

# Lily pads and long vistas

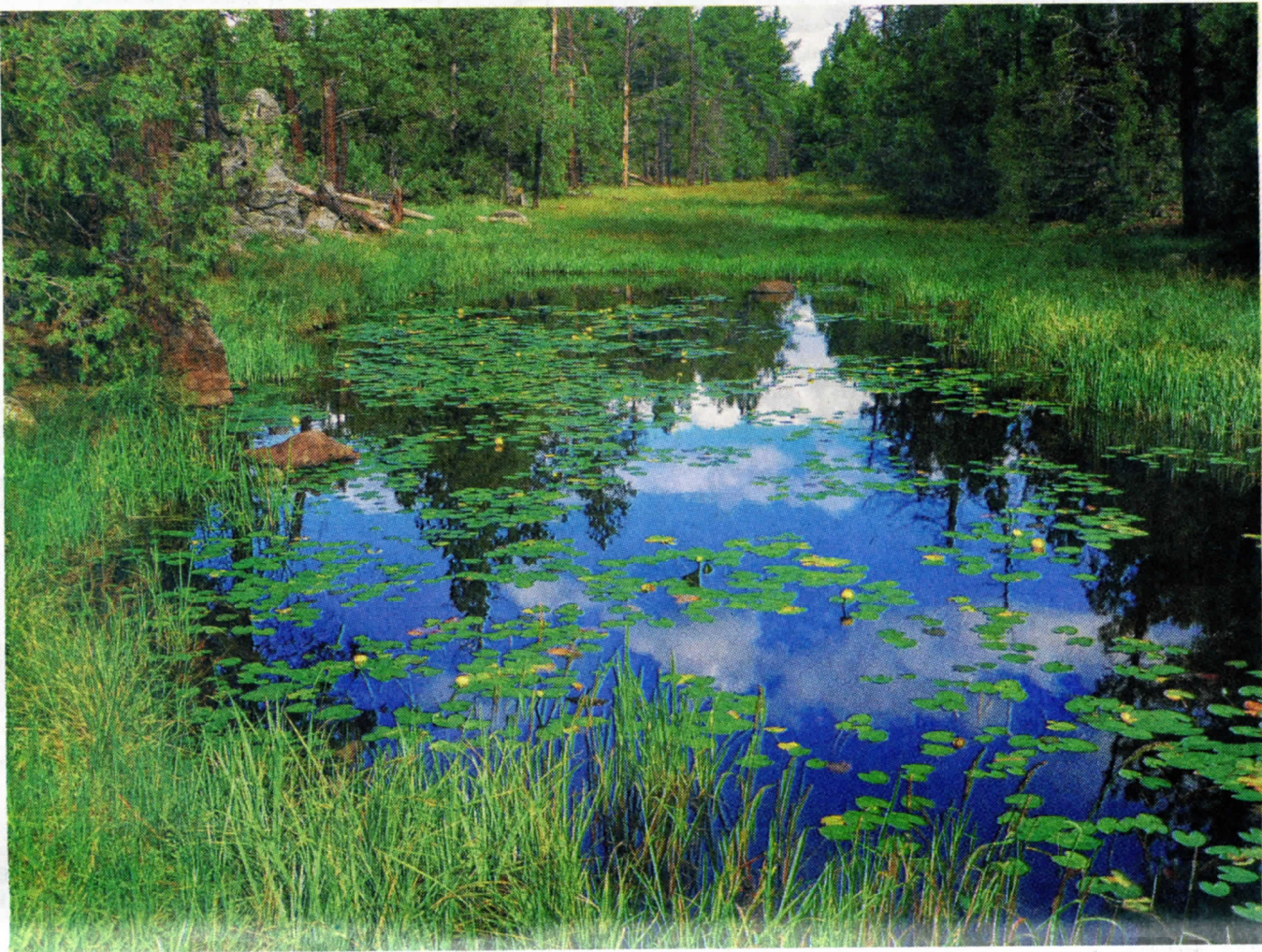


Photo by Rob Jones, courtesy

Lily pads dot the basalt basins near Dow Springs on the rim of Sycamore Canyon.



# A loop hike along the rim of Sycamore Canyon reveals a diverse and scenic landscape.

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Special to the Daily Sun

Mosquitoes nibble on our bare arms as we dip through the outflow of Dow and LO Springs, passing frogs and lily pads.

