

Here we have a clearer view of the crags below Jeff Davis Peak, which is east of Wheeler Peak.



This sign explains to visitors that not all of the trees here are Bristlecone Pine trees. Some of them are Limber Pine trees, and the two are easily confused since they frequently grow in the same places. The Limber Pine's needles are longer and less densely packed on the branches, whereas the Bristlecone Pine's needles are more tightly packed and generally are shorter.



I think this tree is a Limber Pine (note that the bark also looks different from that of a Bristlecone Pine, and the tree is less gnarled). It appears that Limber Pine trees can live to be close to 2,000 years old.



This sign explains how "crossdating," matching patterns of wide or narrow growth rings on different trees, can be used to approximate when a tree sprouted.



Looking southeast from here. We are getting close to where the ground rises up more steeply towards the tall peaks.



Two photos of some impressively gnarled Bristlecone Pine trees as we near the end of the loop trail.



This sign tells visitors that this tree (seen in the picture one below) is 3,200 years old and is still living. "It was necessary to take five cores from different sides of the tree to obtain a complete sequence of its growth rings."



Vertical panorama of this amazing Bristlecone Pine tree.



This Bristlecone Pine tree is visible a short distance off the trail. The cloudy skies made for good photographs of these trees.



Here is the junction where the Bristlecone Pine Grove Loop Trail rejoins the Glacier Trail. Since the rain had stopped for the moment, and we hadn't heard thunder for a while, we decided to continue on a short distance up the Glacier Trail.



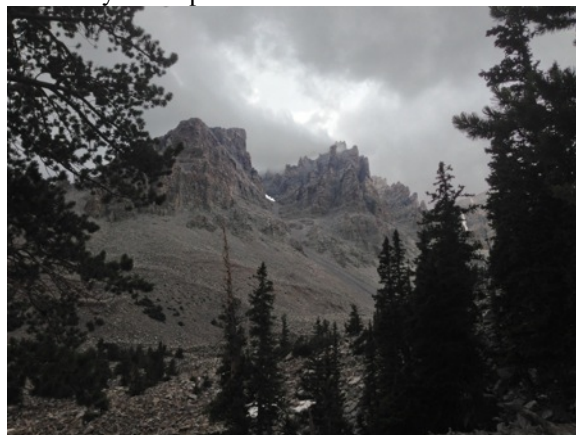
There are more Bristlecone Pine and Limber Pine trees along the first part of the Rock Glacier Trail.



This tall Bristlecone Pine tree has many branches.



The craggy outcroppings to the east of us certainly are impressive.



The trail rounds a corner and we leave the trees. The hiking also gets rougher, as we are crossing some large rocks.



Looking northeast from here at the rocky glacial moraine.



Panorama, with what I think is called Buck Mountain to the far left, and the crags below Jeff Davis Peak to the right of center. Wheeler Peak is to the far right, behind the hillside, and in the clouds.



This informative sign tells visitors that the "Rock Glacier" lies below the actual (Ice) Glacier.



We rounded another corner and could see the edge of the Rock Glacier.



Panorama of the nice view we had here of the surrounding craggy rocks. (The view here would likely be better if the clouds weren't so thick.)



This interesting tree near the trail is probably a Limber Pine, but I'm not entirely sure.



There were numerous small cones on this tree.



I'm not sure (from the photo) if this tree is a Bristlecone Pine or a Limber Pine.



At this point, we were starting to get more rain, and we were also hearing thunder. Since the rest of the Rock Glacier Trail is relatively exposed and beneath rocky cliffs, we decided to turn around here.



Looking up at some tall cliffs on the west side of the trail.



Looking up the valley from here. I hope to return sometime to complete this trail.



Notice the colorful streaks on the bark of this tree near the trail.



Looking up at some interesting cliffs on the ridge between where we are hiking and where Teresa Lake is.





Looking out from here at what I think is called Buck Mountain. Notice how the sky is still relatively clear away from the mountains. The clouds appeared to be lessening in some places, but we were also starting to hear thunder and get more rain.



Another hiker on this trail had told us about these small purple cone buds (?) on a nearby tree. I'm not sure what kind of tree these are on.



