

## About the NCA

McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area (NCA) forms a part of the Uncompahgre Plateau, which rises like a giant rolling wave above the Grand Valley of Colorado. Rugged canyons descend to the Colorado River and contain some of the most spectacular landforms found anywhere in the country. Rattlesnake Canyon, Dinosaur Hill, Devils Canyon and Mee Canyon are just a few of the areas that contribute to the mystery, splendor and diversity of this landscape.

You will not find paved roads, visitor centers, or manicured trail heads, but you may discover a sense of wonder, exploration and adventure in a landscape of humbling beauty.



Photo by Colorado Parks & Wildlife

## Outstanding Resources

**Wildlife:** In this high-desert country, bighorn sheep still leap among the rocks, mountain lions roam the pinyon covered slopes of Black Ridge, and elk and eagles share a seldom-visited wilderness.

**Water:** A gentle permitted stretch of the Colorado River winds 25 miles through Ruby and Horsethief Canyons, offering opportunities to float through the heart of the NCA.

**Trails:** Primitive roads and trails offer motoring challenges and equestrian routes. Mountain bike trails abound on Mack Ridge, including the internationally famous Kokopelli's Trail, testing rider's skills for 140 miles before ending in Moab, Utah. Rabbit Valley offers numerous trails for ATVs and Motorcycles.

**History:** Traditional historical land-uses are maintained in areas where cattle still graze and hunters wander the slopes in search of game.

**Geology:** The geologic story of McInnis Canyons NCA is one of deposition and erosion. Through time, layer upon layer of sediments were deposited in shallow seas and meandering river systems that occupied what is now western Colorado.

**Paleontology:** A high concentration of dinosaur fossils is found embedded in the rocks in and



Photo © Jerry Sirtz

## Directions

**Devils Canyon, Fruita Paleo Area, Pollock Bench:** From Grand Junction, take I-70 west to Fruita exit #19. Turn south (left) and travel 1.5 miles to the Kingsview Estates subdivision. Turn west (right) into the subdivision. Stay on the main road all the way through the subdivision; Devils Canyon Trailhead is approximately 0.5 miles ahead on your left. The trailhead sits back off the main road via a short access road and is not easily visible from the main road. Watch for the sign. Pollock bench trailhead is another 2.5 miles ahead directly off the main road, on your left.

**Rabbit Valley:** From Grand Junction, take I-70 west to Rabbit Valley exit #2. Turn south (left) on Rabbit Valley Road. Continue 1.6 miles into the Rabbit Valley Recreation Area.

## Colorado Canyons Association

Colorado Canyons Association is committed to community stewardship of Gunnison Gorge, McInnis Canyons and Dominguez-Escalante NCAs. It is a non-partisan, non-profit, 501(c)(3), volunteer organization fostering cooperation among all NCA user groups. For more information on how to get involved, visit [www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org](http://www.coloradocanyonsassociation.org).

