

Nature Trail Points of Interest

1. **Growth rings...**The cross-section of a tree reveals not only its age, but also an interesting story of climate of the region during the tree's life span. Count each ring-how old was this tree when cut? Generally a wide ring indicates a good, wet growing season. The study of the relationships between past environments and growth rings is called dendrochronology.
2. **Ecotone...**This is the term biologists use to describe the edges between habitat types. Here woodland gives way to more open shrub and grassland. Some animals thrive in the wooded area, others in the open grassy area. Still others require both areas.
3. **Water, the sculptor...**At one-time this hollow was part of the solid limestone bluff. A tiny stream of water started working at small cracks in the rock thousands of years ago. Now after centuries of weathering, this large hollow has been formed.
4. **Fresh lake community...**Sunlight is needed in the early spring to start the growth of plants called algae. Algae are the basic food for all animals in the lake. The algae are eaten by millions of tiny animals called crustaceans; small fish eat the crustaceans; bigger fish, turtles, and frogs eat the smaller fish. This is an aquatic web of life - an ecosystem.
5. **Chinkapin oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*)** ...Note the large tree with broad, slightly saw-toothed leaves. This species is common to Oklahoma's oak-hickory forests. It prefers limestone outcrops such as those present at Skull Hollow. The fruit of this tree, the acorn, matures in 1 year and is a preferred food of the white-tailed deer.

6. **Understory Communities...**Plant communities are always in a state of change. Here you will notice many Redbud (*Cercis Canadensis*) trees starting to take over. The Redbud tree was designated as the official state tree in 1937. In early spring, its reddish-pink blossoms brighten the landscape throughout the state. Grasses well suited to the rigors of intense sunlight, periodic fire, and parching winds, are being out-competed by the shade-tolerant trees and shrubs at this location.
7. **Return to the soil...**Here and many places along the trail you can observe decaying trees and limbs lying on the ground. The trees are weathered, and fungi such as mushrooms decompose fallen trees and branches, and the nutrients contained in the wood are returned to the soil.
8. **Woodland community...**Trees have a great influence on the "micro-climate" under the protection of their leaf canopy. The overhead canopy gives shade from the sun, shelter from the wind, softens the fall of rain and adds moisture and oxygen to the air we breathe.
9. **Competition...**Here and throughout the trail trees are competing for space and sunlight. Look closely and you can see small shade-intolerant seedling trees that died due to lack of sunlight under the large, mature individuals.
10. **Salt lick...**Deer, just like humans, crave and require salt to supplement their diets. They usually get salt through natural deposits, especially after a rain when it seeps to the surface. Here, we occasionally provide salt for the deer to increase the health of the local population.

Skull Hollow



Nature Trail

Oologah Lake, Oklahoma



US Army Corps
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Tulsa District