Heading back down the trail, we were fortunate to encounter a brief patch of sunshine.



I am not sure what this plant is called, but it had some small yellow flowers, and we only saw it in this one part of the hike, shortly before reaching where the Bristlecone Pine Grove Loop Trail takes off from the main trail.



Looking down the trail and out at Buck Mountain, and across at the part of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest which is just north of Baker, NV.



Interestingly, the thunder and rain lessened shortly after we turned around, and we encountered some sunshine on the hike back.



I spotted these small purple flowers near the trail; I'm not sure what they are called, and I did not see them elsewhere. According to the park brochure, Great Basin National Park does have some very nice wildflowers.



Here we are heading back along the trail towards the turnoff for the Alpine Lakes Loop.



From here, we could just barely see the hikers parking lot near Wheeler Campground, and the road in.



We took the first fork for the Alpine Lakes loop to check out Teresa Lake, which is at elevation 10,230 feet.



Panorama of this lake. Notice the nice view of the long ridge leading to Wheeler Peak. (This ridge has incredible views, but is not a good place to be in 50+ mph winds.)



There are different trees on this part of the trail.



From here, we returned to the Bristlecone Pine Grove/Rock Glacier Trail. Here we are looking back up towards where we had been hiking, below Jeff Davis Peak, which is still in the clouds.



This is another interesting plant we spotted along the trail.



When we returned to the parking lot, it was not raining, so we decided to briefly check out the Island Forest Nature Trail. The first informative sign tells visitors that "this forest stands on the rubble of glacier outwash." And, "because Wheeler Peak is so tall, it creates its own weather." Most of the rain or snow falls on the west side of the mountain, but "enough moisture falls on the eastern, leeward side to sustain these high mountain forests." It also mentions that some of the trees we have been seeing here are Engelmann Spruce.



This sign tells us that Teresa Lake holds much of the snowmelt which comes off of Wheeler Peak.



There is a nice, small meadow alongside part of this trail. I wonder if it sometimes has many flowers.



At this point it started to rain seriously, as evidenced by the water droplets seen on the sign in this photo. This sign tells us that "the many plants and animals found within this forest and along this meandering creek are almost completely cut off from others of their kind. The forbidding landscape that surrounds the Snake Range inhibits all but wind-borne plants, wing-borne animals, and large mammals from finding their way here today."



This small clearing has some aspen trees. We hadn't seen aspens on our walk, but there are many alongside the main road near here.



This sign tells us that these forest gaps (as seen in the below photo) are created by a lightning-caused fire. It also explains why we see many aspen trees in one location and none elsewhere:

"After fire burned these openings in this spruce-pine forest, abundant sunlight flooded in and quickly encouraged grasses and wildflowers to grow. Next, the small grove of aspen trees . . . began to sprout and fill in the opening. When these aspens are 80 to 100 years old their canopy will provide enough shade for young spruce and pine trees to grow. These aspens will give way to the conifers, which will reclaim the ground until the next lightning strike sparks the cycle again."



Another view of these tall, skinny aspen trees alongside the trail.



Looking up towards the Rock Glacier Trail from here.



The trail crosses a small stream with some miniature waterfalls on the way back to the main parking area.



It cleared enough on the drive back down that we were able to stop at a viewpoint and get this photo of Wheeler Peak (right) and Jeff Davis Peak (left) before the clouds came back in. The Rock Glacier is just below the top of Wheeler Peak, and the forested knoll below Jeff Davis Peak is where the Bristlecone Pine Grove is located.



This is a different kind of bush with yellow flowers that we spotted near the viewpoint.



The part of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest just north of Baker, NV is visible to the left in this photo.





One last view of Wheeler Peak and the ridge leading up to it.



There are certainly some nice views from the Wheeler Peak Scenic Drive!



This photo is looking over towards some interesting rock formations on the Baker Creek Road.



Taking a closer look at this interesting rocky area. The "Upper Pictograph Cave," which I hope to visit sometime and is (currently) mentioned on the park webpage, can be found near the turnoff for the Grey Cliffs camping area.



Looking at the southern end of the park as we drove south towards Garrison, UT. There is still much to see in this area!

