

# The Nature Conservancy's Santa Fe Canyon Preserve Trail

Welcome to The Nature Conservancy's Santa Fe Canyon Preserve Trail. The trail is a 1.3 mile loop through the Santa Fe River riparian area and historic dam site. As there are multiple trailheads and joining trails to this loop, the guide can be followed starting from anywhere in the preserve. Interpretive signs located along the trail provide information on the history of the preserve and the important role it played in Santa Fe's water supply. Read the signs, follow this guide and enjoy your hike through the canyon. The trail is for pedestrian use only. Please no dogs or bikes.

## 1 Redirection of a River

The Santa Fe River has been disconnected from its channel for over 100 years. The path through the gate to the right leads to a diversion ditch. Originally, the ditch was the location of a pipeline used to direct water around Two-Mile Dam during construction in 1893-1894. During a large flood in 1904, the pipe became unusable, was removed and replaced by the present open channel.



Beaver foraging

## 2 Two-Mile Reservoir

It wasn't until Santa Fe built a water storage and delivery system that the city was able to develop into what it is today. Two-Mile dam was the second water supply project on the Santa Fe River, after the Stone Dam, which was built in 1881. The terrace you are standing on is built from the earth and rock removed from Two-Mile dam. It was seeded with native grasses, wildflowers and shrubs.

## 3 A Walk Underwater

When Two-Mile Reservoir was full, this area was submerged. How deep was the water? Across the valley a distinct high water mark or 'bathtub ring' can be identified by the hillside vegetation. Pinon and juniper do not grow in moist soils, can you spot the high water mark? In 1976, the water treatment plant across Upper Canyon Road was built and Two-Mile Reservoir was no longer used as a primary water storage reservoir to avoid pumping costs. The dam itself was not removed until 1994, when it was determined to be a safety concern.



Bathtub ring

## 4 Diversion Channel

The diversion channel along Upper Canyon Road has served as a means of reducing sediment in Two-Mile Reservoir, but now that the reservoir is gone, we have an opportunity to return flows to this biologically important reach of the Santa Fe River. In this area the river only receives water from seepage from the channel and occasional overflow from the upstream dam. Efforts are being made to reconnect the original river channel with water flow from upstream.

Look for this plant.

This is called four-wing salt bush, can you see why? It's a native plant that grows well in alkaline and xeric soils. The seed and leaves are an important food source for local wildlife including deer, small mammals, and birds. Native Americans also harvested the leaves and seeds for food. The seeds were collected and cooked just like oatmeal!



## 5 Once farm fields, now beaver ponds

Early Spanish farmers used water from the river to irrigate fields and orchards. Mostly hidden by thick willows and tall cottonwood trees, the trail crosses shallow stone walls where fields had once been terraced for cultivation. This area that had once been farm fields was submerged under a reservoir for 100 years!



Beaver

## 6 Riparian vegetation

Look for signs of beaver activity in this bosque of bluestem willow, coyote willow and narrow leaf, Rio Grande and lanceleaf cottonwoods. Downed cottonwoods show evidence of beaver teeth, and beaver dams across the canyon floor create ponds that host stands of water-loving cattails and willows.

## 7 The Old Stone Dam

Built in 1881, this dam was constructed to provide water to a growing city. The agricultural community felt that their way-of-life was threatened by the privatization of water, and the construction of the dam was met with much opposition. After a severe flood in 1904, the reservoir filled in with sediment. The natural river channel behind the dam was lost and a pipeline was constructed to deliver water to Two-Mile Reservoir. The trail you are walking on now is sediment deposited during this large flood. From the bench behind the Stone Dam you can see a metal staff gauge used to measure water level in Two-Mile Reservoir.

## 8 The Upper Watershed

At this point the trail splits. The right fork crosses the diversion channel and ascends to a dirt road leading to the Randall Davey Audubon Center. To complete the Canyon Preserve loop, follow the left fork which leads along the northern edge of the canyon towards the trailhead.

**P**  
Randall Davey Audubon Center

--- Preserve Trail  
--- Other Trails  
— Road  
**P** Trailhead Parking



## 9 Sediment Fence

The trail on the north side of the canyon continues along a metal fence that was built by the WPA (Works Progress Administration) in the 1940's in order to prevent dirt and debris from muddying the waters of Two-Mile Reservoir. Keeping the water clean was especially important, because water from the reservoir was not even treated until 1978!

As you walk along the sediment fence, don't miss the rocks! You might find some things that will surprise you.

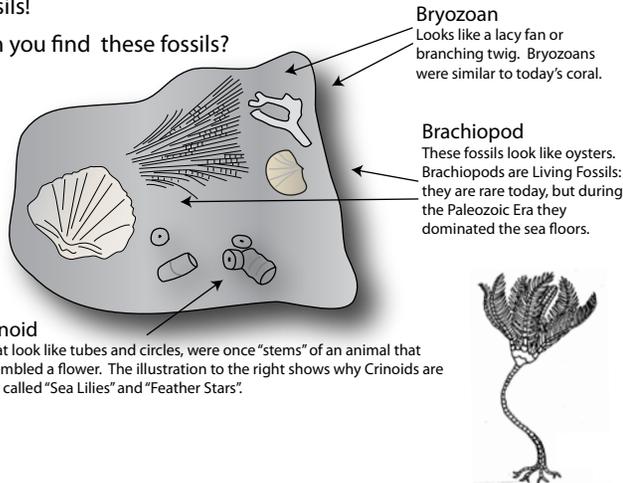
### Pink rocks

This pink rock is called gneiss (pronounced "nice"). It was formed deep within the Earth, where it flowed like taffy, some 1.5 billion years ago. During the formation of the Rocky Mountains, 70 million years ago, it was pushed up to the surface as brittle, fractured rock.

### Sea shells at 7000' above sea level?

A little further along the trail, layered and blocky grey beds of rock appear. These rocks are limestone that was originally formed from deposits in a shallow sea, about 300 million years ago. Look closely at the limestone beds, these rocks are full of fossils!

Can you find these fossils?



Winter in the Preserve

The Santa Fe Canyon Preserve is owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy, a private, international non-profit organization. The Nature Conservancy's mission is to *preserve the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.*

Pets and bicycles, while welcomed on the Dale Ball Foothill Trails, are not allowed on the preserve trails.



RECYCLABLE

If you like, you may keep this brochure. If not, please share it with a friend so someone else may use it.

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This trail guide was prepared by The Santa Fe Watershed Association in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy. This trail was built and is being maintained by The Nature Conservancy. For more information, please contact:

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Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

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## 10 A Natural Restoration

The area below was a narrow river channel until a few years ago. Beavers are actively working to change this area from a river channel to a wetlands. Beaver have recolonized the area and are transforming the river channel into a series of ponds and wetlands. Biologists believe the Santa Fe River on the east side of town looked much like this area in pre-colonial times before the area was settled by Spanish colonialists. The Nature Conservancy has a continuing program to remove non-native vegetation and has fenced some cottonwood trees so that a seed source for new trees will remain.

11 To complete the loop and return to the Cerro Gordo Trailhead, go through the gate and follow the Dale Ball Trail as it winds back below the old reservoir. Look for fossils in the rocks along the trail! Thank you for visiting the Santa Fe Canyon Preserve.

