring water was clear. Water tanks are down slope from the



spring, they are rusted out and not used. As of 2025 the spring had been destroyed by cattle.

When the spring was active overflow ran into the adjacent wash, there was a small amount of surface water in the wash because of this (photo below).

50. Carbonate Creek

To reach the trailhead for this walk, turn off of NM-152 at MP 41.5, onto North Percha Road (a.k.a. FR-157) and follow that road until you reach the trailhead. The walk starts at the turn out or a short distance up the road which follows the stream on its south side (road may/may not be passable). On July 27, 2015 we were able to drive a short distance up the road to an unimproved campsite. From there to the cabin the walk was 1.69 miles (3.4 round-trip).

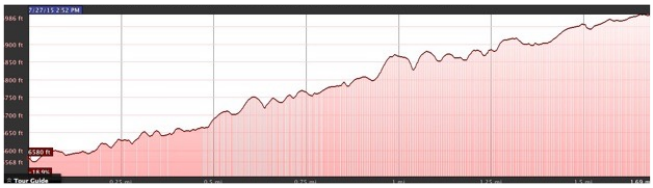
The elevation gain is moderate, from about 6,570′ to about 6,990′, and steady (see elevation graph below). The walk follows the course of the stream. Much of the trail has been washed away in floods. Most of the remaining portions of the trail are on the south side of the stream. Route finding is easy, simply follow the stream uphill, but the trail is seriously overgrown and washed out. A portion of the trail/stream bed is shown to the right.

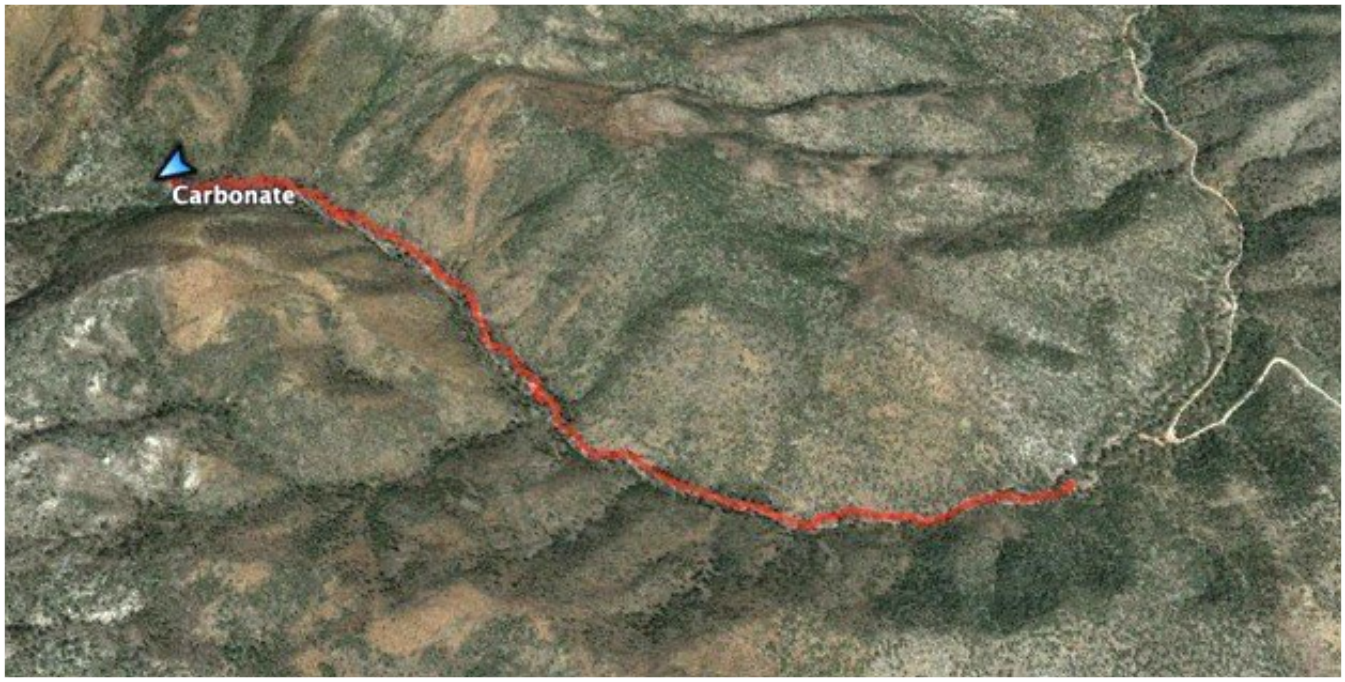
The cabin, which is the destination for this walk, may have been used by some of the ranch hands when the Reid-Armer goat ranch was operating. After that, it was apparently used by squatters until the US Forest Service evicted them. The basic structure is still sound although dirty and rodent infested.

It is possible to continue up the canyon and bushwhack up the slopes until you reach the Black Range Crest Trail. This is rough back country walking, however, and quite strenuous.

In July, there were many beautiful stands of various wildflowers and numerous butterflies along the walk.

The typical difficulties/dangers of a walk in the Black Range are present/possible. Uneven and unstable surfaces, unexpected holes and drop-offs, venomous arthropods and snakes, bears, puma, rabid bobcats, crazed hunters, cowboys, suspicious survivalists etc. Exercise appropriate care and don’t fret the possibilities.





51. Mineral Creek

This trail description starts at Forest Service Road 157 (North Percha Road) and continues for 1.78 miles to the west up Mineral Creek. FR 157 runs north from NM-152 on the east side of the Black Range. At an elevation of 6,347 feet, the trail starts at 13S UTM 24607.29 m E, 3651445.36 m N and continues west, up the creek. On September 18, 2017 we followed the trail to the overlook of a large waterfall, 1.78 miles up the trail. At this point (13S UTM 243932.35 m E, 3651394.47 m N) the elevation is 6,993 feet (having just dropped from 7,002').

Our route on the 18th followed the canyon bottom from right (at FR-157) to left on the map below. The elevation profile for the walk starts with Forest Service Road 157 on the left. The route is along an old mining road which gradually peters out. At about 1.25 miles the grade begins to increase and the trail becomes more overgrown with grass, prickly pear, and mountain mahogany. The trail has a gross elevation gain of 897 feet and a net gain of 646 feet.

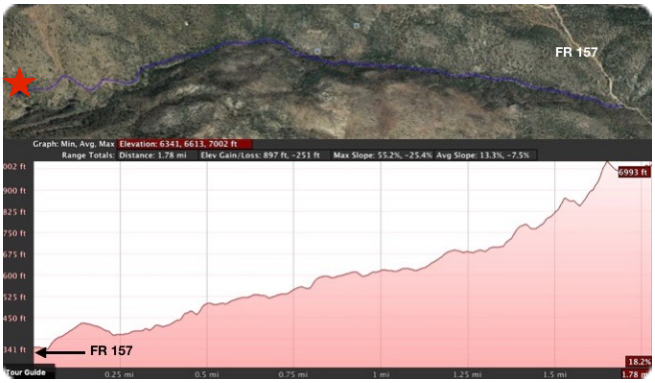
Near the end of the trail described here the road reaches an adit on the south side of the north ridge of the stream canyon (star). After this the road diminishes quickly. There are random pieces of metal associated with this adit in the stream-bed below.

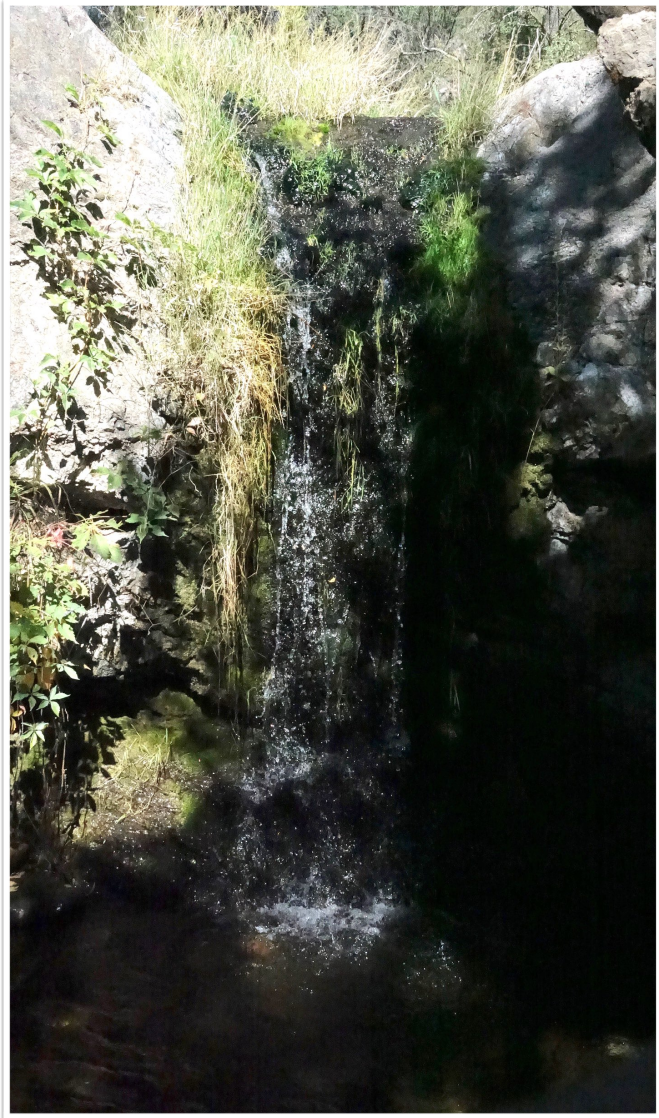
Mineral Creek Spring is a short distance from the beginning of the walk. It percolates from the ground at the base of a hill about fifteen feet above Mineral Creek.

At about 13S UTM 245711.14m E, 3651617.65 m N there is a small waterfall, photo right. This is not the waterfall which is well-known in the area - that fall is in the stream-bed at the end of the walk described here.

On the 18th the trail was very "birdy" (Bridled Titmouse, Acorn Woodpeckers, Northern [Red-shafted] Flickers, Downy Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches, Turkey Vulture, Plumbeous Vireo, Painted Redstart, Swainson's Thrush, Wilson's Warbler, unidentified Quail, ...etc.

The usual suspects are possible along the trail, watch for Rock Rattlesnakes especially. The trail is often rocky and uneven, several stream crossings are involved, higher on the trail the footing is obscured by grass, Mountain Mahogany and prickly pear make the trail difficult to negotiate near its end. The area is rather remote, there is no cell service, so due diligence should be practiced.





Along the north ridge of the stream valley there is a natural arch, shown on the following page, as is the waterfall at the end of the walk.

On December 29, 2017, I returned to the area to photograph the waterfall from its base. The trail to the base of the waterfall starts at roughly the point where the old road crosses the stream for the last time. Just beyond that point the road starts to climb more steeply and a "trail" to the left (south) follows the stream bed westward. In places the path involves a lot of boulder hopping and if wet this area would be treacherous.

At the base of the waterfall there is a pool, and in (this very mild) winter there was still a bit of ice lodged near the top of the fall. The waterfall is doubtlessly more dramatic at higher water levels. Conversely, higher water levels would create a more difficult and potentially dangerous path to the waterfall base.

52. North Percha Creek (FT 757)

Contributed by Devon Fletcher

The trail up North Percha is not on the Aldo Leopold Wilderness map, nor the Gila National Forest map. It is on the USGS topographic map and the Forest Service topographic maps of the area, but for the most part it is still a forgotten trail in a remote area of the forest known and used mainly by hunters and locals. Still it's a great day-hike if you happen to be visiting Hillsboro or Kingston, or if you're already familiar with the more "popular" Black Range trails and want to try something different. Access to the trailhead is off of NM 152 about 6 miles west of Hillsboro. Be on the lookout for a small brown Forest Trail sign. (Note: this road is signed now and is called the North Percha Road.) This is where you will turn off. If approaching from Kingston it is perhaps 2 - 3 miles east of the town. There may be an even more smaller sign with 157 on it, also indicating your turnoff to the north. You will drive approximately 8-9 miles on this mostly good gravel road. You will go through a posted private inholding. Do not cross North Percha Creek but drive straight on past the private property.

This hike is a Black Range classic, but be forewarned, there is very little room to park or maneuver past the private property. If you don't have high clearance and four wheel drive, park as soon as you can once you are beyond the private property. Even if your vehicle is properly equipped, you will probably only be able to manage the first crossing beyond which there is a good camping and a parking area. It is inadvisable to venture any farther in any sort of vehicle.

The last time we hiked North Percha, it was spring of 2017 and our fourth visit. The creek was flowing nicely still and the streamside was delightfully overgrown with bright green bunches of willows and alder saplings, which made it at times easier to just step from rock to rock in the stream rather than look for a trail that wasn't there. The Silver Fire did not touch the first couple of miles and it was nice to see all the firs and pines doing well on the steep hillsides. Along the stream there were fully leafed out chokecherry, box elder, willows, alders, and walnut. At the big horseshoe bend, where you realize you're in a canyon about 1,000 feet deep, there is small waterfall and every pool above it, as elsewhere in the stream, was alive with insects both on, and below, the surface of the crystal clear water.

Past the remnants of the Virginia Mine, the old road becomes easier to follow on the benches in the much widened stream valley. A little further along there is a fork in the road where we usually stay left, although the other branch can be explored for short ways. There is nothing left of the large wooden building that I photographed almost 20 years ago, except for the sheets of tin that were once its roof and parts of an old woodstove. It had collapsed on a subsequent trip, and now there's not even a trace of the old dried lumber which was surely instantly turned to ash and blown on the breeze as stringers from the Silver Fire made their way down the mountain. Another nearby building, that's built into the hillside and still had its glass window and tin roof back then, is just the cobblestone walls now.

Continuing to follow the road which eventually turns into a single track trail, it's a good idea to watch for the few

remaining tree blazes and remember the trail is never too far from the creek. At close to 3 miles a large tributary comes in on your right, stay to the left following the path across the

main creek again. In a little over 3 miles you will enter a stunning gorge with volcanic cliffs towering hundreds of feet over your head.

Effects of the fire are most obvious approaching the gorge. Where once a lush forest concealed all but the tops of the 500 foot high cliffs of bare igneous rock from view, now the entire buttress of stone that is the north wall is visible from quite a ways back. There are surviving trees however, so the view isn't entirely bleak.

The gorge is one of the most spectacular places that I know of in the Black Range, and making it even better, as if in confirmation of how special this place is, there are ancient pictographs beneath the overhanging walls at the base of the cliffs.

That day as we walked further up the narrow canyon, I spied a tom turkey walking up the steep hillside on my left. My male Scottie, even as I tried to discourage him, went in pursuit. Well, we were all more than a bit surprised when this huge bird took to the air and flew over our heads back down the canyon. Just a little reminder of how wild this place is. Shortly after, we crossed into the Aldo Leopold Wilderness. The stream runs over bedrock through most of the section of the gorge and there are a few more small cascades before what's left of the trail turns to follow an alternate branch that comes in from the northwest, to begin climbing up the mountain. On early trips this was a dark heavily forested area, where a few aspens began showing up. There were blazes on the trees and little tread on the ground and we turned around at a very old corral. Now, this area, all the way to the ridgeline, appears to be heavily impacted by the Silver Fire.

Walking back, with our necks craning at the immense rock towers on either side of the canyon, we took many photographs, but I knew that none would really do this place justice. You would need much better photography equipment, but really it's better to just be there.

53. Bald Hill Spring

Bald Hill Spring is located at 33.004758, -107.726254. Access is shown in the image to the right. After crossing North Percha Creek on Forest Road 157 (sometimes shown as Forest Road 57 or North Percha Road) continue to a road junction at "A". From "A" follow the road/stream to the northwest and then travel uphill to a well maintained tank. The spring is in the gully to the right as you face the tank from the downhill side. The pipe which is used to fill the tank is visible in several places and the spring is easy to find.

The ford at North Percha may be impassable following high water events and Forest Road 157 will be in varying degrees of "maintained" depending on water events, recent rains, snow, or when the Forest Service last ran a grader through the area. During trips in July and September of 2017 I chose not to cross one of the wash crossings on the road north of North Percha, making for about a 2.5 mile roundtrip walk to the spring. Generally, an ATV or short-base vehicle with high clearance should not have any trouble with the road.

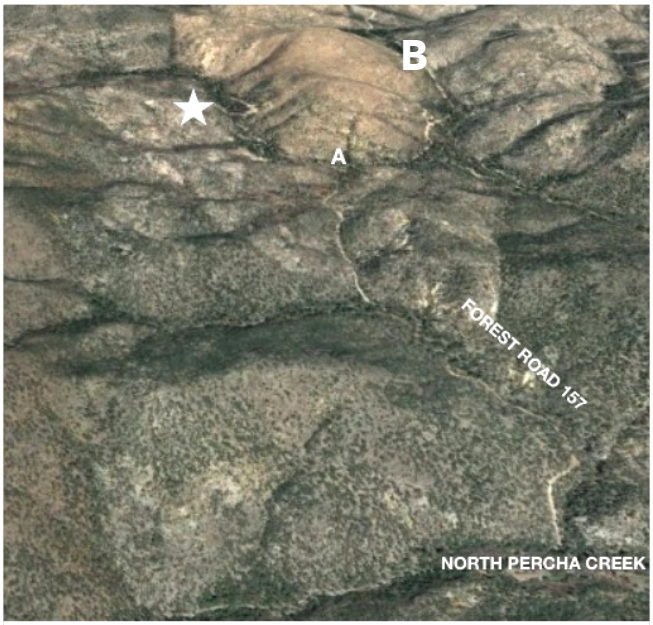
It is possible to drive up the road from "A" for quite a way if you would like, eventually the road is blocked by fallen trees at about its terminus. The road terminus is roughly were the route to the spring turns uphill.

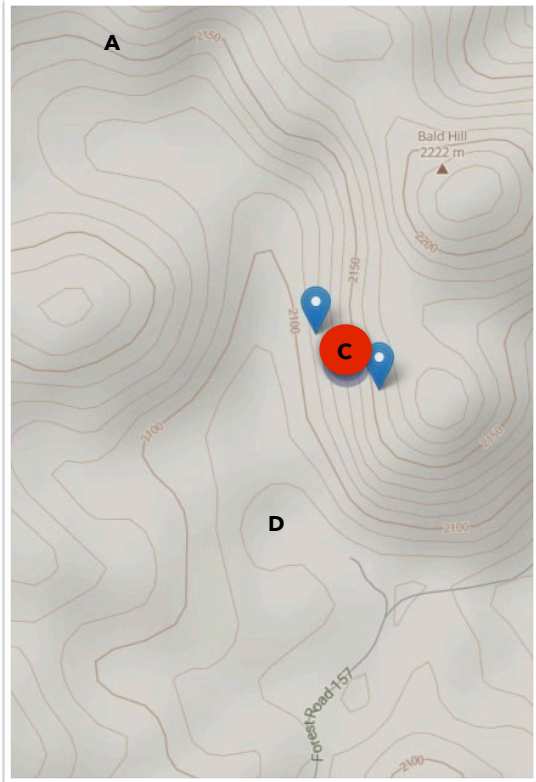
This is one of the better maintained springs in the range. The tank is sound and about 100' from the spring. The spring is in a wash with significant rock in the area, that and a bit of fencing is sufficient to keep cattle out of the spring. The spring is roughly 1/2 the way up the hill.

The walk to the spring, including the last uphill section which is either bush-whacking or following a cattle/game trail is not terribly strenuous. This is good country for rattlesnakes, so watch your step and keep your ears tuned. "B" on the map above indicates the location where *Ipomea gilana* was first found, this is a new endemic plant species - endemic to the Black Range.

A short distance west of FR-157 the remains of the Barnes homestead can be found (D). See *Spell of the Black Range* on the Black Range Website.

Just west and north (on the hillside of Bald Hill - marked C on the map at the right and shown on the following two pages) is the Ingersoll Mine referenced in *Spell of the Black Range*. The Ingersoll had an adit run of about 1500 feet.





The ore was mostly silver, polybasite, and chalcopyrite in a vein 3" to 8" in width. The rock strata is rhyolite from the Pliocene (5.3 to 2.6 Ma). At one point Barnes was the owner of the Ingersoll and then sold half ownership to others. What all of this meant to a family living in the Black Range in the late 1800's is poignantly described in the book.

From a historical perspective, the Bald Hill site is one of the most moving in the Black Range. It combines natural history, a heart-felt story, and an old mining site - in a half-day of exploring.

In the image above, the tank at Bald Hills is just below the large juniper which is at the left center of the image. The spring is in the gully to the right of the tank as you look uphill. At the time of my visits it was a seep with a small pool. The condition of the tank is very good, on our visit to the area on September 10, 2017 there were many tadpoles in the tank.

SAN FRANCISCO, APRIL 30 1881

NUMBER 131

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SHARES $1 200,000 PER EACH

CONSOLIDATED MINING COMPANY.

INCORPORATED MARCH 14th 1881

TOMBSTONE DIST. PIMA CO. ARIZONA.

Transferable on the books of the Company by endorsement hereon & surrender of this Cert.

Collins SECRETARY.

F. C. Jewell VICE PRESIDENT.

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54. Dumm Canyon

Contributed by Devon Fletcher

About 6.75 miles west of Hillsboro there is a small brown sign along NM 152 that laconically states "Forest Trail." This is the turn-off for the North Percha Road, which is also known as Forest Road 157. It's around 8 miles to where we parked. Be forewarned, there is a stream crossing of North Percha Creek, which can be deep occasionally, at mile 7. The last mile beyond the creek is unmaintained and is best negotiated with a high clearance, four-wheel drive vehicle.

The hike we did was about 4 miles roundtrip with about 500 feet of elevation change.

The walk could be extended another half mile or so by walking further downstream to the forest service boundary.

April 12th, 2020

Another beautiful spring Sunday. Another hike out in the Gila. I had this one in the back of my mind for a few years, thinking it would be milder alternative to do with my wife and my dogs (as opposed to what I call my "adventure" hikes, which I usually do alone).

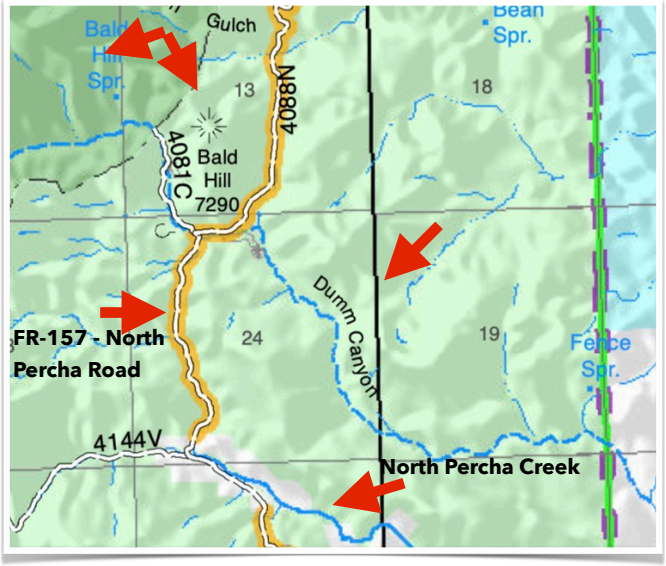
Well, not so much, this stretch of Dumm Canyon from FR 157 downstream to the forest boundary is a fairly rough little hike. At first we walked east on FR157 for just a short ways. Where FR 157 bends away from the creek bed, we crossed the stream and then followed an unnamed, unnumbered road that passed by some very old cabin ruins as well as some cleared areas that are used for camping.

Then we went down into the stream bed following a very vague wildlife trail. Water soon appeared and it made a sweet little scene, but don't expect it to be a live stream (except maybe in the narrowest section) except in the early spring, or years with exceptionally good monsoon rains.

Very quickly, we had to choose whether to go high up on the bank on the south side (to bypass the box), where a path seemed to lead or just get down onto the stream bed itself. We opted for the water of course. For the next mile or so, we were confined by limestone walls anywhere from 20-60 feet high. This is not what I had expected. The very straight sides of these cliffs were not visible when scouting this hike on Google Earth, which led me to believe we would have leisurely walk on dry banks with piñons, junipers and ponderosas.

Instead, we were scrambling around boulders, pushing through thick vegetation, and making many wet crossings. It was all good though. The amenities of the canyon with its babbling stream, tiny waterfalls, flowering willows and sinuous channels carved through the bedrock, more than made up for our struggles.

After picnicking by the transparent, if only slightly milky (from the carbonate rocks so common in the area) brook, we continued downstream and found a lovely little cascade, followed shortly by the flow entering a channel of gray limestone bedrock very similar to places I've visited over on nearby North Percha (Dumm actually flows into N. Percha) and Mineral Creeks.



Clouds moved over us for a time, which kept us from getting too warm, but the wind that was blowing gale all over the region, was non-existent down in our little box canyon.

Giant alligator junipers began showing up as the valley widened. So did the first spot that could have been used for camping, where we saw a long, long abandoned fire ring. When it looked like the canyon would narrow again before reaching our tentative goal of the forest service boundary, we called it a half a day, rested a bit and began our return. We decided against trying to find a cattle path up above, as none of the ones we had seen coming down to the canyon seemed particularly well trod, and who knows what

direction they would ultimately lead. Bushwhacking with a pleasant stream where our dogs could drink and wade to stay cool, and we could listen to the little falls, beats bushwhacking on the slopes of the dry hills any day.

Close to creek we found the ruins (really just one corner of timbers and a pile of stones that was the fireplace) of another cabin with abundant metal trash all around. This one would be real easy to walk by without even seeing unless you happened to kick one of the rusty cans.

NOTES:

1. One of the nice things I noticed while hiking this canyon bottom is that it's too narrow and rough for cattle to pass through it.

2. The mile of FR 157 after crossing North Percha to get to our starting point, had seen some improvements after the Silver Fire, but now without maintenance it's just as bad as ever (although mercifully wider).

3. The canyon is named for a 19th century prospector and ranch hand Albert Dumm who had a cabin on the creek (perhaps one of the ones we saw).

4. From the parking area a road follows the upper portion of Dumm Canyon to the west for a half mile or so. This could be a pleasant cool weather walk as well, but don't expect any water in stream except very early in the spring.

(Ed.: See Bald Hill Spring Walk - spring indicated by arrow on map on previous page.)

55. Cave Creek to East Curtis Canyon or Las Animas Creek (FT 307 & 117)

Contributed by Devon Fletcher

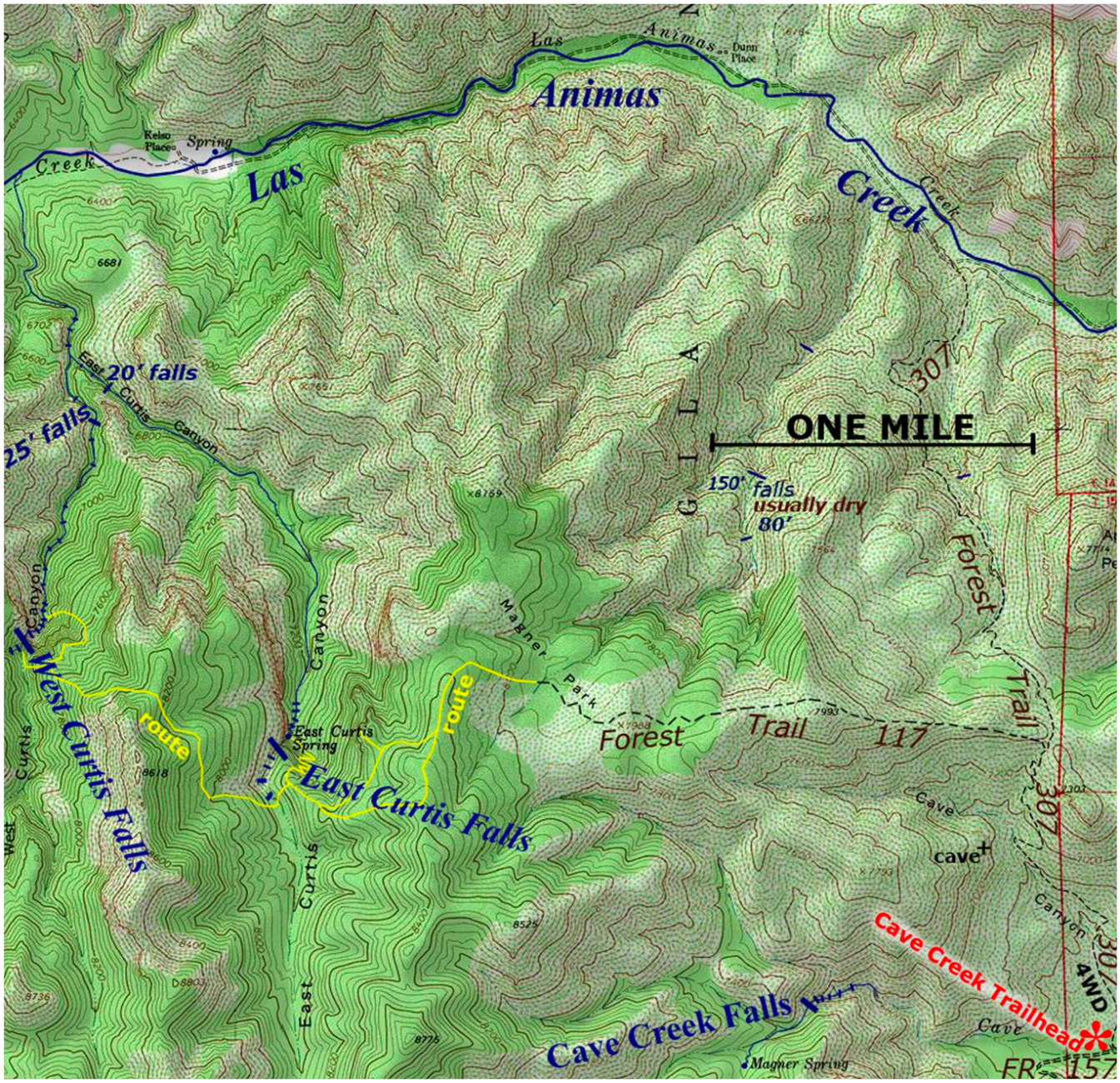
I've hiked the southern portion of FT 307 three times. First, a few words about the trailhead and getting to the trailhead. You may see on some maps the trail starting down on Cave Creek from the furthest extension FR 157. This is more or less correct. Some maps show the road continuing north from there and the trail starting at some point before reaching the ridge and the intersection with FT 117. This is no longer correct. The road, may have existed in some form to that point at one time, traces of double track can be seen in places, but it is not at all practical to even attempt to cross Cave Creek in any sort of vehicle now. All that being said, it is highly unlikely you will want to drive all the way to the trailhead anyway. Unless you have high clearance, four wheel drive and experience with roads in extremely poor condition you should stop somewhere before the ½ mile descent to Cave Creek. To be clear, the preceding two and a quarter miles from North Percha are no prize either. It's all a matter of how much appetite you have for this kind of driving. The trail was signed the last time I was there in 2016, but just in case, know that it is only about two tenths of mile from where the road turns sharply to the east as it reaches Cave Creek. There is a large cairn that marks where Trail 307 turns to the north.

