

Pathways of Prehistory in the Colorado Rockies

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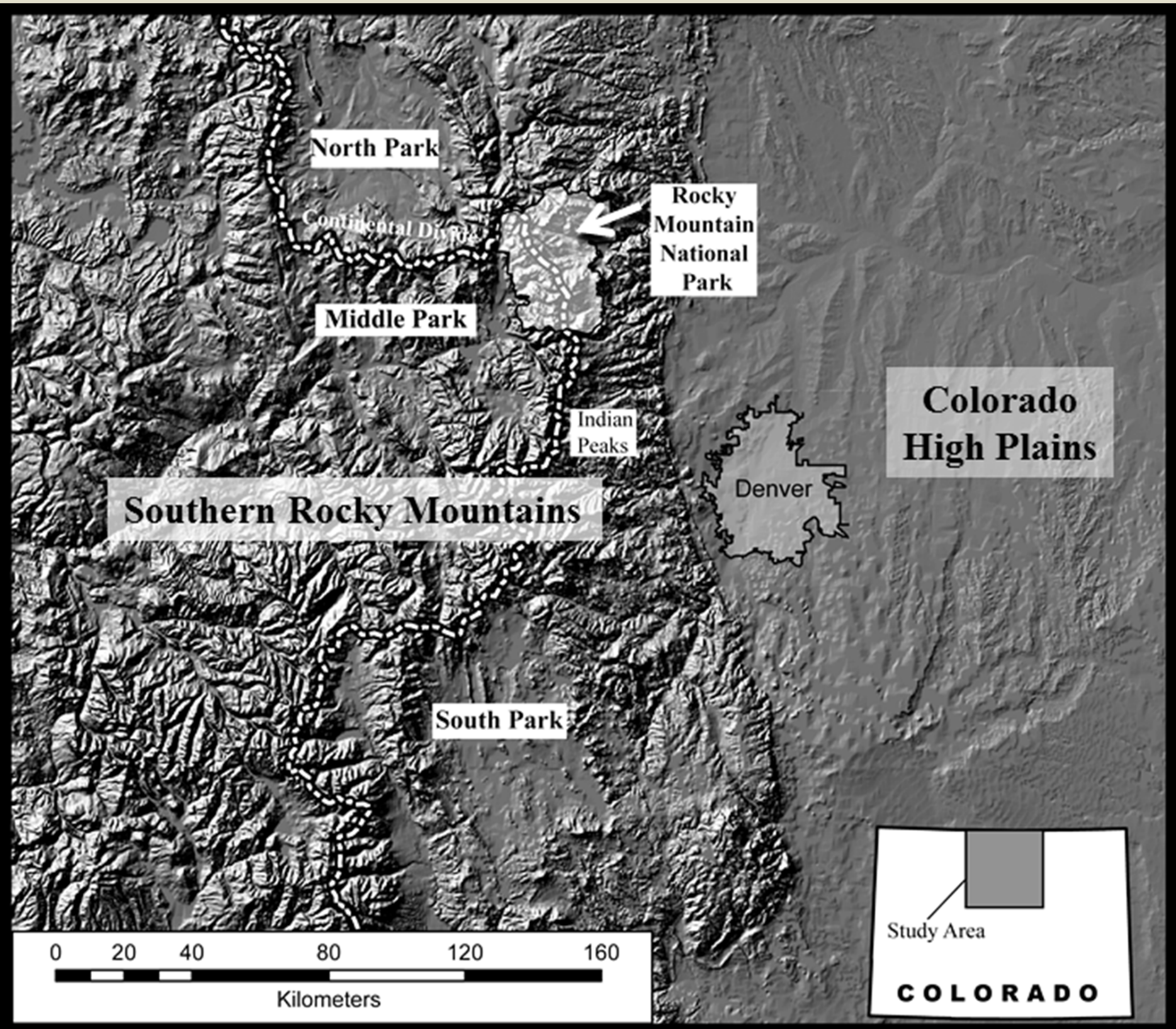


Figure 1. Physiographic Map of Colorado, with Locations of UNC Project Areas Discussed in this Poster Paper (North Park and Rocky Mountain National Park)

