Lon Sanders Canyon Conservation Area

Brochure and Trail Guide

Missouri Department of Conservation

Welcome to:

Lon Sanders Canyon Conservation Area

This 130-acre area was acquired by the Missouri Department of Conservation in 1988 through a 50-acre partial donation from the McGhee family and an 80-acre donation by Nan Gardner Weber, who devoted most of her life to the cause of conservation and reforestation in Missouri.

The area is intended as a wildlife study, hiking, and nature area. The loop trail fulfills one of Weber's wishes for the area.

People have visited and used the canyon for centuries. Native Americans used it as a meeting place. According to legend, at one time a large boulder in the middle of the creek was a sacred place where different tribes smoked a peace pipe.

Barred owl

Joseph Stokely built the first settler's home in the McKenzie Creek Valley in the south end of this canyon about 1803. Later the canyon was the site for the first grist mill in the valley. This mill was powered by a water wheel driven by the rushing flow of the creek. Subsequently, the canyon was owned by Dr. Samuel A. Bates, who dreamed of damming the stream to install an electric power generating plant. This plan did not materialize, but the canyon carried the name Bates Canyon for many years.

Lon Sanders Canyon CA

Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri ©
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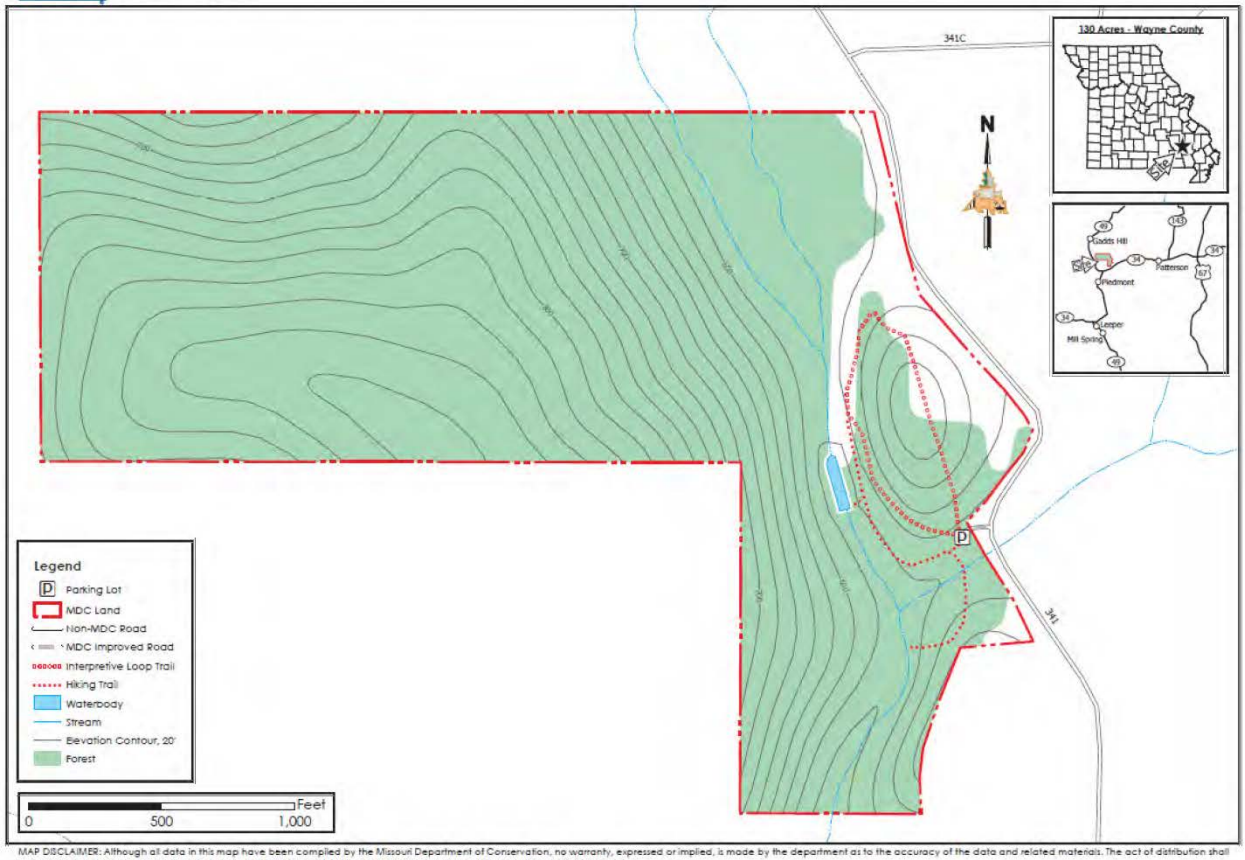


