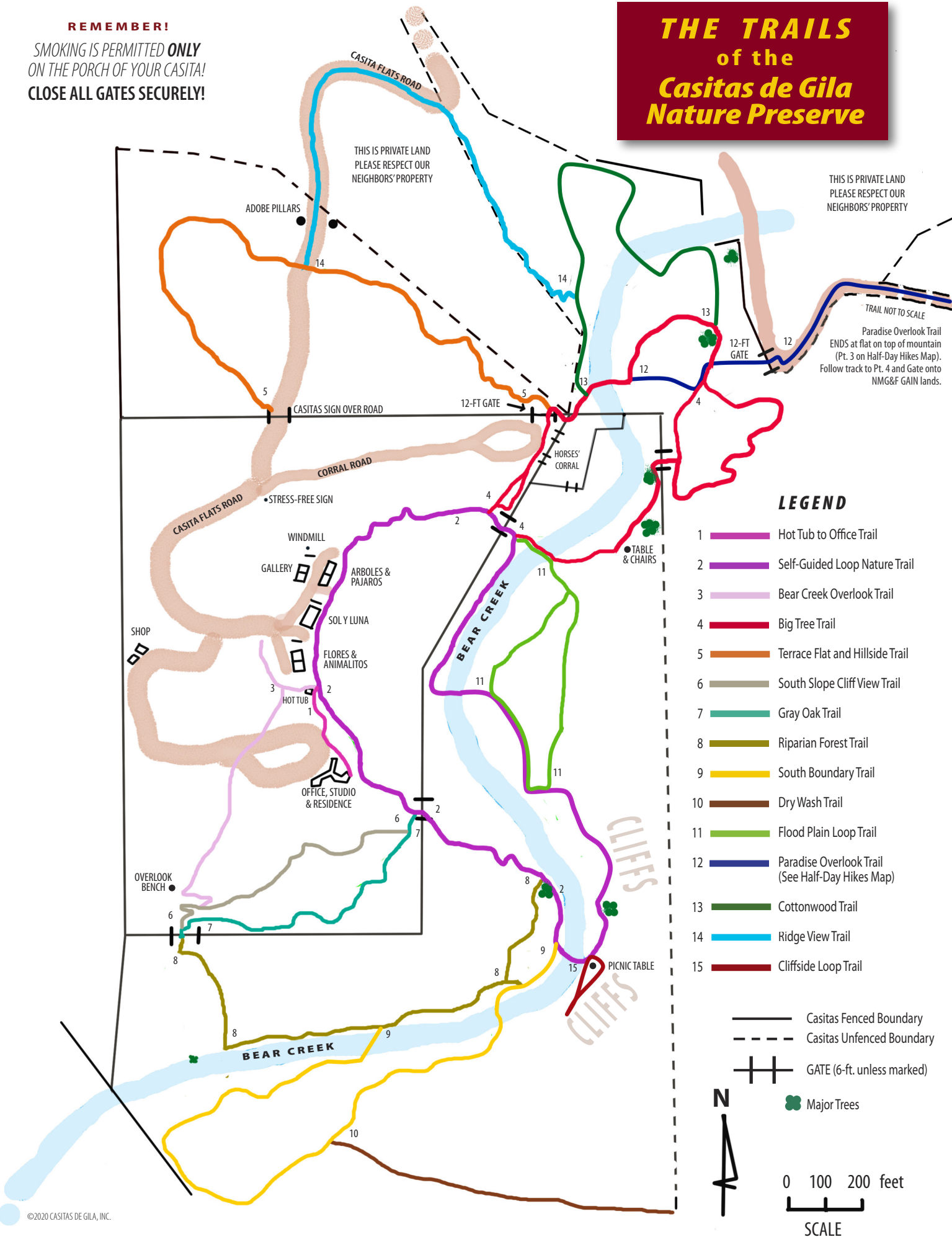


**REMEMBER!**

SMOKING IS PERMITTED **ONLY**  
ON THE PORCH OF YOUR CASITA!  
CLOSE ALL GATES SECURELY!

# THE TRAILS of the Casitas de Gila Nature Preserve



THIS IS PRIVATE LAND  
PLEASE RESPECT OUR  
NEIGHBORS' PROPERTY

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TRAIL NOT TO SCALE  
Paradise Overlook Trail  
ENDS at flat on top of mountain  
(Pt. 3 on Half-Day Hikes Map).  
Follow track to Pt. 4 and Gate onto  
NMG&F GAIN lands.

