

**Plants:** A living organism of the kind exemplified by trees, shrubs, herbs, grasses, ferns, and mosses. They typically grow in a permanent site, absorb water and inorganic substances through their roots, and synthesize nutrients in their leaves by photosynthesis using the green pigment chlorophyll.

**Insects and Arachnids:** Insects have three segments to their bodies and have six legs. Some have one or two pairs of wings. Spiders only have two body segments but have eight legs and are predatory.

**Birds:** A warm-blooded egg-laying vertebrate distinguished by the possession of a beak, feathers, and wings typically used for flight. Medicine Lodge is home to over 100 different species of birds like the blue heron and Sandhill Crane.

**Reptiles:** A cold-blooded vertebrate of a class that includes snakes, lizards, crocodiles, turtles, and tortoises. They are distinguished by having a dry scaly skin, and typically laying soft-shelled eggs on land.

**Mammals:** A warm-blooded vertebrate animal of a class that is distinguished by the possession of hair or fur, the secretion of milk by females for the nourishment of the young, and (typically) the birth of live young.

**Geology:** The science that deals with the earth's physical structure and substance, its history, and the processes that act on it.

**Vegetation Zones:** Plant communities assembled into regional patterns by the area's physiography, geological parent material and history.

**Fire/ Fire Management:** Fires are a crucial part of nature that help reduce and control pathogens/insects, create or maintain habitats, spur germination, and open holes in the forest canopy to allow smaller plants light for growth. Management of fires is important because if unchecked it can lead to fires and have devastating effects.

## Stop! Look! Listen!

*We encourage you to experience the stops on this trail using all of your senses. Take a minute to stop and make note of how you feel, what you see, and what you hear. You might be surprised!*

### Other Things To See & Do:

**Nature Trail:** Take this self-guided wildlife walking trail through the park and along the creek. Brochures are in the mailbox near the petroglyph cliff.

**Rock Art Trail:** This short walk in front of the cliff has a rock art guide and gets you up close to the petroglyphs.

**Natural History Cabin:** This little cabin is packed with plant and animal displays.

**Elk Management Cabin:** Get “hands-on” with elk antlers and discover more about the Medicine Lodge Wildlife Habitat Management Area.

**Bear Trail:** 1/4 mile offshoot of the Nature Trail that starts off steep but levels out.

**Archaeology Visitor Center:** This log cabin across from the barn holds artifact displays and the cultural history of Medicine Lodge.

**Frison Library:** Stop in at the red barn and browse the collection of books for all ages, including more on the history of Medicine Lodge Creek site and the archaeological dig.



Medicine Lodge State Archaeological Site was once part of a working cattle ranch homesteaded in 1881. In 1973, the ranch was purchased by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and became the 12,000 acre Medicine Lodge Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA). Several different agencies coordinate to ensure the lands within the WHMA are managed appropriately for multi-use, but primarily for wildlife habitat and winter range.



## The Deer Path

### Stop! Look! Listen!



*Match the numbers on the signs to the numbers in this brochure for information about the natural diversity along The Deer Path.*



*This hiking trail follows actual deer paths that are rugged and steep in some areas. We suggest you take your time and rest often as you encounter nature while enjoying the breathtaking view.*

1. **Great Horned Owl** - Owls are mostly nocturnal and can be spotted year-round near the big red barn just after dark. Great Horned owls nest in trees such as this large cottonwood and in caves along the cliffs. They prey on mice, rabbits, snakes, and other small mammals. Listen carefully, and you may hear the screeching call of the juvenile great horned owl after dark.

2. **Cottontail Rabbit** - Cottontail rabbits are most active in the early morning or late afternoon. They eat grass and other plants including cactus and sometimes re-ingest their own feces to extract more nutrients. Cottontails are a favorite meal of the great horned owl and bobcat.

3. **Bats** - Bats are the only mammal that truly flies! Five of the sixteen species of bats found in Wyoming are common here and can be seen swooping over the fields at night as they gobble up insects. Return here at dusk or visit one of our bat houses to watch their aerial acrobatics.

4. **Wyoming Sage Brush** - Wyoming has more Sage Brush than any other state as it covers greater than 50% of its land area. It plays a crucial role in providing food and habitat for much of Wyoming's wildlife. For the sage grouse and pronghorn antelope, sage brush makes up over 95% of their winter diet.

5. **Utah Juniper** - Utah Juniper is an evergreen that grows in dry rocky soil and slopes. It is browsed by mule deer during winter months when the snows are heavy and has small fleshy blue-black berries.

6. **Prickly Pear Cactus** - Prickly Pear is a fleshy perennial with flat, jointed stems and sharp spines. It grows large yellow flowers that appear in June/July and increases in abundance with drought and overgrazing. Prickly Pear is an important food source for pronghorn antelope in early spring.

7. **Monarch Butterfly** - Finding these lightweight flyers means finding where milkweed grows. Milkweed is the only type of plant that monarch caterpillars eat. When cold weather appears, monarchs fly thousands of miles south to Mexico and California.