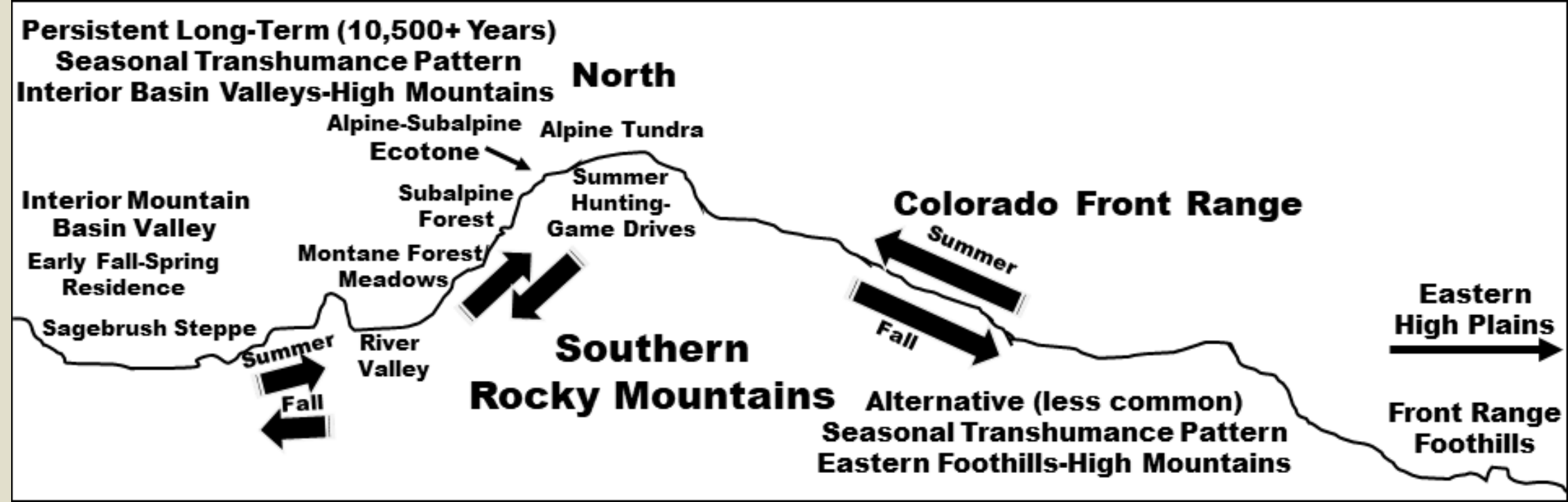


Figure 2. Illustration of the Predominant N Central Colorado Prehistoric-Early Historic Seasonal Transhumance Pattern