**LEGEND**

- 1 Hot Tub to Office Trail
- 2 Self-Guided Loop Nature Trail
- 3 Bear Creek Overlook Trail
- 4 Big Tree Trail
- 5 Terrace Flat and Hillside Trail
- 6 South Slope Cliff View Trail
- 7 Gray Oak Trail
- 8 Riparian Forest Trail
- 9 South Boundary Trail
- 10 Dry Wash Trail
- 11 Flood Plain Loop Trail
- 12 Paradise Overlook Trail (See Half-Day Hikes Map)
- 13 Cottonwood Trail
- 14 Ridge View Trail
- 15 Cliffside Loop Trail

- Casitas Fenced Boundary
- - - Casitas Unfenced Boundary
- + + GATE (6-ft. unless marked)
- ☘ Major Trees



0 100 200 feet

SCALE

# TRAIL GUIDE

## Casitas de Gila Nature Preserve

### SELF-GUIDED LOOP NATURE TRAIL ... 0.6 mile

This trail and the printed guide in your Casita will introduce you to the plants, geology, wildlife, natural history, and cultural history of the Casitas de Gila Nature Preserve. The trail begins and ends at the post near the hot tub.

### BEAR CREEK OVERLOOK TRAIL ... 0.15 mile

Leads from the hot tub area over to the south side of Casita Flat, where a bench provides a bird's-eye view of Bear Creek and the cliffs above. In the evening this spot provides an inspiring viewpoint for watching mule deer, javelina, and birds in the canyon, and the Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep that frequent the cliffs and North and South Peaks across the creek.

### BIG TREE TRAIL ... 0.56 mile

Leads you along a shaded, winding path past ancient 300- to 500-year-old cottonwoods and sycamores and through groves of mature gray oak, alder, ash and walnut. Usually, this and the Cottonwood Trail are the best trails for observing birds and other wildlife, especially in early morning. Mule deer, wild turkey, and javelina are common visitors to this part of the Preserve.

### TERRACE FLAT & HILLSIDE TRAIL ... 0.33 mile

Leads from the Bear Creek floodplain onto an ancient river terrace (or "flat" in local parlance), and then continues onto the hillside comprising our western border. This trail presents a nice transition from the creek floodplain habitat to the plants and animals of the upland juniper and piñon habitat. It provides excellent bird's-eye views of the Casitas, North and South Peak, Turtle Rock, and the Pinos Altos Mountains and Gila Wilderness.

### SOUTH SLOPE CLIFF VIEW TRAIL ... 0.16 mile

This trail runs along a rocky slope of mesquite, catclaw, and cactus-covered outcrops of Gila Conglomerate just above the Gray Oak Trail. Provides excellent views of the cliffs across the creek and the twin peaks of North and South Peak above them. It's an excellent vantage point for observing and photographing the Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep that frequent the cliffs.

### GRAY OAK TRAIL ... 0.15 mile

Developed by our two horses, Yaqui and Saino, to get to their favorite afternoon siesta spot under the gray oaks. Starting at the gate at L4 on the Self-Guided Nature Trail, this trail winds down across exposed outcrops of mesquite- and catclaw-covered Gila Conglomerate to a shady grove of old and gnarled gray oak trees. It then continues over to a gate leading to the Riparian Forest Trail.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

- No smoking or fires anywhere on Casita lands. Smoking is permitted only on the porch at your Casita. Wildfire is a danger year-round throughout New Mexico.
- Guests are requested to **stay on trails** to avoid disturbing wildlife, except along the creek where exploring and play is encouraged. Avoid loud talk and other noise.
- Do not collect or disturb plants or animals. This includes snakes, scorpions, tarantulas, etc., as they are an integral part of the ecological balance.
- Rock and mineral collecting is encouraged.
- During the Summer Rainy Season (late June to mid September) be alert for flash floods. The creek can rise within minutes. Retreat to the *Casita side* of the creek!

- If the Rocky Mountain Sheep are on the cliffs or you come across them in the floodplain, please retreat immediately to the Casita side of the creek so they will not feel threatened. We do not want them to stop visiting us. They can be observed best from the Riparian Forest Trail, the Gray Oak Trail and the South Slope Cliff View Trail.
- Use the walking sticks provided at your Casita. Stout hiking shoes or boots are recommended, as are long pants and shirts. Be sure to take sunscreen and enough water.
- If you are hiking alone, notify Becky or Michael on both your departure and return, and **take a walkie-talkie**.
- **FOR PARADISE OVERLOOK TRAIL:** See *Half-Day Trail Guide and Map* and let Michael or Becky know.

