

USAFA Public Affairs
The Falcon Trail
Maintained by Boy Scout Troop 78
USAF Academy, Colorado

Welcome to the United States Air Force Academy [Falcon Trail](#). Approximately 12 miles long, the trail is open to all hikers. It has been designed to give you a good look at the natural and man-made beauty of the Academy.

FALCON TRAIL REGULATIONS

1. The start and finish point for the trail is immediately south of Building 5132, the Youth Center building. This building is identified by a large blue sign and is shown on the Falcon Trail map. Some groups may prefer to start and end their hike at the Academy camping areas.
2. Please do not litter the trail, nor deface trees, rocks, trail signs, etc.
3. Hikers are required to follow the marked trail. Military training or construction which might be hazardous to hikers may be in progress in off-trail judgment.
4. CAUTION: During the summer months, thunderstorms can build up very rapidly. The danger of lightning strike is very real. Please use care, planning, and judgment.

SIGNS ALONG THE FALCON TRAIL

The Falcon Trail is home for many different types of plants and animals. As you hike the trail, you should be aware of the various plant communities, animal habitats, and geological areas. Fourteen trail signs have been numbered to correspond with the numbers and information below. This information has been prepared to tell about the different plants, geology, and natural phenomena in the area of the signs. ENJOY THE HIKE!

SIGN 1. Even though dead and lying on the ground, the pine's job is not finished. It will return minerals to the soil which were borrowed during growth. To accomplish this, the dead trees have many helpers. Can you name some of them?

In a few years the log will be returned to the soil to make food for future trees and grasses.

Please be careful along the trail; remember, this is home for our timber rattlesnakes.

SIGN 2. The grass, cactus and forbes such as yucca in this area grow well with the average 15-inch rainfall. Try to observe some of the wildlife here, such as deer, rabbits, coyotes, and a large variety of birds.

SIGN 3. The high mountain ahead of you is called Blodgett Peak. On this mountain are bighorn sheep, the Colorado State animal. The mountain is 9,423 feet in elevation and is in the Rampart Range which borders the Academy. Where you are standing, the elevation is 6,892 feet. How much higher is Blodgett Peak?

SIGN 4. Water in this creek is from snow that has melted high in the mountains. It will eventually flow to the Gulf of Mexico. If you look closely, you may see trout, and along the banks, signs of many other animals. How many signs of mule deer do you see?

SIGN 5. Eroded sandstone outcroppings, such as the one near the top of this ridge ahead of you, serve as a home for falcons, hawks, and other birds.

SIGN 6. Along the creek, for the next several hundred years are numerous conservation dam projects built by hikers of the Falcon Trail. These help prevent solid erosion and provide shelters for aquatic life. The marsh plants provide a favorite habitat for many small animals. Look for mice, voles, and other small rodents. In the nearby woods, you may see a weasel which feeds on the small rodents. Take a moment to study the pond. How many different kinds of wildlife did you see there?

SIGN 7. About 1/4 mile to the west is the trail head to Stanley Canyon Reservoir. This trail leaves the Academy and crosses the Pike National Forest ending 2 miles later at the reservoir. The trail continues on from Stanley Reservoir another 5.5 miles to Farish Memorial. A handout similar to this one explains some of the features along this trail.

SIGN 8. The area surrounding this ponderosa pine tree is part of an alluvial fan where soil has been washed down from the mountain above.

SIGN 9. The wavy lines on your map are called Contour lines. These lines show elevation and “the lay of the land.” If you look to the east, you will notice that the land falls gradually away from you. Looking at the map, you see the contour lines are far apart. Looking to the west, the hill is steep and the contour lines are closer together. A contour line that forms a “V” with the point uphill indicates a drainage, with the point downhill, a ridge.

SIGN 10. This next section of the Falcon Trail overlaps with an environmental trail. A series of signs on this trail provide information about the areas geology, vegetation, history, and wildlife.

SIGN 11. One of the most complete marshland communities on the Academy is along this creek. The plants you see are rushes, sedges, and cattails. Many animals and birds live near this area. What different animal signs did you see?

SIGN 12. The bubbles you see in the lake help purify the wastewater by putting oxygen in the water. The water is recycled and used for irrigation on the Academy. Did you notice any horned toads on the trail?

SIGN 13. Have you noticed some of the contour ditches along the trail? They were made to stop soil erosion from water running too quickly downhill. These areas were planted with grasses and shrubs to prevent further erosion.

SIGN 14. This is the oldest building still standing on the Academy, built in 1869 by William Burgess. This log cabin is a memorial to the pioneer people who homesteaded in our region and who lived in cabins such as this. How many beautiful, tufted-eared Aberts’ squirrels do you see around the old pioneer cabin?