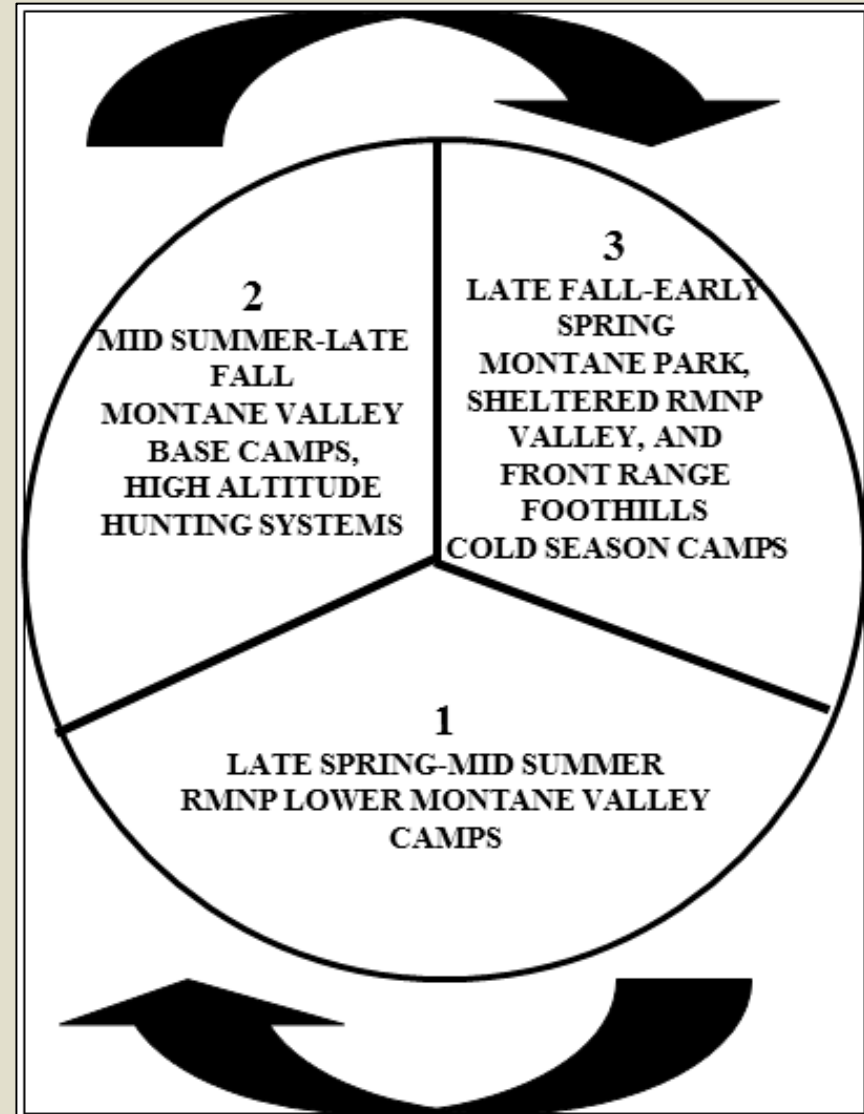


Figure 3. Illustration of Generic Annual Low Elevation-High Elevation Seasonal Transhumance Pattern from Earliest Holocene to Early Historic Times