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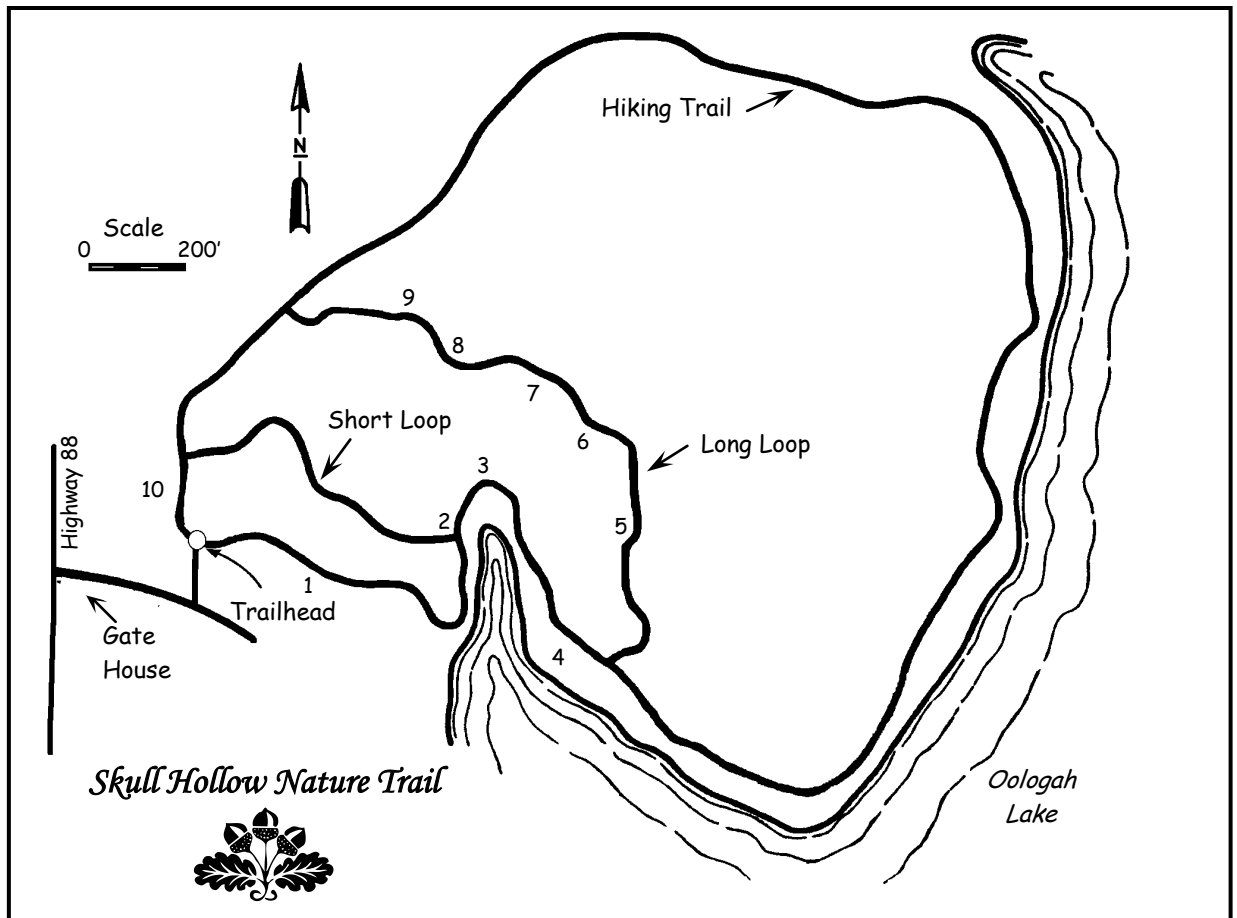
Many of the plants and animals on the trail can be dangerous. Avoid eating any plants or fruits you cannot identify as non-poisonous. You may encounter stinging insects and venomous snakes. As with all wildlife encounters, harassment of animals can have dangerous consequences! View wildlife from a safe distance. When hiking alone, be sure to tell a friend your plan and when you'll be back.

Remember to pack out any trash you bring with you (there are no facilities along the trail). Please, take only pictures, and leave only footprints.

History of Skull Hollow

Skull Hollow Nature Trail is situated in the oak-hickory woods of Northeast Oklahoma. This region was once part of the largest district in the Cherokee Indian Territory.

The name Skull Hollow came about back when the area was still Indian Territory. It seems a Texas cowman, who had a herd of cattle at Old Alluwe, came to the McDaniel Trading Post looking for some strays. Two Cherokees, Louis McNair and "Dirt Pot" rode in from the west and also stopped at the post, which was on the north bank of the Caney River and about four miles south of Oologah. When the cowman stopped, he noticed his horse was lame and proceeded to the blacksmith's shop to have the horse examined. After the horse was shod, he pulled out a large roll of money, but the blacksmith could not make change and told him to drop it by later. The cowman rode off toward his home ranch. Shortly afterward, Louis McNair and "Dirt Pot" started off on their horses in the same direction. The cowman mysteriously disappeared and later a skull was found in what is now known as "Skull Hollow".



Description of the Trail

Three different routes are available on the Skull Hollow Nature Trail: Short Loop, Long Loop, and a Hiking Trail.

The short loop is about a third of a mile long and has several trees and shrubs labeled along the path. It is designed for those who wish to take a brief look at an oak-hickory type forest common in this region of Oklahoma.

The long loop offers a leisurely path approximately three-quarters of a mile in length. This trail features not only labeled trees and shrubs, but is an interpretive trail that has ten points of interest marked by numbered posts. These features are described below in this pamphlet.

For the adventuresome, a hiking trail a mile and a third in length is the thing. The route takes you along the bluff with excellent vantage points of the lake along the way. The trail loops back off the bluff at Skull Hollow following an old wagon road back to the starting point. An old Verdigris River horse crossing is visible leading down the bluff at this point.

We hope you enjoy whatever route you choose, and that you take the opportunity to try them all.