

Panorama from the first part of these meadows, with Snowdon Peak in the background center. Notice how much closer to the peak we had been earlier.



The flowers along this part of the trail were similar to those we had seen near Little Molas Lake, which is across the valley from here.



Here the use trail is rejoining the main trail. To the right in this photo and in the background is the Grand Turk. I think Sultan Mountain may be just barely visible to the left of it.



Looking back at Snowdon Peak as dark clouds are starting to roll in.



We decided to see how far we could get along the Crater Lake Trail before it started to rain. Interestingly, this trail is not much more worn-in than the use trail to Snowdon Meadows.



This trail soon passed through some nice patches of wildflowers, including the tall plants we had seen earlier in the second meadows, which I think are called Colorado False Hellebore, or Skunk Cabbage. I'm not sure what the tall purple flowers are called.



The ominous clouds in the distance made for interesting photographs of this area, but we were concerned about thunderstorms.





This incredible bonsai-like tree can be seen alongside the trail. It is only 2-3 feet tall and is growing straight out of this rock.



The trail briefly descends again through the trees, and we lose our nice views of the valley.



Through here is where we saw the best (i.e., densest and most variety of) wildflowers of the hike. This one looks like some sort of "lady's slipper" flower, but I'm not sure.



Here are more Colorado Columbine, with Mountain Bluebells in the background, some Cow Parsnip, more of the above purple flowers, some yellow flowers, and some small white flowers that were common through here but I'm not sure what they are called.



In this photo are some light-colored Indian Paintbrush, more Colorado Columbine, some Cow Parsnip, and a few small Mountain Bluebells.



The trail continued to descend through a nice meadow, and we hoped to get more views of the valley soon.



The trail rounded a corner, and we got a nice view of Engineer Mountain.





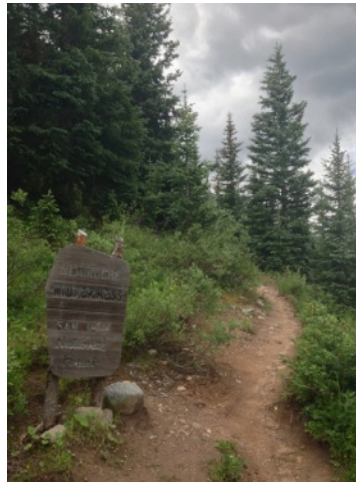
Looking northeast from here, towards Snowdon Peak, which is just barely visible to the left of center in this photo.



Panorama looking out towards some of the peaks across the valley, along the Colorado Trail.



Here we are entering the Weminuche Wilderness of the San Juan National Forest.



Looking out across the valley again, with the Grand Turk and Sultan Mountain just starting to become visible.



There were small patches of nice flowers along the trail through here, but no spectacularly large clusters yet.



This would have been an excellent place to stop for lunch, with such a nice view looking across the valley, but unfortunately as soon as we stopped we were attacked by mosquitoes and biting flies.



There is some very interesting conglomerate rock here.



We saw a few of these purple flowers in this small meadow, which I think are called Fringed Gentian, but I'm not sure.





Here we encountered a large patch of flowers (which appeared more spectacular on the hike back).



The trail began to gain elevation again, and there is a nice viewpoint a short distance off the main trail from which hikers can get nice views of the valley. Here we are looking towards the Grand Turk and Sultan Mountain (center of photo), where the Colorado Trail goes. To the right of these peaks is the Animas River Valley, through which the road to Silverton goes.



Looking across at the ridge from which we had descended earlier in the day, and beyond towards the Animas River Valley and the peaks behind Silverton.



The trail descends briefly then starts to regain elevation.



Here is another small patch of wildflowers alongside the trail, with Engineer Mountain visible in the far background.



Many of the trees through here had different-colored new growth on the tips of their branches.



Another panorama looking across the valley, with Engineer Mountain to the far left and Sultan Mountain to the far right.



Looking straight across the valley and up Deer and Coal Creeks towards what I think must be Jura Knob and Rolling Pass. At this point, we had gained just enough elevation that we could see the tips of some of the peaks in the mountain range just beyond this one, such as Rolling Mountain.





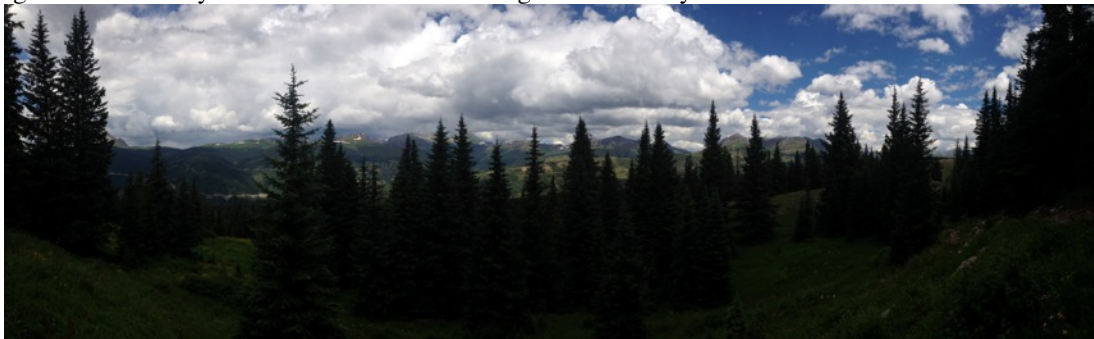
The trail soon entered the trees again, and began to descend. According to the TOPO map, the trail would descend considerably at this point. We also were starting to hear thunder and feel raindrops, so we decided to turn around here. I would estimate we were about a quarter of the way from the Snowdon Meadows turnoff to Crater Lake.