Initially, the trail crosses the bouldery, dry creek and then begins to wind its way up the south side of the ridge that encircles the scenic Apache Peak. The trail makes its way up, sticking close to the Cave Canyon side drainage. After it crosses the dry creek, the climbing begins in earnest and the "cave", a large alcove on the west side looms into view. This is open semi-desert country and it can be very hot, beginning in March and sometimes lasting until October. Switchbacks etched into the crumbling bedrock bring you up to a saddle where you will see a sign, which I more firmly affixed to a juniper the last time I was there.

Trail 117 takes off to the west from here. It's easy to follow for a mile and a half as it traces the spine of the ridge until reaching the burn in Magner Park where it disappears completely. There are a few cairns about, but they are easy to miss. There are no blazes distinguishable on the burnt trunks of trees. Furthermore, setting waypoints by the old trail line makes little sense because on our trip to East Curtis, Spring in 2016, we were unnecessarily diverted around a knob on a hill to the south, and brought through some heavy oak and mountain mahogany brush. Had we continued to follow where the trail used to be, it would have put us on an extremely treacherous line on a near vertical hillside and through a gap in an enormous fin of rock that protrudes from the southeast into East Curtis Canyon. I don't believe any further work has been done on FT 117 since that trip, but if you want a view into the spectacular East Curtis Canyon, it's possible to bushwhack your way from the newish pasture fence, west, through the locust and snags for about a half mile to get a look.

Instead of turning west at the junction of 307/117 you can head north on FT 307. Hiking this section of the trail is initially much more pleasant than the rough climb that preceded it. The views of Apache Peak and red cliffs on the north side of the valley are wonderful. Walking downhill in the shade of oaks, pine and juniper will keep your spirits up, but, if you intend to go all the way down to Las Animas Creek, don't lose sight of the fact that it is 1400 foot descent to the bottom, which means a 1400 foot climb back out. Unfortunately, the first time we hiked here, there was a series of treacherous washouts in this section as well as a few on the south side of the ridge.

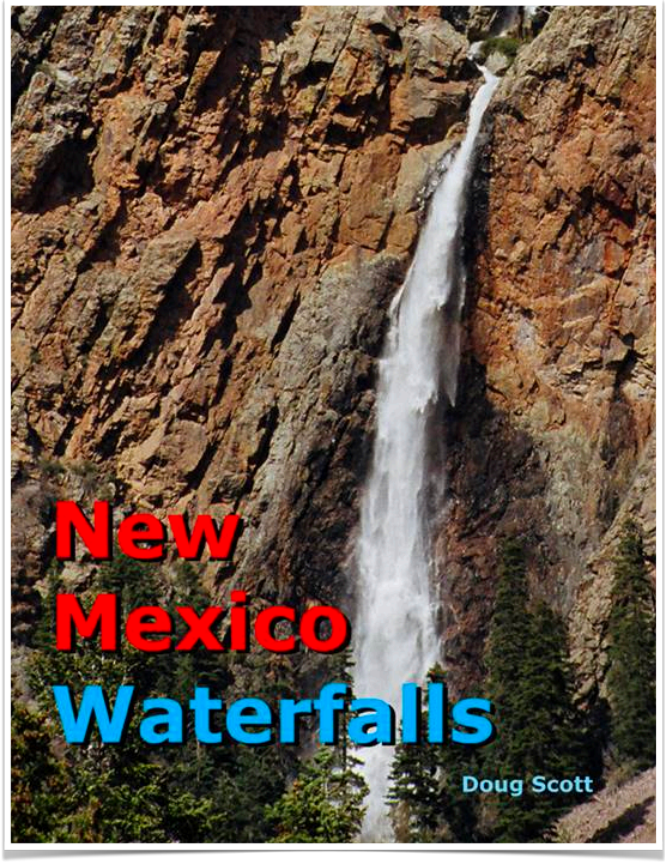
The road "out of" Cave Creek is recorded in two videos in The Roads of the Black Range video portfolio: Cave Creek South and Cave Creek Road - 360.



This map is courteously provided by Doug Scott. It was lifted from his excellent website on New Mexico Waterfalls, specifically the West Curtis Falls page. See also his entry for East Curtis Falls. As he notes in his write-up, the yellow lines on the map are routes - not trails - this is rugged cross-country walking.

They had only gotten worse when I visited in 2016. Since then, and perhaps due to my prompting, work has been done although I have yet to go back out to see the improvements. At the bottom, cottonwoods, willows and alders line the banks of a wide section of the creek (see top left on the following page). In the early spring it will be flowing here with a few inches of clear water. The rest of the year it may not be so dependable, although as the valley narrows upstream, the likelihood of flowing water increases.

I have never hiked the northern portion of FT 307. Although I wanted to for years. I even talked to a neighbor about doing a through hike (with the southern portion) as shuttle or key exchange hike, but because of the rough roads and distances, the driving times between the entry points, one of which isn't even the actual trailhead, make the whole enterprise an impractical affair requiring at least two days to accomplish. Neither the southern entry point near Dumm Place (on Las Animas) which I've walked by four times, nor the northern one at Davis Well (on North Seco), where I did a bit of searching only recently, have standing (or perhaps any) signs. Portions of it are readily visible on Google Earth however, and I suspect it is part of an old wagon road route that ran from Hermosa to Kingston. It appears to be a tough five and a half miles, going up and down dry, sparsely wooded ridges and in and out of three canyons that most likely only carry seasonal water. The truly rough drive to the parking area above North Seco Creek, still over a mile shy of



Unfortunately, as far as I know this is only Available on Amazon. See Doug Scott's books at New Mexico Waterfalls.

the trailhead, and the treacherous drive to Cave Creek (discussed earlier) only further emphasize that this can never be considered a day hike and may only be accomplished as a backpack (in cool weather) for the young, fit and hardy, or with the help of pack animals.

56. Noonday Canyon

Contributed by Devon Fletcher

There's access to this hike off of NM 152 a little less than 1.5 miles west of the now closed Lower Gallinas Campground. A rough road on the north side will take you down to the parking for the Rabb Park Trail (FT 747). If you don't have high clearance (and maybe 4 wheel drive) you might want to park across the road at either the FT 795 trailhead or a pull-out a short ways to the west. I've hiked upstream from this point along Noonday Canyon three times before. Once we hiked on the old road to the older cabin after deeming it too hot to conquer the Rabb Park Trail. A second time, on a cloudy and cool day, we did make the climb over into Rabb Park. In fall 2017, we hiked in the stream bed past the cabin for a couple of miles or so.

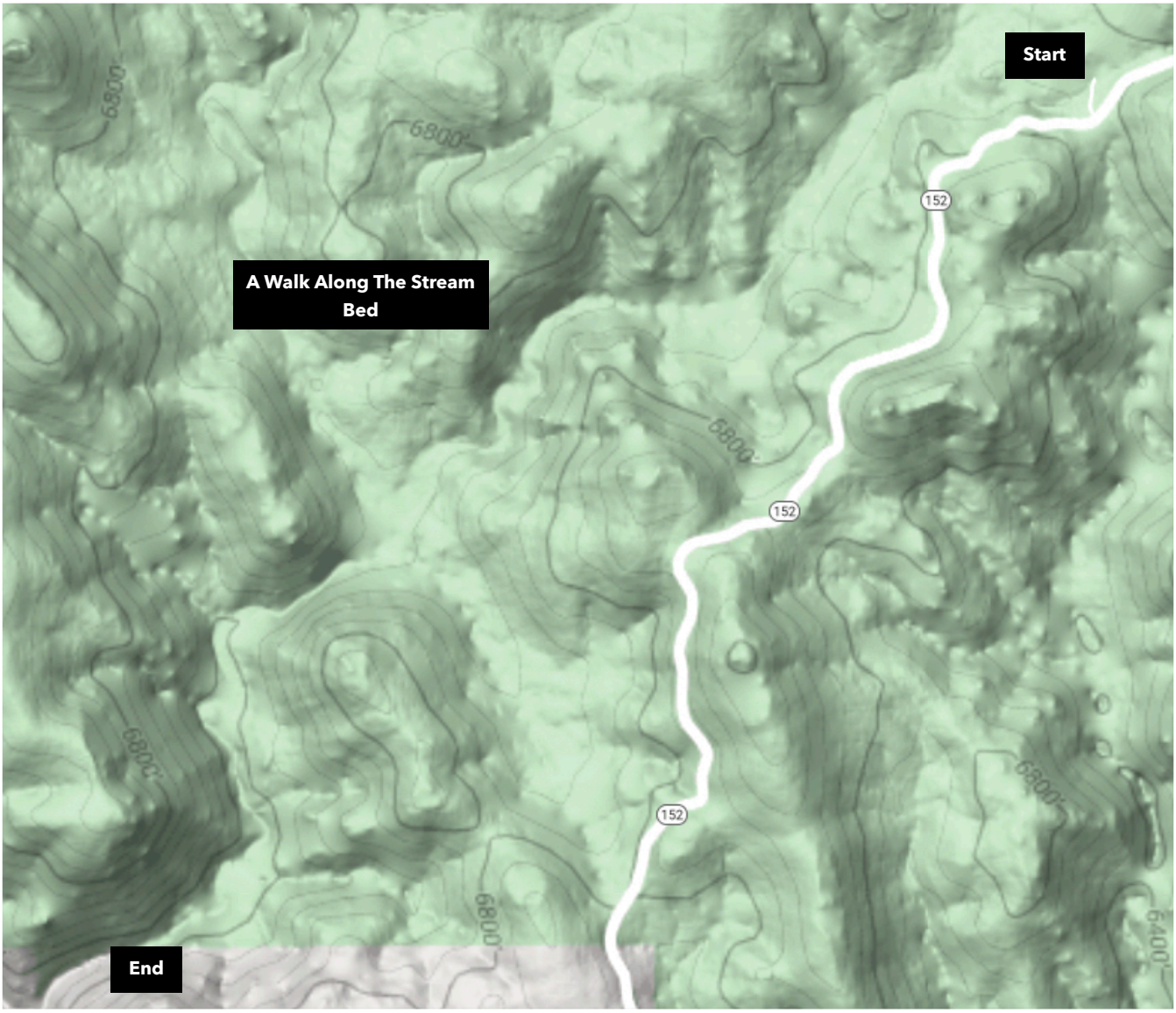
October 2018 found me out there again, this time with a plan to hike downstream into Noonday's box section. It had been raining all week, but Saturday was supposed to mercifully precipitation free. I had my doubts though. It was cloudy, windy and much cooler than I expected as I started out.

The first part of this hike was walking west down the old road which is sometimes directly in a tributary stream. Just before crossing Noonday Creek I turned down another road to my left and headed southwest.

The walking now was in a fairly wide little valley that's been beaten down a bit with grazing, wet years and drought, for a long time. A few colorful oaks were mixed in with the pines and junipers along the banks.

The stream was wet, but silent with an imperceptible flow in the shallow pools. It narrowed to wet crossings in a few rocky spots. At times I would just walk right along the stream, but at others I followed the cow path along shadier banks.

The road along the stream had disappeared shortly after the turn, but further down, another road came in from the south where there was a meadow that has been used for camping (although by the looks of the fire rings, not too recently). At the confluence with Rabb Canyon, the valley widens considerably. Rabb Canyon had tall grass and a very small flow as well. I was headed downstream into Noonday's little box which starts immediately after the two streams join.



The scrambling is not too hard and it's a fun 1/4 mile or so through the narrowest parts where the water runs over bedrock and into deep willow lined pools. There was one large alcove that I investigated but found no artifacts and where the canyon opened up again there was a little cave that could hold two or three people with juniper timbers across the entrance and a stone box in front of it.

I don't how old it is, but from the state of desiccation on the timbers, I would have to say it wasn't done anytime recently. I continued on through a bend below a pine covered hillside where a large side canyon comes in from the east.

Downstream the fall display of ash, cottonwood, walnut and willow was right at its peak. I found a shady resting place and ate my lunch, but my heart was already content from being in this beautiful canyon.

Just a short ways beyond this point, and three miles from the start is the un-marked, un-fenced Forest Boundary. There is an alternate route to the Noonday Box (which is a shorter hike) that is discussed in the Rabb Canyon Box hike.

I've since repeated this hike in the Spring of 2020. The stream had a larger flow with active springs feeding the delightful little cascades and waterfalls.

57. Rabb Canyon Box

Contributed by Devon Fletcher

The hike begins about 3.4 miles west of the (now closed) Lower Gallinas Campground. There are large pullouts on both sides of the road for parking. The old, narrow and steep road which starts at the pullout on the north side runs alongside NM 152 briefly, then heads northeast before turning back to the northwest, descending rapidly most of the way. It is pleasant walking in the piñons, junipers and ponderosa pines. There was even a trickle of springtime water here and there running over the bedrock. In about a mile we were in the canyon bottom right at the Rabb and Noonday confluence.

Looking up Rabb Creek, there's more to this mostly treeless section that lasts for over a mile than one might think given the elevation (6,400 feet) and the location in the very dry Black Range. I noticed that surface flow was limited to a shallow channel a few feet wide, but the ground was soggy over a wider area and was green with moss and other clipped greenery. There was an occasional bit of bunch grass that had grown up high, and if the summer rains go well the "stream" itself is invisible amidst four foot high grasses come the Fall, as I had seen it in October. I speculated that the lack of trees along the stream might have as much to do with the saturated ground as with persistent heavy grazing.

Further on we found a small wet meadow area, degraded for sure, but still green and surviving. Soon after that we came upon many seeping springs (Valentine Spring) coming out of the low cliffs on the west side of the stream and a trickling waterfall from a side canyon (most likely spring fed as well) that filled a deep pool. We had already seen several deep pools (2 - 4 feet deep) fed by subsurface flow in the slow moving creek, and as we moved into the box canyon carved into the bedrock, the pools got deeper still.

There were little falls that we had to scramble around as we listened to their music in the previously nearly silent stream. Eventually we came to boulder strewn area that was an obstacle to continuing with our short legged dogs, plus there was little room to maneuver on the stream sides that didn't involve hopping from rock to rock. Willows now grew and the grasses were thick in this stretch that is difficult for cattle to enter and the still pools looked to be over my head. It was warm, and had it been a little hotter we might have been tempted to get right in one of them.

The alternate way into the Rabb Creek Box, is to start out on the well known Rabb Park Trail (FT 747) either from the rough parking and camping area right off NM 152 (see Noonday Box for directions) or by making the really rough drive to the dispersed camping area .75 miles beyond where the trail actually begins.

I've been on this one a couple times before, so I knew what to expect, another Gila National Forest uphill both ways special. FT 747 starts with a rough steep climb on loose gravel and rock, followed by a pretty leisurely stroll on the ridge top and then a long descent through a side canyon down into Rabb Park, which meant a long, slow ascent, a pleasant stroll, and a slippery descent on the return trip.

I was in Rabb Canyon in 47 minutes. Instead of heading upstream, following the trail to the park, I turned left and began boulder hopping and scrambling around the deep pools of tea colored water. I stepped lightly through the tall grass that made the runs in between nearly invisible even though the trickling sound was always there.

Early on I inadvertently disturbed a red tail hawk at close quarters as it drank from the stream. Flying up to a juniper on the hillside, it let me know its displeasure with a few grouchy screeches. Down and down I went. Pale frogs scooted about on the bottom of the still pools that had only the thinnest layers of silt and organic material covering the bedrock. Piles of sticks and branches on the low benches streamside made it clear that when this narrowest section of the stream floods the water has no place to go but up.

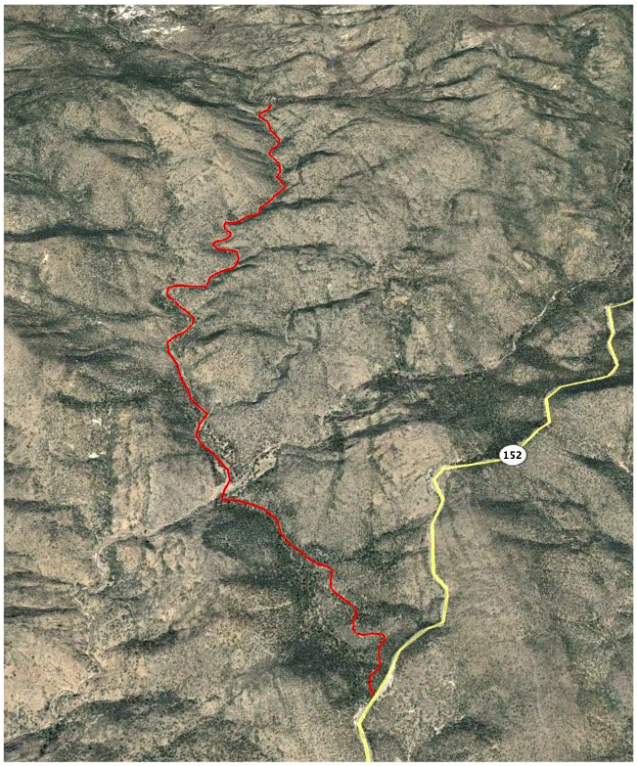
Canyon wren laughter, a constant on these warm spring days, and the splashing of small falls were the musical accompaniment for my two hours in the box. I came to a fence that was strung high over some twist and turns in the smooth bedrock, high enough for nimble footed cows to go under and leave their allotment. Luckily by the look of things, not many try it. Rabb Canyon Box is a strange, unique place in the Gila. Despite being nearly in the desert, it seems to have a perennial flow. Despite that flow, there are few riparian trees here, just an occasional narrowleaf cottonwood or group of willows.

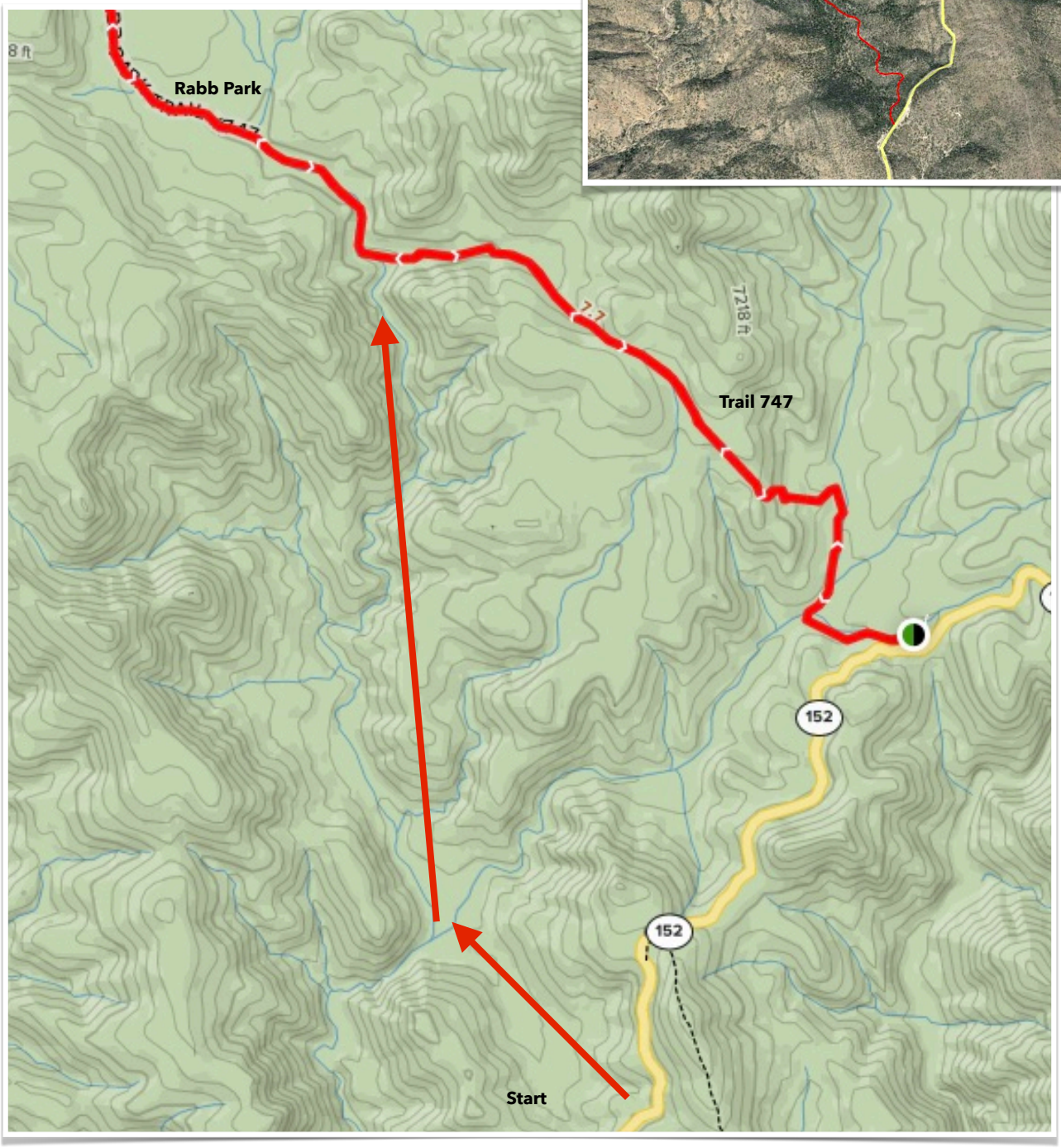
Before I left, I soaked my feet, wet my shirt, pants and hat. I had planned to get in but the water was just too cold. I could tell by the way it made my pale bare feet ache.

The map on the next page shows both Trail 747 and the alternative route described here. To view more photos from

the area please visit the original post on Southern New Mexico Explorer and a post from September 2012.

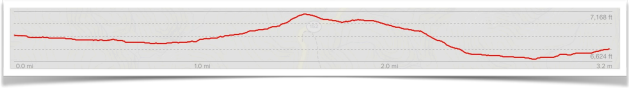
A generalized contour map of this route is shown below and the exact route is depicted at the right.





58. Rabb Park

This walk, see map below, starts at NM-152 (32.88692, -107.85841). The trail is 3.2 miles long (6.3+ roundtrip), as described, and has a gross elevation gain of 483 feet. The highest point (7,137') on the walk is at a saddle just over one mile from the start. The elevation profile of the walk is shown below.



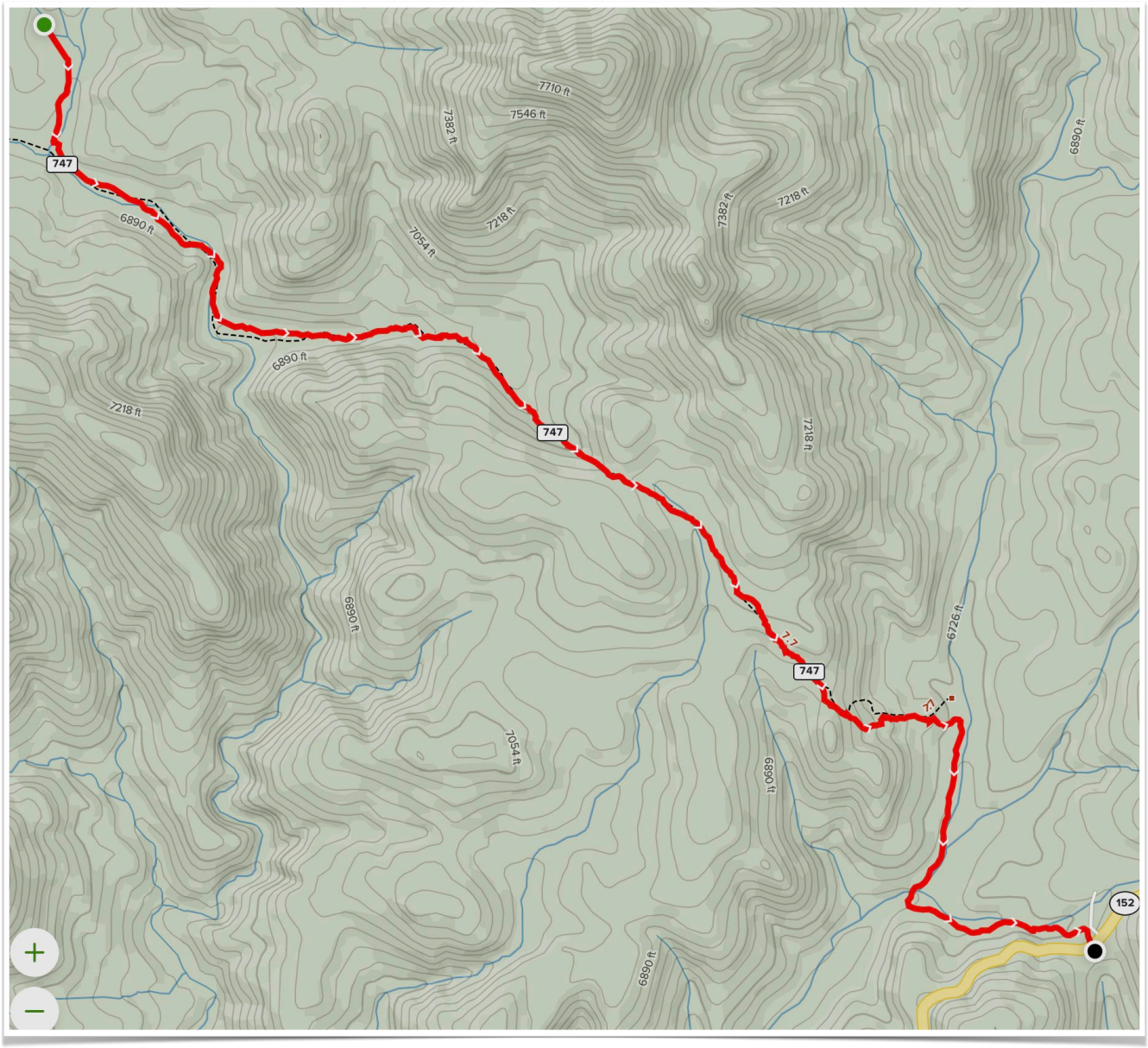
There is some confusion about the first part of the trail. The trailhead is actually .8 miles from the parking area. On the north side of NM-152 there is a dirt track which heads steeply downhill. As you go downhill, follow the road to the left and continue to follow the track until you reach the trailhead, which is signed. With a high clearance vehicle it would have been easy to drive to the trailhead on the day we did this walk (November 17, 2020).

The trail winds its way through forest of juniper (including some large alligator juniper), Pinyon Pine, Ponderosa Pine, and oak. Agave parryi, like that shown at the top of the following page, is fairly common along the trail.

After we crossed the first ridge we entered a flat area before we entered the park. Here we found a species of small tarantula (*Aphonopelma madera*?) sharing the trail with us (photo next page). Species determinations in this genus are difficult and (perhaps because of that) the taxonomy is fluid. Recent efforts may have settled things, we shall see...

Just before the trail enters the park it passes a narrow section of stream where the bedrock forces water to the surface creating a ciénega-like section of stream, see photo later. The trail is on the slope to the west of the stream at this point. We chose to walk along the stream, a nice experience.

After passing this section, the park opens to the north. A large relatively flat area where the Ponderosa Pines grow tall and the Alligator Juniper are happy all day long.



Rabb Park Trailhead, .8 miles from NM-152.

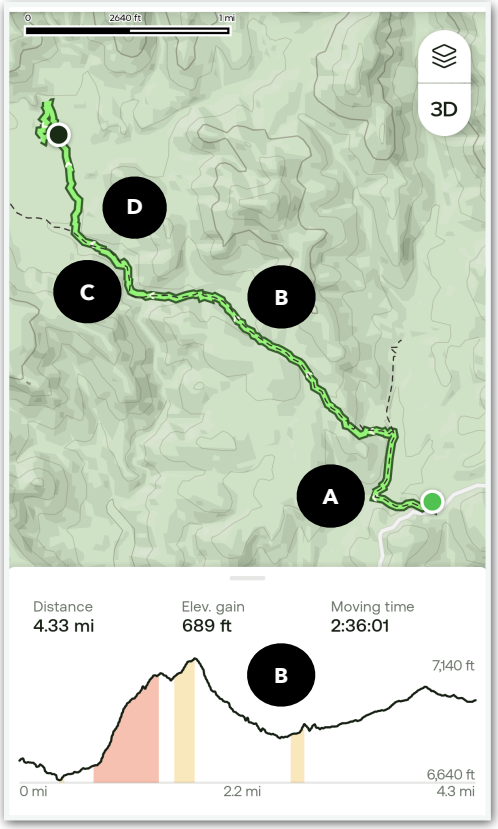
The park is criss crossed with streams (dry in this year of no monsoon) and is full of bird life. Mostly, we saw Mountain Chickadee, Common Bushtit, and Dark-eyed Juncos (Grey-headed group). There was also a female Williamson's Sapsucker about (photo in two pages). In winter, this area is at the very northern tip of its range.

