

3 Living Rocks-The boulders on the trail are some of the oldest around. If you look closely, you will see small plants growing on them. These are called lichens, and contain both algae and fungi. They come in many colors and forms, but are not related to moss. Lichen provide food for animals and help break down the rock as the start of soil formation.

4 High Above-At 8,100 above sea level, you are at the top on the trail. The High Bridge was built in 1900 to carry a water pipeline between two reservoirs. Directly below is the falls, fed by Canyon Creek Twin Peaks, with Sister peak are visible above to the northwest. In the canyon below you can see a winch left by miners who were unsuccessful in finding gold in the creek sediments.

5 The Tunnel-This passageway was built for the water pipeline over a century ago. The broken pipe inside is a remnant of that project that was abandoned in 1950 when extra water wasn't needed anymore.

Native Plant Loop

Rocky Mountain Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) The scale like foliage and stringy bark are distinct features of Junipers. Unlike other Colorado junipers this upright tree usually has just one main trunk. Its blue berries contain two or three seeds. The dried berries helped the Ute Indians survive long winters.

Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga mensiesii*) Not a true fir tree, it grows best in shady places of the Montane forest. The easiest way to distinguish this tree is by looking on the ground for the unique three pronged bracts on its cones.

White fir (*Abies concolor*) Look at the tree top to identify a true fir by its cones which point upwards. White fir needles are flat and grow up to 3 inches long on the lower branches. In Colorado, it is unique to the southern part of the state. It is mistakenly called Balsam Fir, which doesn't grow in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.

Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) The fragrant white flowers of this large shrub of the rose family are a sure sign of spring. Notice the teeth on the upper half of the leaves. The berries became an important food source for the Ute Indians who mixed them with meat to make a staple provision called pemmican.

Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) This tree is over 85 feet high and close to 200 years old. You can recognize it by its long needles that grow in bunches of two or three. It is a sun loving tree that grew here first before fir and spruce seedlings took root in its shade. It grows in association with the Gambel Oak behind it.

Oregon Grape (*Mahonia repens*) Nicknamed the holly grape, the evergreen leaves resemble the Christmas holly. Its leaves turn red in the fall but remain on the shrub. The berries can be eaten raw, but are mostly used to make jam, wine or a lemonade type drink.

Boxelder (*Acer negundo*) Its three leaflets disguise this member of the maple family. Look close to discover the winged fruits and opposite branching that are telltale signs of a maple. Although not as tasty as its cousin the sugar maple, Boxelder was used by the Ute Indians and settlers as a substitute source of sugar and maple syrup.

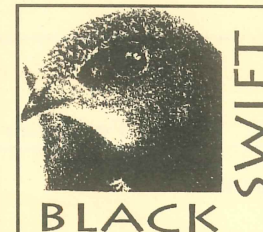
Rocky Mountain Maple (*Acer glabrum*) This large shrub provides food for squirrels, chipmunks, birds as well as deer who browse the leaves. It also provides a safe haven for the tiny mites that thrive on the leaves. Look closely to see their 'home', the red felt that appears on many leaves.

Gambel Oak (*Quercus gambelii*) Wildlife love this shrub for its acorns and leaves. It is found on many Colorado hillsides and helps prevent erosion. As part of the white oak family, the leaf lobes are rounded and the acorns are less bitter than the red oaks. This was fortunate for the Ute Indians, as acorns became the mainstay of their diet.

Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*) This large shrub is a favorite food of bears and birds, although people find the fruits bitter, thus the name "chokecherry". Black bears love to gorge on the tasty berries come fall. The Ute Indians ate the berries fresh and dried them for winter use. Nowadays people use the dark berries to make jelly, wine and syrup.

City of Ouray

Box Cañon Park



SWIFT

BLACK

Summer home of the beautiful & rare Black Swift

Falls Trail

- Start by checking out the nature center. Here you can get a heads up on local wildlife and check out rock samples of what can be found in the area. You can also read up on the local history and visit the gift shop.
- Begin the falls trail near the bird feeders. As you pass by, please enjoy the birds and critters at a distance. Remember, these are still wild animals and should be respected.
- Follow the path up a gentle slope. On your left you will find an optional side trail to the upper bridge. You can find more information about this hike detailed below.
- As you continue straight on, you will begin to hear the sound of the river. A sharp turn right and then left down some shallow stairs starts the entrance into the canyon
- Along the path you can still see ornamental remnants of past railings from decades ago. Down below, you can see the pipe that brings the mineral hot spring water to the famous Hot Springs Pool in town.
- Just a few steps further will reward you with the beauty and roar of the Box Cañon Falls!

High Bridge Trail

- 1 Take a break**-You have already climbed one third the elevation of the trail and are standing amidst a Montane forest. Surrounding you are White Fir, Douglas Fir and the occasional long needled Ponderosa pine. Next stop, a wonderful valley view in the shelter above you.
- 2 Panorama**-Across the valley is the beautiful Cascade Falls on the northeast side of Ouray. High above the falls are the tin roofed buildings of the Chief Ouray Mine. Glance right to the semi circle of cliffs known as the Amphitheater. To the left is the gray-orange area known as the Blow-out. Both of these rock formations are the result of volcanic activity some 60 million years ago. Both the mine and the fall are accessible by trail. Visit the Nature Center for more info.

