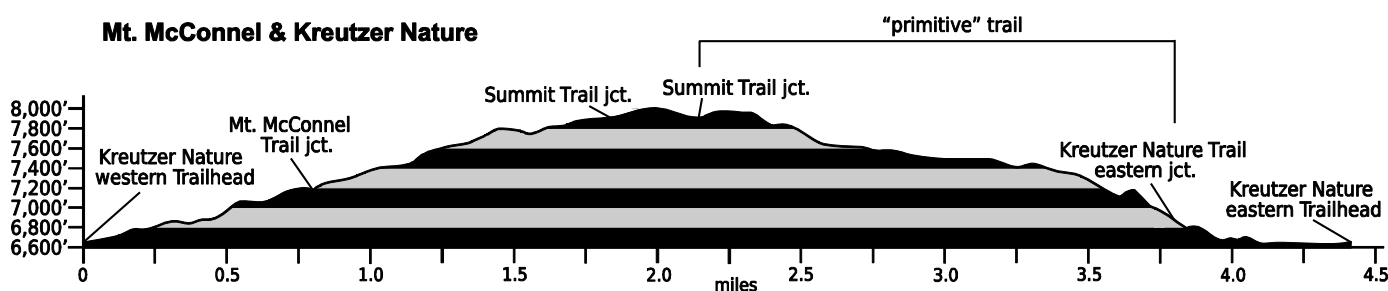


Feb. 8, 2021

Public Trail Information: Mt. McConnel & Kreutzer Nature

Trail(s): Mount McConnel #992 (#801); Mount McConnel Summit #992-1; Kreutzer Nature #936	
Ratings / restrictions:	Hikers – Moderate Stock - Prohibited Bicycles – Prohibited Dogs on hand-held leash with hikers See complete REGULATIONS below INFORMATION OF INTEREST
CAUTIONS:	The Mt. McConnel “primitive trail” is very steep and poorly marked. Poison ivy
Typically accessible:	All year (see SEASONAL below)
Wilderness:	Cache La Poudre
One-Way Length:	4.7 miles (entire length of Kreutzer Nature + Mt. McConnel + Mt. McConnel Summit Trail) 1.9 miles (west arm of Kreutzer Trail + west arm of Mt. McConnel Trail + Summit Trail) 2.0 miles (Kreutzer Nature Trail only)
Elevation – Beginning / Peak:	6,651 / 7,998
Gain/Loss/Net Gain:	1,658/352/+1,306 (one way to summit)
Map(s) - Trails Illustrated:	#101 Cache La Poudre Big Thompson
Map(s) - USGS 7-½' Quadrangles:	Big Narrows



TRAILHEAD LOCATION:

Lower Poudre Canyon Area: Drive 23.5 miles on CO-14 from Ted’s Place. Just past mile marker 99, take the turnoff for Mountain Park Campground. Cross over the bridge spanning the Poudre River and immediately turn right into the day use parking area (this is generally a Fee Area). Continue to the toilet area, where there are five free parking spaces designated for hikers. A sign here says it is the trailhead, but the true trailhead is about 100 yards uphill to the southeast, just across the upper campground road. A second trailhead sign and an area map are posted at this location.

TRAIL: This is really two trails: (1) Kreutzer Nature Trail begins at the trailhead and circles south and east and then back west, for 1.9 miles, ending at the bridge into the campground. (2) Mt. McConnel is an arc off Kreutzer, leaving it at about 0.8 miles, heading uphill to the south. After another 1.0 mile, a short spur (0.14 mile) leads to the summit of Mt. McConnel. Continuing past this spur junction, the Mt. McConnel Trail becomes steep and “primitive” until it rejoins the east side of Kreutzer after another 1.6 miles. The trail tread of the entire Kreutzer Nature Trail and of the western arm of the Mt. McConnel Trail is well-worn and easy to follow. The routes of the Summit Trail and the eastern arm of the Mt. McConnel Trail (the “primitive” trail) are marked with small (6-12 in)

rock cairns but somewhat challenging to see and follow (especially if there is any snow on the ground). **Note that the Mt. McConnel Trail has some steep portions and sheer drop-offs, which may bother those who are fearful of heights or prone to vertigo.**

WATER: Limited - Dry except for a small creek at the eastern junction of the Kreutzer Nature Trail with the eastern arm of the Mt. McConnel “primitive” trail. Recommend carrying plenty of water.

CAMPING: Not Recommended

SEASONAL: Accessible in the winter, but the gate to the campground and trailhead is locked. Park near Highway 14 (but do not block the gate), and hike in to the trailhead. Traction devices are usually needed. For your safety, do not attempt the “primitive” eastern arm of this trail when it is snow covered. This trail typically holds snow.

DESCRIPTION: Both the Mt. McConnel Trail and the Kreutzer Nature Trail are popular hikes during the summer months. The trail begins on the western arm of the Kreutzer Nature Trail and ends on its eastern arm. Because there is not much shade on much of these trails, sun protection and plenty of water are recommended. Sturdy shoes are also recommended.