There is a moonstone deposit in the park. Moonstone occurs in pegmatite, formed when the pegmatite magma rapidly cooled. Sanidine is the mineral, Moonstone is a variety ($KAlSi_3O_8$). The deposit was discovered in 1925'.

The open area of Rabb Park is quite beautiful with tall Ponderosas and small streams. We were there in November, April (if there was snow in the mountains) would be nice as would the monsoons, if they occurred.

Please see the following update.

Female Williamson's Sapsucker, *Sphyrapicus thyroides*, Rabb Park, Black Range. November 17, 2020



Update of 15 September 2025

As shown on the "one way" map at the right, this walk was a bit longer, at a bit over 8 miles round-trip) than that described earlier.

The features of the trail remain unchanged. In August 2025 we had walked up the trail to the fence gate at the high point of the trail, about a 3 mile round-trip which manages to get in most of the steep part of the trail. At that time there was not a drop of water to be seen, none in the sky, none in the streams. Little in the way of flowers (but some) and few birds on that day (although several Wild Turkey feathers were found; apparently one of the large birds had met an untimely demise).

When we arrived at the parking area in September we found the ground wet and water on the road which is the first part of the walk. Indeed, this was a theme of the walk. Every water course we encountered had water flowing in it. When we got into Rabb Park we had to do some searching to find the best stream crossing, at times.

The first stream crossing, which is along the road to the trailhead, was completely dry in August, on September 15 it was flowing nicely ("A" on the map).

The trail was nice and soft (wet but not muddy, so that rock sank into the ground rather than slide as it does when dry).

From the trailhead to near the bottom of section ("B") there are no water crossings. From that point onward every low spot had flowing water and flowers were nicely displaying, not at their peak, but in what had been a very dry year, very nice.

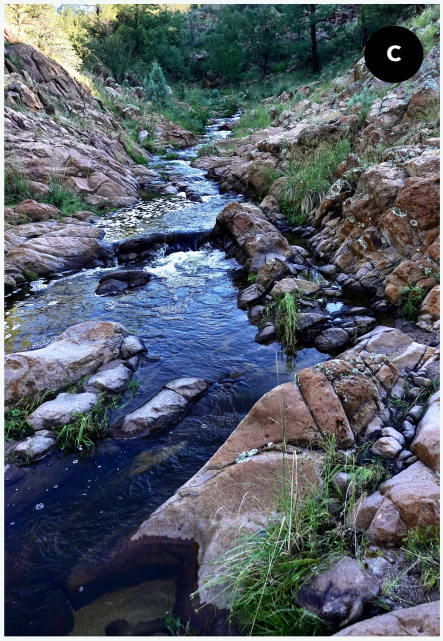
At the southern end of the park there is the first stream crossing of the main drainage for the park ("C"). In the times we have walked into this area this has always been a reliable place for water. In the past this area was full of sedge, on September 15 it had been scoured out. This stream winds its way south and west, down Noonday Canyon to the Mimbres river near the south end of San Lorenzo.

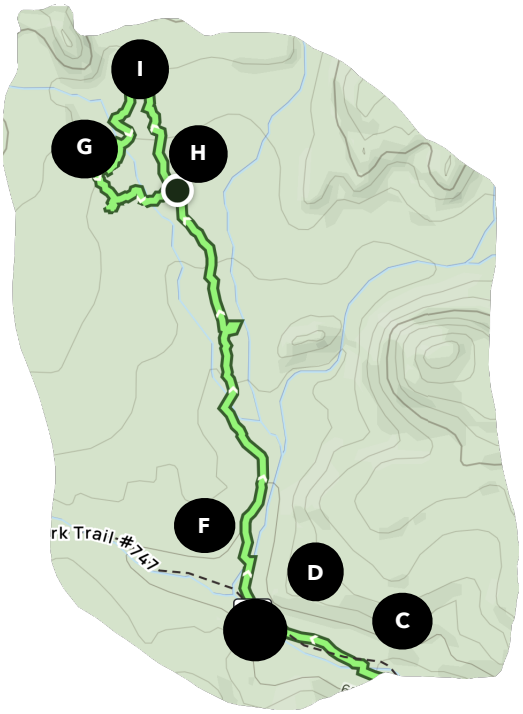
After crossing the stream the (current) trail follows the top of an outcrop on the west side of the stream. At times the route follows the stream northward into the park from the crossing and, in fact, that is where topo maps and many trail apps indicate the trail is located, but this section of the USDA Forest Service trail is gone for the most part.

Coming down off the outcrop and into the park proper we saw how significant the rain event had been. Grass and sedge along the creek was flattened well above the stream bed ("D"). And in the southern part of the park, where the stream and its various "tributaries" meander about, finding a crossing spot through the vegetative mass broke the stride.

Farther into the park every oak, juniper, and pine had a mass of leaves below it. The rainstorm must have come with a significant, perhaps large, amount of hail.

Penstemon virgatus ("E"), Wand-bloom Penstemon, was found in the trail where it descends from the outcrop and into the park proper. The grains of sand visible on the leaf of the larger photograph were probably knocked into the air by the heavy rain. The air was still fairly humid, and the water droplets on top of the flower are dew from the night before.





A few more flowers of the same species were found at "F". Note that the flower color and plant form (one much more upright) are different between the specimens.

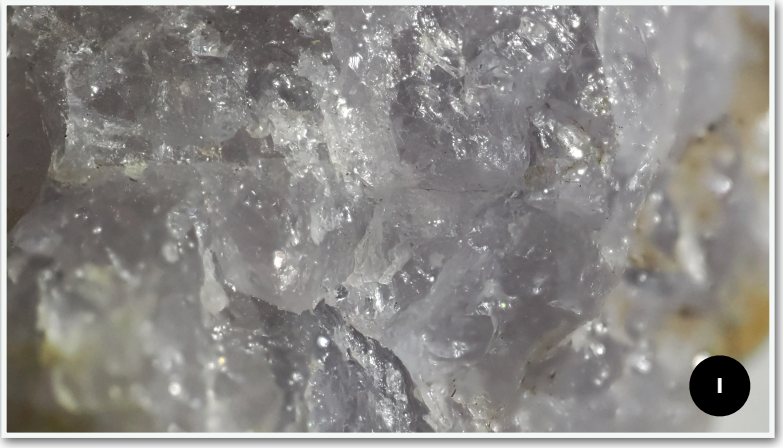
There were several other blooming species in the area, like *Potentilla thurberi* (Bray), Thurber's Cinquefoil. Thurber's Cinquefoil has, what I characterize as the "typical" *Potentilla* leaf, fan-like.

At the northern end of the park there was a nice clump of cactus ("G") growing in a bit of soil between the large sections of bedrock ("H") which are found at the surface here. Without the benefit of a flower, this cactus consistently keyed to a species found at much lower elevations - so another time.

In this general area white moonstone ("I") was mined in the past, and specimens of this mineral can be found in the outcrops and in the stream beds which radiate from the area.

On the way out, as we started up the incline at "B" on the previous page, we found several specimens of *Potentilla crinita* (A. Gray), Bearded or Lemmon's Cinquefoil (see "J"). This plant has small pinnately compound leaves, with the leaflets "almost" alternate in placement. There may be as many as 17 leaflets per leaf. This species might be confused with *Potentilla anserina*, which has fewer leaflets, notched along their entire length.

Moonstone is a sodium potassium aluminum silicate ($[Na,K]AlSi_3O_8$) in the feldspar group. A mineral may have several different forms. In the case of moonstone it may be composed of sodium or potassium (Na,K). Minerals are arrayed in a taxonomic tree something like the Linnaean system used in biology. Moonstone is a tectosilicate mineral in the feldspar group, alkali series, orthoclase variety.



Tectosilicate minerals include the quartz group (the silicas like chalcedony, agate, amethyst, "normal quartz", etc.), the feldspar group (which includes things like plagioclase and orthoclase), the feldspathoid group, the scapolite group, and the zeolite group. Many of these groups are further divided into subgroups. Moonstone is an orthoclase in the feldspar group.

Moonstone is known for its adularescence (or schiller/shiller). This is the bluish cast, best seen in the center photograph, which appears to emanate from inside the rock. This is an optical effect; it is a product of the crystal structure of the mineral, not of any particular type of inclusion.

In "Preservation of primary magmatic features in subvolcanic pegmatites, aplites, and granite from Rabb Park, New Mexico" James D. O'Brient (*American Mineralogist*, Volume 71, 1986, pp. 608-624) describes the moonstone and its development. He notes that:

"Rabb Park moonstone specimens are well known to mineral collectors because of their gem-quality blue schiller, but could never be profitably mined because of widespread fracturing that has broken most of the pegmatite crystals into pieces less than I cm in maximum size. These fractures are commonly conchoidal, even in easily cleaved sanidine. They terminate or branch at crystal boundaries. A few are filled with groundmass or heulandite, but most are hairline cracks that lack any visible filling. In places, fracture density within single crystals varies systematically such that regularly spaced zones of intense shattering are separated by concentric domains of less fractured material. These bands define growth zones at a spectacularly coarse scale of several centimeters each in some of the meter-scale quartz euhedra. Nested quartz hexagons are separated from one another by 5-10-mm thick zones of intense shattering and more rarely, thin selvages of pumiceous glass. Subsequent growth bands of less-shattered quartz are individually 8-10 cm thick. Up to six such discrete fracturing episodes are preserved in the largest crystals. They are thought to record episodic thermal shocks to the growing crystals, probably caused by periodic venting, adiabatic decompressions, and rapid temperature changes in the throat of this subvolcanic system."

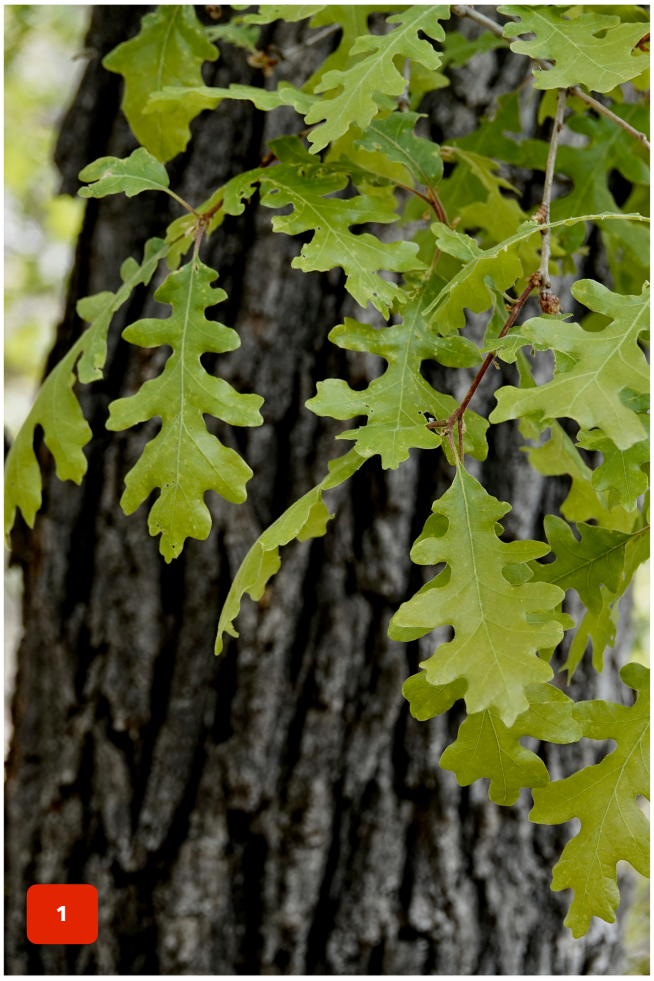
59. Lower Gallinas Canyon

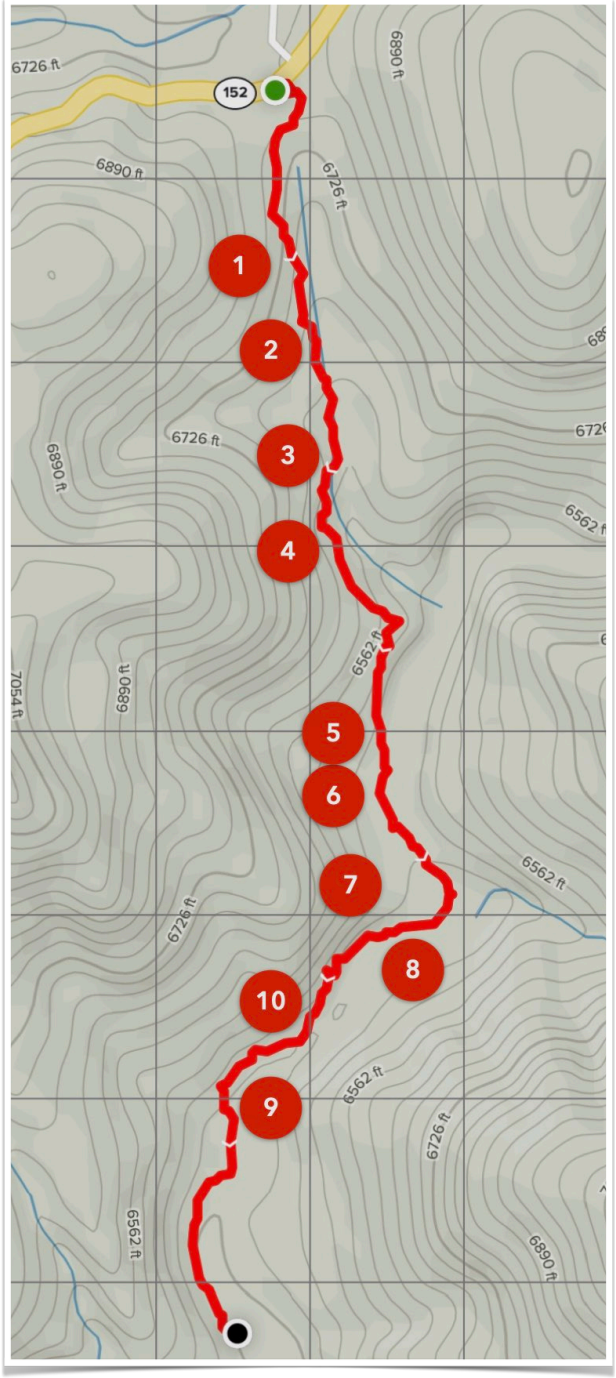
The trail starts at a turnout on the south side of Highway 152 about 1.5 miles west of the Lower Gallinas Campground. Across NM 152 (on the north side) is the road which leads down to the Noonday Canyon and Rabb Park walks described earlier. The walk described here has two distinct sections. From the trailhead the walk heads south and downhill, passing a spring before reaching the stream. The second half of the walk is along the stream.

1. Starting down the trail you will quickly encounter many individuals of Gambel Oak, *Quercus gambelii*. This species will present as a shrub or a rather significant tree, usually less than 30' tall, but sometimes twice that, depending on the soil conditions at the site. On this walk there are several "big" mature trees, like that pictured below. Gambel Oak is the only native oak in the west which has deeply-lobed leaves.

2. Well maintained Chipmunk Spring is about half-way down the first section of trail. The photos on the next page show the small canyon below the spring and the spring. Water from the spring does not make it all the way to the stream below.

The spring has a protected water outlet and piping to the cattle trough. It has enough flow that there is a bit of overflow, making a short green oasis flowing down the hill.





3. *Cylindropuntia spinosior*, Cane Cholla, was beginning its yearly growth on May 11, 2020 - the day we plotted this trail. How it develops its branched form is clearly visible at this time of year.

4. The other common oak on the walk down the hill is *Quercus grisea*, Gray Oak.

5. In the canyon bottom there were several vines growing along the stream including Canyon Grape, *Vitis arizonica*, which is very common in this type of habitat in the Black Range.

2

2

2

4

3

5

6. Less common, but not rare, is *Parthenocissus vitacea*, Virginia Creeper, shown above.

7. And, lastly - for the vines - *Toxicodendron rydbergii*, Poison Ivy.

8. *Ptelea trifoliata*, Hoptree, grows along the trail by the stream. The white dots which are visible on the leaf, in the detail are called "pellucid dots". They contain aromatic oils. Although Hoptree (a.k.a. Stinking Ash and Wafer Ash) can grow to 16', most of the plants we saw were small shrubs. Its fruit is about the size of a thumbnail, flat (with the seed in the center), and "papery", at times they have been used as a substitute for hops.

9. The stream bottom is quite wide at times, making for easy walking if you lose the trail.

10. Alligator Juniper, *Juniperus deppenana*, can contort into beautiful forms as it ages. It can be especially tenacious, holding on to life when most of their bark has been ripped away by lightening, fire, or flood.

60. Bull Trap Canyon, Lower Silver Creek Falls

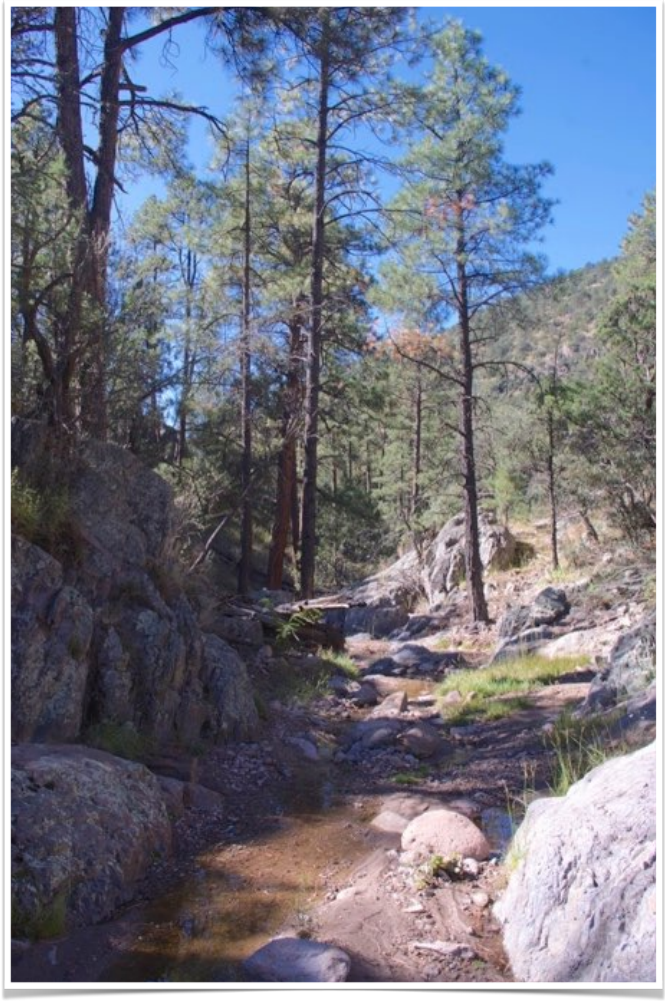
Contributed by Devon Fletcher

Lower Gallinas Campground (now closed) is about 6.5 miles west of Emory Pass on NM 152. There is parking at several pullouts on both sides of the road.

To get to the falls it is a tough 3 mile (one way) hike that includes climbing up and over a 500 foot ridge and scrambles in both lower Bull Trap and Silver Creek. If you go when there's good water, it will be worth it.

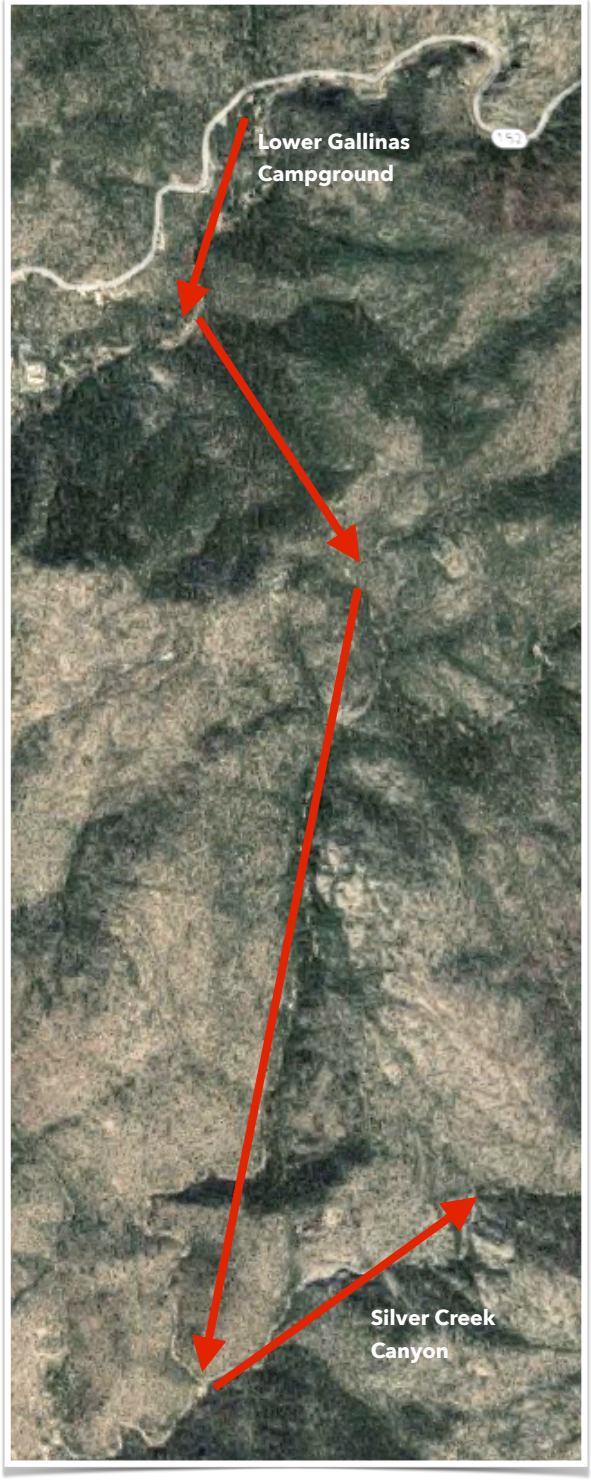
My hike started from the closed Lower Gallinas Campground on a perfect October day. I walked down the old road, now almost completely concealed by tall grass past camp sites unused now for years. About 4/10 of a mile from the now locked gate, I found the trail that goes up a side canyon on the south, I started up through pines and lichen covered boulders. All was going well. This was definitely a human created trail, and was in pretty good shape for not being maintained or used much (by humans) in many years. Unfortunately, at a crucial juncture, there was a washout with abundant debris that concealed the trail which headed off to the left.

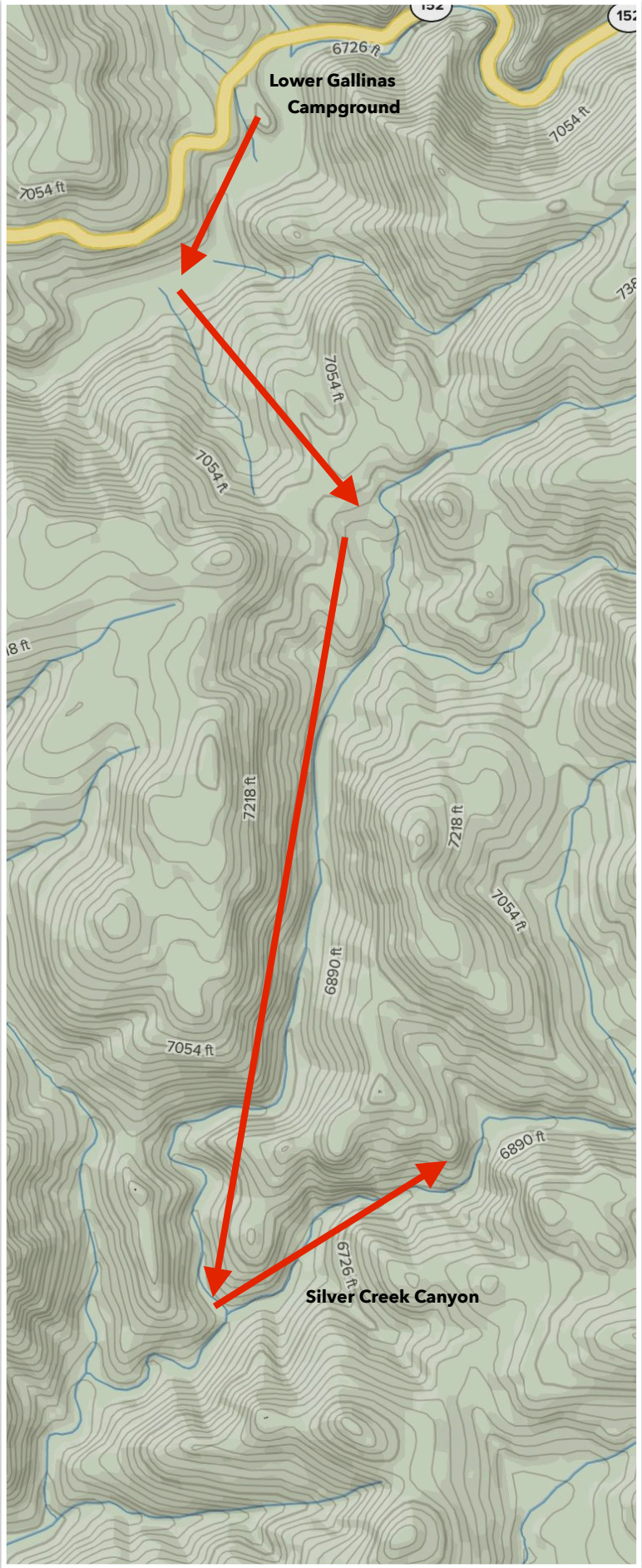
I stayed straight, and now made my way very, very steeply up a gully and then began weaving my way through trees up to the top of the ridge. It was so steep that I was resting about every tenth step to catch my breath. When I got to the crest of the ridge, I was not surprised in the least to see that I was much higher up than I had planned to be. In fact it was the exact mistake I was trying to avoid when I was researching on my maps and Google Earth.



Well, I got over the drift fence up there and started taking myself down towards Bull Trap. I found a pretty good trail on the other side for part of the way and then continued in the creek bed southwest until I was in the main canyon.

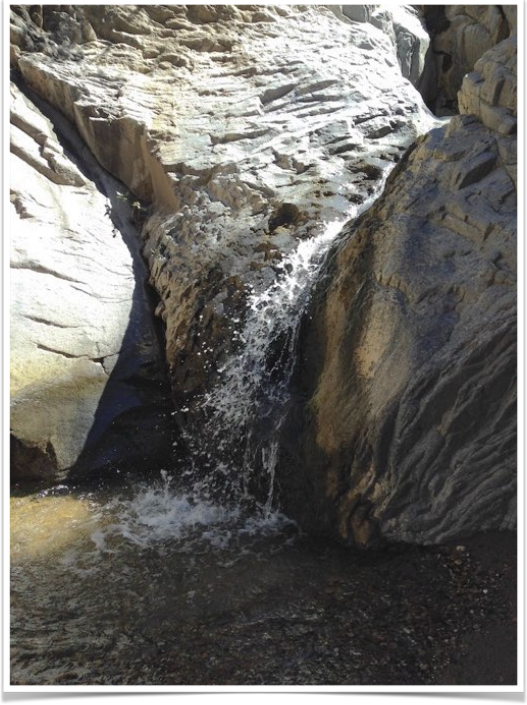
Bull Trap was big and wide with tall ponderosas and no sign of fire damage whatsoever. Water trickled from puddle to





puddle. I had to climb around a well-constructed rock dam, and sunk into a bit of quicksand when I got back down to the stream. Luckily I had already planted my lead foot on solid ground so I was able to pull out quickly before sinking in too far in the deceptive mix of gravel, sand and water.

Further down, past the cliffs on the south side, Bull Trap gets very narrow. There are small waterfalls, boulders and stretches of bedrock. One of the falls which pulses through a chute in the bedrock about as big around as baseball bat, I decided to name Peashooter Falls.



A few ash trees, five leaf ivy vines and walnut trees provided a bit of fall color. Willows and locusts crowded the stream. Just as things were opening up a bit I realized I was coming to the confluence with the Silver Creek.

Silver had a lot more water than Bull Trap, and I thought if Bull Trap had some small falls, maybe Silver Creek would have some bigger ones. I began marching upstream, with the anticipation providing the extra energy my legs needed.

Soon I was in a bare rock little box confronting the steepest of several water slides. I put down my gear and went scrambling up, encountering more slides punctuated by small falls. At the very back of the box a waterfall of at least 40 feet in three tiers was gushing from the gray rock. A wonderful, exciting discovery that certainly was one of the highlights of 20 plus years of exploring the Black Range.

These are just a couple more of those magical spots in the Black Range that, though not far from

NM 152 as the crow flies, are magnificently remote, unknown and unspoiled.

On the return I flushed out the same spotted owl from his perch that I had disturbed on my way in. I saw what I'm pretty sure was badger down by the rock dam as he headed back up hill after getting a drink. Earlier on in the hike I had seen tracks with claw impressions in the sand at this same spot, and assumed they belonged to a small bear. Now it made more sense that they belonged to this seldom seen forest carnivore.

I found the trail leading up to the saddle easily where there was an actual gate in the fence. I then followed the real trail all the way back down, placing a cairn in the spot where I had gone astray on the way up.

I ate my snacks at an old picnic table under one of the many giant alligator junipers found in the abandoned campground, and then I was on my way with my spirit changed for the better, as almost always, by spending a day in the Gila.

A general depiction of this route on a contour overlay is shown on the previous page and the exact route discussed here is shown on the satellite view below.

