



Kiesha's Preserve Nature Walk

A SHORT WALK ADJACENT TO OUR CAMPSITE WITH EDUCATIONAL SIGNS AND NATURE GUIDE

Kiesha's Preserve Nature Guide



Natural history of Kiesha's Preserve and the surrounding areas.



PARIS SPRING & CREEK:

- » Snow accumulates up on Paris peak in the winter months to form the snowpack, which thaws during the spring and early summer and moves underground. This process is called groundwater or aquifer recharge.
- » Paris Spring is the result of a natural flow of groundwater up to the earth's surface.
- » Paris Spring provides drinking water for the City of Paris, insect, fish, and wildlife habitat throughout the entire reach of Paris Creek.



RIPARIAN ZONE:

- » The riparian zone is the most important and heavily used wildlife habitat in the region.
- » 82% of all bird species in the Intermountain West are dependent on riparian habitat.
- » Filters nutrients, pesticides, and animal waste from agricultural runoff, stabilizes banks, filters sediment from runoff, provides shade, shelter and food for fish and other aquatic organisms, and provides wildlife habitat and corridors.



BEAVER:

- » Beavers are the second largest living rodents on Earth. They can weigh up to 110 lbs.
- » Beavers are herbivores, consuming tree bark, aquatic plants, grasses, and sedges.
- » Beavers build dams and lodges using tree branches, vegetation, rocks, and mud. They have a large impact on the biodiversity of an area. These dams also mitigate the impact of flooding by slowing down high flows during runoff.
- » Beavers store water and improve hydraulic (water) conditions. They increase water storage on the surface in ponds and subsequently raise the water table in the surrounding area increasing the productivity of the surrounding plant communities.

A wooden signpost stands in a lush green forest clearing. The sign is white with a green silhouette of a forest at the top. The background shows a dense forest of tall evergreen trees and shorter deciduous trees with vibrant green leaves. The ground is covered in tall grass and small shrubs. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

CONIFEROUS FOREST:

- » A coniferous forest contains evergreen trees that have needles instead of leaves and bear cones. We have Douglas Fir, Subalpine Fir, Lodgepole Pine, and Englemann Spruce occurring on Kiesha's Preserve.
- » Conifers are usually mingled with deciduous trees (leaves), especially Aspen, as forest succession marches on through time. This provides important habitat and security for many wildlife and bird species.
- » The fallen dead conifer and deciduous trees occurring in a forest cycle nutrients back into the soil so that they are available for new growth.



ASPEN COMMUNITY:

- » Aspen is noted for its ability to regenerate vegetatively by shoots and suckers arising along its long lateral roots. All the trees in a clone have identical characteristics and share a root structure.
- » Aspen clones are the single largest organism on Earth and have an average life span of 60 to 70 years old. The oldest recorded Aspen was 226 years old.
- » Aspen communities provide a wide variety of wildlife habitat including moose, hare, elk, deer, and grouse.



UPLANDS:

- » Uplands are often, but not always, mountainous and consist of rock, shrubs including sagebrush and Juniper and Mahogany trees.
- » Upland vegetation ecosystems are important throughout the West. They include woodland, grassland, and shrubland habitats including sagebrush steppe.
- » Uplands help conserve soil, sequester carbon, and cycle nutrients, energy, and water. They also provide a variety of wildlife important habitat.

A wooden signpost stands in a lush green meadow. The sign is white with a green grass silhouette at the top. The background shows rolling hills under a cloudy sky.

MEADOW:

- » The meadow is land mostly covered by grasses, herbs, and wildflowers.
- » The meadow provides cover, food, and nesting for birds, insects, and other wildlife. Without this important habitat these species would disappear.
- » Field vs. Meadow? A field is used to describe an area managed by people. A meadow is used to describe a wild area.



ANTS AND RODENTS:

- » Ants play an important role in the environment. Ants turn and aerate the soil, allowing water and oxygen to reach plant roots. Ants take seeds down into their tunnels to eat. Some of these seeds sprout and grow new plants.
- » The ants that occupy this large ant hill are Red Harvester Ants.
- » Rodents including voles, ground squirrels and gophers play an important role in the health of this meadow including seed dispersal and soil aeration.
- » Rodents provide a major source of food for many predators and scavengers including hawks, foxes, bobcats, and coyotes.



DEER AND ELK:

- » For Mule deer and elk to survive they need food, water, shelter/cover, and space to move about and find their daily requirements. These are essential components of habitat. Without them, mule deer and elk will not be successful at surviving and reproducing.
- » Kiesha's Preserve provides important fawning and calving habitat as well as security and critical winter range for the mule deer and elk that inhabit the area. This type of critical habitat is disappearing fast as increased development is occurring in the Bear Lake Valley.
- » We typically see around 150 elk and 100 Mule deer winter at Kiesha's Preserve.



PREDATORS:

- » Predators help control the populations of prey species such as mule deer, elk, rabbits, ground squirrels and gophers, which in turn affects the quantity of plants and animals further along in the food chain.
- » Predators can increase the diversity in communities by preying on competitive dominant species or by reducing consumer pressure on foundation species.
- » Without predators, prey can become over-abundant. This can result in damage to local plants as well as disease outbreaks such as Chronic Wasting Disease. Top predators like wolves and cougars dominate small predators like coyotes keeping those populations in check too.