The current name of the canyon is taken from Colonel Lon Sanders, a St. Louis and Philadelphia businessman. About 1930, Colonel Lon Sanders began developing the canyon and brought it to public attention. He built small dams, lily pools, flower gardens, shelter houses, and foot paths. He also planted non-native ornamental plants, some of which grow here to this day.

Things to Do:

- Hiking
- Nature study
- Wildlife viewing
- Fishing
- Archery hunting
  Creek.

Regulations:

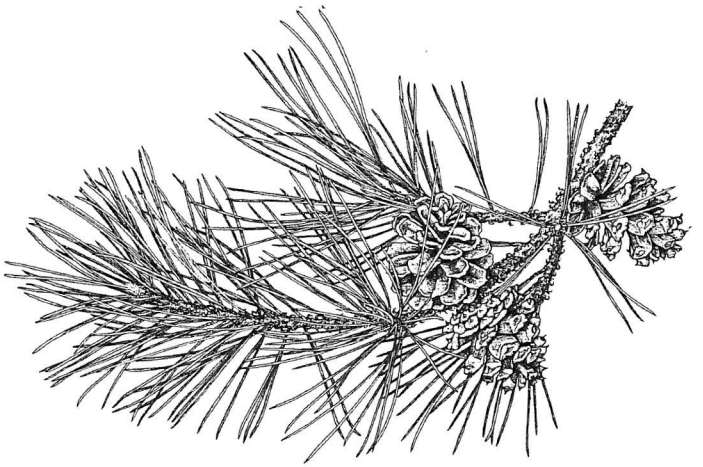
- Area Hours: Open daily from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m.
- Trapping by permit only
- Day use only - no camping
- No firearms
- No horseback or bicycle riding
- No cutting or removal of vegetation
- No littering
- Mushrooms, berries, and other fruit may be picked for personal use only.

Lon Sanders Canyon Loop Trail

This trail is approximately one-half mile and will require 30 to 40 minutes to hike at a leisurely pace. It is moderately difficult with some steep grades. On some parts of the trail, there are large, loose rocks.

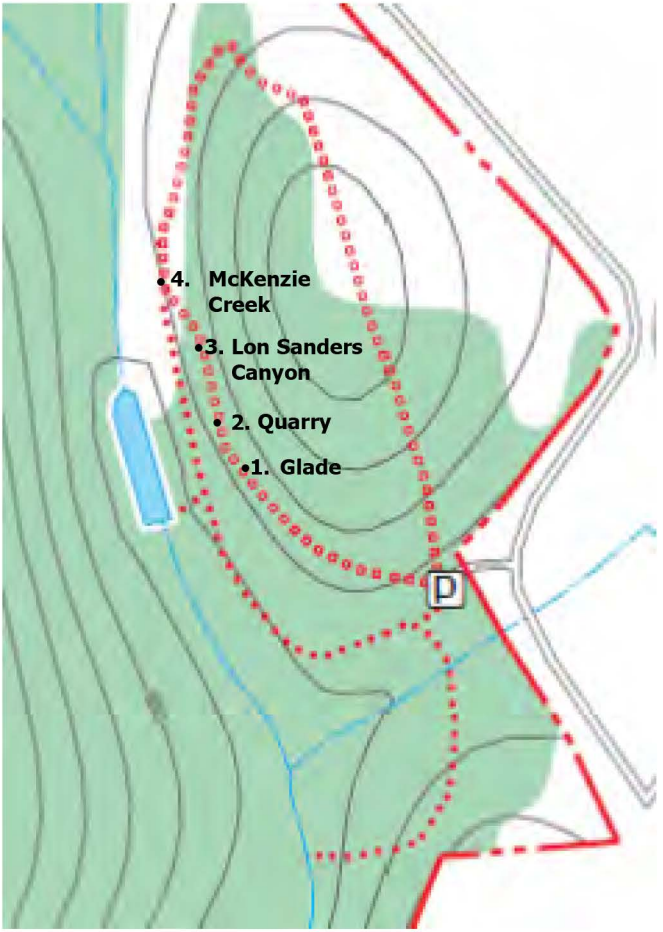
Please note:

