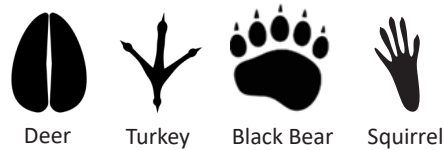


#16 Critters on the Trail

While dogs are required to be on leash on the Foothills Nature Trail, and their tracks are common, keep an eye out for these other tracks:



#17 Pause for Wildflowers



In this area you can find rabbitbrush, prickly pear cactus, sage, curlycup gumweed, asters and Liatris (also known as Blazing Star or Gayfeather). A plant of three names, Liatris is a late summer or early fall bloomer. Pick up a flower brochure at the Nature Cabin in Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park. It has information and illustrations of many of the wildflowers in the area.

#18 Sun and Slopes – Canyon Habitats

Look out into the canyon, see how the two sides are different? North facing slopes are wetter, with ponderosa pine forest habitat, home to squirrels and birds of all kinds. South facing slopes are drier with mountain shrub habitat, home to bighorn sheep.



#19 The Power of Nature and the Rock

Note the bending twisting layers of rock. Rocks that undergo a change from their original form (either layered sediments or hardened volcanic molten rock) are referred to as metamorphic. Try tracing a layer with your finger. Imagine the heat and pressure that had to be present to form this metamorphic rock.

#20 Take in the View

You have climbed about 423 feet to an elevation of just over 6,200 feet. You have a little farther to go and a steeper climb to get to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) shelter. Along the way you can catch your breath by stopping to smell some ponderosa bark, is the scent vanilla or butterscotch?



#21 A Place to Rest – Since 1935

In the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) saw this knoll as a place for nature contemplation. Men working for the federal government during the Great Depression built this overlook, a picnic shelter and restrooms (now the History Center) at Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park. Visit the History Center in the park for more CCC information.

Rules & Regulations to Preserve the Foothills Nature Trail:

- Pets must be leashed and under human control at all times. Owners must pick up and remove pet waste.
- Please leave all wildflowers to seed their next generations for pollinators.
- No camping, open fires or flames.
- Discharge or use of firearms, projectiles or fireworks is prohibited.
- Collecting, removing, destroying, or defacing any natural or man-made object is prohibited.
- Smoking and alcohol are not permitted.
- Horses/pack stock are allowed but not recommended (rocky sections and high use).
- Littering, graffiti or markings on open lands or facilities is prohibited. Pack out all litter.
- Motorized vehicles (except authorized) are not allowed on trails. Park in designated areas only.
- Remote control (RC) motorized vehicles, including drones, are not allowed on site.
- Christmas tree cutting is regulated by the US Forest Service and a permit is required to cut trees in designated USFS areas only. Fines are imposed.

Notice of Non-Discrimination

It is the policy of the City of Loveland to provide equal services, programs and activities without regard to race, color, national origin, creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or age and without regard to the exercise of rights guaranteed by state or federal law. It is the policy of the City of Loveland to provide language access services at no charge to populations of persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) and persons with a disability who are served by the City.

For more information on non-discrimination or for translation assistance, please contact the City's Title VI Coordinator at TitleSix@CityofLoveland.org or 970.962.2372. The City will make reasonable accommodations for citizens in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

For more information on ADA or accommodations, please contact the City's ADA Coordinator at ADACoordinator@CityofLoveland.org or 970.962.3319. Title VI and ADA Grievance Policy and Procedures can be located on the City of Loveland website at: lovgov.org

City of Loveland Parks & Recreation
Open Lands & Trails Division
500 E. Third St., Suite 200
Loveland, CO 80537 • lovgov.org/OpenLands



Foothills Nature Trail



Round Mountain Trailhead

Two trails begin at this trailhead: Foothills Nature Trail and Sheep Mountain Summit Trail. The first 0.3 mile of path is shared by both.

This brochure highlights features of the environment along the Foothills Nature Trail. Match the corresponding post numbers for a description of each feature. This 2.1 mile (round-trip) trail will take you to the overlook shelter built in 1935 by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

A Word About Your Hike

You are in the Foothills Life Zone. Colorado has several life zones, with Plains at the lowest elevation and Alpine at the highest. As you travel the trail, you'll learn about many organisms that call the foothills home. The trail was formerly used to provide access to the waterline that once fed the City of Loveland's hydroelectric plant in Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park. You can visit the remains of the original plant, destroyed by flood in 1976. The replacement plant, destroyed by the 2013 flood, has been completely removed.