61. Sawyers Peak Trail

Locally, the section of the Black Range Crest Trail which runs south from Emory Pass to Sawyer's Peak is known as the Sawyers Peak Trail. The Trail is 3.9 miles long and has a net elevation gain of 1,638 feet. It is generally considered a moderate walk. Note, however, that since the Silver Fire the exposure to the sun along this route is much more intense than it was in the past.

As of January 2025, the section of trail from Emory Pass to the Grandview Trail Junction was in very good condition. Above the junction there was a significant amount of blowdown for about a quarter of a mile. Further along, the blowdown decreased, and for the last mile or so the trail was in good condition. There is no longer a "trail" from the Crest Trail to the summit of Sawyers Peak. Route finding is easy, however. Once you get to the saddle at the base of the peak turn west and go up.

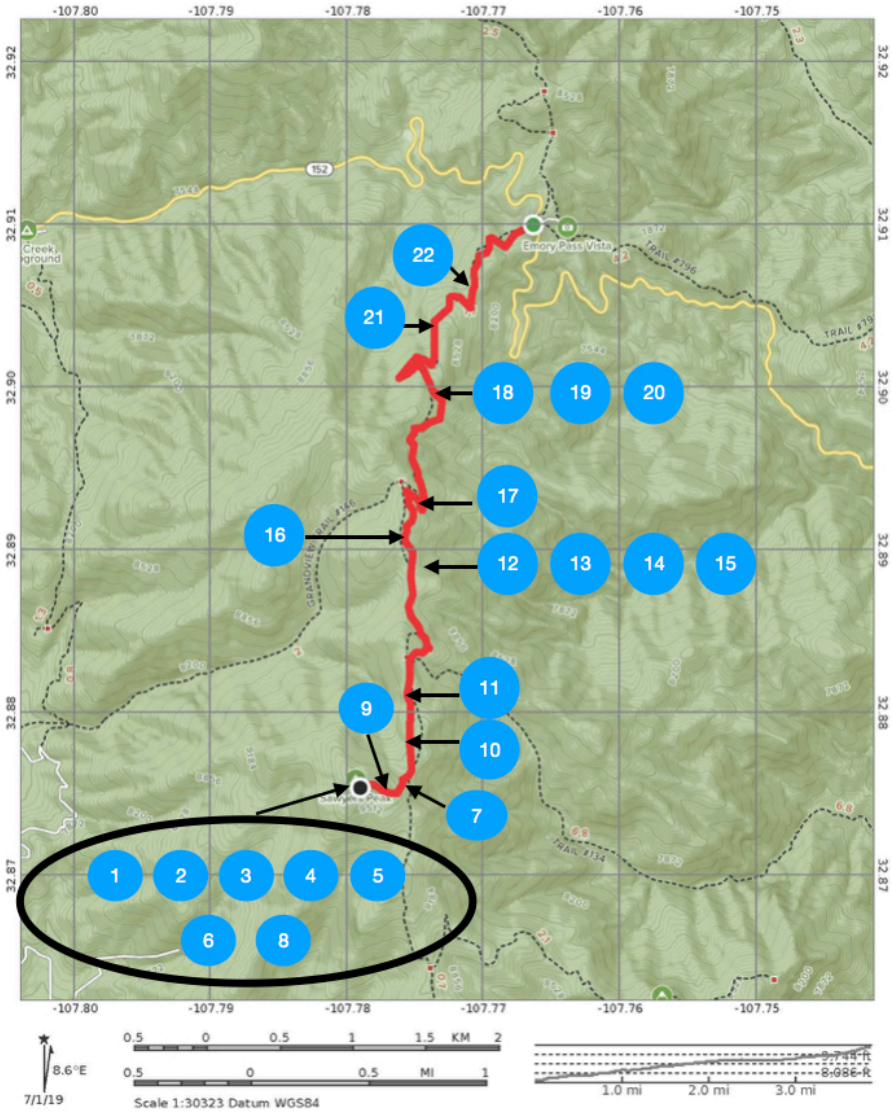
The natural history along this trail is typical of the Crest Trail generally. There are ladybugs found at the summit of Sawyers Peak in the summer.

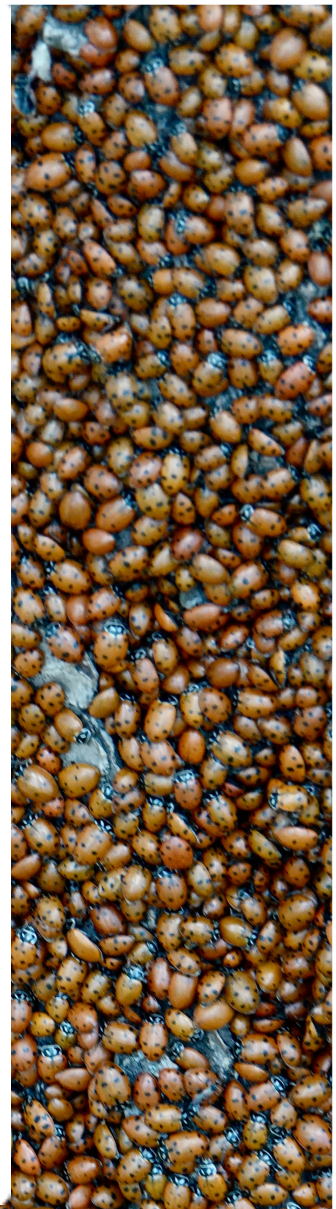
The caption numbers for the following photographs are keyed to the route map on the following page. We start at the peak and head north to Emory Pass in this description - it is easier that way since it is downhill. The first link (in red) in each caption links to our photo gallery of the species at the Black Range Website, www.blackrange.org.

1. Convergent Lady Bettle, *Hippodamia convergens*. The "red stain" at the base of the tree (at the right) is a mass of ladybugs. (See also next page and below.) In season, the trees at the summit of Sawyers Peak are covered like this and it is not advisable to try to eat a picnic lunch at the summit - because the lady bugs are everywhere. This species generally has twelve spots, six on each elytron (the hard wing case which forms the "back" of the beetle). The prothorax (area behind the head) has distinctive white lines which converge near the elytrons.

The Convergent Lady Beetles have been gathering at this site for at least 15 years (based on personal observations) and probably much longer. Such congregations are not unique to Sawyers Peak. In 1930, J. R. Douglass reported on such a mass on Mosca Peak (9,462 feet - SE of Albuquerque)

Sawyer Peak Trail





stating that "…have been observed for a number of years to hibernate on the summit of Mosca Peak, New Mexico". The University of Florida paper linked to in the Latin binomial above is an excellent natural history of the species.

2. Black Swallowtail, *Papilio polyxenes* (probably *P. p. asterius*), above. There were several butterfly and moth species at the summit of Sawyers Peak.

3. West Coast Lady, *Vanessa annabella*, above. This species is found primarily in California, but its historical range extended throughout the western U.S., the very southern part of western Canada, and Mexico as far south as the Federal District.

4. Funereal Duskywing, *Erynnis funeralis* (bottom left). This species is found throughout the southern half of the U.S. and southward into Mexico.

5. Forage Looper, *Caenurgina erechtea,* above. This moth is common in the U.S. and southern Canada. For you allergy people, it eats ragweed.

6. Blue Fungus Beetle, *Gibbifer californicus*. We have seen these beetles in a number of places in the Black Range, especially after the Silver Fire. They eat the fungus which grows on the dead trees.

7. Olive Warbler, *Peucedramus taeniatus*, just below Sawyers Peak on June 13, 2010. In North America, this species is found in the sky islands of southern New Mexico and Arizona and in the Sierras of Mexico. It is found as far south as Nicaragua.

8. *Villa* sp.? (probably *Villa lateralis*). *Villa lateralis* is widely distributed in the United States and is found as far south as Panama. It has at least one scientific synonym, *Anthrax lateralis*.

The U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Marker from Sawyers Peak, dated 1936.

Flowers vary with the season and the amount of precipitation. And, as we are learning, the opening of the canopy by the Silver Fire has created a patchy network of plant communities which seem to be associated with the amount of sunlight/shade they receive. Unfortunately, I do not know of a flora survey prior to the fire with which I could compare the current community.

9. *Lithospermum multiflorum*, Wayside Gromwell. Like the primrose shown below, the Wayside Gromwell is found at higher elevations in the Black Range, this one on the summit slope to Sawyers Peak. And, true to nature, I found that the only decent photograph I have shows a partially eaten flower.

10. *Primula rusbyi*, Rusby's Primrose. We found this primrose along the Black Range Crest Trail not far north of the saddle below Sawyers Peak. This species is also found along the Hillsboro Peak trail at similar elevations.

11. *Campanula rotundifolia*, Harebell. In this, the higher elevation portion of the trail, we also found several clumps of Harbell, also known as Bluebells of Scotland. This species generally prefers more water than is always present along these slopes.

On June 2, 2024, we took a walk up the Sawyer Peak Trail, from Emory Pass to the Grandview Saddle, for the express purpose of seeing if the Iris were in bloom. At the Grandview Saddle we often find a community of composites.

The round trip was about 5.25 miles with a net elevation gain of about 1300 feet. We found the trail in good condition, better on the west slope of the crest, less well maintained on the east slope where the trail was uneven and sections of blowdown were present.

12. *Potenilla anserina*, Silverweed. This species is best identified by its leaves (see right).

14. *Western Bluebird*, *Sialia mexicana*. On the way down the mountain we flushed two juvenile Western Bluebirds from a tangle of down trees. The juvenile of the Western Bluebird can be told from that of the Mountain Bluebird by the spots on the back of the Western. See the first link for larger images.

13. *Iris missouriensis*, Rocky Mountain Iris. The first time we walked up this trail we were struck by the fact that there were blooming Iris high on the mountain - followed by the ladybugs. Later in the year they go to seed and the insects feast.

True to form on June 2, the iris were in bloom at the saddle (see above and previous page). They are generally also found in the upper reaches of the Grandview trail if they have not been destroyed by cattle. We did not check on this occasion, however, and cannot report on their continued existence at that location.

Since the iris prefer a fair amount of water, we assume that the drainage in this area flows down from the crest on both sides of the saddle and then downslope along the old Grandview Trail. There is typically seepage along the upper reaches of the trail.

***Iris missouriensis* (Nuttall), Rocky Mountain Iris (also Western Blue Flag Iris) is found throughout the western United States. Ingestion of parts of this plant will induce vomiting and it is documented as used for that purpose by the Navajo.**

15. *Townsendia formosa*, Smooth Townsend Daisy. This species is found at middle elevations and has purple streaking under the rays of the flower.

16. *Echinocereus triglochidiatus*/*Echinocereus coccineus*. Cactus plants are hard (for me) to identify. This plant was found in the saddle above the junction with the Grandview Trail. In addition to everything else, cactus plants of the same species can be highly variable. To separate the two species referenced here you have to look at the chromosomes to be sure - *E. triglochidiatus* is diploid, *E. coccineus* is tetraploid.

The resources available to us grow by the day, and are increasingly open access. And, at least for now that is the spirit of many governmental resources, such as *The Feather Atlas* maintained by the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Forensics Laboratory.

17. *Wild Turkey*, *Meleagris gallopavo,* primary wing feather. Although we saw several of these feathers along the trail, this particular one was just below the junction with the Grandview Trail.

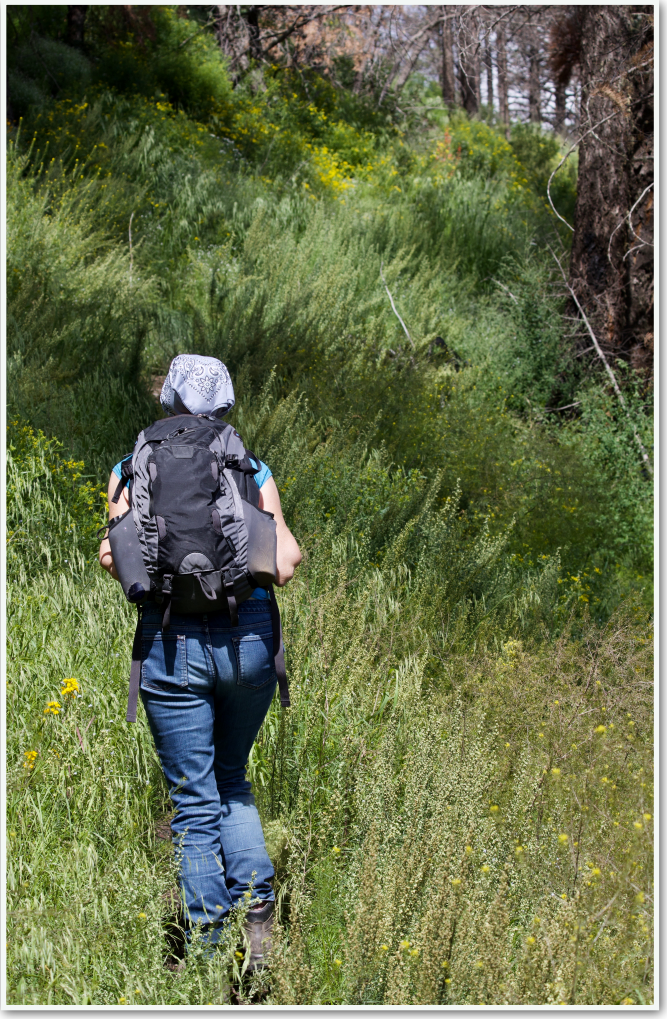
As we crossed the ridge to the west side of the range we found Jacob's Ladder, Yellow Salsify, and Scarlet Penstemon growing closely together.

18. *Polemonium foliosissimum*, Jabob's Ladder (upper right). This species was just coming on in mid June; the week before we saw our first specimen in the Silver Creek Drainage at lower elevation.

19. *Tragopogon dubius*, Yellow Salsify. (Center Right)

20. *Penstemon barbatus torreyi*, Scarlet Penstemon. (Bottom Right)

It can seem strange to be walking along the crest of the Black Range and find evidence of human technology (ignoring the trails for a moment and the grazing allotment fencing) like that shown at the top left of the next page, from the Grandview Saddle. But if you are watchful such evidence is fairly common.



Following the Silver Fire, grass obscured footing along the trail, much worse in other parts, than shown here.

***Robinia neomexicana (*Gray) var. *rusbyi* ([Wooton & Standley] Martin & Hutchins ex Peabody), New Mexico Locust or Rusby's Locust, is a plant of the middle elevations in the Black Range (see images on the next page). The stems of new growth are reddish in hue, turning to brown as they age. Swallowtails are known to pollinate this species. The Apache, Jemez, and others ate the seed pods of this species, either raw, dried, or cooked.**

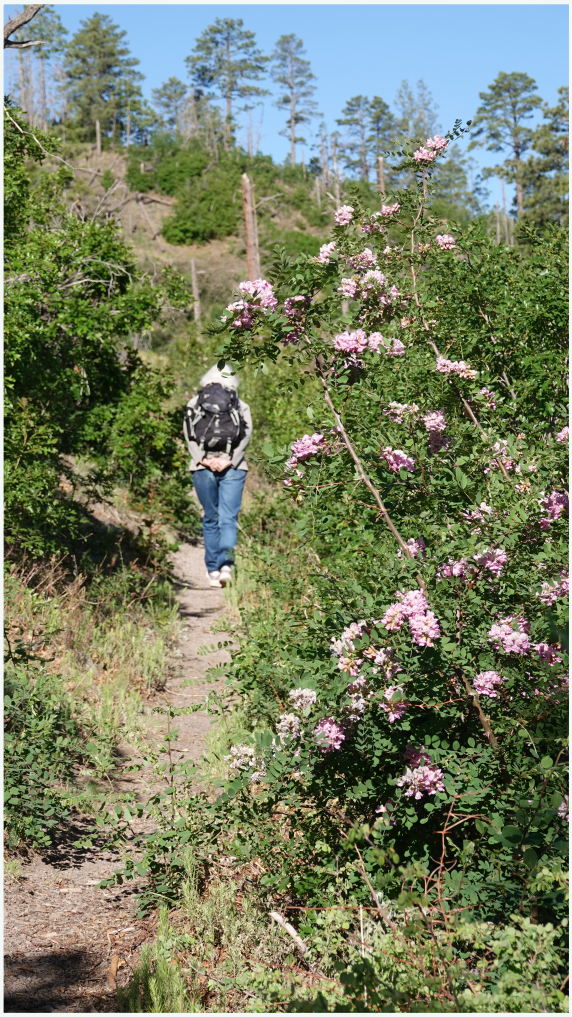
***Rubus idaeus* (Linnaeus) var. *strigosus* ([Michaux] Maximowicz), Red Raspberry grows in places along the trail (see top right). "The stems have nearly straight prickles and are stipitate glandular." (Vascular Plants of the Gila)**

The ethnobotany of *Symphoricarpos rotundifolius* (Gray), Roundleaf Snowberry (middle right), is described well by Wikipedia.

Bird life, including this Western Wood-Pewee, shown above was very vocal during this outing.

21. The lower slope of the trail held its own special treasures, like *Holodiscus dumosus*, Mountain Spray, shown directly below. This is a species which I have not often seen (or at least not observed).

New Mexico Locust, shown in the rest of the images on this page, are doing well along the lower reaches of the trail.



22. *Erysimum capitatum*, Wallflower. And, as odd as this may seem, the third wonder of the trail's flora came in the form of a multicolored Wallflower. Flowers at higher elevations are often darker in color, but this particular plant was a wonder of hues.

This listing is not complete by any means. There were several other blooming plants which we observed and photographed along the way, including: Fendler Meadowrue, *Thalictrum fendleri*; Purple Loco, *Oxytropis lambertii;* and Mountain Parsley, *Cymopterus lemmonii*. The bird life was dominated by a few species. Hairy Woodpecker, Dark-eyed Junco, Western Bluebird, Turkey Vulture, Common (Northern) Raven, and Brown Creeper were common at various spots along the trail.

And the trail, for the most part, was in excellent condition. We have hiked this trail in all seasons and it never ceases to inspire - and in my case - when I am in a particularly poor state of physical condition, it never ceases to cause me to perspire.

Through The Years

Over the years the Black Range Website has reported on this trail many times, the following is a summary of some of those reports - a comparison of these reports with the report you have just read, above, will give you an idea of how a trail can change over time.

During the summer of 2013 the Silver Fire burned a significant portion of the Black Range. Following the fire, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service seeded many parts of the range with annual grasses to prevent erosion. In many cases the grasses obscured the trail and footing proved treacherous for the unobservant. The fire and subsequent erosion meant that portions of many of the trails in the Black Range were especially uneven, had washouts, and were through burnt snag areas, etc.

Washouts, like that shown at the center right - along the lower section of the trail got progressively deeper with the rains and led to interesting side excursions along the trail, like that shown on the map at the upper right. After a few years parts of the gully filled in naturally and the trail was rerouted through that section. (It should be noted that the trail is currently (January 2026) in great shape.

Some people will talk about vistas, and Sawyers Peak Trail provides some great ones, but for me the high point of a hike to Sawyers Peak - in the summer - are the swarms of *Hippodamia convergens* (Convergent Lady Beetle) which can be found at the summit or the Wild Turkey and Black Bear which are sometimes found along the trail.

Following the fire a number of flowers, I had not seen along the trail before, started to appear, like the Crag Lily (*Echeandia flavescens*) pictured at the bottom right of the previous page. In August (2014) Alpine Woodsorrel, *Oxalis alpina*, was especially prevalent (photo below), along with Scarlet Penstemon and many other species.

This walk can be very nice for bird species, including Hairy Woodpecker, Pygmy Nuthatch, Mountain Chickadee, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Steller's Jay, Dark-eyed Junco, Raven (sp.?), and Brown Creeper. In the past, I have seen Clark's Nutcracker along this section of trail.

This trail starts at Emory Pass at an elevation of about 8,115' and ends at the summit of Sawyers Peak at about 9,615'. (If you are not acclimated to this elevation you may wish to take it fairly slow and remember to drink lots of water - dependable safe water is not available along the trail.) Over the 4 mile route (8 miles round-trip) there is an elevation gain of about 1,736', the maximum grade is 18% (elevation profile of the walk shown below). At 1.9 miles from Emory Pass, there is a trail junction with the Grandview trail. This junction is at about 8,973', from here to the summit of Sawyers Peak the trail is above 9,000'.

There are a number of variables which affect the trail's condition. At times cattle literally destroy the trail in places.

62. South Percha - Drummond Canyon

The trail starts at a turnout on the south side of Highway 152 at MP 35.6. From the turnout an old mining road travels down to the stream bed. The grade is moderate and there are many softball sized rocks (often obscured by grass) requiring careful placement of the feet to avoid twisting an ankle.

1. Portions of this old road burned in the Silver Fire of 2013. The fire tended to be very spotty except along the high ridges where practically everything burned. The photograph below was taken on July 13, 2013. Now, much of the evidence of fire was gone. The trail is obscured by stands of grass in places making passage an act of faith.

The old road ends at its intersection with South Percha Creek which flows from the canyon to the right. Drummond Canyon is more or less in front of you as you stand at the base of the road and look across the stream.

The map on the following page depicts a short walk (1 mile from NM 152 to the termination point in Drummond Canyon) which is reasonably easy. After you cross South Percha you may be able to follow an old road on the southeast side of Drummond Canyon for a hundred yards or so, then you must bushwhack as you follow the stream bed up hill.

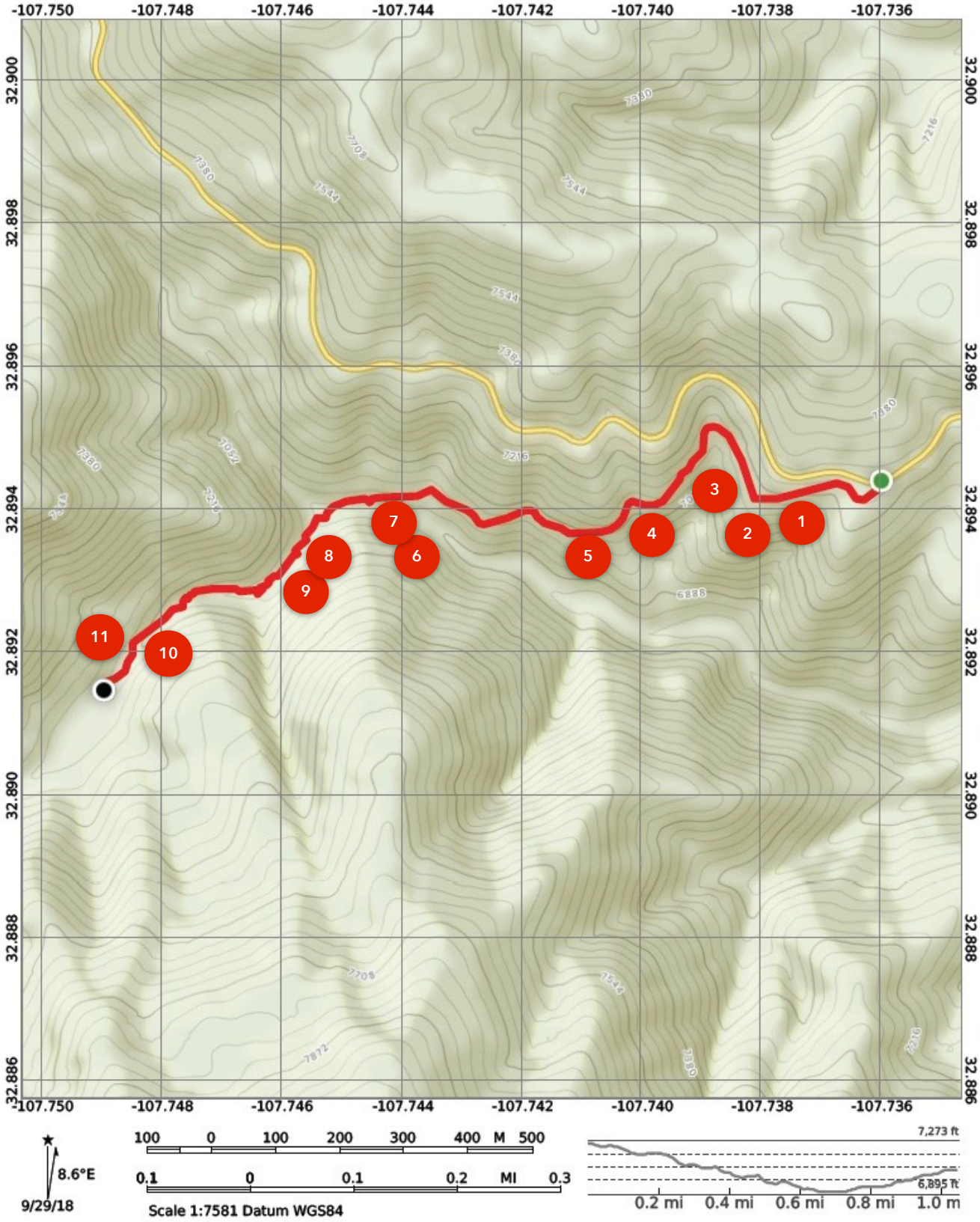
Alternatively, at the base of the road down from NM 152, you may turn right and go up Percha Creek. There are a number of old shafts and diggings in this area (Gray Eagle Mine) as well as the ruins of some old mining shacks (mostly burned by the Silver Fire). The way up the stream valley is by following game trails and bushwhacking. The stream flows down the mountain in a very narrow stream canyon. After about a mile the canyon broadens into beautiful flats with large pines. The area is mostly clear of low vegetation. Half way through this extensive "flat and broad" area there is a spring at the old cabin site (cabin long gone). (A description of South Percha Spring is found at the end of this trail description.)

At this point a way back to Highway 152 leads up the canyon to the north following an old trail, very hard to decipher, very grown-up, but a gentle grade with beautiful views back into the valley. The "trail" intersects NM 152 at about MP 34.8. It is close to impossible to locate this "trail" head if you don't have good directions, the trail is not discernible - it is simply a way forward which is less overgrown than its surroundings. Not obvious at all. Unless you know the location of the old trail it is probably best to bushwhack back down South Percha to the old road.

2. Ivy-leaf Ground Cherry, *Physalis hederifolia*, was growing in the road on the walk down. (Photo - May 2020)

3. The Canyon Grape, *Vitis arizonica*, (aka Arizona Grape) is the common grape found growing up - just about anything - in our area, generally at middle elevations. On this walk we found many individuals growing beside the road and in Drummond Canyon. (Photo - May 2020)

Trail to South Percha



4. There are many species of *Oenothera* in the Black Range, this, *Oenothera brachycarpa*, is found at middle and upper elevations, despite what its Common English Name - Desert Evening Primrose - might lead you to think. Along this walk there are numerous individuals growing in the rock debris about half way down the road. (Photo - May 2020)

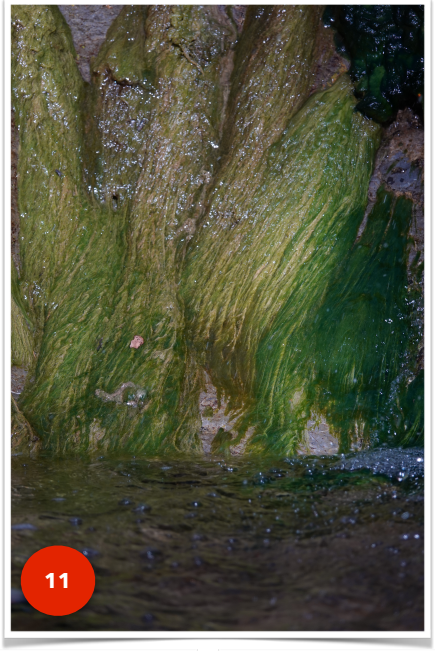
5. *Cyllopsis pertepida*, Canyonland Satyr, is found from southern Mexico north to southern Colorado. The adults rarely feed. Often rare within its range we found this individual on the road. (Photo - May 2020)

6. The American Black Bear, *Ursus americanus*, is the most common bear in the world, but is infrequently seen in the Black Range, away from human habitation. Video. (Photo - May 2020)

7. New Mexico Locust (Rusby's Locust), *Robinia neomexicana* var. *rusbyi*, is a common species in the Black Range, especially since the Silver Fire. (Photo - May 2020)

8. *Phacelia integrifolia*, Gypsum Scorpionweed, is not as common here as it is in the rest of New Mexico. (Photo - May 2020)

9. *Mimulus guttatus*, Spotted Monkeyflower, is named for the spots on the lower lip of the flower. Its other Common English Name is Seep Monkeyflower, which describes the habitat where it is frequently found. It grows well along the edge of Drummond Creek. (Photo - May 2020)



10. Western Flycatcher, *Empidonax difficilis occidentalis*. When this photograph was taken, the individual shown here was considered to be a member of a full species; Cordilleran Flycatcher, *Empidonax occidentalis*. They can be very common in this area. (Photo - May 2020)

11. I will not venture to guess the species growing on the small waterfall in Drummond Canyon shows the effects of the Silver Fire. (May 2020 - Following two photos)

South Percha Spring

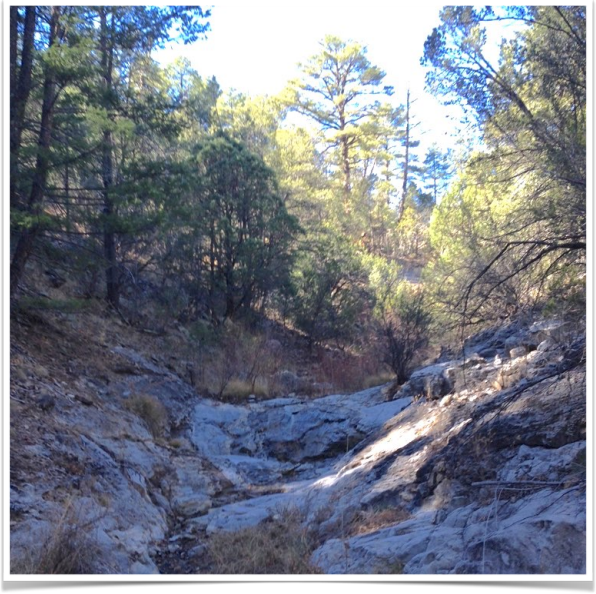
The spring fills a trough in an area burned by the Silver Fire. The trough is decaying and will fail from rust shortly. The spring site is fenced (poorly) on three sides. On the stream side of the spring there is no fencing. As with most springs in the Black Range, the protections which are required by Forest Service Regulations are not enforced at this spring.