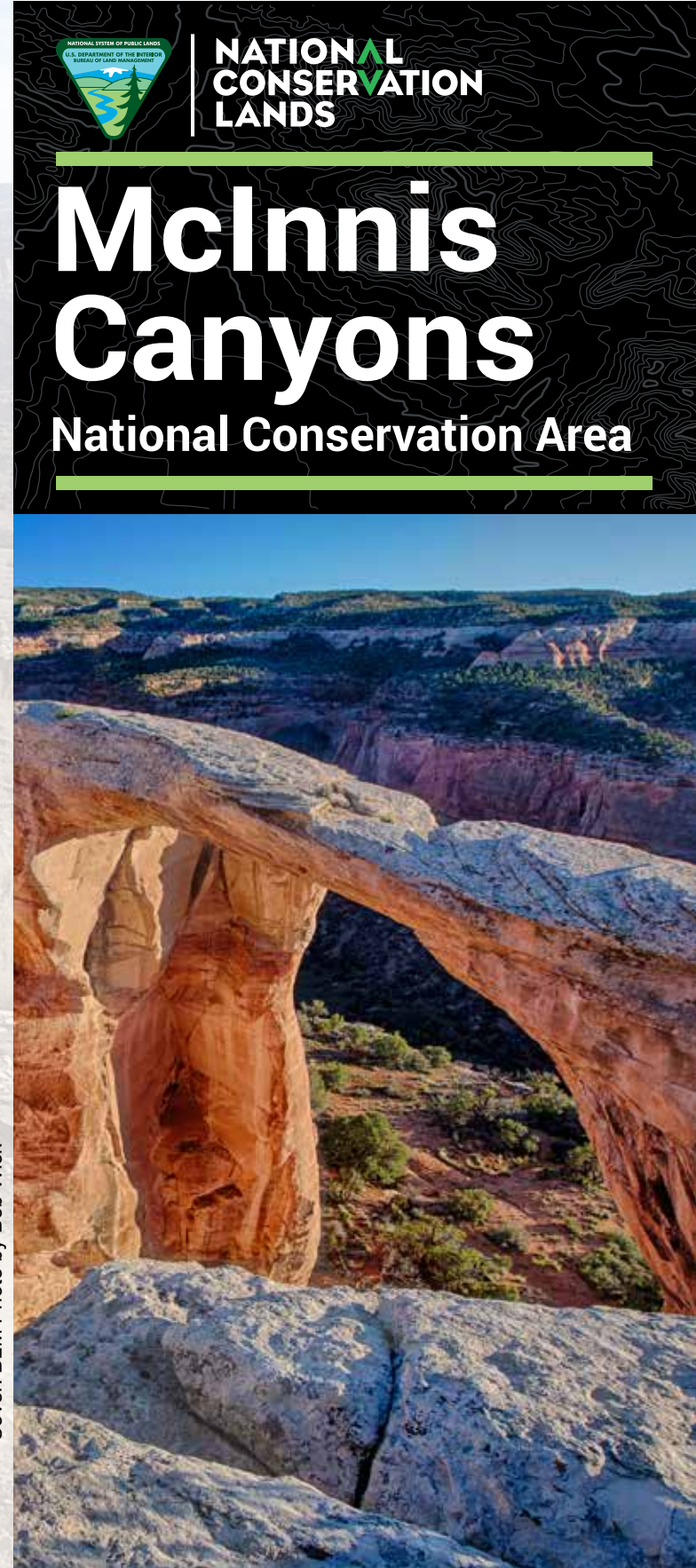


## Call or Visit

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Photo by Chris Pipkin

Cover: BLM Photo by Bob Wick



northwest flank of this uplifted area. The forces of water, wind and gravity continue to sculpt this spectacular landscape today.

As early as 13,000 years ago, Native Americans used the area for hunting animals and gathering plants. By 500 A.D., Fremont farmers entered west-central Colorado. The Fremont Culture was responsible for much of the rock art found in the area.

The Utes were the most recent Native American occupants of western Colorado, and were one of the first tribes to acquire horses. Small family groups camped, hunted, and gathered foods in local canyons and on nearby mesas. Historically, Utes may have walked the same trails you visit today. Be sure to respect this area's rich heritage.

In 2000, Congress designated the McInnis Canyons National Conservation Area and Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness to conserve, protect and enhance its nationally significant values for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The NCA is managed as a part of BLM's National Conservation Lands which include National Monuments, National Conservation Areas, Wilderness Areas, Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Scenic and Historic Trails, and Conservation Lands of the California Desert.

## Leave What You Find

Paleontological and cultural sites help us understand our past. These sites vary from fossils to lithic scatters (chipping sites associated with making stone tools) and rock art. Paleontologists and archeologists study these sites and materials to help interpret our past. It is illegal to remove any materials from these sites!

The NCA is closed to all fossil collecting and serves as an outdoor museum. Enjoy rock art but do not touch it. Help protect your heritage.



Photo by Marley Steele-Inama

around McInnis Canyons. In locations such as the Trail Through Time, Dinosaur Hill, and the Fruita Paleontological Area, visitors can view dinosaur bones or watch a paleontological dig in progress.

**Natural Arches:** Ongoing uplift of the Uncompahgre Plateau and erosion has resulted in colorful cliffs, deep canyons, and sculpted alcoves and arches. Rattlesnake Canyon contains one of the largest concentrations of natural arches in the western United States.

## History of the NCA

During the Upper-Jurassic Period between 146 and 156 million years ago, McInnis Canyons NCA was part of a basin of shallow lakes, meandering streams, and subtropical vegetation. Some dinosaurs got stuck in the soft mud near ponds, where they became easy prey for meat eating dinosaurs. If an animal or plant is quickly buried, it may be preserved as a fossil, which happened a lot in this area. As a result, McInnis Canyons offers an amazing diversity of fossilized plants and animals.

About 4 Million years ago during the late Cenozoic Era, movements within the earth began to uplift an area from Fruita to Montrose creating the Uncompahgre Plateau. Canyons eroded into the

## Help Protect Your NCA

- Pack out all trash.
- Tread lightly and leave no trace.
- Keep on designated roads and trails.
- Drive and ride carefully and courteously.
- Measures to protect resources or reduce user conflicts vary by area. Check kiosks to see where special equipment or actions are required.
- Use designated and existing campsites and park in designated parking areas; do not disturb new areas.
- Wilderness campsites should be at least 200 feet from water.
- Use camp stoves for cooking.
- If you need a warming fires, use a firepan and pack out ashes.
- Where required, use a portable, washable toilet, and pack out waste.
- In other areas, dispose of human waste by digging a shallow "cat hole" at least 200 feet from water and trails. Do not burn your toilet paper (this may cause a wildfire). Pack out toilet paper.

## For Your Protection

McInnis Canyons NCA is a rugged and remote landscape. It can be very unforgiving of any carelessness. Be prepared for your visit to the NCA.

### Always:

- Carry a map, compass, extra water, food, first-aid kit and warm clothing.
- Tell someone where you're going and when you expect to return.
- Carry a gallon of water per person, per day.
- Wear sunscreen and a hat.
- Wear sturdy footwear and watch where you step.
- Be aware of fire danger and be careful with any type of flame.
- Avoid ridge tops and open ground during lightning storms.
- Be alert for flash floods in the canyon bottoms.
- Avoid drinking untreated water; it may not be safe to drink.

### Seasonally:

- Carry insect repellent to fend off the biting gnats that can be a problem from May-August.
- Do not enter the seasonal pools that may exist in the canyon bottoms from April-July. Sunscreens and lotions can pollute these ephemeral waters.