- Wooden posts mark interpretive features along the trail. Post numbers correspond to information in the trail guide and also are plotted on the trail map.
- **Please stay on the trail surface. The trail approaches steep bluffs and cliffs. Please use caution. Use caution in the old quarry area as the rocks are sharp.**
- **If you walk slowly and quietly, you will be more likely to see wildlife and hear the natural sounds of the woods.**
- **Help us keep your state lands beautiful. Your pride in this area will help improve it for all. Please, respect the features and leave the area as you found it-or better.**



Boy Scout Troop 65 of Piedmont, Mo., planned and constructed this trail through an Eagle Service Project. The Department is grateful for the excellent work done by Troop 65 and other local citizens in trail planning, construction, and interpretation.

Loop Trail



Trail Stations

1. Glade
2. Quarry
3. Lon Sanders Canyon
4. McKenzie Creek

Station 1:

Glade

See the open area on both sides of the trail.

These small openings within the forest are called glades. They occur mainly on south and west slopes where bedrock is at or near the land surface. Glades provide important habitat for turkey and quail and are homes for eastern collared lizards and flathead snakes. Many songbirds, such as red-eyed vireos and indigo buntings, live on or near this glade.

Little bluestem, Indian grass and many wildflowers, such as tickseed, pine-weed and sunflowers, characterize the glade community. Efforts are being made to restore the once common glade community to the Missouri Ozark landscape. Suppression of fire has allowed woody species to grow over these dry, rocky areas. Now, under prescribed conditions, fire is being reintroduced as a natural tool to restore glades.

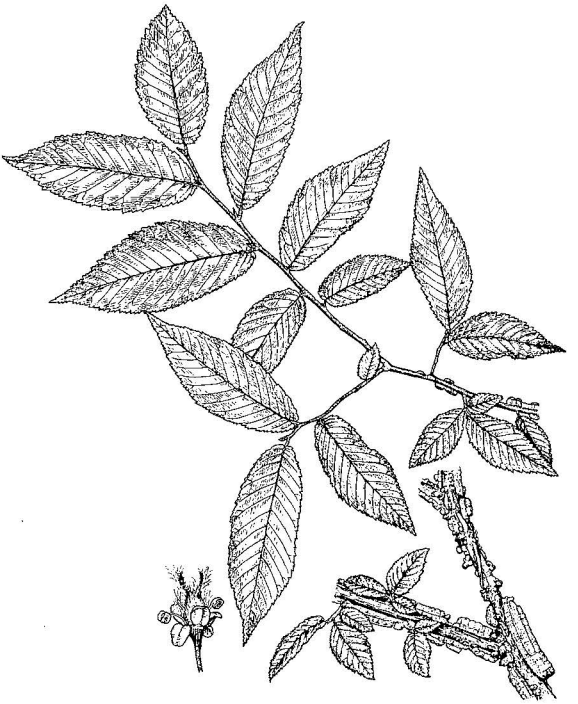
Station 2:

Quarry

The trail traverses the remnants of a quarry operation. The blue-gray, fine-grained crystalline rocks around you are known as Mudlick Dellenite or blue granite. The rock was named for its exposures on Mudlick Mountain in Sam A. Baker State Park at Patterson, Mo.