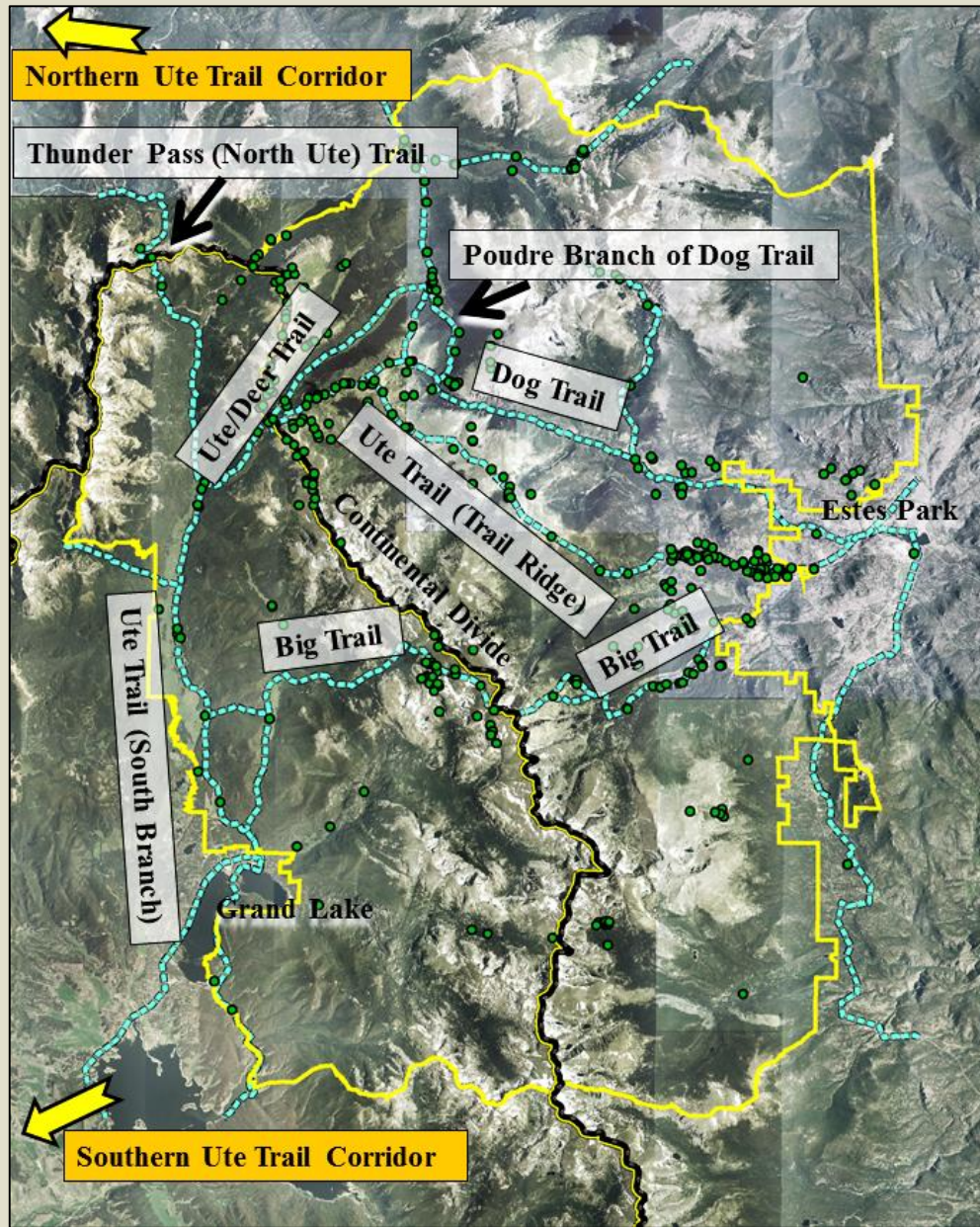


Figure 4. Major Native American Trails in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP), Reconstructed by Ethnohistoric Records, Native American Consultations, and Confirmed by Archaeological Field Research.

From 1998 to the present, the University of Northern Colorado conducted continuous multi-disciplinary mountain landscape archaeology research programs in the Southern Rocky Mountains of North Central Colorado, USA. 127 km² (12,647 hectares) of surface area in Rocky Mountain National Park and the adjacent North Park basin valley were intensively (5 m interval pedestrian survey) surveyed, GPS-recorded (~.4 m accuracy) and GIS-mapped. Tens of thousands of artifacts were collected and analyzed along with hundreds of stone features. 26 sites were excavated and 49 AMS-radiocarbon dates recovered. Research focused on reconstruction of all human prehistory in the region with integrated component studies on archaeology, paleoclimate, tool raw material sources, paleoeconomy, and ethnographic analogy, the latter based in ethnohistoric records and Native American consultations.

Research results allowed detailed modeling of prehistoric through early historic Native American hunter-gatherer systems based in persistent annual seasonal migration of game animals and humans from lower elevation montane basin winter ranges and cool-season camps to high altitude mountain zone forests and tundra over more than 12,000 (cal bp) years. They also documented the existence of complex prehistoric trail systems with shared mundane (e.g., economic) and sacred (religious) functions, the pathways referenced in this poster paper's title, trails which extended over hundreds of kilometers and facilitated ancient seasonal transhumance of migratory game animals and nearly five hundred generations of mountain-based hunter-gatherer bands.

UNC Mountain Archaeology Trails Survey Data

1998-2019	RMNP	North Park
Ute Trail & Connecting Branches	58.3 km	
Big Trail	32 km	
Dog Trail & Poudre Branch	25 km	
Total RMNP Survey Length	115.3 km	
Northern Ute Trail Owl Ridge Segment		1.7 km
Northern Ute Trail Peterson Ridge Segment		2.5 km
Northern Ute Trail Buffalo Ridge Segment		4.3 km
Total North Park Length		8.5 km
Total Trails Survey Length	123.8 km	

