

Enjoy a walk on the trail to observe native plants, wildlife, and the geology of the canyon. The 1 1/2-mile trail follows Bison Creek, which once watered buffalo and the wild horses. Numbered posts along the trail correspond to numbers in this brochure.

1. Sentinel Rock - Bison Creek

To the left stands Sentinel Rock, marking the entrance to Horsethief Canyon. Water flowing over the Dakota sandstone on its way toward the Smoky Hill River eroded these canyons. Kanopolis Reservoir periodically floods the mouth of this canyon.

2. Yucca or Soapweed

A plant with narrow, gray-green, nearly vertical, sharp pointed leaves and tall spikes of white flowers in the spring. The Indians used the roots as a shampoo and the leaves for basket fibers. Yucca pollination is accomplished by the Yucca Moth. The female moth gathers pollen and forms it into a ball, flies to another flower, punctures the ovary and lays an egg inside, crawls to the pistil and packs the ball of pollen there, insuring pollination. The egg hatches and the larva feeds on the developing seeds.

3. Plant succession

There are more trees and shrubs in our prairies now than a hundred years ago. Plants like eastern red cedar, sandhill plum, sumac, and currants invade prairies. Fire used to control this process, but man has intervened by controlling wild fires that would kill these plants when small. Controlled fires help keep out invading woody plant and improve the natural quality of grasslands.

4. Dakota Sandstone

The sandstone consists largely of quartz grains cemented to each other with dark brown iron oxide. Resistant to erosion, it caps steep hills. Graffiti left by humans on the rock destroy some of the area's wildness. Leave only your foot prints behind.

5. Nature's apartment house

Woodpeckers excavate cavities in dead trees to nest. Other animals are totally dependent upon these ready-made homes. Bird houses can provide alternate housing, but will never replace these natural habitats.

6. Sculptures

The Dakota sandstone has been shaped by wind and water, taking on a form that may look like a wolf or a bear. What do you see?

7. Mixed grass prairie

The dominant grass here is little bluestem, reaching a height of two or three feet. Tallgrass species, such as big bluestem and Indian grass, often reach a height of four to nine feet and thrive where the soil is deeper and holds more moisture. Shortgrass species, such as buffalo and gramma grass, are found mainly on hill-tops where the soil is thin and drier.

8. Lichens

The colored organisms growing on the rocks are called lichens. The majority of a lichen is a fungus, with the remaining part being algae. When wet, the fungus becomes transparent and allows the algae to make food using sunlight. The rock is slowly broken down by secreted acids.

9. Nature's Quarry

The tree to your right is growing up through a crack in the sandstone. Pressure caused by the tree roots is gradually forcing the sandstone apart.

10. Rock Slide

Roots and water seeping, freezing, and thawing are breaking off large sections of the cliff. The fine particles have been eroded back to their original size.

11. Buffalo tracks

According to local legend, the marks in the sandstone above were caused by buffalo as they traveled into the canyon for water. The wide color range is due to different materials in the iron oxide that cement the sandstone together.

12. Caves

Several caves are found in the area. These are formed by water seepage through poorly cemented sandstone.

13. Box Canyon

This canyon gives you a sense of what the Indians felt when trapping buffalo and wild horses. This canyon was named when Pawnee Indians hid horses stolen from a Cheyenne village here.

14. Mortar and Pestle

Water from above plunges into this hole, carving this mortar-like bowl into the bottom of the canyon. Hard materials, carried by the water, act like pestle to carve and shape the sandstone.