The trail has several switchbacks, then turns and climbs gradually westward, paralleling the

campground. At 0.4 mile, there is an overlook with sign information on the human history. This is the last switchback in this section where the trail turns sharply left and climbs for another 0.4 mile to the high point of the Kreutzer Nature Trail, where the west end of the Mt. McConnel Trail starts. At this junction, note the flat rock (about 3 ft in diameter and 1 ft high) in the middle of the trail. The wooden trail sign marking this junction faces to the east so, while it is visible coming from the east, it is very easy to miss if approaching from the west. Just 10 ft east of this junction is an interpretative sign titled "*Creation of the Poudre River Canyon.*"

To continue your hike on the Mt. McConnel Trail, turn back sharply to the right (west) at the junction and follow the Mt. McConnel trail uphill. Notice the numerous rock walls and seats constructed by the CCC in the 1930's. There is a great view to the north where the trail switchbacks just below the bottom of an impressive boulder field and talus slope, about 0.25 mile past the junction (1.1 miles from the trailhead). From this point, the trail continues climbing steeply and passes several more CCC rock benches and seats. Another great view is at a switchback at the very top of the talus slope, by the cliffs, at 1.4 miles from the trailhead. About 0.75 mile past the junction with the Kreutzer Nature Trail (1.6 miles from the trailhead), the Mt. McConnel Trail enters the Cache La Poudre Wilderness.

After another 0.25 mile, look carefully to the west, along the right-hand side of the trail, for the unsigned 0.14 mile-long Summit Trail (#992-1). This junction is marked with a small rock cairn. From the summit of Mt. McConnel there is a great view of the canyon carved by the South Fork of the Cache La Poudre River to the southwest and beyond it, on the horizon, you can see the Mummy Range. You can also see sections of the Pingree Park Road from this vantage point.

Now retrace your route: Follow the Summit Trail back to the main Mt. McConnel Trail, turn left (northwest) and descend to the west junction with the Kreutzer Nature Trail, then turn east (right) onto it, follow it to the east junction with the Mt. McConnel ("primitive") trail, turn left (northwest -- downhill) and follow the Kreutzer Nature Trail to its east trailhead, very near the road bridge across the Poudre River.

Mt. McConnel "primitive" trail: If you are a strong hiker able to deal with steep downhills, one option is to take the Summit Trail back to the main Mt. McConnel Trail and turn right, to the southeast. The east arm of the Mt. McConnel Trail is steep, primitive, and not often used. This trail will eventually rejoin the Kreutzer Nature Trail. At this junction there are two routes back to Mountain Park Campground. Option 1 is to follow the Kreutzer Nature trail uphill and to the west until reaching its junction with the west arm of the Mt. McConnel Trail and then follow the Kreutzer Nature Trail downhill, retracing your path to the western trailhead. Option 2 is to follow the Kreutzer Nature Trail to the north and northwest as it contours around the northeast flank of Mt. McConnel and gently descends toward the Poudre River. This route will take you to the eastern trailhead of the Kreutzer Nature Trail near the bridge over the Poudre River.

INFORMATION OF INTEREST:

The Kreutzer Nature Trail has at least 23 interpretative signs along its length that provide information about local geology, ecology, plants, and animals; making this trail interesting and informative for kids and adults. This trail system was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1936 during the Depression and was named after William Kreutzer, who in 1898 became the first official forest ranger in the United States. He undertook the daunting task of enforcing new and often unpopular regulations regarding public land use, but succeeded through his patient and calm demeanor. He served first near Colorado Springs, later in the Gunnison National Forest, and in 1921 transferred to what is now Roosevelt National Forest, where he stayed until retiring in 1939. His 41 years of fire prevention and forest management efforts, initially met with resistance, transitioned Colorado into modern forestry practices.

Mt. McConnel was named after R.C. McConnel, one of the first rangers in the Poudre District, who served here in the early 1900s. Look for the walls and benches built by the CCC and detailed in the description portion above. The Mt. McConnel trail is the only USFS system trail in the Cache La Poudre Wilderness.

The extensive impact of the High Park Fire in 2012 is visible along much of this trail.

REGULATIONS:

- Camping and Fires - Prohibited within 1/4 mile of trailhead. Outside the Wilderness boundary: recommend at least 100 feet from water and trail. In the Wilderness: prohibited within 200 feet of water or trail.
- Dogs - Must be on hand-held leash with hikers.
- Stock - Prohibited.
- Bicycles and Other Wheeled Conveyances - Prohibited.
- Motorized Transport - Prohibited.
- Group Size - Outside the Wilderness boundary, more than 74 people in a single group must have a USFS permit. In the Wilderness, maximum 12 people in a group.

The Mt. McConnel Trail is a National Recreation Trail.

The Kreutzer Nature Trail is adopted by: American Association for Aerosol Research, CSU Chapter.

The Mt. McConnel Trail is adopted by: BSA Troop 83, Fort Collins.

GPS Coordinates: datum = WGS84	Lat/Long	UTM
Kreutzer Nature Trail:		
west Kreutzer Nature Trail trailhead	N40°40.97' W105°27.84'	460790mE 4503653mN
west junction of Kreutzer Nature & Mt McConnel trails	N40°40.70' W105°27.76'	460900mE 4503152mN
east junction of Kreutzer Nature & Mt. McConnel trails	N40°40.64' W105°27.42'	461378mE 4503039mN
east Kreutzer Nature Trail Trailhead (near bridge)	N40°40.96' W105°27.71'	460973mE 4503633mN
Mt. McConnel Trail:		
Mt. McConnel "west trailhead" at west junction of Mt. McConnel & Kreutzer Nature trails	N40°40.70' W105°27.76'	460900mE 4503152mN
west Wilderness boundary	N40°40.50' W105°27.81'	460823mE 4502783mN
junction with Summit Trail	N40°40.38' W105°27.77'	460883mE 4502560mN
Mt. McConnel summit	N40°40.32' W105°27.88'	460727mE 4502450mN
end of Mt. McConnel Trail at east Wilderness boundary & east junction with Kreutzer Nature Trail	N40°40.64' W105°27.42'	461378mE 4503039mN

(See next page for map of trail.)



Mercator Projection
 WGS84
 UTM Zone 13T
 CalTopo