You can observe Mudlick Dellenite in several small quarries in Lon Sanders Canyon. Presumably, these quarries are the source of building stones used in the construction of the city library and other buildings in Piedmont. Additional exposures are on Haley Mountain and on the hillside to the northeast along Highway 49 from Piedmont.

Mudlick Dellenite is some of the oldest rock you will see in Missouri. Geologists believe that this precambrian rock was formed about 1.5 billion years ago. Molten rock from deep in the earth flowed into cracks and crevices below the earth's surface. Here it quickly cooled and crystallized. Although it contains feldspars and other common minerals, Mudlick Dellenite is chemically different from other precambrian rocks in the area. Mudlick Dellenite occurs in a few locations in the St. Francois Mountains and no where else in the world.

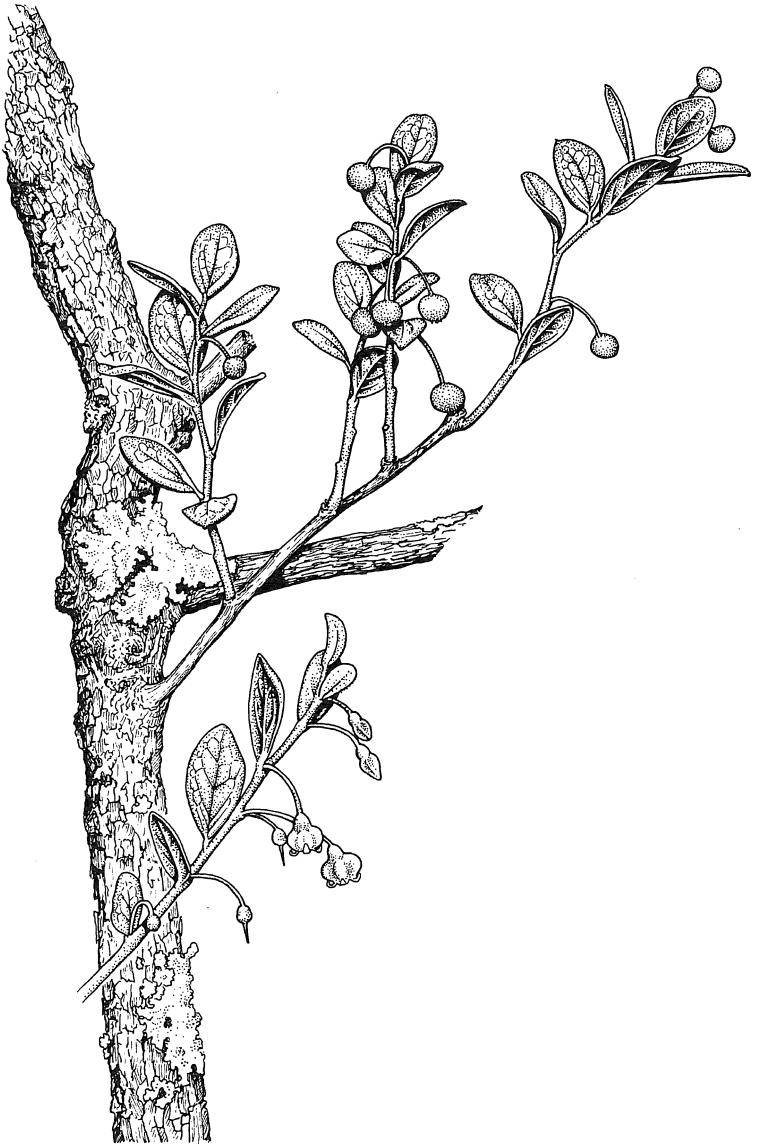


Station 3:

Lon Sanders Canyon

The pool and plants here are remnants of the work begun by Colonel Lon Sanders. He introduced many exotic plants including wintercreeper and Japanese honeysuckle. Some of these plants, when left unchecked, can spread and become a nuisance on the landscape.