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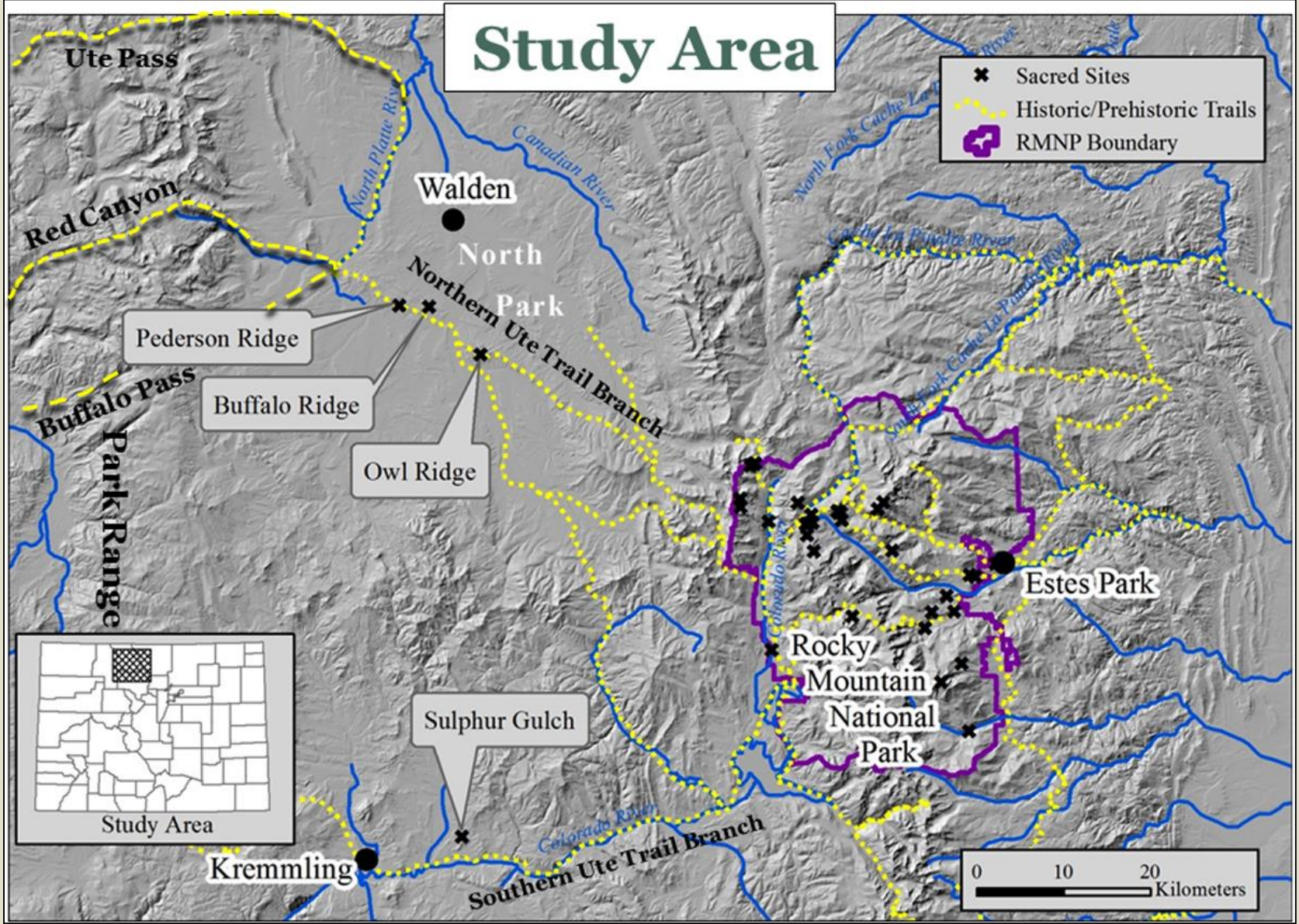


Figure 5. Major Regional Native American (Ute) Trail System in the North Central Colorado Rockies, linking Rocky Mountain National Park with (and through) Interior Basin Valleys to the West.