### RIPARIAN FOREST TRAIL ... 0.16 mile

Begins at L6 on the Self-Guided Nature Trail and winds through a dense thicket of willow, walnut and juniper before opening out onto an old sand- and gravel-covered river terrace with mesquite, catclaw, walnut and cholla. At the trail sign, this trail goes to the right; to the left is a junction with the South Boundary Trail. Follow the Riparian Forest Trail west along the creek to the Casitas' boundary through a diverse mixture of mature red willow, Arizona walnut, velvet ash, one-seed Juniper, and a magnificent corridor along the creek lined with Fremont cottonwoods.

### SOUTH BOUNDARY TRAIL ... 0.31 mile

Starts on west side of Bear Creek at junction with Self-Guided Nature Trail and heads south to cross the creek at southern end of cliffs of Gila Conglomerate to make a broad loop to the southwest to South Boundary fence mostly on old Bear Creek floodplain, before recrossing Bear Creek to junction with the Riparian Forest Trail. Seep-willow, broad-leaved cattail and cottonwood are common along the creek and scattered Arizona alder, velvet ash, and one-seed juniper are found on the sparsely vegetated floodplain of sand and gravel.

### DRY WASH CANYON TRAIL ... 0.4 mile (roundtrip)

**NOTE:** Do not attempt to climb the cliffs of Gila Conglomerate lining the canyon; they are unstable.

This round-trip trail forks off the South Boundary Trail and runs up Dry Wash Canyon. This small dry wash canyon is typical of all canyons in the desert and has been formed over the millennia by the periodic flash floods coming down from North and South Peaks to the east. The "trail" is the dry wash itself in the bottom of the canyon and displays excellent outcrops of Gila Conglomerate. It is a good place to look for rocks and minerals, since they are replaced after every heavy rain.

A quarter-mile up the trail, you will come to a five-foot high ledge of Gila Conglomerate which you can either climb over or by-pass on the left side. Continue for another 500 feet until you reach the spot where the dry wash forks. This is the end of the trail and is easily recognized by a small grove of three large and gnarled old juniper trees clustered at the beginning of the right-hand fork. These junipers make a nice shady spot for lunch and refreshment. Upon reaching this spot, do not attempt to climb out, but retrace your steps to the beginning of the trail.

### FLOODPLAIN LOOP TRAIL ... 0.16 mile

When combined with segments of the Self-Guided Nature Trail, this trail provides a nice loop trail through magnificent stands of young cottonwood, willow and sycamore covering the floodplain on the other side of the creek across from the Casitas. These trails are an excellent place for observing the many birds and animals that frequent the floodplain, and also provide a connection between the trails on the north and south sides of the property.

### COTTONWOOD TRAIL ... 0.22 mile

This excellent wildlife trail begins at its junction with the Big Tree Trail. The trail heads north through a riparian forest of old growth red willow, velvet ash, and Fremont's cottonwood for about 0.1 mile before entering a magnificent grove of old growth Cottonwood trees, an excellent habitat for many bird species. The trail then loops east to cross Bear Creek to enter a very different riparian habitat of modern floodplain sand and gravels. Proceeding away from the active floodplain bordering the Creek, the trail traverses a progressively older floodplain covered with various grasses, mesquite, Apache plume, desert willow, seep willow, and a few scattered small trees of alder, juniper, and walnut.

### RIDGE VIEW TRAIL ... 0.23 mile

This trail begins at a rocky ledge of Gila Conglomerate, where it adjoins the Cottonwood Trail. From here, the trail proceeds in a westerly direction approximately 150 ft. along the southern side of an unusual deeply-shaded, spring-fed boggy area of tangled live and dead vegetation of various water-loving mosses, vines, shrubs, and willow and juniper trees as it slowly ascends the side of a ridge to emerge into a small clearing on the southern end of a north-trending ridge. At this point the trail turns to the north and begins a 400 ft. moderate climb of 60 ft in elevation along the crest of the north-trending ridge to end to intersect with Casita Flats Rd. Climbing up the ridge, scenic views of the distant mountains unfold. For birders, this trail can offer unique opportunities to observe and photograph various birds and sometimes raptors as they watch for prey from the tops of the Cottonwoods.

### CLIFFSIDE LOOP TRAIL ... 0.13 mile

This is an optional loop off the southern-most end of the Self-Guided Nature Trail, (see that guide for full description). This trail offers opportunities to sit, relax, or meditate; to picnic at a rustic table; to watch birds and animals along the cliffs and trees above; to study the rocks making up the vertical 130-ft cliffs of Gila Conglomerate; or to sit perched on a ledge of the conglomerate watching the minnows and dragonflies patrolling the clear waters of Bear Creek.