

Columbia National Wildlife Refuge

Hiking Trails



Trail Descriptions

The refuge contains four designated trails, but hiking is permitted on all areas open to the public.

Black Lake Trail: This approximately one-mile-long trail (round trip) isn't a managed trail, but hiking our service road is a great way to see some of the best cliffs and mesas on the refuge. In fact, the parking lot is nestled among the Pipistrelle Cliffs. While the scenery is dramatic, the road itself is flat with just slight rises and falls. The lake is privately owned, so do not go beyond the cleared area at the end of the service road. *Difficulty: Easy*

Crab Creek Trail: This is a one-mile-long (two miles out and back) trail that mainly follows Crab Creek, immersing one in its riparian habitat. Patches of wild rose, golden currant, and willows make this trail a favorite among birders. For an extended hike, you may follow an additional $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile section of trail connecting the Crab Creek Trail to the Rimrock and Marsh Loop trailheads. The trail splits for a short section but then rejoins itself. *Difficulty: Moderate*

Crab Creek Spur Trail: This is a quick 780-foot sidetrip to one of the refuge's interesting geologic features. There is one short, but steep, section, and the trail is rocky. *Difficulty: Moderate*

Marsh Loop Trail: The Marsh Loop Trail is about one-mile-long and, except for a small incline down from the parking lot, has almost no elevation change. This trail follows Crab Creek and circles one of the marshes, remaining in the lowlands near wetland habitat. The Marsh Loop Trail is closed between October 1 and March 1 to provide winter sanctuary for waterfowl. *Difficulty: Easy*

Rimrock Trail: The trail is three-miles-long with an elevation gain of 200 feet. Although starting out near Crab Creek, this trail promptly leads into the drier shrub-steppe habitat. After meandering past striking columnar basalt formations, the trail ascends, circling the top of a mesa and provides a beautiful view of the surrounding refuge landscape. *Difficulty: Moderate*

Know Before You Go

Crosscountry hiking is allowed, but please follow all posted signs. Many areas of the refuge are closed on a seasonal basis.

The Marsh Loop and Black Lake trails are closed October 1 – March 1 for wintering wildlife.

The refuge is open for hiking sunrise to sunset. Camping is not permitted anywhere on the refuge.

The trails are considered primitive and may be narrow, uneven, overgrown, or unstable, with sections on steep slopes.

There are few restrooms on the refuge nor are there any potable water sources. Cell coverage is spotty, especially in the areas between cliffs. Please plan accordingly.

Parking is permitted in designated areas, or along refuge roads within one vehicle length of the road, between sunrise and sunset. Avoid parking in dry grass, which may catch fire.

Dogs and other pets must be leashed at all times.

Rock climbing is not permitted on the refuge. Wildlife calls these places home.

Fires are not allowed anywhere on the refuge, and summers bring fire protection orders that ban all open flames, including smoking, outside of vehicles.

Artifact collection and disturbance are prohibited and prosecutable.

Littering is unlawful. Please carry out everything you bring in.

Be alert for rattlesnakes, but remember that they, like all other species of wildlife on the refuge, are protected and may not be harassed, injured, or killed. Rattlesnakes are most abundant in rocky areas.

Please respect the rules that protect wildlife and their habitats. you are visiting their home.

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