#1 You Are Not Alone on This Trail

Among the rocks and up the hill, you can see a shrub known as Mountain Mahogany. The mahogany shows signs of being browsed by deer and elk. When the branch ends are “trimmed” by teeth, many smaller sprouts grow. The curled, fuzzy seed tails of mountain mahogany can give the shrub a silvery look.



#2 The Park Below – Visit History

Consider visiting Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park after your hike. From here you can see the ADA fishing access and picnic shelters. Interpretive signs tell of the original homestead, flood history, and changes over the last 100 years. The mountain park is open April through October, weather permitting.

#3 Things Are Always Changing

As our climate warms, the plants that are better adapted to less moisture and warmer temperatures grow in number. This includes prickly pear, cactus, sage and yucca.

The fiber of the spine-tipped yucca leaves was used by early inhabitants of the area to make rope and other useful items.



#4 Trees Are Depending on Us

Have you found evidence of wildfire? It is up to us to prevent wildfire, by being careful with open flames and using techniques such as thinning trees to remove fuels. We also need to be responsible forest users. Did you find the two Junipers cut for holiday trees? Without a US Forest Service permit or when on City property, this is not fuel thinning; it is vandalism. There is more information on fire mitigation at the trailhead kiosk.



#5 Ground Cover is Key in Nature’s Culverts

Here you begin to see ravines that collect excess rainwater and direct it down slope. They don’t stay wet very long but support shrubs and other plants where there is enough sunlight. They fill with needles, leaves and logs. Think what the runoff would be like without these to slow the water. Burned areas lack these natural obstacles and rivers below them are prone to flooding.

#6 A View of the River Road

Looking below, try to imagine the road being completely under water. US Highway 34 was destroyed by flood in 1976 and in 2013. If there is a large storm upstream, or if the water level rises or color changes, it is time to leave (or climb!). In 2013, 15 inches of rain fell in 7 days.

#7 Where’s the Big Pipe?

Locals may remember the large pipe stretching across this “nature’s culvert.” It brought water to the hydroelectric plant below. With the dam destroyed in 2013, the pipe and other infrastructure was removed. There is no longer a potable water source in Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park. Bring your own water!

#8 Signs and Sounds

While the “Bear Aware” sign stands out, there are other signs and sounds telling you what else is in the woods. Tracks and scat are “signs,” so are calls of birds. Steller’s Jays live here. Hear water running? The stream runs nearly year-round, bringing in all kinds of wildlife visitors.

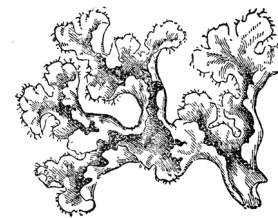


#9 Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Seeds often find just enough nutrition and moisture captured in crevices between rocks. If the young tree continues to grow, it may be able to force the crack open faster. Exposed roots adapt by developing bark.

#10 Life on Stone Builds Soil for the Future

Look for lichen on the granite stones. Lichen has two symbiotic partners: fungus provides structure and protection, and algae produce food through photosynthesis. Lichen is the first to colonize bare rock. It can corrode rock and



accumulate minerals and organic matter. Plants such as moss and grass appear later, utilizing the first soil formed by lichens.

#11 Fires Bring Change

The Alexander Mountain Fire of 2024 stayed north of the river. Look across the canyon for browned trees and the lack of undergrowth on the slopes. In 2010, fingers of fire crossed this trail. As you hike, look for charring, dead and down trees, and the new growth that came afterward.

#12 Close Your Eyes and Listen

Can you hear the river? This may depend on the time of year. Water is highest in June and lowest in January. In winter or spring you may hear voices of wildlife. Abert’s squirrels (tassel-eared squirrels) or pine squirrels (chickarees) may scold you if you come too close.

#13 The Fir Tree That is Not a Fir

Most fir trees have cones that stand up from the branch, Douglas fir cones hang down. Douglas firs have fine short needles, and cones with distinctive 3-pointed bracts. It is one of two species in their own genus that translates to “false hemlock.” Google “Legend of the Douglas fir” for a Native American story.



#14 Photosynthesis Requires Sunlight

Thick stands of young ponderosa pine (yet to be thinned by fire) grow tall, thin and straight up if completely shaded. Trees on edges or near openings often lean toward open patches of sunlight. Look for leaners overhead as you hike.

#15 Mountain Weather

Take a moment to look up, are there clouds coming over the ridge? In the Colorado foothills and mountains, it is often hard to see a storm brewing until it is on top of you. Know before you go, check the forecast and keep looking up.