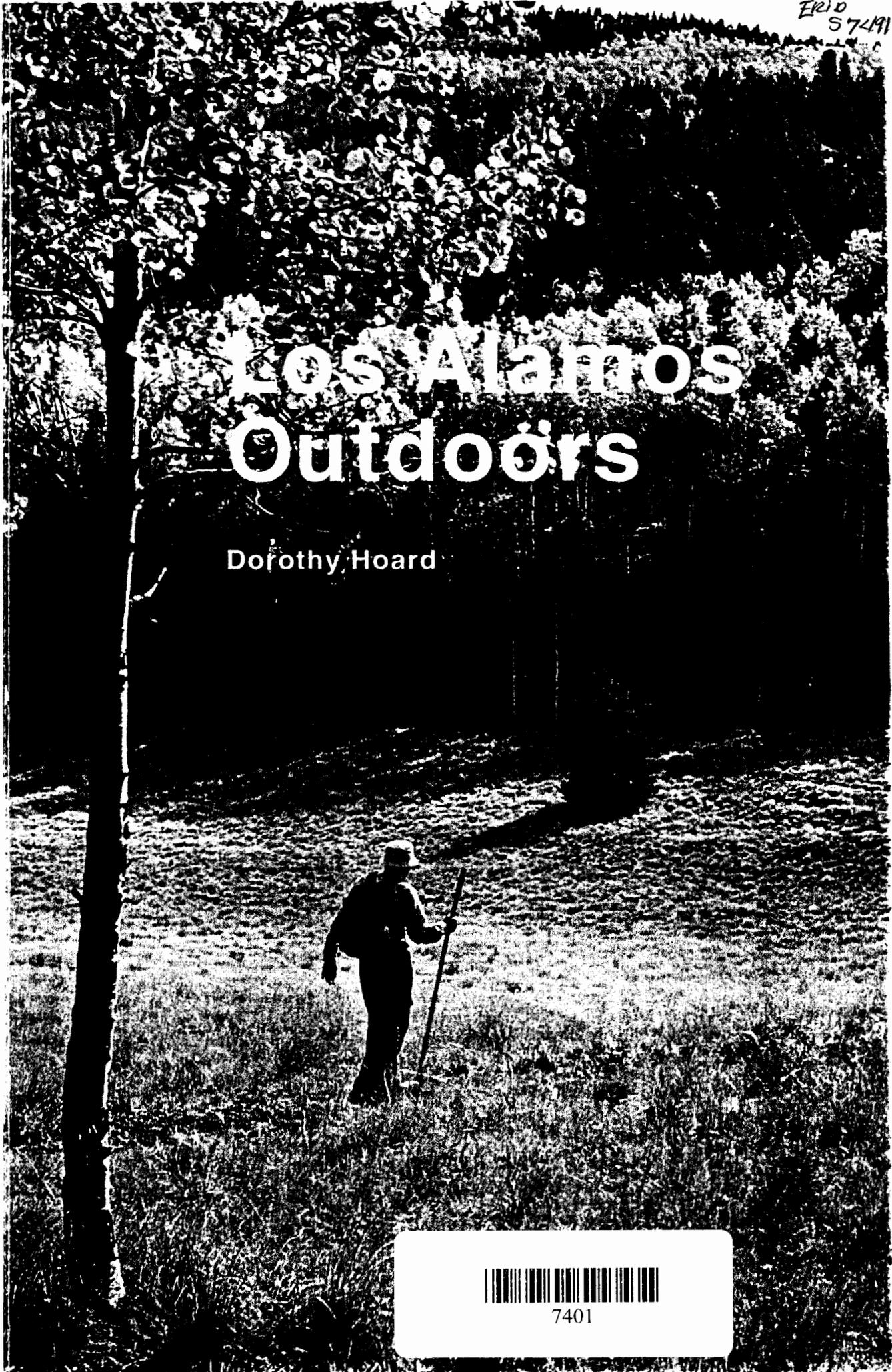


ERID  
57491

# Los Alamos Outdoors

Dorothy Hoard



7401

# Los Alamos Outdoors

Second Edition

Dorothy Hoard

Photographs by Betty Lilienthal

Illustrations by the author

There are better ways to stop bleeding. Cockleburs are monoecious: they have separate male and female flowers on the same plant. The prickly burs, clustered among the upper leaves, develop from tiny female flowers. The male flowers are small, papery structures on the top of the plant, which fall off soon after producing pollen.