If you must hurry away, return along the same route from which you came. Otherwise stay and explore, or rest in the shade. If you do not care to retain this brochure, please return it to the brochure box. If you have any suggestions or questions, please write to:



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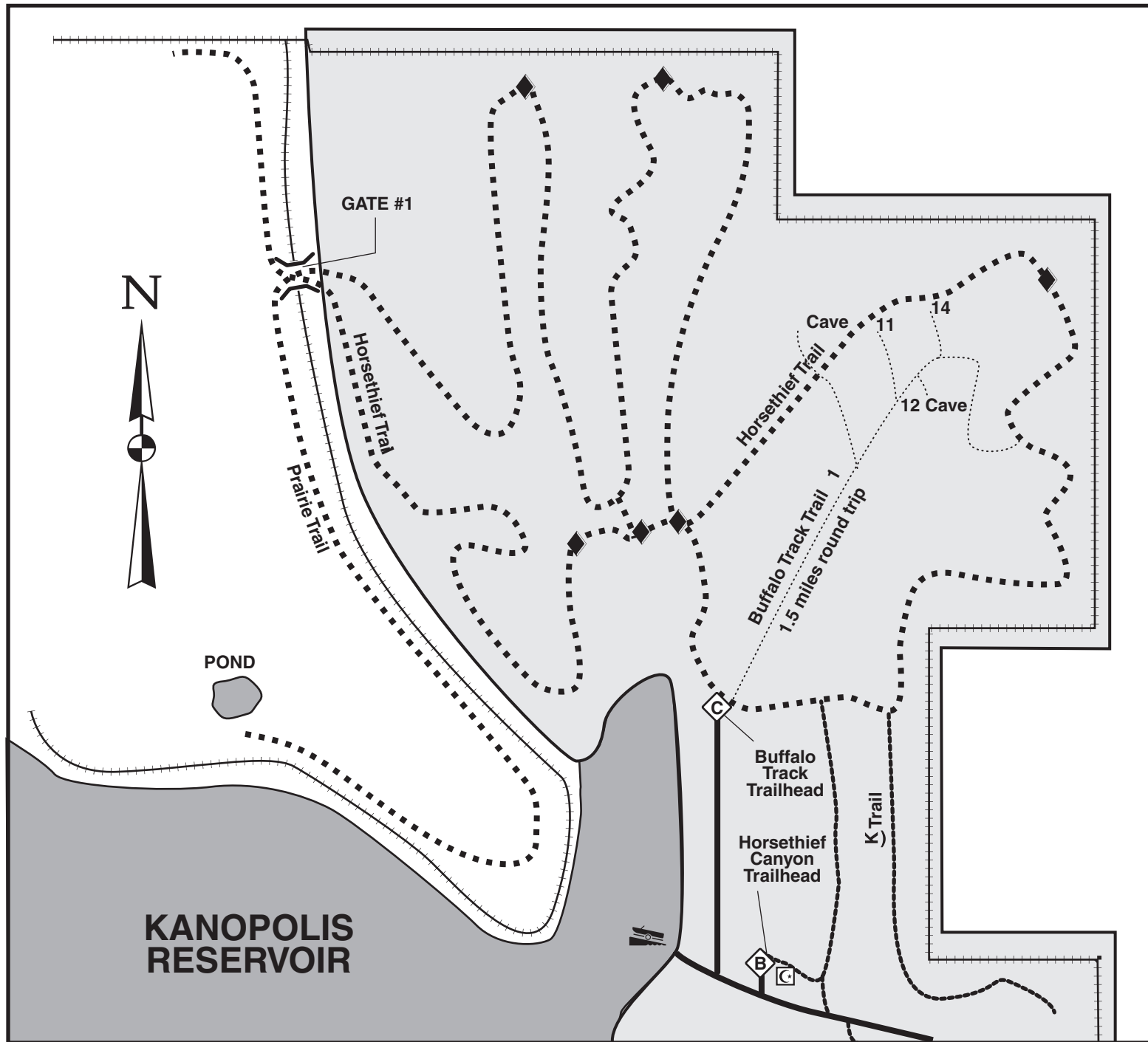
Buffalo Track Canyon



Nature Trail

KANOPOLIS STATE PARK

Buffalo Track Canyon Nature Trail



LEGEND	
Park Boundary	
Paved Road	
Fence	
Bicyclist, Equestrian, Hiker Trails	
Equestrian Trails	
Hiking Trails Only	
Trail Head	
Low Water Crossing	
Vault Toilet	
Boat Ramp	