

The GYM Associations,
Ecology Committee and Trails
Committee present

The Crellin Canyon Nature Trail

2002 (Revised 2016)



The Crellin Trail was initially created by Howard Ensign and Mary Alice Evans. This trail is described in his book, *A Naturalist's Years in the Rocky Mountains*.

Warning! Parts of the trail are steep and can be slippery, especially in winter. Please use extreme care while hiking the trail.

1. Narrowleaf Cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*)

This is the common cottonwood of the Northern Rockies, identifiable by its narrow, willow-like leaves. It grows along streams and produces millions of seeds with fluffy hairs that are dispersed by wind. This tree was discovered by Lewis and Clark in 1805.

2. Alder (*Alnus incana* subsp. *tenuifolia*)

Very common shrub or small tree, forming thickets along riverbanks. It is an important species for enriching the soil with nitrogen. It has tiny 1/2" egg-shaped cones that grow in clusters of 3-6 on new twigs.

3. Riparian Habitat

A riparian habitat is the region between the surface of a creek, stream or river and the highest point of the bank. Because of the rich source of water, this habitat supports extensive vegetation and a large number of animal species.

4. Sandbar Willow (*Salix exigua*)

An erect deciduous shrub with long narrow leaves, producing large amounts of forage for many animals. The bark contains salicin, a compound closely related to the active ingredient in aspirin which was originally derived from willow plants.

5. Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*)

This is the most common tree in Glacier View. It is named for its large size. The needles are long, usually in bundles of three and the 3-6" cones grow in groups of three. The bark smells like vanilla or butterscotch.

6. Common Juniper (*Juniperus communis*)

This is a spreading evergreen shrub with separate male and female varieties. This shrub is very common, being the only conifer to be found throughout the Northern Hemisphere.

7. Kinnickinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)

Also known as the common bearberry as bears are very fond of the bright red berries. This is a trailing mat-forming evergreen shrub with pink urnshaped flowers that bloom in May and June.

8. River Birch (*Betula fontinalis*)

Also known as mountain birch, red birch and black birch, this is the only native birch in the Southern Rockies. Its bark is dark reddish brown with horizontal lines but does not peel like the white paper birch. It grows in the moist soils

9. Wax or Squaw Current (*Ribes cereum*)

This deciduous shrub grows on dry slopes. The pink tubular flowers are important sources of nectar for hummingbirds. Named for the waxy appearance of the leaves, this shrub produces red berries in the fall.

10. Quaking or Trembling Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*)

A sun loving tree with smooth greenish-white bark. The leaf stalks are long and flattened, allowing the leaves to tremble in light breezes. It usually reproduces by sending up suckers which produce stands of genetically identical trees [clones].

11. Common Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*)

This is a deciduous shrub of the honey-suckle family. The pink flowers bloom July to August. The white waxy berries stay on the plant through winter but are poisonous for humans if eaten in quantity. They are a valuable food source for several species of birds.

12. Lichen

Lichen is actually two species living together where the species benefit each other. The algae provide food and the fungi provide minerals and anchors on which to grow. This living together is called "symbiosis". These symbionts are the first to grow on rocks and their secretions start the decomposition of rocks.

13. Decomposition.

The dead log is undergoing decomposition, the breakdown of complex organic compounds to form the basic inorganic molecules from which all life is formed. This event is mandatory in order to sustain life for earth only has a finite amount of these chemical building blocks.

14. Granite Rock

The 70' cliff across the canyon is grey and pink feldspar covered with dark greenish lichens. There is an abundance of ledges and crevices where birds, (several species of owls and true hawks, common nighthawk, band-tailed pigeon), and many species of rodents live. Weathering and biological decomposition helps to enrich the riparian habitat.

15. Boulder Raspberry

(*Oreobatus deliciosus*)

This woody shrub produces showy 1-3" white flowers that look similar to the wild rose. It grows on dry hillsides and rocky areas. The pinkish berry looks like a raspberry but is dry, seedy and tasteless, not "delicious" as the Latin name implies.

16. Ninebark

(*Physocarpus monogynus*)

This deciduous shrub has continually shredding bark and is so named because it was believed to have 9 layers of bark. The white clusters of flowers that bloom in June and July are sweet smelling, attracting bees and butterflies.

17. Common Chokecherry

(*Padus virginiana*)

A shrub or small tree that forms dense thickets in moist soils. The flowers are in 4" long clusters that bloom late in the spring. The fruit are shiny red or black berries with large seeds. They are a prime autumn food for black bears.

18. Rocky Mountain Juniper

(*Juniperus scopulorum*)

The male and female cones are found on separate plants. The female plants have bluish berries (cones). They germinate after passing through the digestive tract of birds or mammals, having lost their outer covering which exposes the seed. The cedar-like aromatic wood is suitable for cedar chests.

(*Follow the loop counterclockwise*)

19. Douglas-Fir

(*Pseudotsuga menzi*)

Not a true fir, this evergreen has flat needles that are aromatic when crushed. The brown cones have many thin three-toothed bracts, sometimes likened to the tail and hind legs of a mouse. This tree typically grows in the shade of other trees such as the Ponderosa Pine. It makes excellent lumber (first in the U.S. in total volume of timber) and is a popular Christmas tree.

20. Prickly Rose

(*Rosa sayi*)

A deciduous shrub with prickly stems and sweet smelling pink flowers. When the flowers fade, "rose hips" remain through the winter providing a food source when other fruits are gone.

21. Red Osier (Dogwood)

(*Swida sericea*)

This deciduous shrub forms thickets in the moist areas in which it grows and is typically found in riparian habitats. The red bark and white winter-time berries make this an attractive shrub that is planted as an ornamental.

22. Shrubby Cinquefoil

(*Pentaphylloides floribunda*)

This is a common shrub of the west. It adapts well to cultivation and many variations have been developed. This variety has yellow saucer shaped flowers with five heart shaped petals.

23. Mountain Mahogany

(*Cercocarpus montanus*)

This deciduous shrub grows in dry, open areas. Its fruit has a feathery tail. Native Americans used the hard and heavy wood for tools and war clubs. It is browsed by deer.

24. Narrow-leaved Yucca

(*Yucca glauca*)

This yucca and the yucca moth depend on one another for survival. The flowers open fully only at night which is when these night-flying moths fertilize the flowers by laying eggs in them. This assures the development of seeds that, in turn, provide food for the young moths when they hatch.

25. Prickly-Pear Cactus

(*Opuntia polyacantha*)

This cactus grows in dry open sites from the plains into the foothills. The 2 - 3" wide yellow flowers bloom in May and June and have many thin overlapping petals. Also called "Hunger" or "Starvation" Cactus because its dry fruits were a last-chance food choice for early settlers.

26. Rocky Mountain Maple

(*Acer glabrum*)

This shrub or small tree grows in moist sheltered areas. The fruits are V shaped pairs of winged seeds that sail with the wind. The leaves turn crimson in the autumn.

27. Antelope Bitterbrush

(*Purshia tridentata*)

This silvery shrub blooms with many fragrant yellow flowers from May to July. The leaves are and three toothed. This is one of the West's most important forage plants for deer, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, and pronghorns, the mistaken "antelope" for which the bush is named.

Wildflowers

At different times of the year, the trail is lined with many species of wildflowers. Early in the year you may see Pasque flowers, Spring Beauties and Larkspur. Later, Shooting Stars, yellow and blue violets, and Pink Bergamot may be seen. Keep a careful watch for these small but beautiful plants.