



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE HRCA TRAILS

Where are the HRCA Trails?

A: There are two separate trail systems with a total of 11.2 miles of trails for HRCA Residents and their accompanied guests.

The Wildcat Mountain Trail System is located east of Monarch Blvd and opened in 2006.

- Approximately 5.5 miles long and consists of two loops and one out and back trail. (Trail names: Wildcat Mountain Trail, Ponderosa Loop, Waterin' Hole Loop)
- Access to the trails is from the parking lot on Monarch; approximately 2 miles south of McArthur Ranch Road and Monarch Blvd.
- Parking is also available at Rocky Heights Middle School (McArthur Ranch Rd. and Monarch/Quebec). The Douglas County East/West Trail begins at Rocky Heights Middle School and goes south to connect to the Wildcat Mountain Trails.

The Highlands Point Trail System is located west of Grigs Road and southeast of Mountain Vista H.S. Most of these trails opened in August 2009 with the exception of the Rocky Gulch Trail which opened in 2006.

- Approximately 6.7 miles long and consists of a loop system in conjunction with the Douglas County East/West Trail.
- Access to the trails is from Mountain Vista H.S. or the Douglas County Trailhead Parking on Grigs Road. The Metro Districts 'West Fork of the Big Dry Trail also connects.
- Access is also through the D.C. East/West Trail which connects from the Bluffs Regional Park (Lincoln and Yosemite) to Wildcat Mountain Trail System to the Grigs Road Parking/Trailhead to Mountain Vista to the Metro Districts trails just south of Wildcat Reserve Parkway between Broadway and HR Parkway.

Q: Are all of these trails beginner trails?

A: The Wildcat Mountain Trail System is mostly beginner level with a few small technical areas. The Highlands Point Trail system is intermediate for the most part with some beginner areas. The terrain is steeper and some turns are tighter. The Douglas County East/West Regional Trail is beginner level.

Q: What kind of trails are these?

A: All of the HRCA trails are 4 feet wide, natural surface trails. The natural surface minimizes the disturbance of the natural habitat and provides a rare opportunity in Highlands Ranch.

Q: Can I bring my dog?

A: Dogs are not allowed on the Wildcat Mountain Trail System or the Highlands Point Trail system except the Rocky Gulch Trail. The no dogs rule is in place to minimize the disturbance on the habitat and the abundant wildlife. Dogs on leash are allowed on the Rocky Gulch Trail as well as the Douglas County East/West Trail. Rattlesnakes are fairly common around the trails and pose a greater threat to dogs off leash.

Q: What kind of wildlife can I expect to see?

A: The wildlife viewing opportunities are incredible; especially being right here in Highlands Ranch. Elk, deer, coyotes, eagles, hawks, falcons, bobcats, the occasional mountain lion and bear, and rattlesnakes are just some of the wildlife you might see. The bird watching is also great.

Q: Are bikes allowed on all of the trails and don't they have a negative impact on wildlife?

A: Bikes and pedestrians are allowed on all HRCA trails. Research shows that bikes have no greater impact on wildlife than pedestrians. Any kind of motorized vehicle is not allowed.

Q: Are horses allowed on the trails? Why allow horses and not dogs?

A: Horses are allowed on the Wildcat Mountain Trail System and Highlands Point Trail System except for the Rocky Gulch Trail. Horses do not have a significant impact on wildlife. Wildlife sees dogs as a predator and therefore has a much stronger reaction to dogs.

Q: Why do I have to stay on the trail?

A: Walking or biking off the trail will have a negative impact on the habitat and wildlife. For example, deer can get used to humans when we walk on the same trail. The deer develop a spatial awareness to the trails and know where they are safe and where they feel uncomfortable. The deer and other wildlife are more affected when we walk off of the trail. They become alert to our presence at a greater distance and are much more likely to flee the area. Also, by staying on the trail we minimize the disturbance that the trail has on the habitat. The design of the trail was thought out very carefully to minimize our disturbance. If we were to walk off of the trail, all of the thought that went into the design and location of the trail becomes insignificant and the efforts to minimize our impact become irrelevant.

Q: Do the trails ever close.

A: The trails can be closed during wet periods. When the trails are muddy, people tend to walk on the edge of the trail, often in the grass. This causes widening of the trail corridor and an increased disturbance to the vegetation and an overall negative impact on the habitat. The trail is designed and constructed to shed water. Damage to the trail during wet/muddy periods can impact the trails ability to shed water which can end up causing severe erosion on the trails. We ask that you stay off the trails when they are wet; even if they are not closed. For up to the minute updates on trail closures you can call our trail hotline –303-471-8873.

Q: Why are the Wildcat Mountain Trails closed in the winter from January 1st through March 31st?

A: The property surrounding the Wildcat Mountain Trails has been traditionally used by large numbers of elk during the cold and snowy winter months. Winter is a tough time for the elk and deer. They must conserve as much energy as possible during the winter months as nutritious food is scarce. The most likely reason the elk like to be in the Wildcat Mountain area in the winter is to be near the creek that runs through the property. This is the only live water in all of the Backcountry and proximity to water in the winter months is important. The Colorado Division of Wildlife recommends the trails be closed during the winter to allow the elk and deer to get through the winter with minimal disturbances.

The winter months are also a time when raptors such as eagles are looking for nest sites. The less human disturbance the better when raptors are searching for nesting sites.

Q: Are there any other scheduled closures?

A: There is a possibility that the Wildcat Mountain Trail, which goes up on top of Wildcat Mountain, could be closed in the spring and into the summer. If nesting raptors are present in the cliff areas, the nests need to remain undisturbed until the nestlings fledge.

Q: Why are the trails open only to HRCA members?

A: The trails are on private property owned by the HRCA. The HRCA is a private non-profit organization, funded by HRCA members. HRCA members paid for the construction of the trails and fund the maintenance of the trails and property. Basically, the trails are like the HRCA's fifth recreation center. For more information on this topic see our question and answer "Why are the trails Private" form on our web-site.

Q: How does the HRCA plan to enforce the members only rule?

A: The HRCA staff is enforcing the members only policy. Members need to present their recreation center i.d. card when they use the trails. Currently there are also over 150 volunteers helping to patrol the trails.

Q: How can I get more information?

A: Trail maps and additional information are on our web-site at www.hrcaonline.org . You may also call or e-mail Mark Giebel at 303-471-8885 or mgiebel@hrcaonline.org.