There were many of these white flowers on this knoll, which I hadn't seen before on this hike.



Panorama looking across the valley at where the Colorado Trail goes on our way back to Andrews Lake.



Here we are walking through a collection of different types of yellow flowers.



Now we are back at the nice flower patch mentioned earlier. In addition to at least two different types of yellow flowers, there were some purple flowers as well as Indian Paintbrush and Mountain Bluebells through here.



Looking down the trail through this collection of flowers. There were also some Colorado False Hellebore, also known as Skunk Cabbage, here as well. We would probably have considered these flowers more spectacular if we hadn't just come from the Coal Bank Pass and Engineer Mountain hike the previous day.



The clouds were definitely starting to make it dark at this point. Notice how threatening the storm clouds look over the peaks to the west here.



This is a very nice (and large) patch of Mountain Bluebells.





Here we are hiking back through a big collection of Skunk Cabbage.



Looking north across one of the two small ponds in the first Snowdon Meadows.



Snowdon Peak is now visible to the far right in this photo. Thunderstorms certainly can come in relatively early in the afternoon here.



Looking across at Sultan Mountain (far left) and the Grand Turk (just left of center). There is still some sun up the Animas River Valley towards Silverton at this point.



Looking up the Animas River Valley again as we descend from Snowdon Meadows and back towards Andrews Lake. I think the peaks to the far left which are in the sun are the peaks just north of Silverton, such as Ohio Peak and Storm Peak, but I'm not sure.



It appears to be starting to rain on the part of the Colorado Trail we can see across the valley.



Looking north at a pond near Andrews Lake.



Looking towards the peaks between us and Silverton.





Looking across Andrews Lake now at the clouds above the Grand Turk.



View north across Andrews Lake, towards the peaks just south of Silverton.



The duck family was still in the same place on the lake when we returned.



Panorama of Andrews Lake from the parking area. Notice there are a few small patches of yellow flowers here. Also notice that Snowdon Peak is visible to the right of center in this photo, as is the smaller peak to the north of it which is supposedly accessible from the use trail.



From here, we drove up to the Molas Pass Overlook. This is the view looking east towards where another section of the Colorado Trail goes. I think the peak to the left of center in this photo is called Whitehead Peak. Notice that Snowdon Peak is just barely visible to the far right in this panorama.



Another panorama from a slightly different location at this viewpoint. Here, one can see Snowdon Peak to the far right, with the smaller peak just to the left of it. The Animas River Valley continues towards Silverton to the far left in this photo.



Taking a closer look at Snowdon Peak (left of center), and the interesting smaller peak just to the left of it, which I hope to hike to someday.

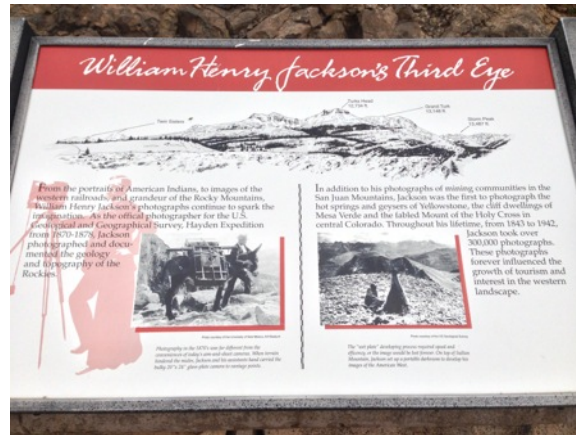


There are some interesting informative signs at this viewpoint. This sign discusses how clean the air is in the San Juan Mountains.





This sign tells visitors about William Henry Jackson, who was the "official photographer for the US Geological and Geographical Survey, Hayden Expedition, 1870-1878". He "photographed and documented the geology and topography of the Rockies." The two photographs included on this sign show Jackson's camera being transported by mule, and also his portable darkroom set up on the top of Sultan Mountain.



Two more informative signs at this viewpoint.



Panorama looking north from here, with the Grand Turk visible to the left of center.



Looking up the valley towards Whitehead Peak again, as the skies start to get darker.



Looking across at Molas Lake (background, right of center) with what I think is Kendall Mountain behind and to the left of it. Silverton is in the V-shaped gap in the upper left corner of this photo.



Heading back towards the Durango area along the San Juan Skyway. Here is Coal Bank Pass, with Engineer Mountain visible behind and to the left of it.