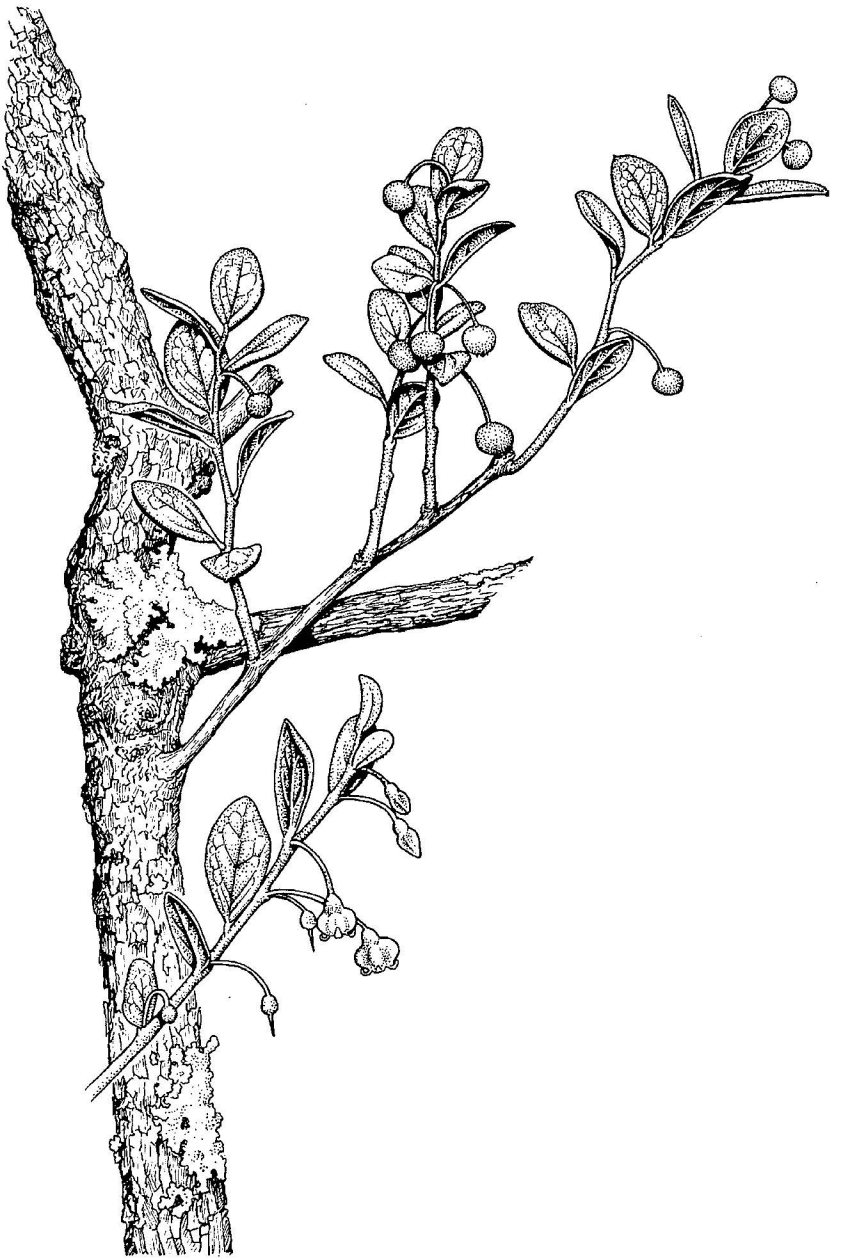
Lon Sanders also built the steps and dam on the creek below this point. There have been multiple renovations and attempts to repair damage from time, water, and neglect through the years. A large-scale renovation was done in the 1960s by the Job Corps and the City of Piedmont, and more recently the Department of Conservation has repaired the dam. The canyon that you will walk through as you continue on the trail is home to McKenzie Creek.



Station 4:

McKenzie Creek

Clear Ozark streams are like jewels in the oak-hickory forest. These spring-fed waterways provide the life line for an abundance of aquatic species, as well as for land animals such as deer and turkey. Typical trees along the clear streams are river birch, musclewood, alder, and willow. Trees provide shade for aquatic life and protection for stream banks.



We hope you have enjoyed your walk. Please visit again.

6/2024