Lily pads in Arizona? Yes, you'll find some wetlands on this diverse loop

that takes you along the rim of the upper regions of the Sycamore

## OUTDOORS

Canyon Wilderness Area, providing wide-ranging views into the rugged Mogollon Rim country and of some columnar volcanics and human history, too.

This is a very scenic, 12-mile loop hike, in part because easily a third of it is along the rim of the canyon, with its changing views and grand vistas. Depending on the time of year, you might want to bring along some mosquito repellent or a long-sleeved shirt and long pants. The best time to hike this loop may be at the close of the monsoon season, when the tanks are full, and the country is green and dotted with wild flowers.

From the trailhead at Dow Springs, the trail begins by paralleling the canyon. You hike past basalt basins filled with more water lilies, then meet an abandoned roadbed and climb briefly on it out of the basin area to the Sycamore Rim.

Our trail stays along the rim, while



Photo by Rob Jones

A hiker looks out over Sycamore Canyon from a vista on the rim trail.

the road fades into the ponderosa parks to the West. There's a vista point near Double Tanks (another trailhead is just to the north of the rim), and this grants a view down main Sycamore Canyon. After a few miles, the superb canyon views culminate at a popular climbing area, commonly called Paradise Forks. It's the Big Spring Canyon arm of Sycamore on the map.

The falls, which typically flow only during the spring snowmelt, were featured in the March 27, 2012, edition of the *Arizona Daily Sun* ("Surge of Spring: Waterfalls at Sycamore Canyon

are in Full Roar"). This is a good place for lunch, where you can lounge under the big ponderosa pines and watch the climbers scaling the cracks in the volcanic columns just below the falls area. There's a fork in the trail near where the creekbed becomes a falls, with one trail going to the nearby Paradise Forks trailhead, and the other (our route) continuing up canyon toward Pomeroy Tanks.

Another trail comes in at Pomeroy Tanks, where you drop through the

# OUTDOORS

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shallow basin holding these natural tanks and then climb out of Isham Spring Canyon and cross the vague Overland Road Historic Trail as you start the long low grade to KA Hill (7,287 feet), climbing almost 700 feet to the hill over the next two miles. You'll cross a gravel road (FR 139) and a dirt track along your way to KA Hill.

The Overland Road was constructed by the U.S. Army in 1863, linking Flagstaff, at Antelope Springs, to the gold fields in present day Prescott. About 23 of the original 85 miles of the Overland Trail can still be followed using cairns and posts on the Kaibab National Forest.

There are good views north across Garland Prairie to San Francisco Mountain before you drop south, then east off KA Hill to FR 56, where there is yet another TH. The meadows near this

## IF YOU GO ...

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### Sycamore Canyon Rim Hike

From Flagstaff, drive west on I-40 for about 17 miles to the Parks exit, exit 178. Turn left (south) and cross the railroad tracks toward Garland Prairie. Stay on gravel, then pavement on FR 141 for about 10 miles, where you reach a "T" junction. Turn left (south) and travel FR 131 for about 0.6 miles, where you will see the trailhead for Dow Spring on your right. Start out hiking to the south, clockwise on this loop. For a map of this 12-mile hike, visit <http://www.trimbleoutdoors.com/ViewTrip/2768764>.

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trailhead will be cluttered with wildflowers during the monsoon season.

It's not that far to the Dow Spring trailhead, yet the exploration continues. You encounter an old saw-mill area, then pass some remnants of cabins, and finally an old railroad grade that you crossed when leaving the Dow Springs trailhead earlier today. One of the cabin skeletons may be the remains of a post office at Dow Spring, where ranchers William Garland and James Dow settled in the area about 1870.

The Saginaw-Munistee

Lumber Co. operated in the area from 1898 to 1928, cutting ponderosa pine in the Kaibab National Forest and freighting it to their mill in Williams. The high stumps you've seen on the loop are a product of lumberjacks cutting trees with hand-powered crosscut saws. The rails were removed in 1928, yet you can still see the ties scattered along what remains of the old railway grade. You'll feel like you pulled the freight while circling the Sycamore as you reach the trailhead after a glorious 12 miles of public land diversity.

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