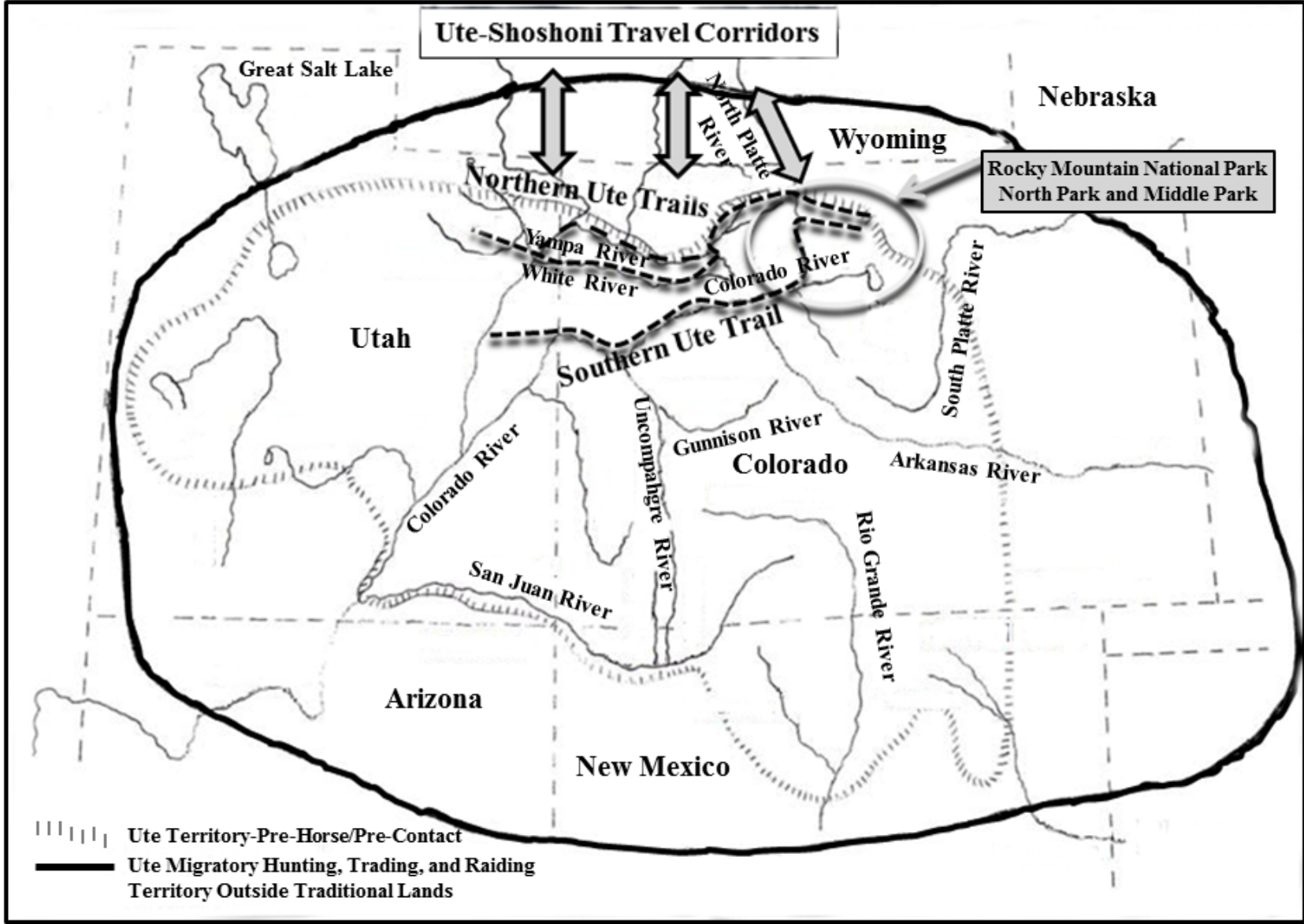


Figure 6. Southern Rocky Mountains Ute Trails System (Brunswig Figure 9.2 2020, in press)



Figure 7. Photo of a Ute Trail Segment in RMNP (left) and a GoggleEarth™ Satellite Image of the Northern Ute Trail's Crossing Ridgeline in North Park.

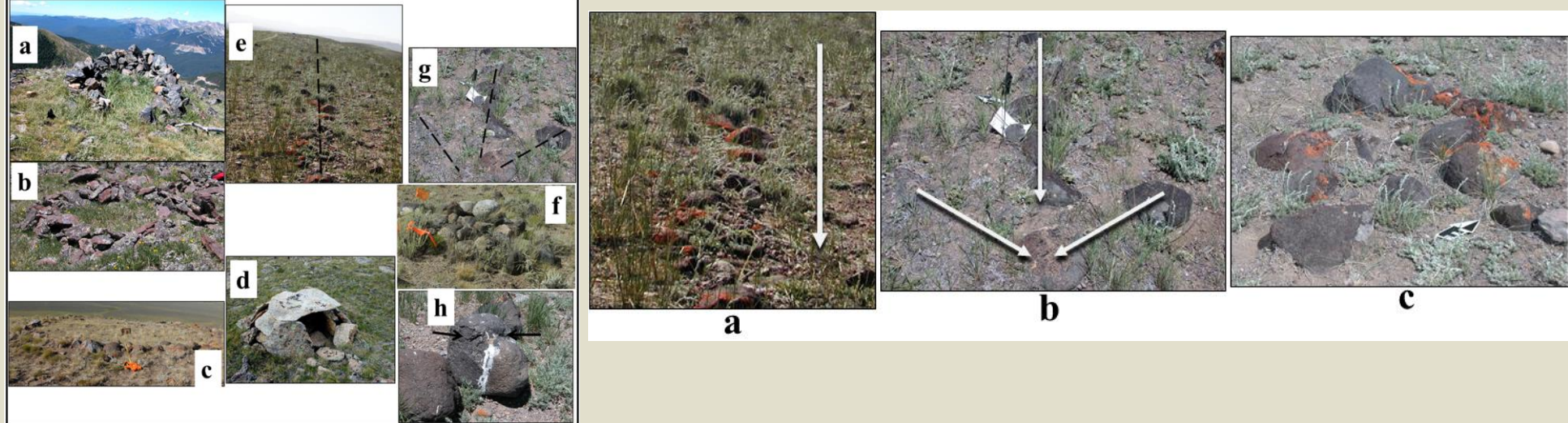


Figure 8. Native American Religious Rock Features (left) and Trail Marker Rock Features (right) in RMNP and North Park Valley "Ute Trail" Routes.