The route followed on this trip was 1.14 miles (round-trip) with an elevation change of approximately 325'.

There is an old cabin site next to the spring, only the foundation and trash remains. The drainage immediately east of the spring has a the start of an adit which did not play out and the next drainage to the east has the remains of a camp used by a fence crew - lots of beer bottles, cans, and assorted other glass - probably from the 1950's or so.

63. Southwest Canyon

Contributed by Devon Fletcher



Southwest Canyon is less than a mile from Kingston which gives it the distinct advantage of not having to negotiate the worst of the twists and turns of NM 152. It also can be done as a wintertime hike when the higher elevations of the Black Range may be covered in snow (although that phenomenon is increasingly rare these days).

Depending on the vehicle's clearance one can park at the dirt road entrance right off the highway, or there is parking at some nice, dispersed camping spots a short way down the road to the south. Initially we crossed the creek and investigated an old mine or gravel pit, but then began heading upstream. The canyon bottom is quite narrow upstream, and well forested with large piñons and junipers on the south facing slopes, and Douglas firs and larger pines on the north facing side. Along the creek there were deciduous and evergreen oaks, ash, boxelder and a few walnut, but my inspection of the fallen leaves found bigtooth maple lacking.

Early on we saw an animal clinging to small pine ahead of us. At first I thought it was raccoon, but as it escaped up the hillside, I realized it was a coatimundi. When the Scotties reached the spot, their sniffers went wild, and from then on they were continually trying to pull us up the hillside to pursue the wild beastie.

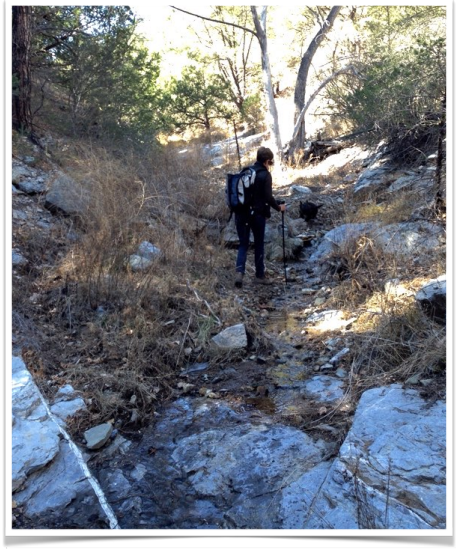
There is bound to be a section of frozen creek to contend with even in the late winter and early spring. For desert dwellers walking on it can be novelty, but for safety's sake try to avoid it as much as possible. Further above, there are several spring areas, with the many smells of all the animals that have come to drink, which our dogs found extremely interesting.

The canyon was shady and cool, what we had come for, but when it came time for our picnic we found some warm bedrock in the sun. Afterwards we came upon one of the few open areas: a lovely sloping meadow of golden grass and junipers on the creek's north side.

Although we occasionally would hear cars along NM 152, which was never more than a few hundred feet away, we were in our own little forest paradise, and hardly paid them any mind. As the canyon steepened, we climbed up, over and around a series of small, trickling waterfalls carved into what appeared to be limestone bedrock. The last and tallest was about 15 feet high. I climbed around and above that one and shortly thereafter the highway guardrail came into view and the canyon made a right turn towards a culvert and its uppermost branch on the north side of NM 152.

Walking down Southwest Canyon is much the same, if a bit less claustrophobic. The hike in the stream-bed was mostly clear with a trickle of water in a few spots. Unfortunately there were very few deciduous trees, save for a few small oaks and lone cottonwood, so if you are looking for an easy spot to see a bit of fall color, go upstream rather than down.

Still it's a pleasant enough walk passing through the layers of limestone, shale and sandstone. There was one old mine, that was flooded at the bottom of its shaft, but little else to show that people come here or came here in any numbers. Upon reaching the fence just a short way up from the Forest Service's Kingston Work Center, it seemed like a logical place to turn around, which is exactly what we did.



the surface. In addition to the photographs at the link above there is a short snippet of handheld video showing the moth vibrating its wings and antenna.

The walk, which starts at the right side of the map (32.90687, -107.7056) proceeds up the canyon to the intersection with NM 152. This walk is 1.6 miles long and has an elevation gain of 424 feet. The ease of a slight gain in elevation is belied by the fact that there were numerous down trees across the intermittent stream at the base of the canyon. The walking was tedious. As Devon notes, this is a pretty walk and easily accessed.

Southwest Canyon Follow-up (Barnes)

On March 7, 2021, we walked this canyon, intrigued by Devon Fletcher's report of the Coati he saw along this route, in 2018. He saw the Coati at roughly the same time that one was seen on NM 152 at about the same spot. We ventured up the canyon from the parking area, looking for Coati and Coati sign.

We found Coati footprints in the snow see photo above. There were random patches of snow along the walk and some ice where water came to the surface.

We also found a number of small moths, *Litocala sexsignata*, in two places where the bedrock forced the stream water to

64. Bloodgood Spring and Homesite

This route starts at the Kingston Cemetery (NM 152) and follows a fence line eastward to an old road bed. It follows the road bed to Bloodgood Spring (about 2,000') which is easily identified by the drive through gate of the cattle exclosure. The route follows the outside of the north side of the cattle exclosure, past the water trough, and along the creek bed/road bed for about another half mile (.75 miles from the cemetery). The ruins of the Bloodgood homesite (now limited to a few crumbling retaining walls see photo top right) are on the left (north) side of the trail/road bed as you walk down the trail. It is possible to walk along the road bed and along the creek bank for another .75 miles from the homesite. At 1.5 miles a fence crosses your path, private land is beyond. A minimal change in elevation occurs between the cemetery and the homesite (6,264' to 6,000') and the grade remains fairly constant until you reach the fence line.

The old Bloodgood Mine is located north of the homesite.

This is a very "birdy" canyon with Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Chickadee, Bushtit, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and other species readily seen. It is also a great walk for wildflowers like the Sweet Four O'clock (*Mirabilis longiflora*) pictured at bottom right, for fields of daisies, Ivy-leaf Morning Glory (*Ipomoea hederacea*), and Paintbrush (below). The trail starts in Juniper, Oak, and Ponderosa Pine and eventually tapers into mostly Juniper. This trail is at the edge of these ecosystems and, therefore, has a lot of flora and fauna diversity.

Bloodgood Family at Home 2 Miles East of Kingston by J. C. Burge ca. 1890

The usual suspects are on-the-scene; rattlesnakes (only Western Diamond-Back that I know of), Black Bear, Coyote, and Cougar are all possible, but not likely.

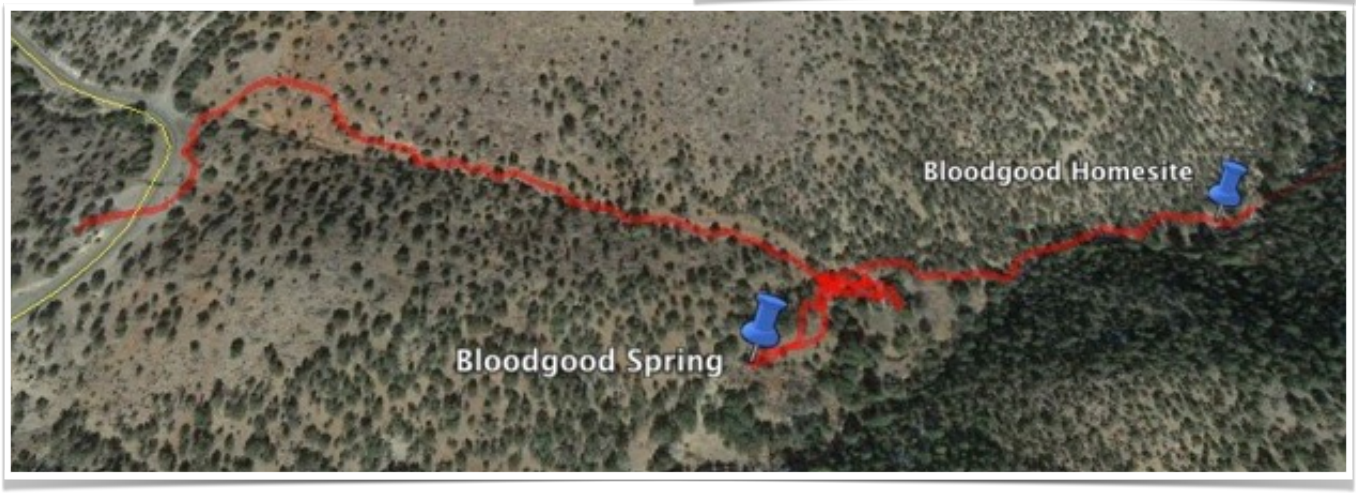
Bloodgood Spring

I have seen this spring referred to as Goldfish Pond Spring in some documents. It is unnamed on USGS topographic maps. The photographs on the following pages were taken on September 5, 2014 and July 5 & 11, 2017.

A new exclosure fence was installed around this area, including the spring, in 2025. There is a water trough, fed by the spring, outside the eastern end of the cattle exclosure (photo top left of the next page).

There is a significant amount of water flowing from the hillside at the spring site. Some of the springs are natural but at some point holes were drilled into a rock and water flows freely from them. There are reeds, native grasses, and other vegetation at the site. The cattle exclosure (photo above) has beautiful old Alligator Juniper trees.

There are several wet seeps and wet areas from the spring drainage at the site. Broad-leaved Cattail, *Typha latifolia*, dominates the wettest of these areas. Along the edge of the slope and creek there are a number of seeps and smaller springs. Most of the spring outlets are on the hillside, but along the creek edge there is another artesian spring (created by drilling into the rock).



There are not many locations in the Black Range where you can find cattails, of any sort, so as strange as it may sound to those who are in areas with more water, finding a location with this genus of flora is a treat.

The other species of cattail found in the Black Range is the Southern Cattail, *Typha domingensis*, which is also a native species. The two species (*T. latifolia* and *T. domingensis*) can be very difficult to tell apart. However, the pistillate and staminate sections of the flower (that brown hot dog looking thing which grows on a [flower] spike) are separated by a bare section of stem in *Typha domingensis*.

Late in the season it is possible to find these cattails dispersing their fruit. The "brown hot dog things" seem to explode in a mass of soft white fluff which floats easily away on the wind - unfortunately these seeds will not find many habitable places to land in the Black Range.

65. Forest Trail 134

This route starts at Tierra Blanca Road and terminates at the Black Range Crest Trail north of Sawyer's Peak. Trail conditions in the Black Range, since the Silver Fire, are problematic. Although the walk described here is fairly straight forward and at least as good as a good cow path, for the four miles round-trip shown here, it is not certain what the upper portions of the trail may be like. In 2021 there was a 500+ acre spot fire in the area. The junction with the Crest Trail is not apparent at the upper end.

The trail head is about 14 miles from NM-27 on a dirt road which gets progressively worse as you proceed. A high clearance vehicle is recommended. The bottom map to the right shows the detail of the upper map, after you cross into the National Forest. The star on the lower map indicates the trailhead for Forest Trail 135.

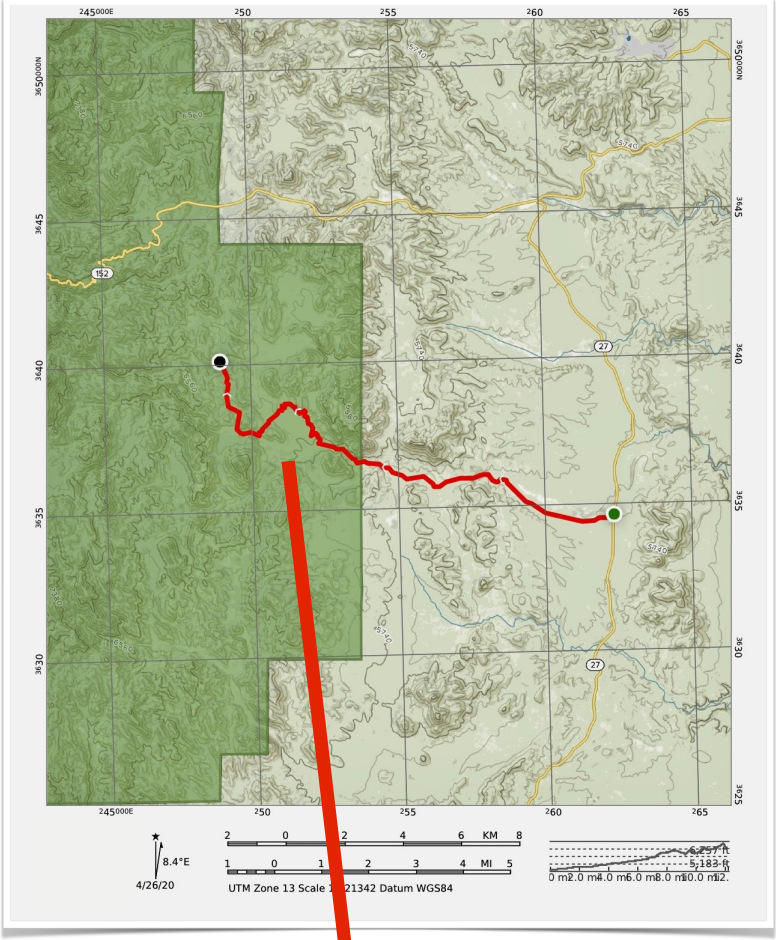
All of the photographs in this trail description were taken on April 25, 2020. Photographs are keyed the map on the following page.

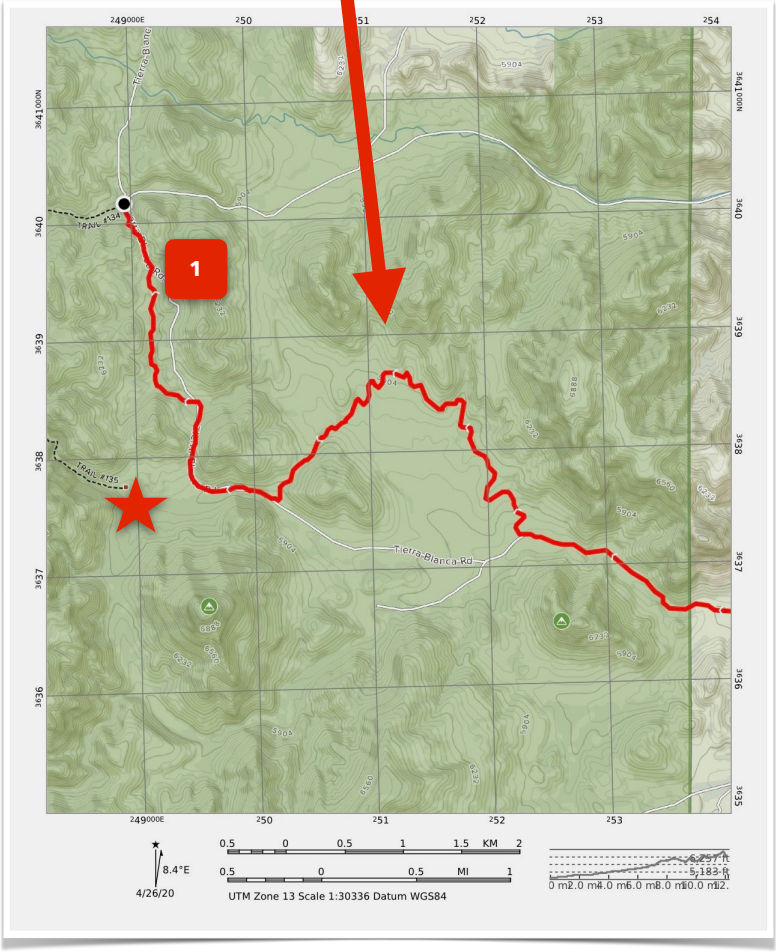
1. There are two cabins which are of interest along the way. The first is found along the road between the trailheads for Forest Trails 134 and 135. It has pieces of equipment strown about the front of the "stick-built" wood cabin. (Photographs on the following page.)

2. At the very start of the walk, as you leave the trailhead, you are introduced to the mix of rock, vegetation, and a free-flowing stream which characterizes this trail. The bedrock of the canyon sides often comes down to the stream. The banks of the stream bed support a lot of trees and other plant life. The usual dangers of a walk in the Black Range are present, you are far from medical assistance should it be needed - so keep that in mind. On the 25th of April, I walked into barbed-wire strands which were camouflaged by downed branches. It was not a significant event, but it could have been.

3. The general impression of this trail is quickly reinforced.

4. The second cabin of interest on this walk is found in the first wide spot in the canyon. There are corrals and a pasture here and an adobe cabin which has seen better days. The ceiling has





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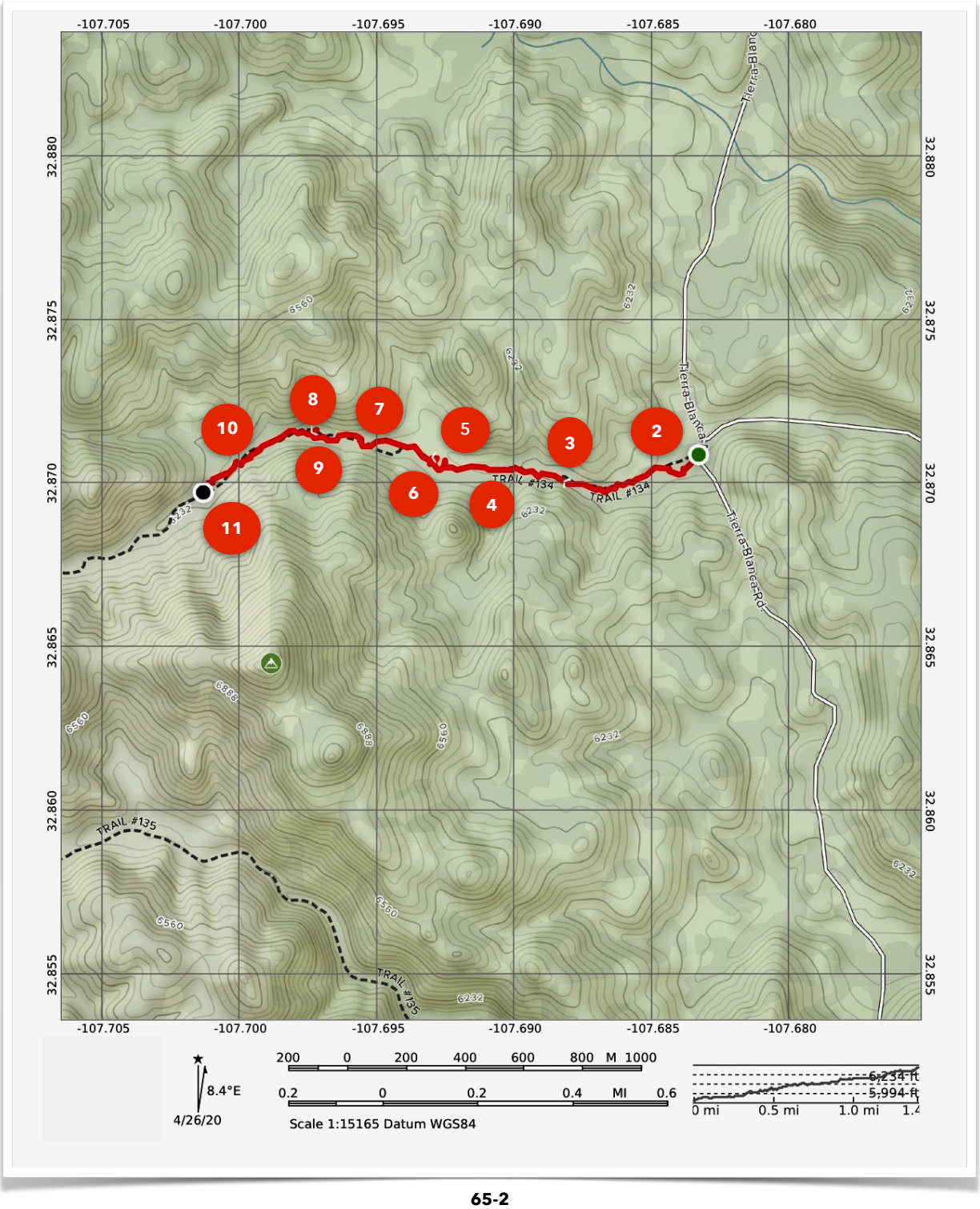
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4. (con't) collapsed allowing observation of the primary source of ceiling/roof insulation in times-gone-past, dirt. A layer of dirt of 3+ inches is seen in the center right photograph, on top of the collapsed ceiling. Generally, a cloth covering (often muslin) was hung beneath the ceiling to capture dirt as it worked its way through the cracks in the ceiling.

5. *Erodium cicutarium* (Redstem Storksbill, Redstem Filaree) is a member of the Geranium family and is an exotic. That being said, this species can be found in all but the highest places of the Black Range. On this walk, they were blanketing the pastures at the cabin site. Walking along the track through the meadow with a mass of these flowers all around was (is) a memorable event.

6. Associated with the Filaree was a *Eupeodes volucris*, Bird Hover Fly (identification tentative).

7. On this day, *Junonia coenia*, Common Buckeye, was the common butterfly which was flitting about.

8. Toward the end of this walk there were several large individuals of *Alnus oblongifolia*, Arizona Alder.

9. The alder tended to grow closer to the stream than did the Ponderosa Pine. Associated with the pine there were *Conopholis alpina*, Ground Cone.

10. In this same area, *Veronica anagallis-aquatica*, Water Speedwell and Watercress, *Nasturtium officinale* (photo "11"), were found growing in close proximity - as they often are.

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12. Small pools along the stream edge were full of cyanobacterium. Cyanobacterium produce much of the oxygen which is in the atmosphere. Reproduction is by fragmentation. Strands break apart, each segment can create a new colony.

66. Forest Trail 135

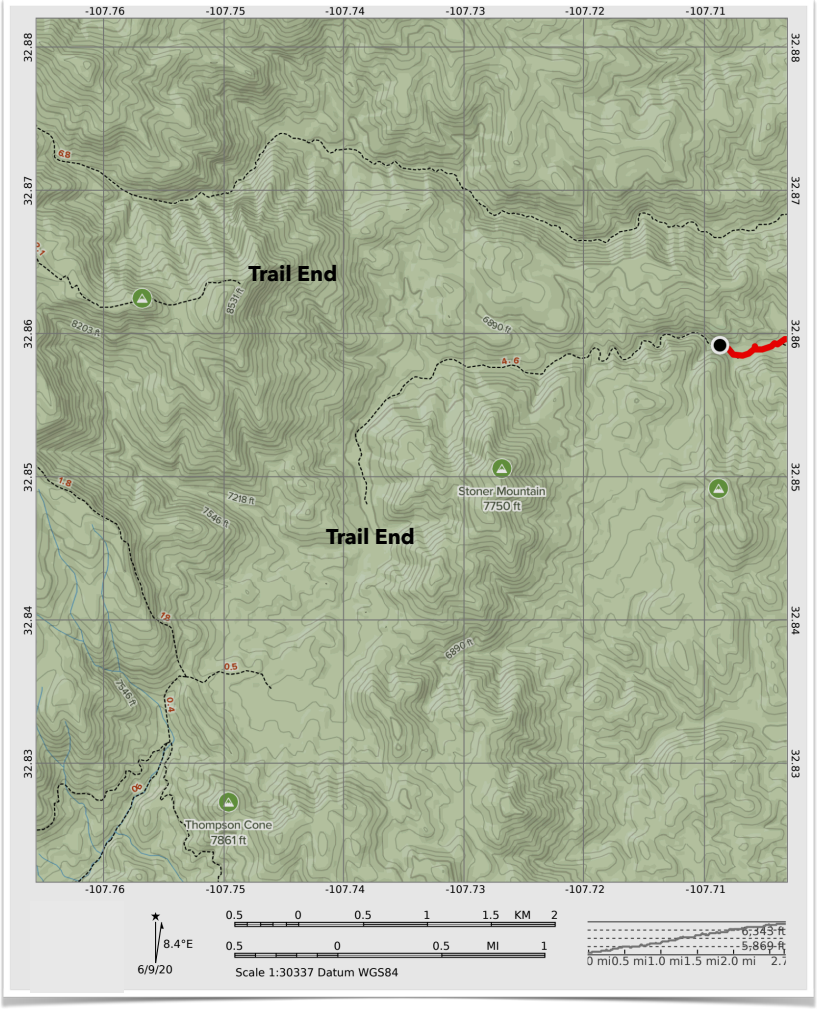
This route starts at Tierra Blanca Road and (arguably) terminates at the Black Range Crest Trail north of Sawyer's Peak. Trail conditions in the Black Range, since the Silver Fire, are problematic. Although the walk described here is fairly straight forward (at about 4.5 miles round-trip) it is unclear what the upper portions of the trail may be like. The junction with the Crest Trail is certainly not apparent at the upper end.

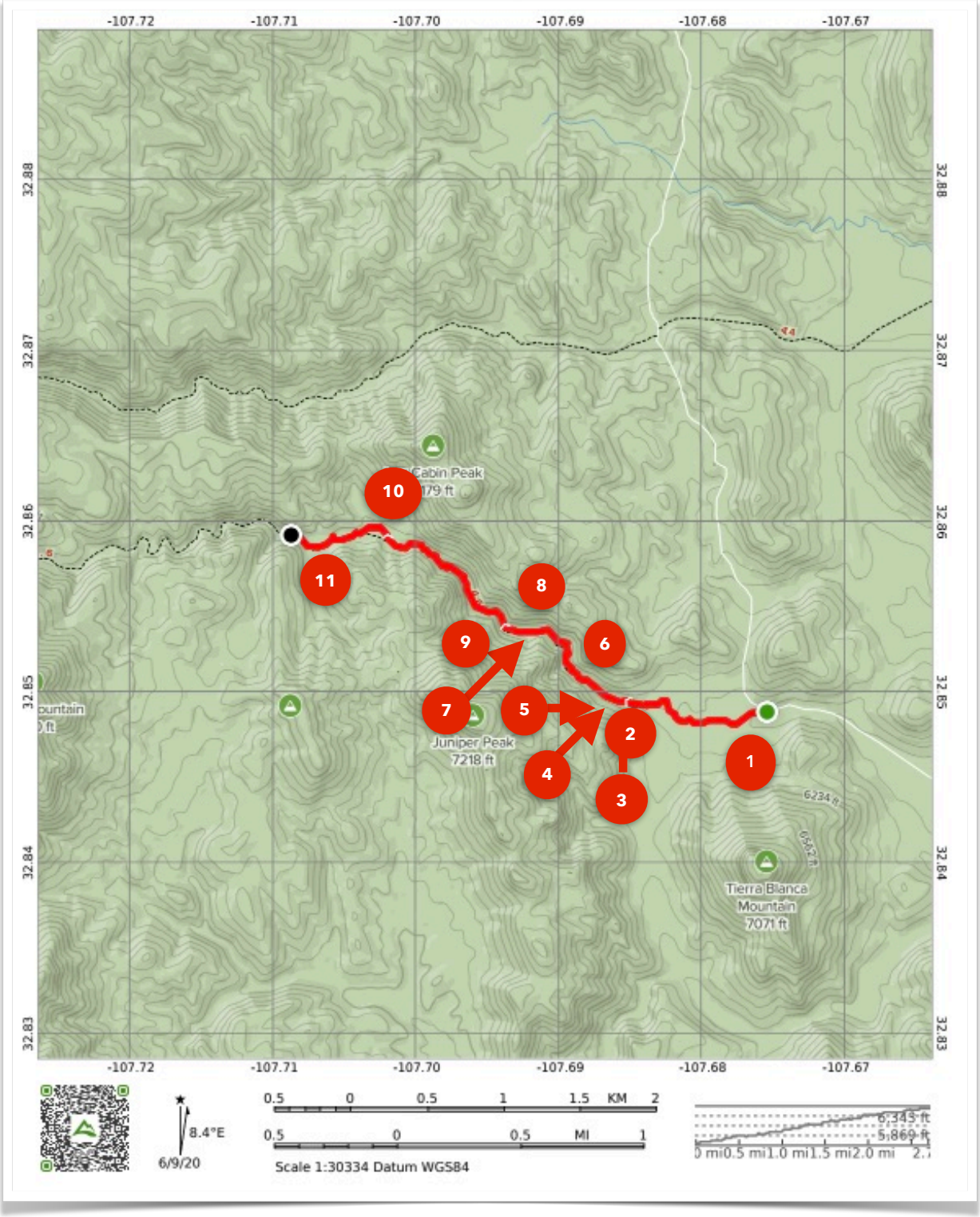
The nature of this trail is a bit more problematic. Although there is a trail 135 which heads east from the Sawyers Peak Trail (Black Range Crest Trail), maps show that it terminates on a bluff above where the trail described here ends (according to maps). See map to the right.

The trail head is about 12 miles from NM-27 on a dirt road which gets progressively worse as you proceed. A high clearance vehicle is recommended. The maps for trail 134 show the route to the trail head for this walk, the star on the bottom map (p. 61-1) indicates the trailhead for Forest Trail 135.

1. The portion of this trail which is described in this walk is knock-down gorgeous. The photo below was taken at the start of the walk.

