Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), through the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service, designated the 21,589-acre Browns Canyon National Monument on February 17, 2015. The Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service designated the monument to protect natural or historic features, including the Arkansas River, which traverses the northern boundary of the Monument. The river features a campground with restrooms, changing facilities, a boat ramp and picnic sites. The road into Hecla Junction is steep and unpaved.


Access All access to Browns Canyon National Monument is via unpaved roads that have blind corners and other hazards. One of the main trailheads into the Monument is via unpaved roads that have blind corners and other hazards. For more information, please refer to CPW fishing regulations (http://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/RulesRegns/Brochure/fishing.pdf).

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Cultural Resources

The story of people living in the upper Arkansas River valley is told through sites and artifacts dating back 11,000 years. Within the monument, evidence of seasonal camps remains, including open campfires, prehistoric stone structures and rock shelter sites, among other features. These sites range from the Paleoindian (11,000 years before present) to the Late Prehistoric Period (from around 2,000 years ago to the 1700s). The cultural resources within Browns Canyon provide future generations with the opportunity to learn from those who preceded us in exploring this beautiful area.

Fishing

The Arkansas River within the AHRA is a world class fishery and provides an excellent opportunity for anglers to test their skills at catching brown and rainbow trout. As a testament to the excellent fishery, CPW designated the Arkansas River from the confluence with the Lake Fork of the Arkansas River downstream to Pahala, Colorado (102 miles), as a Gold Medal Trout Fishery in 2014. This addition to the Gold Medal registry is the state’s longest–nearly a third of Colorado’s 322 Gold Medal river miles in a single segment. The Gold Medal designation itself doesn’t carry any special fishing regulations; however, a valid Colorado Fishing License is required and other special fishing regulations apply within certain portions of the Gold Medal stretch of river. For more information, please refer to CPW fishing regulations (http://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/RulesRegns/Brochure/fishing.pdf).

Recreation

Whitewater Activities

Whitewater boating is the most popular recreational activity that occurs in Browns Canyon. Through the AHRA partnership, CPW manages commercial and private boating through Browns Canyon along with all recreational use on the Arkansas River from the confluence of the Lake Fork and the East Fork of the Arkansas River to Lake Pueblo.

The Arkansas River is the most accessible way to enjoy the National Monument. The remote canyon provides a unique type of whitewater boating experience when compared to other segments of the Arkansas River, allowing visitors to experience solitude in a natural setting while enjoying the scenery.

For more information on water flows and float permits, visit http://bit.ly/1HqiwmK

Hiking Trails

Ruby Mountain Trailhead (Ruby Mountain Recreation Site) distances and estimated hiking times:

- Roundtrip to river at Little Cottonwood Creek is a steep but short 2 mile roundtrip hike with wide views of the area’s northern half. The 5.5 mile Catkin Gulch Loop 6046 is a good sample of the northern Monument with an Arkansas River overlook. The 11.5 mile Catkin Gulch Loop 6046 through the gentlement dead-end River Bench Trail 6045A provides a pleasant walk along the Monument for a fuller experience of its wilderness character.


- Step on designated trails unless confident in cross-country hiking and navigation skills.

Browns Canyon National Monument

For centuries, the rugged granite cliffs, colorful rock outcappings and stunning mountain vistas of Browns Canyon National Monument have attracted visitors from around the world. The area’s unusual geology and roughly 3,000 foot range in elevation support a diversity of life and a wealth of geological, ecological, riparian, cultural and historic resources.

President Obama designated the 21,589-acre Browns Canyon National Monument on February 17, 2015. The Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service jointly manage the Monument.

For more Information

Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area
307 W. Sackett Avenue
Salida, CO 81201
719-539-3591
719-269-8500
http://on.doi.gov/1JKWyQU

BLM Royal Gorge Field Office
3202 East Main Street
Cañon City, CO 81212
719-269-8500
http://on.doi.gov/1JWYjU

USFS Salida Ranger District
5725 Cleora Road
Salida, CO 81201
719-526-3591
http://1.usa.gov/1GziZIl

Cultural Resources

The story of people living in the upper Arkansas River valley is told through sites and artifacts dating back 11,000 years. Within the monument, evidence of seasonal camps remains, including open campfires, prehistoric stone structures and rock shelter sites, among other features. These sites range from the Paleoindian (11,000 years before present) to the Late Prehistoric Period (from around 2,000 years ago to the 1700s). The cultural resources within Browns Canyon provide future generations with the opportunity to learn from those who preceded us in exploring this beautiful area.

Discovery of gold near the Arkansas River in 1859 brought an influx of people to the area, along with the need for transportation. While the old Stagecoach Road provided a route to Leadville for many years, it was very rugged and the trip was a long one. The arrival of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad in 1880 allowed for much easier access to the booming mining area around Leadville. Many interesting mining and prospecting sites can still be found throughout the monument.

Browns Canyon has a rich cultural history that we are still investigating. The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 prohibits removing, disturbing or defacing archaeological sites or artifacts on federal public lands.
Plants
The plant community in this area has repeatedly evolved during periods of climate change since the Eocene Epoch (56-33.9 million years ago). Geologic and climate changes since the Precambrian (4,600-541 million years ago) make the area an important site for research on paleobiology and the effects of climate change, wildfire fire and other disturbances.

Unique plant species within Browns Canyon include the endemic Brandegee's buckwheat as well as imperiled species such as Fendler's Townsend-daisy, Fendler's false cloak-fern, Livermore fiddleleaf and the endemic Front Range alumroot.

Wildlife
Browns Canyon is home to some of Colorado's most emblematic animal species, including mountain lions, bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer, bobcat, red and gray fox, black bear and coyote, among others. The area's cliffs provide excellent habitat for peregrine falcons, prairie falcons and golden eagles.

The rugged river corridor of Browns Canyon National Monument represents one of the only riparian ecosystems along the Arkansas River that remains relatively undisturbed. Riparian corridors provide very important migration routes for birds and insects. A number of reptile and amphibian species are found in the area, including Woodhouse's toads, chorus frogs, bullsnakes, plains garter snakes, Short-horned lizards, and some other less common species.

Grazing
The Monument contains several active livestock grazing allotments that have been permitted since implementation of the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934. Grazing use in this area supports the local economy and maintains the historic ranching heritage of Chaffee County. Livestock grazing management practices are conducted in a manner that promotes a balance in use with wildlife needs, protection of riparian areas and healthy plant ecosystems.

Fees
Browns Canyon National Monument does not require fees for entrance. However, parking at the Ruby Mountain Recreation Site and or the Hecla Junction Recreation Site requires either a CPW annual or daily parks pass. Annual park passes can be obtained at the AHRA Visitor Center in Salida or daily passes can be obtained at self-serve kiosks at the recreation sites.

For more information about fees, visit http://cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/ArkansasHeadwatersRecreationArea/Pages/Fees.aspx

Leave No Trace
Following the Leave No Trace principles and combining them with your personal judgment, awareness and experience will help protect natural and cultural resources and preserve the experience for future visitors. Please learn and practice Leave No Trace skills and ethics and pass them on to those you meet. It's easy to enjoy and protect the Monument simultaneously.

• Plan ahead and prepare.
• Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
• Dispose of waste properly.
• Leave what you find.
• Minimize campfire impacts.
• Respect wildlife.
• Be considerate of other visitors.

For more information, visit https://lnt.org/