



## **Silver Creek Preserve Fact Sheet**

### **History**

The Nature Conservancy purchased the 479-acre core of the preserve from the Sun Valley Company in 1975. The property previously had been used as a hunting and fishing retreat for the resort company. Since 1975, the Conservancy has added 403 acres to the preserve. In addition, the Conservancy has partnered with neighboring landowners to protect another 9,500 acres of the Silver Creek Valley through conservation easements, making Silver Creek one of the country's most successful examples of community-based conservation.

### **Ecology**

Silver Creek is one of the best remaining examples of a high desert, cold spring ecosystem in the western United States. Dozens of springs percolate up from an aquifer and merge to form Silver Creek. The alkaline and nutrient-rich waters nourish an abundance of insects and an exceptionally high density of brown and rainbow trout (about 5,000 trout per mile!). The unique combination of shrub land, riparian forest, and wetlands makes the preserve a haven for more than 150 species of birds. Species of special concern at Silver Creek include the Wood River sculpin, the yellow ladyslipper orchid, and the long-billed curlew.

### **Ongoing Work**

Although much of Silver Creek has been protected, the Conservancy's work here is not completed. The Conservancy has implemented an extensive ecological monitoring program to gain a better understanding of the relationship between Silver Creek's water and the creatures that depend on it. The Conservancy also initiates and assists with habitat restoration on easement land as well as on the preserve itself. In addition, the Silver Creek Preserve Visitor Center provides a great location for public education about Silver Creek, The Nature Conservancy, and conservation work in general. Approximately 8,000 people visit Silver Creek Preserve each year to fly-fish, birdwatch, canoe, hike, hunt, paint, or simply enjoy the view from the visitor center porch.

### **Directions**

Silver Creek Preserve is about 15 miles southeast of Bellevue and 4 miles west of Picabo. It is on the south side of Highway 20 (look for the brown Silver Creek Preserve sign and the Kilpatrick Bridge Road street sign).