2. On the day we walked this trail we parked on the Tierra Blanca Road and walked up a forest road (4146N) to the trailhead.





2. On the day we walked this trail we parked on the Tierra Blanca Road and walked up a forest road (4146N) to the trailhead for this walk. Shortly after starting up the formal trail the canyon becomes more narrow and the sides steeper. A briskly flowing stream was flowing down the canyon. (Photo next page.) In December 2025 we found this stream completely dry.

3. *Phoradendron juniperinum*, Juniper Mistletoe, was growing in a number of the junipers at the start of the trail. This species is one of the most common mistletoe species in this area. Part of its success is due to that fact that it has several different types of pollinators, from those which crawl like ants and beetles to those which fly, like flies. Distribution of the seeds is generally performed by birds. Unlike the dwarf mistletoe species, the Juniper Mistletoe uses its own photosynthesis to produce most of its food. It does, however, rely on its host for water and some minerals.

Walking up the trail we quickly entered Ponderosa Pine and large Alligator Juniper. The trail meanders along the stream and the canopy provides a great deal of shade, making this a very pleasant walk on a hot day. On the day of our walk, April 18, the conditions were perfect.

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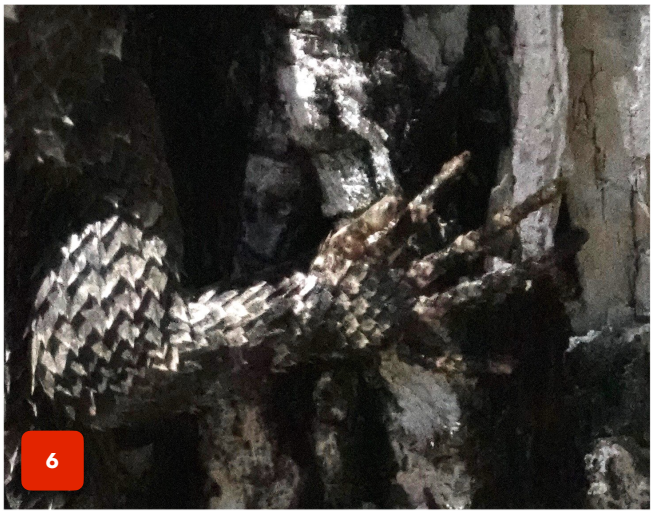
in large clumps about ten feet above the stream. Some authorities (B. L. Turner) consider this subspecies to be a full species. The (unsplit) species has a fairly limited range in the U. S. In Mexico, it is found in the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Sonora.

6. Shortly after one of the stream crossings, there are several but at this time of year none presented any difficulty, I encountered a Clark's Spiny Lizard, *Sceloporus clarkii*. We played ring-a-round the tree for a moment, I got my photo and off I went. The lizard was nonplused by the event. There are other spiny lizards in our area, primarily the Twin-spotted Spiny Lizard and the Crevice Spiny Lizard. If there is any doubt in your mind about the identification of an individual you believe to be of this species look at the forelimb, dark bars on the forelimb are diagnostic of this species.

The round-trip depicted here was about 5.5 miles long, an easy 5.5 miles. At our turn around spot we sat by the stream and enjoyed a trail lunch. Along this lower section of the trail it is not obvious that there was a Silver Fire. As we progressed up the canyon the condition of the trail gradually eroded.

4. Paintbrushes can be difficult to identify, "luckily" we have few species in the Black Range. The paintbrush typically found at mid-elevations is the Foothills Paintbrush (aka Southwestern Indian Paintbrush), *Castilleja integra*.

5. Fendlerbush (aka Cliff Fendler-bush or Wright's Fendlerbush), *Fendlera rupicola* var. *wrightii,* was growing



7. We found *Viola nephrophylla*, Streambank Violet), at one stream-crossing near the end of the walk. Within the US this is a widespread species, being absent only from the southeast and mid-Atlantic states.

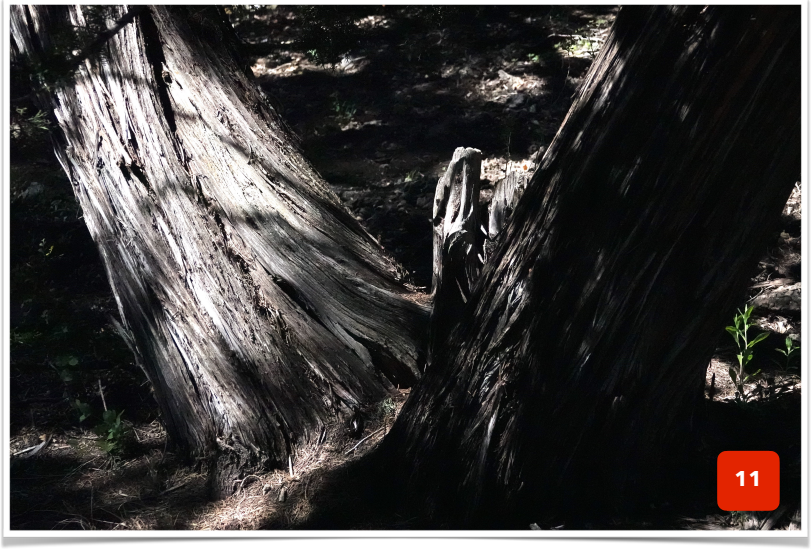
8. Especially along the southern reaches of the trail, rock dominates the scene. (Photo on page 62-7 taken on April 18.)

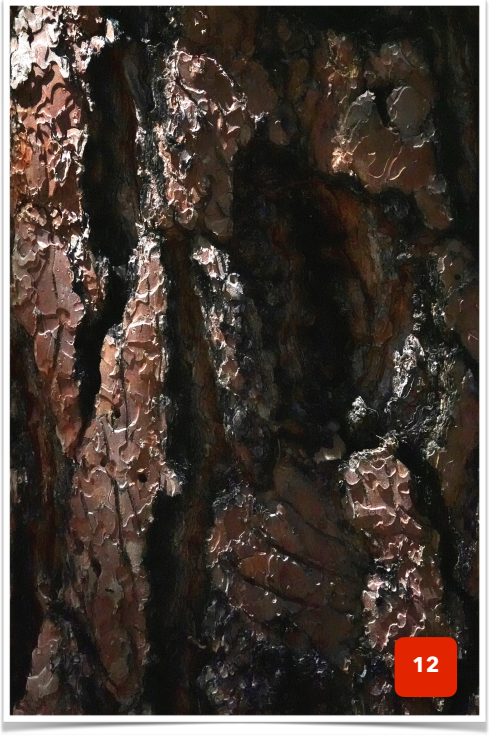
9. Chief's Tub Spring is a well maintained spring beside the south side of the stream about a half way up the walk. Although well maintained it contrasts strikingly with the clear fresh water of the stream. I suspect that neither of these water sources is safe to drink without treatment. (Photos taken on April 18.)

8

10. *Conopholis alpina*, Ground Cone is generally associated with Ponderosa Pine. We found several clumps along the trail on April 18.

11. Along the upper reaches of the trail there is a robust forest, dominated by: *Juniperus monosperma*, Oneseed Juniper; *Pinus ponderosa*, Ponderosa Pine (photos number "12"); *Juniperus deppenana*, Alligator Juniper (photo "13"); *Salix gooddingii,* Goodding's Willow (photos numbered "14"); and *Berbes haematocarpa*, Red Barberry (photo 15).





16. But as noted earlier, in December 2026 the stream was almost dry, only a puddle of water here and there in a recess in the rock. This is the same drop depicted in photo "2" earlier.

The natural history along this trail can be as stunning as the scenery. It may be a long drive to the trailhead, but the walk is worth the effort.

67. Grandview Trail

It is safe to assert that most of the less popular trails in the Black Range are in disrepair. Following the Silver and Black Fires the hillsides were covered with burnt snags and debris. The rains that followed were not held back by vegetation and scoured the hillsides even more and washed much of the debris from the hillsides into the mountain ravines. As a result, some trails that appear on maps are non-existent at this time. The last time we were in East Railroad Canyon we found that to be the case and suspected that was what we would find as we explored the Grandview Trail which runs from Silver Creek to the Black Range Crest Trail, just north of Sawyer's Peak.

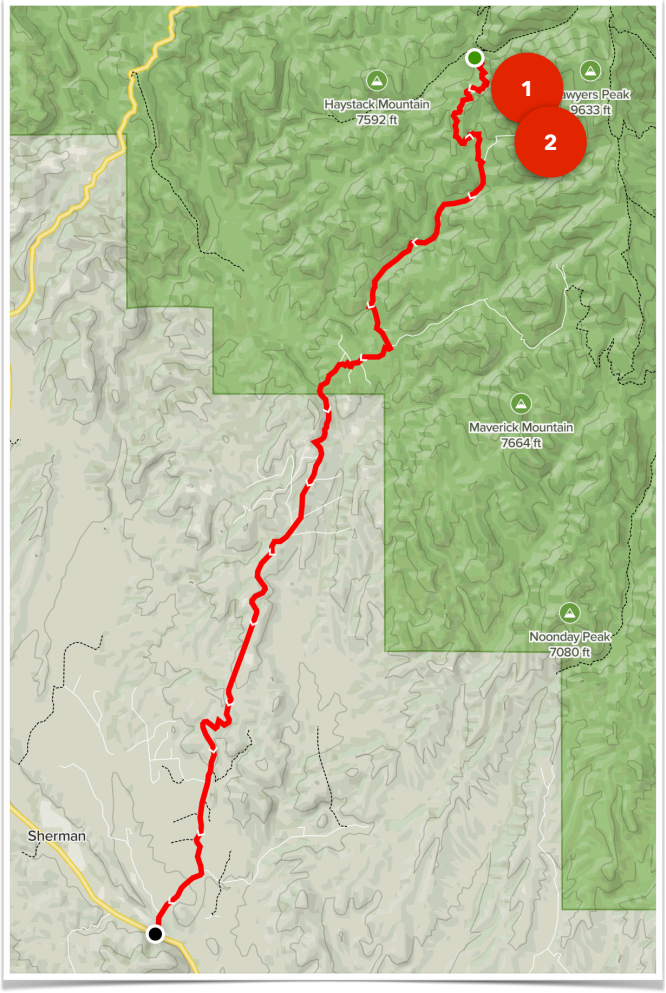
This is a trail you must really want to walk on; it is not a casual outing. Access begins at the junction of Royal John Road and NM 61 southeast of Sherman. The Royal John Road was the subject of a road video recorded a few years ago. This is beautiful country, so if you have a high clearance vehicle and are looking for a Sunday outing this road could be your cup of tea - but look at the video first. (This video is part of "The Roads of the Black Range" video portfolio maintained by The Black Range website.

The road, from NM 61, to the trailhead is 14.3 miles long, mostly on the Royal John Road. Near the end of the trek the Silver Creek Road turns off of the Royal John Road and travels north to its end.

1. Along the Silver Creek Road there are at least two ruins of log cabins.

2. Southwestern Fence Lizard, *Sceloporus cowlesi*, was found on the logs of one of the cabins.

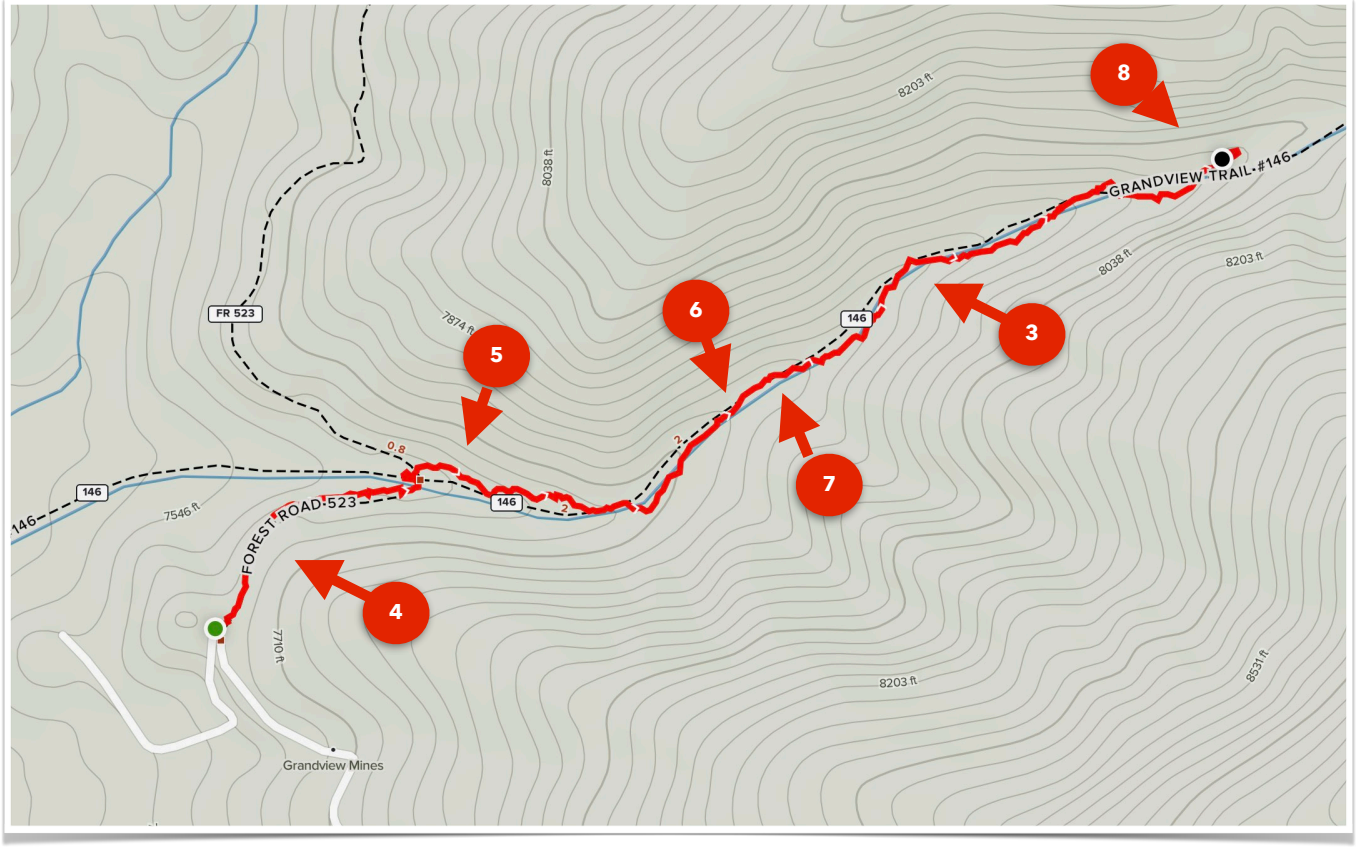
3. The following describes our experience on September 27, 2020. An improved trail does not exist in the lower reaches of this walk. At times the walking is fairly easy, short sections of the remnant trail, animal tracks, and sections where it is possible to walk on bedrock where the stream bed has been completely scoured. Generally, however, this is a strenuous walk with unsure footing, loose rock, downed trees and lots of debris. Only the first mile, of roughly a three mile walk, is discussed in this part of the entry. During our walk we found an occasional trail blaze on a standing snag and some sections of what appears to have been a trail at one time. After stumbling a lot we simply decided it was not worth the effort. That was not an easy decision, however, because this canyon is both beautiful and dramatic. Over the first quarter of a mile or so the walk is through unburned forest, mostly Ponderosa Pine and oak.



3

4

5


8
GRANDVIEW TRAIL #146
8203 ft
8038 ft
8203 ft
8038 ft
FR 523
7874 ft
6
5
146
3
0.8
2
7
146
146
7546 ft
FOREST ROAD 523
4
7710 ft
8203 ft
8531 ft
Grandview Mines

4. Mexican Catch-Fly/Cardinal Catchfly, *Silene laciniata* is one of the more common flowers of the Black Range, but nonetheless, beautiful and abundant at the start of this walk.

5. *Dieteria bigelovii*, Bigelow's Tansyaster, and *Clematis ligusticifolia*, Virgin's Bower, were growing near where the walk started up the stream bed. The Clematis is one of two species in that genus which are sometimes found in the Black Range, the other being *Clematis columbiana*, Columbian Virgin's Bower, which we have found in Railroad Canyon.

6. *Mirabilis longiflora*, Sweet Four O'clock was growing in the stream bed, somehow holding on between the scouring floods which commence with the rains. The flowers of this species typically open late in the afternoon and as a night blooming plant attract large hummingbird moths. The seeds of this species are poisonous.

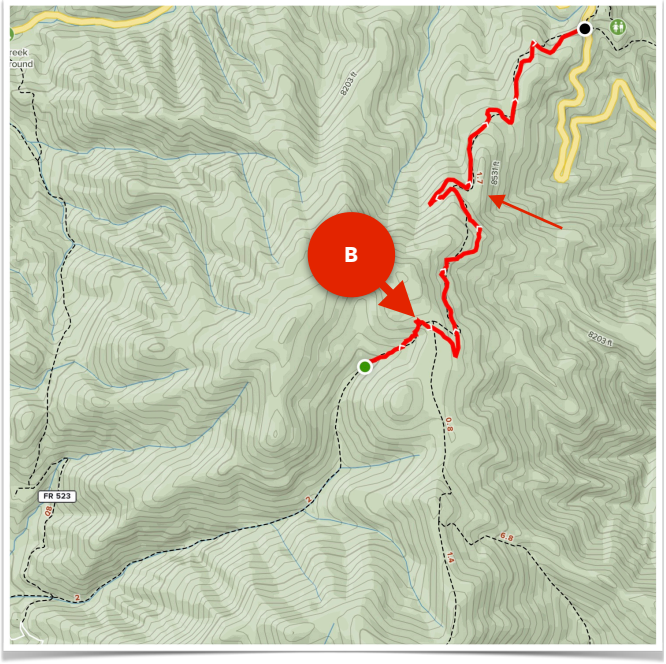
Some authorities will separate out the plant that we have here as a distinct subspecies, *M. l. wrightiana*. The range of the Sweet Four O'Clock is restricted to central Mexico and the southwestern United States. If you are inclined to recognize the existence of subspecies in this plant then the nominate form is found in central Mexico and *M. l. wrightiana* is found farther north. The range within the United States is restricted to southwestern New Mexico, southeastern Arizona, and the Big Bend region of Texas.

7. *Juncus torreyi*, Torrey's Rush, was growing in the stream-bed where the trickle of water formed small pools. (Note that this has to be a tentative identification - I am outside my scope of competence here.)

8. One of the common geraniums of the Black Range, *Geranium richardsonii*, Richardson Geranium, was growing in several large clumps near the rushes.

9. *Pericome caudata*, Taperleaf, was growing in the stream-bed as clumps of flowers on plants which barely reached my knee. On the stream bank the plants were very large, easily over 6 feet high and more in diameter.

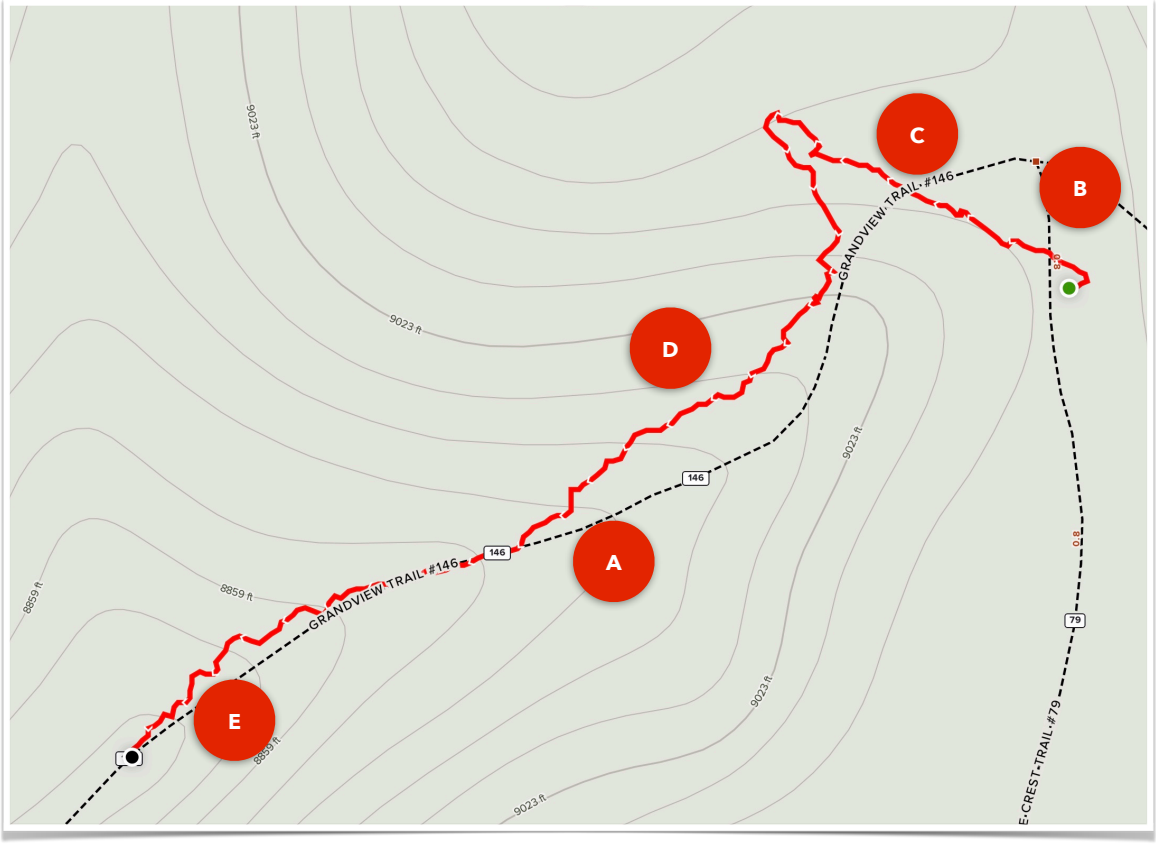
10. Western Honey Bees, *Apis mellifera*, were busy working the Taperleaf. Some sources refer to this species as the European Honey Bee, for the reasons cited at the BugGuide website. We use Western Honey Bee here and on the www.blackrange.org website. There are at least 24 recognized subspecies, some of which hybridize. There are also feral and domestic populations. Attempting to delineate these bees to subspecies is problematic. The rather notorious "African Killer Bee" is one of these subspecies.



These bees have experienced significant hardships of late. The first was the introduction of a parasitic mite, *Varroa*, which *Apis mellifera* had no natural defense against, the second is Colony Collapse Disorder which may be caused by something like the Israeli acute paralysis virus.

At this point on our walk, a scant .9 miles up the "trail" we were tired of crawling over debris, shifting rock and boulders, and avoiding tripping in the tangle of vines and vegetation. We gave up. We opted instead for another try from the top, from the Black Range Crest Trail.

A few days later, on October 2, we walked south on the Black Range Crest Trail from Emory Pass for 2.2 miles to the junction with the upper part of the Grandview Trail. As shown on the map at the right (see arrow) the distance is 1.7 miles; this is an error. The elevation gain on this portion of the trail is just over 1,000 feet. From the junction we wandered around a great deal (see detail of the Grandview Trail on a following page) trying to find the trail. Eventually we saw some burned tree blazes (at "C" on the map and pictured on a following page) - not that route finding is difficult, you are after all walking down a ravine. Before long we found the trace of the trail. The map indicates that the trail is in the stream bottom; it is rather on the north side of the ravine.



At "A" on the map a small stream came to the surface and continued on the surface at least as far as where we stopped - and given that there was a small stream flow in the lower reaches of the trail it is probably continuous all the way down the canyon. In the section which we visited the stream was mangled, but not completely destroyed, by cattle.

The upper section of this trail did not burn very badly in the Silver Creek Fire. There are several mature Southwestern White Pines in this area ("D" on the map). This species, *Pinus strobiformis*, is listed as *Pinus reflexa,* in some sources. It goes by several common names, including; Chihuahua White Pine, Southwestern White Pine, Mexican White Pine, and pino enano.

At "E" on the map the small stream is badly trampled but with its layers of moss and *Iris missouriensis*, Rocky Mountain Iris, is quite striking. It should be especially pretty in the spring when the flowers are in bloom.

We walked a half mile down the ravine and then decided to call it a day. I am pretty sure that the upper and lower trail descriptions provided here describe the natural history of the middle section of the trail which we did not visit (see 67A).

As mentioned earlier, this is a trail you really have to want to walk. But if you are motivated and can put up with a hard go of it, it is well worth the effort.

There are nice stands of Gambel Oak along this trail. Gambel Oak is the only native oak found in the southern Rockies which has deeply lobed leaves (see top right on the following page).

C. The upper trail goes between these two large trees, a blaze can be seen about half way up the tree on the right.

67a. Describes the middle section of the Grandview Trail (not covered in "67") and FR 523 north of the Silver Creek "crossing". This walk described in "67" was made prior to that described in "67A".

67A. Lower and Middle FT-146 and FR-523 (Grandview Trail and Silver Creek Road)

Contributed by Devon Fletcher

I had wanted to visit this section of Silver Creek above the Silver Creek Road for many years and finally made up my mind and went back in 2018. It's a long drive from my home in Las Cruces to get to the start of this hike. I left the house at 8 and wasn't hiking until 10:30 or so. The Silver Creek Road (FR 523) has a couple of bad crossings over Little Gallinas Creek, but otherwise is quite drivable. I was glad to see the old cabins we had visited 8 or 9 years ago had not burned in the Silver Fire in 2013. The large Columbia Mine nearby, though, which previously was concealed in thick forest was easily visible amongst the burnt trees.

About a quarter mile from Silver Creek crossing, there are berms that prevent vehicles from traveling any further, but there is a large turnaround/parking area. This was all put in place, I'm sure, because where the roads meets Silver Creek, it is completely washed away. There would be no way to turnaround at that point.

There is a little bit of a mine road to follow initially on the north side of the stream. Most people would not notice it. Past the mine there are a few old blazes on ponderosa pines, but the trail (technically part of the Grandview Trail) is mostly invisible.

Not to worry though, because the flooding after the fire has left many parts of creek scraped clean to the bedrock which makes for easy walking. I continued up with my only companions the little yellow warblers darting in and out of the shrubs and bushes. There is one tough section of boulders and fallen snags, but after that comes the falls which are over bare limestone bedrock.

Unfortunately there was just the barest of trickles when I visited. I plan to come back when the flows are better though, because this series of steep slides, cascades, and drops will be quite a show. The whole section with cliffs and alcoves on the north side is very rugged and still quite scenic despite the damage done by the fire.

At the top of the falls section there is fifteen foot straight drop. I tried to climb up the rock on the north side, but really couldn't get a good footing. I then decided to ascend a narrow break in the bedrock with small oak trees and their protruding roots, both of which I used for leverage.

Photographs from this walk are shown on the next two pages.

I got up on top and was now standing where I stood nearly six years before on FT 146 and then turned around not realizing that the trail was supposed to continue straight down the watercourse I had just come up. The forest here was as green and beautiful as it was back then and maybe as it's ever been, even though I was only short distance from ground zero of the huge fire. A little ways upstream the entire mountaintop has burned.

The ascent up the canyon had been a little slow and a little warm but, after clambering back down the falls, the descent was quick and easy. Back at the road, I decided to explore

to the north on the closed section of the road which was rapidly returning to a natural state with fallen trees concealed in thickets of wildflowers.

I was looking down into Rustlers Canyon, when I decided I had enough. The road still continued for perhaps 1/2 mile down across the drainage and then up on the other side. I could see the Mineral Mountain Mine and the plateau where the road dead-ends across the way.

I now began hiking back to my vehicle. Squirrel-sized lizards ran out of nooks in the crumbling chalk-like rock beside the road, and then seeing me, ran back in. I looked over to the rock bluffs of Haystack Mountain and down the bleached bedrock of the lower reaches of Silver Creek. I enjoyed long distance views to all of the western lands of the Gila. There were a few isolated thunderstorms well off in the distance, but just scattered, fast moving clouds and blue sky over my head.

On my drive back. I saw a cinnamon colored bear right along the Royal John Mine Road. It didn't really register with me at first that I was seeing a bear. The way he stared at me for a few moments was more like something a big goofy dog might do. I was wondering if the elk hunters a hundred yards behind him (but facing the wrong direction) were going to notice our encounter, when he ran off.

As I continued to drive down and down on the narrow and winding, but well maintained road, the rolling hills of green grass, with oak, piñon and juniper in the folds along the lower reaches of Cold Springs Canyon warmed my heart the way only a Gila landscape can.

68. Ciénega Trail - City of Rocks State Park

The Ciénega Trail is just north of NM-61, within City of Rocks State Park. The walk as shown on the following page is 2.07 miles long with minimal elevation change, 166' between the lowest and highest points on the trail with some up and down. The trail crosses the Faywood Ciénega near the park boundary. "The Faywood Ciénega is in the southwest corner of the Park. It is one of only two ciénegas in the area that have remained wet. The other is Faywood Hot Springs. The rest of the ciénegas in the area have dried, mostly due to water extraction, cattle grazing, and subsequent down-cutting of arroyo channels, which will lower water tables." (p. 10 of the 2016 Park Management Plan).