8. **Cheatgrass** - This non-native, invasive annual plant grows in almost any type of soil. It sprouts rapidly in spring, matures by early June and cures to a yellowish



brown color. Cheatgrass outcompetes native plants by greening up before other grasses, but provides nutrition to weary animals after a long winter.

9. **Northern Sagebrush Lizard** - These small reptiles are two to four inches long and prey on a variety of insects such as ants, grasshoppers, flies and spiders. They in turn are preyed upon by snakes and birds. Look closely (and quickly) at sunny rock outcroppings along the trail to catch a glimpse of this speedy little lizard.

10. **Belted Kingfisher** - Belted Kingfishers are stocky, large-headed birds with a shaggy crest on top of their head and a straight, thick, pointed bill. They feed on aquatic prey, plunging into the creek to catch trout and are a powdery blue-gray color. Listen for a chattering call that can be heard from a distance. Look for them weaving in and out of the cottonwoods along the creek or perched atop power poles.

11. **Northern Scorpion** - Beware, this small (1.5 inch) scorpion is very rare but mildly poisonous. They are nocturnal and feed on insects and other small prey they can handle with their claws. Keep a close eye near rocks (or return here after dark) to sneak a peak at this uncommon arthropod.

12. **Riparian Zone** - Cottonwood trees, along with willows, chokecherry, boxelder, and many other plant species are located where land meets water along Medicine Lodge Creek. Riparian areas are crucial habitat and movement corridors for wildlife. The forage, cover, and water provide an oasis for birds and mammals to rest,

feed and travel in an otherwise harsh landscape.

13. **American Kestrel** - Kestrels are rust colored with slate blue wings and are North America's smallest falcon (about the size of a dove). Look for them on fences and power lines out over these open fields. They hunt small mammals and insects, often spotting their prey while hovering.

14. **Yucca** - Yucca is a perennial, native evergreen shrub with sharp, sword-like leaves that grows well in dry, rocky soil. It has a very specialized pollination system that relies on the yucca moth. The moth pollinates the yucca flowers while laying an egg inside. Do you see any of these tiny white moths?

15. **Mule Deer/Mountain Lion** - Both mule deer and mountain lions frequent these hillsides and travel along the canyon amongst the juniper. However, mountain lions are secretive hunters (feeding largely on mule deer) and are rarely seen. Mule deer have a tan colored rump patch with a short, black-tipped tail.

16. **Fire/Fire Management** - Fires are key in the biological process of maintaining a healthy and reproductive rangeland. Fires stimulate biodiversity and can create and maintain habitat for living organisms.

17. **Rocks** - There are three classifications of rock, and each is formed in a different way. Igneous rock, is formed by the cooling of magma (molten rock) inside the Earth or on the surface. Sedimentary rock, is formed by the deposition of material at the Earth's surface and within bodies of water. Metamorphic rock, is formed by

temperature and pressure changes inside the Earth. Before you, are examples of different sedimentary rocks (sandstone & chert). Touch them. Are they smooth? Can you guess which one is which?

18. **Mountain Bluebird** - Bluebirds are summer residents in Wyoming and frequent this hillside. They are found along fields, open woodlands, and other areas with scattered trees. Look for them hunting insects, or popping in and out of the bluebird house above.

19. **Vegetative Zones** - From here, you will find five different vegetative zones within a 12-mile radius: alpine, sub alpine, foothills/shrub (which includes this Riparian area), grassland, and desert basin.

20. **Landforms** - Dramatic geological landscapes are visible from here including the Red Buttes, Medicine Lodge Canyon, Black Butte, and Dry Fork Canyon. Surprisingly, views of the alpine peaks are obscured because of our close proximity to the foothills.

21. **Prairie Rattlesnake** - Beware! This snake is poisonous and can be identified by rattle segments at the end of its tail. It has an upper body that is light brown to green with dark, light-bordered blotches along back, and a triangular-shaped head. It feeds on rodents, other snakes, lizards, and birds.

22. **Greater Short-Horned Lizard** - Often called the "Horny Toad", this little lizard feeds mainly on ants and other insects. They wait for prey to come by and often snap them up whole. Camouflage coloration helps them avoid predators and they can inflate their bodies up to twice their normal size, with horns protruding appearing to be an unappetizing meal.

23. **Indian Paint Brush** - Wyoming's State flower is a perennial that grows well here, and blooms May through July. Its color ranges from red to orange and even yellow. Native Americans consumed the flowers but its leaves and roots can be toxic.

24. **Black Widow Spider** - Hey, what's that on your leg? Just kidding, but watch out for these shiny black arachnids with red hour glass markings. It is the most toxic spider in North America. Its venom is reported to be 15 times more toxic than that of a rattlesnake, though rarely as fatal because of how small its bite is. Contrary to how they got their name, females do not always eat their mate.