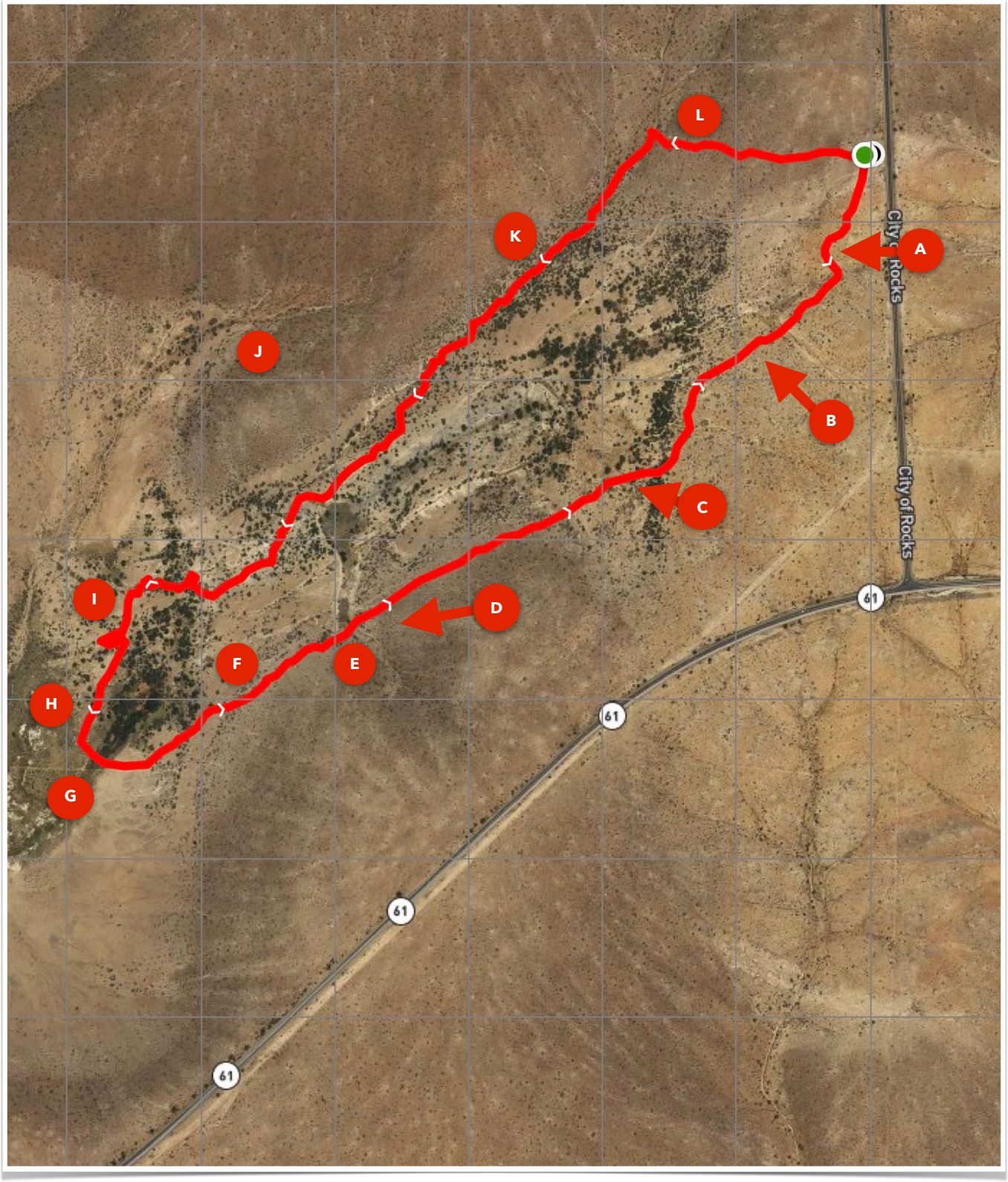
A ciénega "is a wetland system unique to the American Southwest and Northern Mexico. Ciénagas are alkaline, freshwater, spongy, wet meadows with shallow-gradient, permanently saturated soils in otherwise arid landscapes that often occupy nearly the entire widths of valley bottoms. That description satisfies historic, pre-damaged ciénagas, although few can be described that way now. Incised ciénagas are common today. Ciénagas are usually associated with seeps or springs, found in canyon head-waters or along margins of streams. Ciénagas often occur because the geomorphology forces water to the surface, over large areas, not merely through a single pool or channel. In a healthy ciénaga, water slowly migrates through long, wide-scale mats of thick, sponge-like wetland sod. Ciénaga soils are squishy, permanently saturated, highly organic, black in color (and) anaerobic." (Wikipedia 2/6/2026). Note that ciénaga may mean "marsh" in Spanish - as in Ciénaga Grande de Santa Marta, a large marsh in northeastern Colombia.

The following entries are keyed to the map on 68-2.

A. On March 5, *Lomatium nevadense*, Biscuit Root, was just beginning to express itself.

B. On May 20, we found many Band-winged Grasshoppers along the upper part of the trail. The individual pictured above is probably an Aztec Grasshopper, *Lactisa azteca*. In "Foliage Insects and Termites", Walt Whitford (January 3, 2020 issue of *The Black Range Naturalist*, p. 22) noted that Band-winged Grasshoppers are the "most common ground loving grasshoppers in the northern Chihuahuan Desert". Band-winged Grasshoppers are a subfamily (*Oedipodinae*), which has several tribes, which, in-turn, have several genera, each genus may have several species (or only one). Given the number of possible species which this individual can be attributed to, and given it is a photograph - not a specimen - I will stick with "probably" as my assurance of a correct identification.

C. *Krameria lanceolata*, Trailing Krameria, (photograph from May 20) is found in the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Coahuila and the U.S. states of New Mexico, Arizona, Texas and somewhat northward. Like other species in the genus, *K. lanceolata* is a root parasite, sucking a variety of nutrients - but especially water - from its hosts. The *Krameria* genus has an unusual pollination biology. Its flowers produce fatty oil, not nectar. Female bees of the genus *Centris* collect the oils from the modified external surfaces of the eliaphores (what appear to be upright flags), pollinating the flower in the process, and mix the oils with pollen to feed their larvae. Although the *Krameria* plants are wholly dependent upon Centris bees to effect their pollination, the relationship is not mutually exclusive - Centris bees utilize other oil-producing plants as well.



D. The trees at right center are at the end of a wash system and just east of the flat plain of the ciénaga. (Photograph by Mike Barnes, May 20, 2020.)

E. Four-wing Salt Bush, *Atriplex canescens*, (photographs from May 20) is found in much of the western United States and southward to southern Mexico. Vascular Plants of the Gila Wilderness notes that "The silvery appearance of the leaves is not due to hairs, but rather due to a covering of flaky scale-like structures, almost like dandruff." This species readily hybridizes with others in its genus, causing some disagreements about specific specimens. In the case of the type specimen for this species there is the following from Flora of North America: "Materials from the vicinity of the type locality of the species in South Dakota are low subherbaceous plants that differ from our shrubby tall material. However, the type area is presently covered with water from a dam on the Missouri River, and it is not possible to exclude the possibility of *A. canescens* as it has been interpreted for the past century to have existed at that site during the Lewis and Clark Expedition, if that is indeed where the lectotype was collected."

F. Wire Lettuce (aka Few-Flowered Wire Lettuce and Prairie Skeletonplant), *Stephanomeria pauciflora*, is found along the southern part of this loop walk. The range of this genus is confined to the western United States and northern Mexico. This particular species is found in Sonora and Chihuahua. Skeletonweed, which it may be confused with, is a noxious plant and is in a different genus. This species may hybridize with *S. tenuifolia*. Like many plants in our desert borderlands, this one has few leaves. (Photograph from May 20.)

G. Many species of grass are growing at the mid-point of this walk, where a wooden walkway (photograph from August 18) crosses the main "waterway" of the ciénaga. (Photograph of grasses from May 20, by Mike Barnes.)

For all practical purposes, the monsoon did not develop in 2020 so in August there was no water at the boardwalk pictured in "G". The grasses were just as beautiful, however, as they had been in May.

H. Most of the ciénaga appears to lie within the property bounds of Faywood Hot Springs. In spots there are islands of yucca and sunflower (August 18) "across the fence".

I. At the base of the trees we found many *Wislizenia refracta* – Spectacle Fruit, blooming in August. In the US this species is found in California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and far western Texas. In Mexico, it is found in Chihuahua and Sonora.

J. In the range of the unexpected were several *Koeberlinia spinosa* var. *spinosa*, Crown of Thorns, in flower (photo August 18). This is how I have grown accustomed to

G

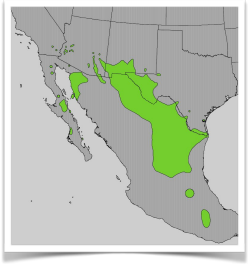
H

G

J

I

seeing this plant: A skeleton of stout sharp spines that you really do not wish to venture too close to, and we have that opportunity - as shown in the U.S. Geological Survey map of the range of this species at the right. The range is limited, and we are at the very northern boundary.



This is a rather remarkable plant. The leaves have diminished to scales, for instance. It is a tree, and most of the photosynthesis happens in the branches, thus their bright green color. Most sources consider it to be one of two species in the family *Koeberliniaceae*. The other, *K. holacantha* is found in Bolivia. The species does bloom however, as shown in "J" on this page.

K. The watershed for the ciénaga is limited, but at times the rainfall can be intense and the volume of water collected by the watershed can be substantial. Small arroyos channel the water from the hillsides into the ciénaga. On August 18, the arroyos had recently been scoured, indicating that a significant amount of water had flowed through them and down into the ciénaga. Such gullies diminish the viability of ciénagas.

K². Along the banks of the arroyo there were a few of the more common plants of the area, including *Zinnia grandiflora*, Plains Zinnia. But the fact that it is common here does not mean that the species is common world-wide. Its range within the US is limited to New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas. In Mexico, it is found in the north (Chihuahua, Coahuila, Sonora, and Zacatecas).

K³. We also found *Chrysactinia mexicana*, Damianita Daisy or simply Damianita (photograph from August 18) in the arroyo. Again, although common in our area, this species has a limited range. Its US range is limited to New Mexico and Texas. In Mexico, it range extends south to Puebla.

K⁴. And lastly, *Eriogonum pharnaceoides*, Wirestem Wild Buckwheat, Wright's Cudweed, Slender Cudweed, was growing on the rocky banks of the arroyo in mid-August. Within the US, its range is restricted to New Mexico, Arizona, and S. E. Nevada. In Mexico, it is found in Chihuahua.

The bird species found along this trail are typical of the area and include Loggerhead Shrike, Black-throated Sparrow, Northern Harrier, and various wrens.

The route shown earlier does not cover the established trail exactly. The northern half of the route depicted follows an arroyo which the formal trail crosses not far from the start (or end) of the trail. The established trail is roughly 1.9 miles long. Two loops making for a 4 mile walk is easily done, and if you are a runner this is a good trail for that.

L. This photograph was taken along the trail just before the arroyo. The light-colored rectangle just below the skyline, right of center, is the ciénega. The flora and fauna of this area are of the Chihuahuan Desert. City of Rocks State Park is at the western fringe of the area covered by the Black Range website and just barely included in the focus area of this publication.

The Ciénega Trail is a nice outing, but not at midday in June. Remember, there is no shade along this route.

69. Cooke's Townsite

The initial description of this walk is based on a venture in mid February to find a disjunct population of Arizona Cypress which are said to be in the area of Cooke's Peak.

This trail starts at Riley Spring (photo no. 1) south of the Cooke's Peak Township (ruins - photo 4). The spring has been tapped and fills a cattle tank. From the spring, the route follows a good dirt road north through mine ruins of various types: unframed shafts, framed shafts (photo no. 2), what appears to be a mill site, the remains of framed buildings, corrals, old car frames, etc..

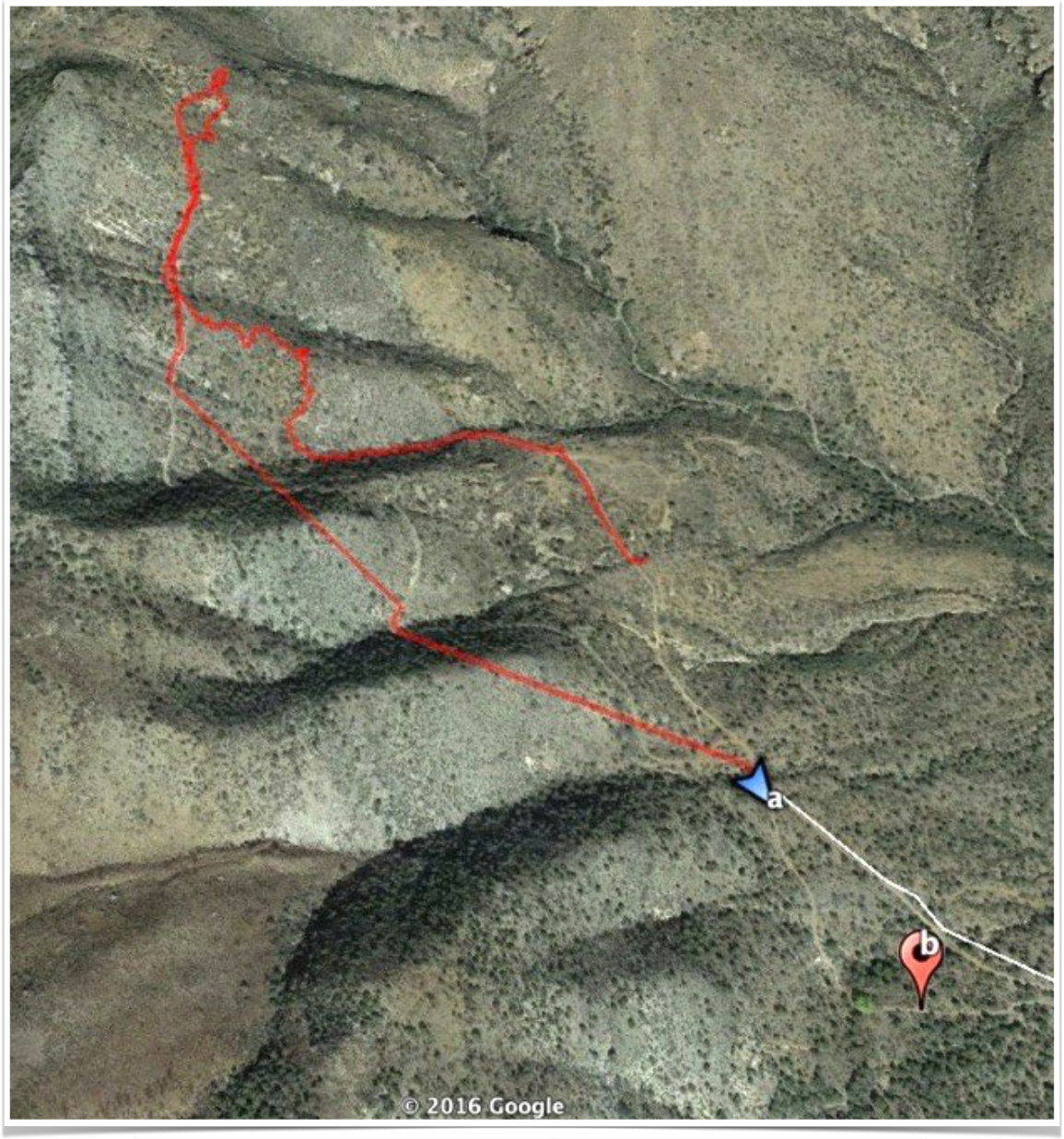
The walk starts and ends at point "b" on the map (following page). The road mentioned in the previous paragraph is clearly visible. At the point where the red line of our walk appears (within Cooke's Peak Township) our route followed an old road bed up hill, this quickly deteriorated to a route in a narrow and quite heavily vegetated ravine. After we reached some mine workings (photo no. 3) we exited the ravine to the north climbing up over a ridge and eventually making it to a "good" road. We followed the road up hill until we spotted two Arizona Cypress trees, just down slope from the road. I suspect that these trees were naturally planted, even though they are growing in an area where there was a significant amount of human activity - that is entirely supposition, however, and it is entirely possible that the trees were planted by humans. The largest cypress is actually growing on mine tailings.

We then headed back following the road down to the truck (the trail map shows two straight lines where the recorder dropped the signal, the walk followed the road which is visible on the map).

This is the general area of the Faywood Mine of the Jose or Cooks (Cooke's) Peak Mining District. Only two minerals are listed for the Faywood Mine on mindat.org, quartz and vanadinite, there were more.

The walk, as shown in red was a little over two miles, total distance was about 3 miles, with a minimum elevation of 6,004' and a maximum of 6,597', the maximum grade on the walk was 20%. The grade, if you travel on the road from point "b" to the farthest point in the upper left hand corner, is very modest. The elevation profile of that part of the walk shown in red is shown on the next page - the two peaks on the right side depict the elevation profile following the straight lines on the map above and do not represent the grade on the road.

A "road video" is available for some of this walk. The video starts at NM 26 and continues to the saddle north of Cooke's Peak, thus the road section of this walk.



Cooke's Townsite, photo by Devon Fletcher

70. Cooke's Peak

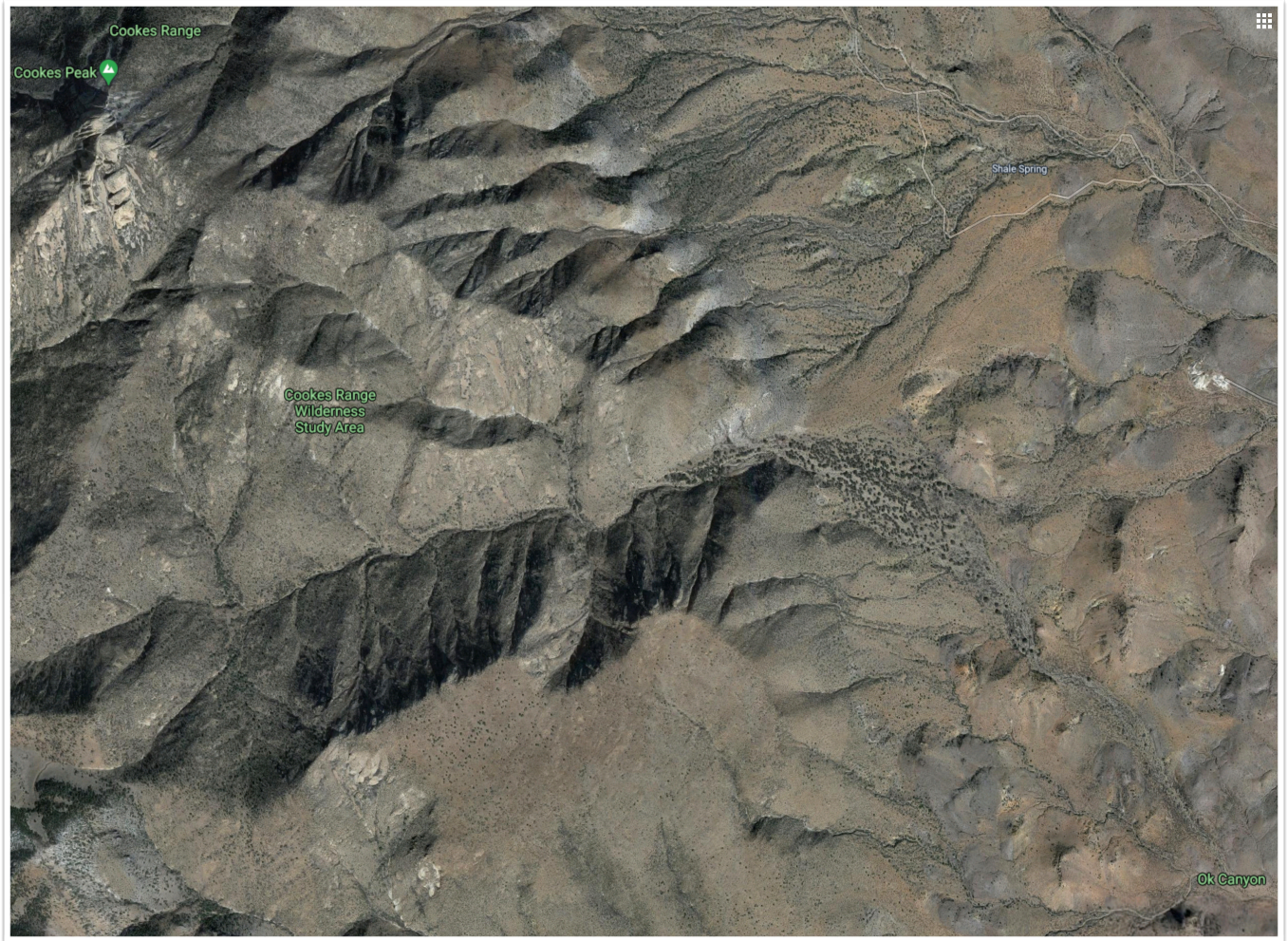
Contributed by Devon Fletcher

It was a cool fall morning when I did this hike quite a few years back. Our group of Las Cruces Sierra Clubbers and other hikers gathered together as an Apache man sang a beautiful song under the blue skies that framed "Standing Rock" or Cooke's Peak. We then started cross country heading southwest from the corral at the end of the county road, and soon picked up the old Boy Scout trail (so I was told the name) in OK Canyon. This trail was pretty easy to follow in this southeast facing canyon as it ascends passing alligator junipers and the occasional walnut tree. On the north side we began to climb very steeply on some switchbacks that weren't quite switchy enough, eventually reaching a saddle and then crossing the ridge, where the trail, cut high into the steep side of a tributary drainage descends (slightly) into an oak woodland at its very head. Here the trail, which had been easy to follow (and is also highly visible on Google Earth, which was not available at the time) was a bit hard to come by, and we did a bit of wandering around before finding it heading north up to the ridge. As we got closer to the final pitch up to the peak, it disappeared altogether and we made our way as best we could through the piñons, junipers and mountain mahogany until we reached the bare rock of the summit tower. There's a crack in the rock to follow here that we went on all fours to climb. Once we could stand again it was an easy walk to the top, although there is a small gap in the stone that has to be hopped over. It has long drop-offs on either side, so it's best to look straight head. This last part was a little nerve-rattling, even more so than when I climbed the highpoint of the Organ Mountains. The mountain top is not entirely bare as it might appear: they were few bush-like box elders and oaks (center photo right). We took in the sights and then descended by the same route. Round trip distance was around 9 miles. Elevation gain was over 3,000 feet.

Since the time that I did this hike the BLM has put it a road that bypasses some private property by first heading west and then north back to the road through Cooke's Peak ghost town. The point where it changes direction would be the place to park and start the route described here. Then, by walking southwest a 1/2 mile or so, one would pick up the trail on the north side of OK Canyon. It saves around 1.4 miles roundtrip, which is not much, I know, given the hefty overall length and elevation gain, but every little bit counts. For an even shorter, steeper adventure, with even more sketchy trail finding, read on.

The bypass road makes it possible (most likely with four wheel drive and high clearance) to drive further up the mountain through the old mining area and town. It is very rough, but a little less than 1.5 miles from where the bypass road rejoins the older road is a mine road that branches off to the southwest which now seems to be the preferred starting point for climbing the peak. It does eventually bring you to the same ridge on the southeast side of the summit tower from which point the ascent of the peak is the same as the OK Canyon hike. Check out Greg Magee's Day Hikes and Nature Walks in the Las Cruces-El Paso Area for a description of this route.

A "road video" is available for this track, from NM 26 to the saddle north of Cooke's Peak.



Above: Cooke's Peak, upper left, and OK Canyon, lower right. Below: OK Canyon access.

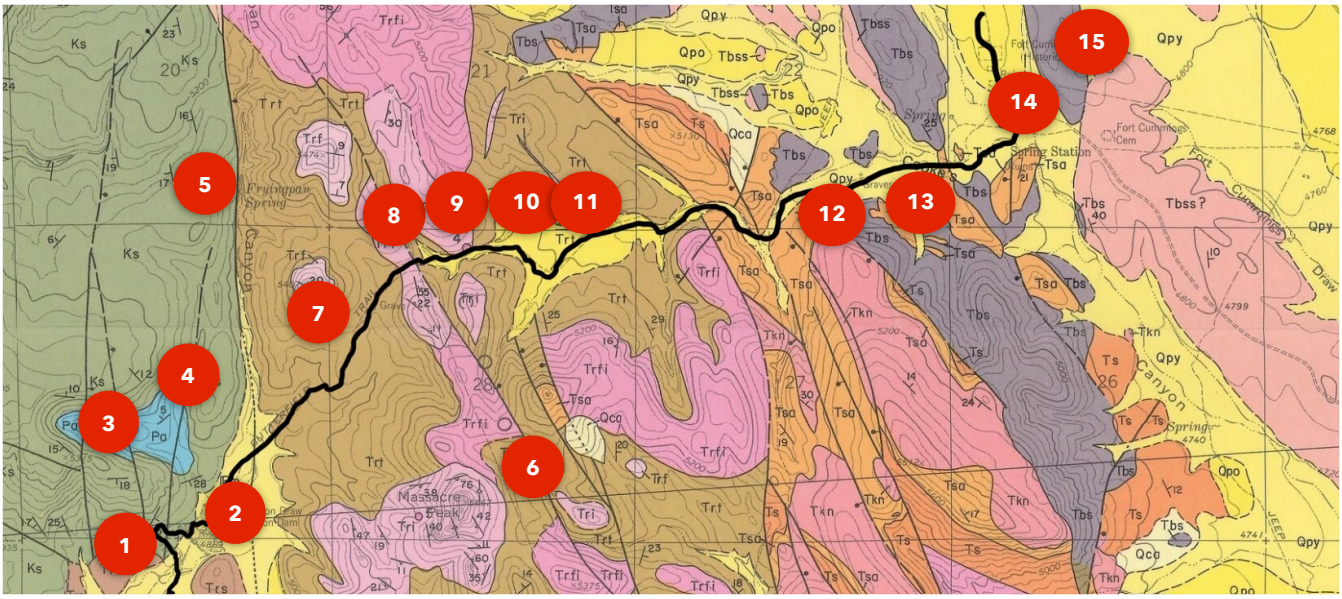
Cooke's Peak photos by Bob Barsch.
Cooke's Peak from the northeast (top left)
View from summit (top right)
View from summit (bottom

71. Cooke's Spring (Massacre) Pass

What do you call this trail? It has been called many things by the Anglos, many more by the Spaniards and Mexicans, and even more by the various native peoples. During the Anglo period it was part of the Gila River Train and Wagon Road, or the Butterfield Stage Route, or . . . . Whatever you call it, the route from the west side of the range starts at the Starvation Draw Detention Dam No. 4 ("1" on the geologic map below). It terminates on the east side at the ruins of Fort Cummings ("15" on the map below). The route which is steeped in cultural history is shown in black on the map. See the link for an extended discussion. The number protocol is consistent throughout this article and repeats on the map at the end of the article.

Geologically this route passes over Tertiary and Quaternary era Rock (alluvium). Most of the Tertiary rock is identified as the Rubio Peak Formation. The surrounding rock is also from the Tertiary. The Tbs formation on the east side of the map is Tertiary (Miocene era rock). The Ks rock to the west is from the Lower Cretaceous and the Pa unit is from the Lower Permian. (Download the Massacre Peak Geology Map)

1. **There is a series of detention dams in Starvation Draw. This route starts at Detention Dam 4. The range land of Starvation Draw begins to change at the dam. Just to the west of the dam there are nice Cane Cholla, *Cylindropuntia spinosior*. This particular plant had a Cactus Wren nest embedded in it. May.**



2. The area behind the dam to the northeast is rich in sediment and plants benefit from the greater amount of water in the soil. In this area there are numerous Desert Willow trees (photo below left) and very old Mesquite. Photographed on May 21, 2018.

3. A population of Echinocereus *chloranthus* subsp. *rhyolithensis* - or if you wish *E. rhyolithensis*, a newly described species - is found on the slopes in this area. Information is in short supply about the speciation determinations in cactus and they are often contentious and uncertain. We treat the population as the new species, but . . . .

4. On the hillside above the dam there is one of the best Mimbres-era petroglyph sites in the southwestern part of the United States. (See www.ancientpeoples.org for photos.) At the base of the hillside, in the Ks formation, there are many grinding holes. Ks is "Sarten Sandstone - Light-gray to yellowish-gray, medium to massive-bedded, fine to medium-grained sandstone . . . crossbedding and ripple marks fairly common . . . ." (See map link on the previous page.) Most of the glyphs are in the Pa formation, mostly on the sandstone. Pa is "Abo Formation . . . breccias, conglomerates, red shale, shaly limestone, and fine sandstone." (See map link.)

5. Frying Pan Spring. A fault runs down Frying Pan Canyon, dipping to the east. To the west of the fault is the Ks formation mentioned above, to the east is Trt (tuff of the Rubio Peak Formation) capped by "Dark-gray to black basalts, basaltic andesites, andesites, and latites" and Trf, which is also part of the Rubio Peak Formation. The eroded area through the rock is most likely the fault line.

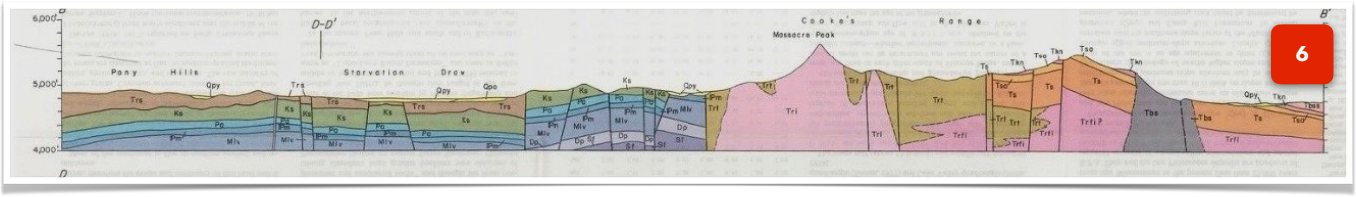
6. The geologic map depicts three cross-sections. The "B" line is shown here and runs just south of this route. It is the diagonal line marked as "6" on the previous page. There is more relief (elevation change) along the "B" transect than along the route discussed here (which follows the pass).

7. Generally the area to the north of this route is in a Wilderness Study Area where the use of motor vehicles is prohibited. My experience in this area is limited so I am not able to access the degree to which these regulations are adhered to. On February 7 of this year we shared the route with a pair of ATV's which seemed to be compliant.

8. Near the crest of the pass, there is a road which forks off of the Butterfield Trail and heads northwest to Frying Pan Spring. Although I knew the location of the spring, and the old stage route, I had never really understood what the route was like for groups like the Mormon Battalion when they came through this area. After leaving Cooke's Spring they crossed the pass on this route and camped near the detention dam, after getting water at Frying Pan spring. I had always assumed that they must have made camp and then headed up the wash to the spring. It is more likely that they took this cut-off and went directly to the spring, making camp near-by or near the detention dam (which is a large flat area). Makes sense when you walk it . . . (No photo.)

9. Looking east along the route from the high point of the pass. ATV's referenced above are center left.

10. The view of Massacre Peak is striking from this point on the route. (See next page for added description.)

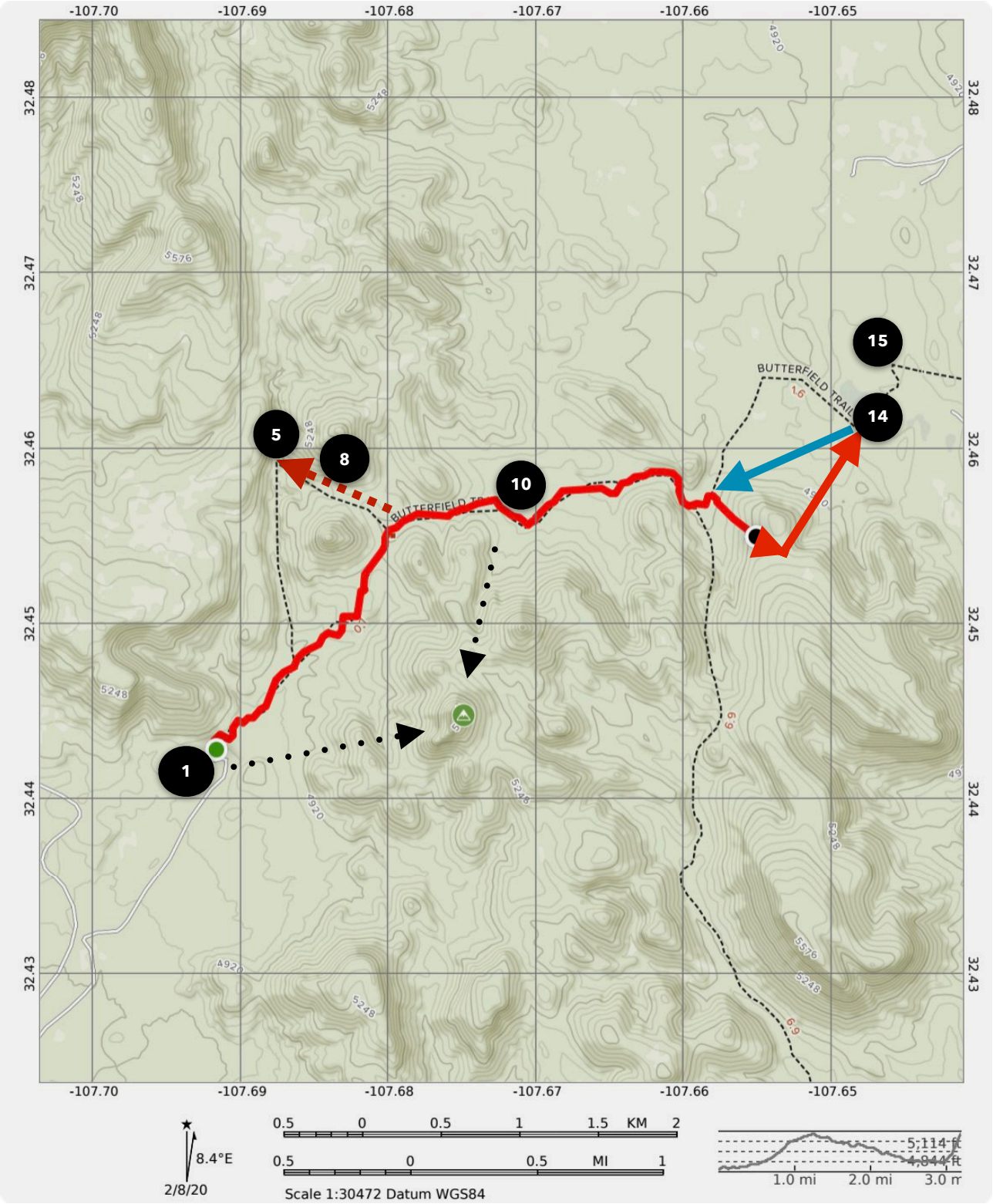


10. Massacre Peak from the detention dam (No. 1 on the map), the dotted black arrow on the map on the following page shows the angle of view. Massacre Peak is named for, you guessed it, the massacre of anglos by indians at the base of the peak. The location of massacres of indians by anglos are rarely referenced on maps.

10. Massacre Peak has a dramatically different aspect when viewed from about the half-way point on the trail. For this spot it is a distinctive landmark. The dotted black arrow shows the direction of the photographic shot.

11. Stream cuts in the area often show dramatic geological strata. In the case of this photo, tuff (Rubio Peak Formation Trt) over other layers.

12. Mormon Tea, *Ephedra trifurca*, is found along the route at this point.



13. We found this Spiny Cliff Brake, *Pellaea truncata*, beneath a juniper which provide some shade for a water break. This species is found in the American southwest and northern Mexico. The type specimen of this species was collected in the Mule Mountains of Arizona in August 1911 by Leslie N. Goodding. Goodding was considered a leading expert on the flora of the Southwestern United States.

The route shown on the map above is roughly 3.6 miles each way. The walk up the ridge (straight red arrow) we had climbed to view the country to the east was the most strenuous, a walk up a steep ranch road. From the high point we then turned northeast and headed down slope to the old Butterfield Stage corral site where we had a late lunch ("14" on the maps). This part of the route is shown by the red arrows. After lunch we made our return trip via the route shown by the blue-green arrow, this northern route skirts the ridge we had just crossed and is basically flat.

The view from the top of the ridge impressed me greatly. The valley south of Lake Valley spreads out both north and

south of where we were. These are the Nutt Grasslands, the northern edge of the Chihuahuan Desert in our area. I was also impressed with how difficult it was to pick out the ruins of Fort Cummings, even though I knew where they would be - I might not have found them except for the fact that the roof of the spring house at Cooke's Spring was more-or-less visible.

We plotted the trail on February 7 and it proved to be a good time for a hike. There is little shade along the route, except for the occasional juniper. During the heat of the summer there are more flowers in bloom, more reptiles to be seen, and in general more to see from a natural history perspective - but there will be a price if you go at this time of year.

On our walk during February several things became more clear to me. I had long considered the pass to be simply a question of getting from one water source to the next. To fully understand how important this consideration was to the peoples of the southwest prior to the modern age please read Wood Plenty, Grass Good, Water None by Harley Shaw. But I had never considered how easy this pass is.

This pass had a terrible reputation in the late 1800's when stages, riders, and cattle drives had to deal with attacks from the Apaches and robberies from Anglos and Mexicans. A lot of people died along this route. There are many ambush sites along the way, if you are thinking in that vein it becomes painfully clear why this was a dangerous place.

Three and a half miles gets you through the pass, from Cooke's Spring to Starvation Draw and on your way to the Mimbres River. And you have the option of a stop at Frying Pan Spring if you wish (note that this spring is often dry).

14. Among the possible reptile species you can encounter is the Long-nosed Leopard Lizard. It can grow to 10 inches in length and is capable of jumping up to two feet when catching prey (and I assume at other times). "A seasonal breeding coloration develops in adult females: orange to red pigment emerges on the sides of the head, flanks, thighs, and the ventral surface of the tail." (*Lizards of the American Southwest, A Photographic Field Guide*, Lawrence L. C. Jones and Robert E. Lovich editors, specific article by Bradford D. Hollingsworth, Rio Nuevo Publishers, p. 124.) These photographs are from Cooke's Spring and Frying Pan Canyon Spring.

14. Cooke's Spring is a lesson in the natural history of our area. In 1851 it was described as "a pool, some 50 feet across, surrounded by rushes. The water is a little brackish, but the grass in the vicinity is excellent." Later, after the sheep and cattle drives, after the wagon trains, after - well you get the picture - after people, it was little more than a mud hole. But there was water. In 1881, the AT & SF Railroad built the spring house shown (from 1882) to the right and piped the water to the Florida Station on their railway. By that time the use of the pass as a transportation corridor had ceased to exist. Now it is used by ranchers, hikers, hunters, and ATV owners. There are no longer any big trees at the site.

15. Some of the ruins of Ft. Cummings. From the height of the ridge above they were easy to overlook but easy enough to discern when you were able to pick out where they were in the scrub and grasslands below. These walls are of adobe and will dissolve into the earth if it continues to rain in our area, all thirteen inches a year.

72. Frying Pan Spring

The walk to Frying Pan Spring is surrounded by history. The walk is on the southwestern edge of the Cooke's Range. It is a beautiful place, full of colorful flora (dozens of mature Desert Willows) and exotic fauna (Long-nosed Leopard Lizards). It is also rich in human history; known for its petroglyph site and early travelers of European heritage. Photographs of the glyphs at that site may be seen on the ancientpeoples.org website.

The road video to the area is shown here. The condition of the road varies significantly with the rains.

If you are interested in the experiences of Cooke and the Mormon Battalion as they marched through the area please see page 41 of Cooke's Peak - Pasaron Por Aqui - A Focus on United States History in Southwestern New Mexico, by Donald Howard Couchman, 1990 - Cultural Resources Bulletin No. 7 of the United States Bureau of Land Management. The route followed is shown on the map to the right from page 40.

The walk from the Starvation Creek Check Dam site to Frying Pan Spring (shown in red on the map on the next page) is about 4 miles roundtrip. It starts along the track which was the stage route and then turns north (at the approximate location of Cooke's camp) up Frying Pan Canyon. The spring is usually dry.

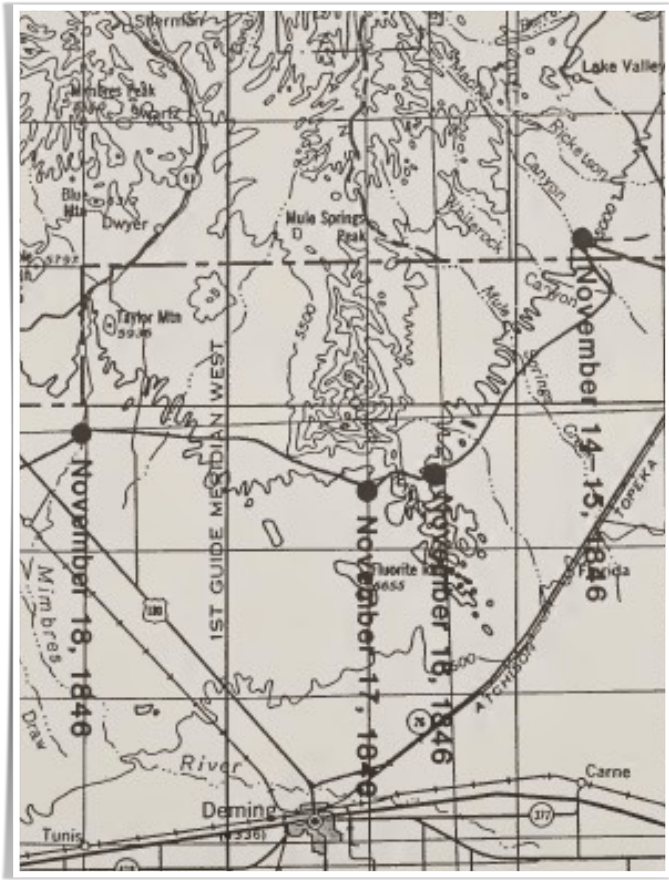
Now for a bit of surmising: The Mimbres people may have had a check dam at the approximate location of the current retention dam. This would replicate the situation at the Pony Hills glyph site just 5 miles to the west. A small check dam would have impounded enough water for the flat fields to the east of the dam. The glyphs, mortar holes, habitation enclosures etc. found on the hillside go hand and hand with an agricultural site.

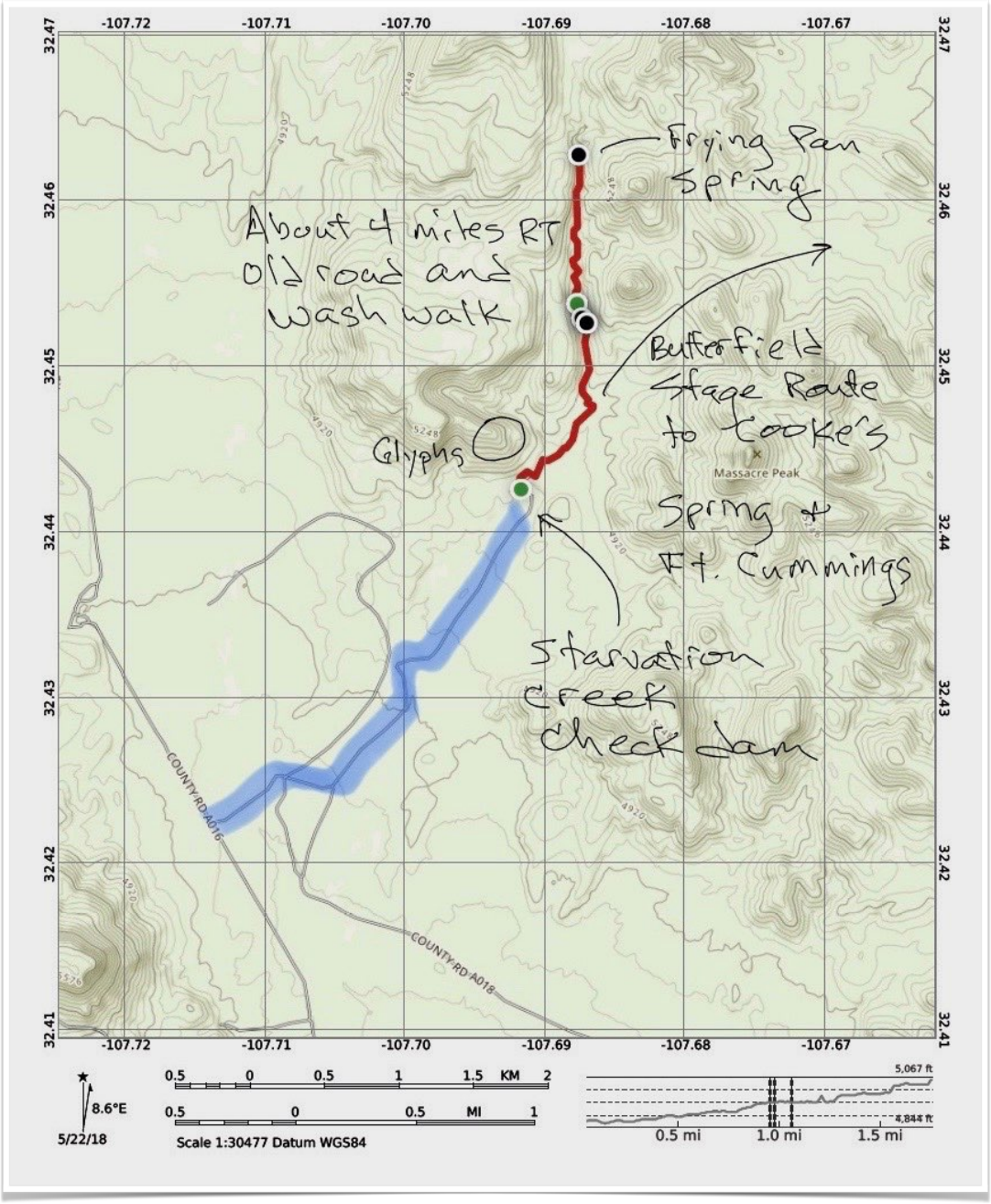
This is a nice walk with flora, fauna, and history. There is little shade, no dependable water, and the usual poisonous creatures and carnivores may be present. The walk is along an old road and up a wash; footing may not be stable.

Although a lot of attention is paid to Cooke's passage in the discussion above, it should be noted that he was far from the first to use this route/spring. This was a well known passage by the time the Mormon Battalion came along.

1. Frying Pan Spring Stock Tank.

2. In the past, metal pipe ran from Frying Pan Spring to the stock tank. Now hoses are used to transfer the water.





3. **The capped spring.**

4. **Just north of the spring there is a plunge site in the wash, probably very dramatic if it rains.**

73. Sadler Mine

The Sadler Mine (Saddler Mine, in some sources) is located at the southeastern end of the Pony Hills (Fluorite Ridge), northeast of Deming. At about MP 6, turn north off of NM 26, on to Greenleaf Road (Green Leaf Road and/or County Road 16, or A016 in some sources). When you reach the Pony Hills Ridge, which are the hills on the left of the road as you approach from the south, there will be several structures on your left. These structures were part of the Greenleaf Mine complex. The road to the Saddler Mine is more or less obvious, high clearance is recommended.

The abandoned mine marker for the Sadler Mine adit is shown below. The marker for the Sadler Mine Stope, as well as the stope, is shown in the right column. An adit is a horizontal hole dug in the side of a mountain. A stope is a hole, it can have a number of configurations depending on the method of mining which is used. To be a stope, the ore/mineral/etc. must have been excavated from the area to create the hole (vs. a shaft or adit which may be dug to get to a body of ore etc.).

Fluorite was the object of mining at Greenleaf and Sadler, an especially important commodity during the Second World War. That is why the Federal Government built the access road into the area. See New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources Bulletin 21 - *Fluorspar Resources of New Mexico* - prepared by the US Geological Survey. pp 123 - 142 for more information about this area, including an excellent write-up of the mining and mining history of this site.

The Sadler Mine is the oldest fluorspar mine in the Fluorite Ridge area. It was developed on the Susan No. 1 claim in 1909 by the American Fireman's Mining Company. Before being abandoned it was operated by several other entities, including G. M. Sadler. Some of the surface structures are still visible at the Sadler Mine (photos on the next page and in this photo gallery). Aerial video of this area may be viewed here.

The Saddler Mine Stope Abandonment Marker is shown bottom left and the stope is shown bottom right.

Following page: Mine infrastructure in the left column and a stope at the upper right. The other two photographs show the area looking east. In the center right photo the buildings of the Greenleaf mine are visible.

Abandoned Mine marker for the Saddler Mine Adit (above) Saddler Mine Pony Hills (below)

74. China Draw

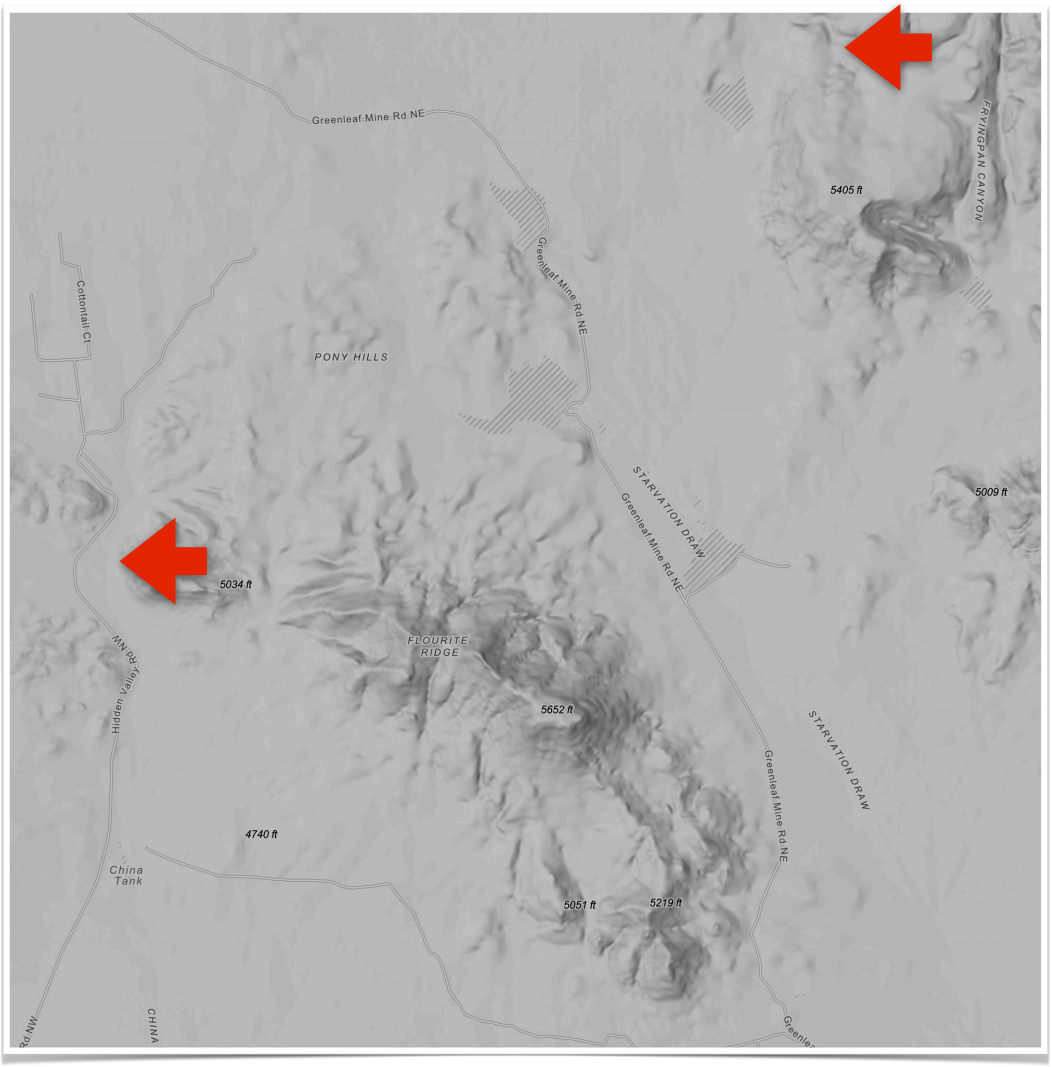
Contributed by Devon Fletcher

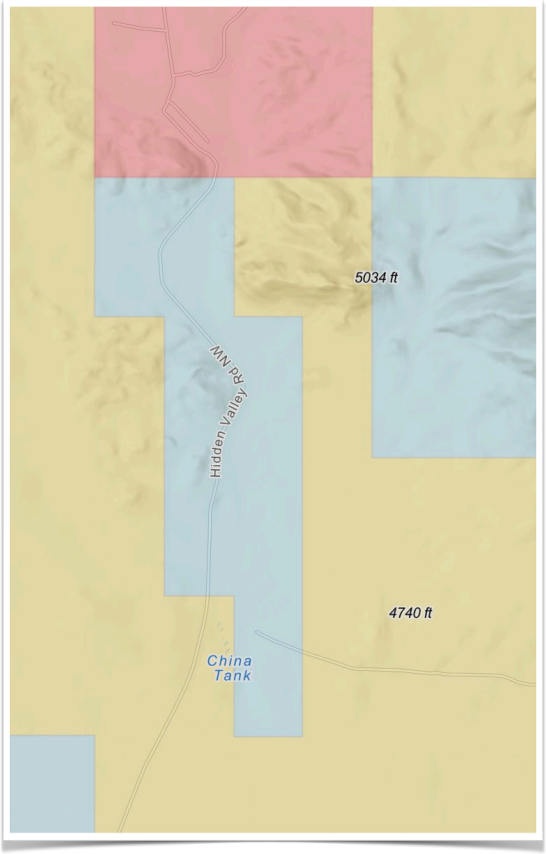
This small rock art site is in Luna County, north of Deming, close to the larger and more well-known sites at Pony Hills and Frying Pan Canyon. The China Draw Site is on a section of state trust land, a stone's throw away from the Hidden Valley Ranch RV resort, which is at the terminus of well-maintained county road (see left arrow on map at the top of the next page). I am sure it gets visited by lots of people, yet on the day I visited with friends, we were the only folks there, wandering among the sandstone outcrops and boulders, and even climbing on top of a few to see what we could discover. Lower down just up from the bank of the draw is a dark gray rock covered with an assortment of elaborate petroglyphs. Further up the hillside are three orange and tan outcrops that are about 15 feet high. They are surrounded by numerous grinding mortars and have petroglyphs on every side and on top. Many of the glyphs are similar in style to those found at Pony Hills and Frying Pan, but as always there are few that seem unique to the site. We explored the many outcrops, boulders and few cliffs, but it seemed that most of the art was concentrated in these two spots. I had begun to walk up to the higher cliffs, when I heard "the buzz" and quickly scoped out the thin neck and triangular head of a blacktail rattler in little hollow among the rocks. I turned back, so there could be a few more petroglyphs up high although I doubt it. I have been very close to this site on two different hikes over the years, and I've known of its existence for many years, but for some reason had never took the time to look at it. Given its ease or access, and perhaps even without, it certainly exceeded all of our expectations.

The state, BLM, and private land boundaries at China Draw. The blue color indicates state land, the reddish tone is private, and the dirty yellow color is BLM managed land. A New Mexico State Trust Lands recreation permit is required for visiting sites on state lands.

Additional photos from this site can be found in the photo galleries of ancientpeoples.org.

See also: McGee Canyon (right arrow on map below).


Greenleaf Mine Rd NE
5405 ft
FRYINGPAN CANYON
Greenleaf Mine Rd NE
Cottontail Ct
PONY HILLS
STARVATION DRAW
Greenleaf Mine Rd NE
5009 ft
5034 ft
FLOURITE RIDGE
Hidden Valley Rd NW
5652 ft
STARVATION DRAW
Greenleaf Mine Rd NE
4740 ft
China Tank
5051 ft
5219 ft
CHINA


5034 ft
Hidden Valley Rd NW
4740 ft
China Tank

75. McGee Canyon

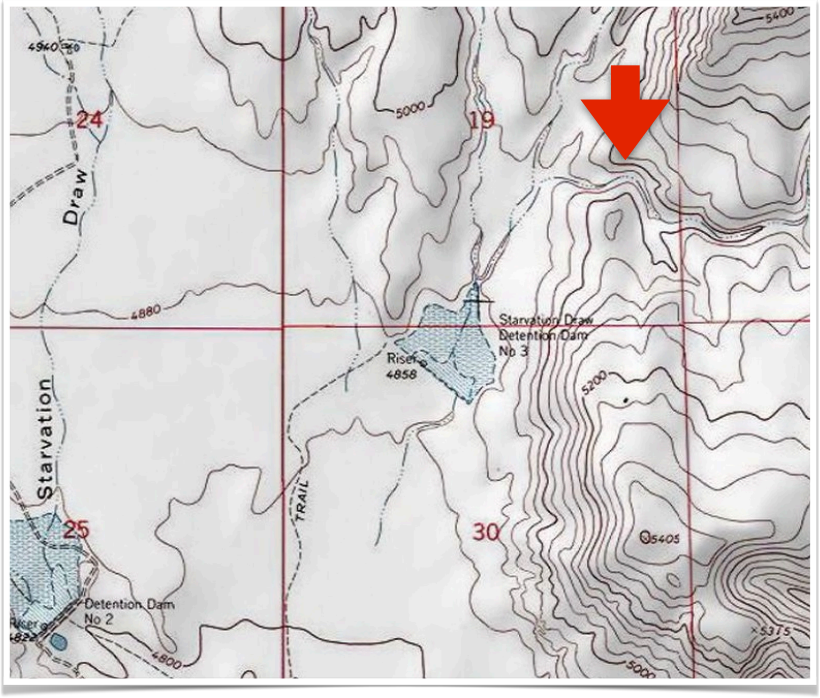
Contributed by Devon Fletcher

To reach McGee Canyon, drive north from NM-26 on the Greenleaf Mine Road (a well maintained county road). We drove north until we reached a very slow road just past Starvation Draw Dam #2, stopping at a point about a mile directly west of McGee Canyon. It is possible to halve that distance by using a different low maintenance road that also heads northeast from a point close to the east end of the Starvation Draw Dam # 1.

McGee Canyon is a rocky little defile on BLM land, that incises itself deeply into the ridge that is the western edge of Frying Pan Canyon. It heads west for less than a mile before joining the much larger arroyo that is dammed by Starvation Draw Dam #3. Coming at it from the west we crossed creosote flats, climbed a few mounds, eased in and out a couple of large arroyos, and stepped over another road as well. It is not on maps as far as I can tell. Where it starts, I can't say. All the while we kept a line toward some cliffs that we took to be the entrance to the little canyon. At the mouth was a large juniper, and there were more further up the stream course as well. There was also the high dried grasses of last summer, and much scrub oak, which were further indicators that water lingers in this canyon and that it may even have seasonal springs. We all speculated that in times past perhaps China Draw and Starvation Draw themselves had, if not perennial flow, then extended seasons of surface flow. Which may explain why this place was attractive to ancient peoples.

We found an old mine with blue-gray tailings that had hardened like cement, a "cave" made from 3 massive boulders leaning against each other, grinding mortars, and of course many petroglyphs.

What we did not find was the icon for this site: the large Sunman, a humanoid with a small head, large eyes and a rectangular spiral for a body. I would gladly revisit to find him.

NOTE: The case could be made that the art at the McGee Canyon and China Draw sites are less abundant and perhaps lacks the craftsmanship, artistry and imagination that is so apparent at both Pony Hills and Frying Pan Canyon, but their proximity makes it easy to visit all four with two different hikes. China Draw can be seen by extending a visit to Pony Hills (or vice versa) perhaps just a little more than a mile, and very short loop hike could allow one to visit both Frying Pan and McGee Canyon.

Additional photos from this site can be found in the photo galleries of ancientpeoples.org.