A second plant, field sandbur, is a native grass of North America and a common weed in sandy soil. In arid country, it grows along river banks. Sandbur spreads in large, low mats, but the burs grow on upright stems, ready to catch on any passerby. Sandbur is an annual grass that stabilizes sand and makes acceptable livestock forage when young. Little else can be said in its favor.



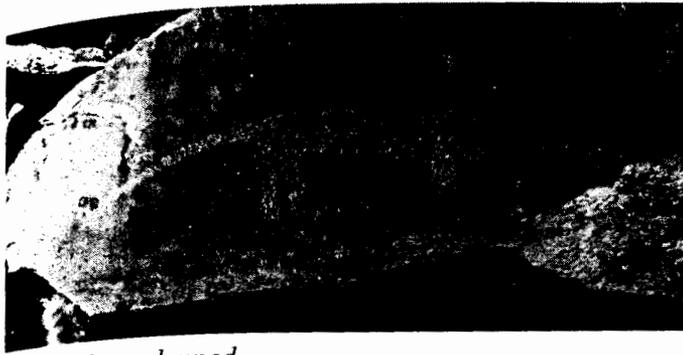
*Field sandbur*

### **Pajarito Springs (Red Dot Trail) Rim to River - 1.5 miles**



Red Dot Trail begins in the park at the easternmost end of Piedra Loop in La Senda. A wide trail leads about five hundred feet across the field to the canyon rim. The hike down (and up) is steep, rocky, rough, dry, high, deep, and usually hot, but well worth the effort. The trail leads past petroglyphs and agricultural plots to the heart of White Rock Canyon.

Petroglyphs are designs pecked or scratched directly on a rock face. (Pictures painted on rock with pigment are called pictographs. Surviving pictographs are rare; paint weathers away in a short time.) Petroglyphs cannot be dated directly. Archaeologists often presume they are the same age as nearby artifacts, especially pottery shards. But for the most part, petroglyph dating remains an unsolved challenge.

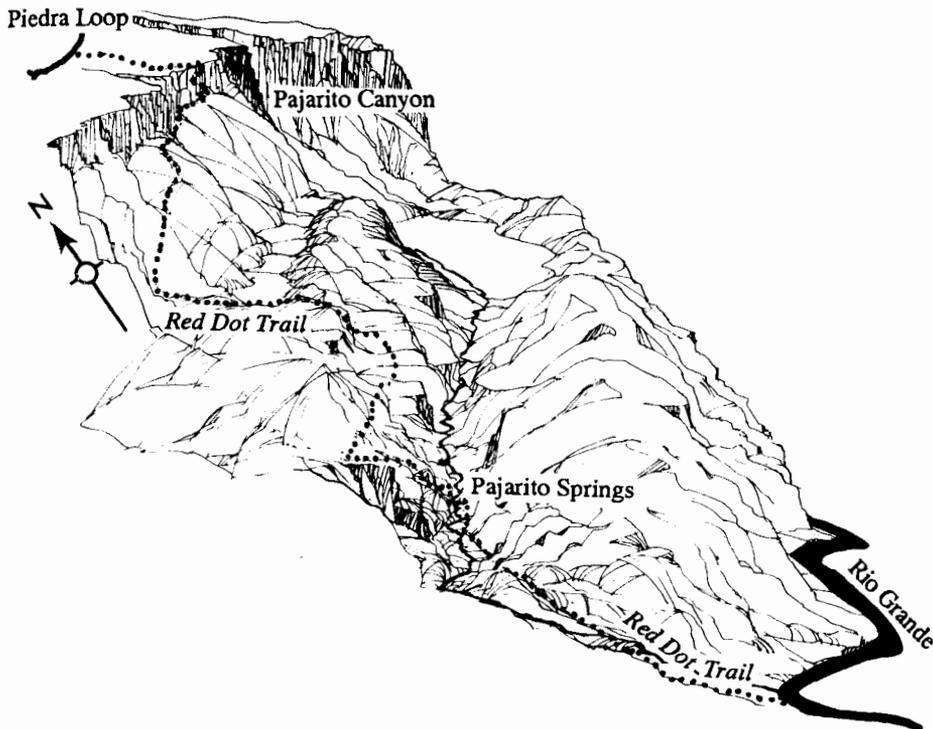


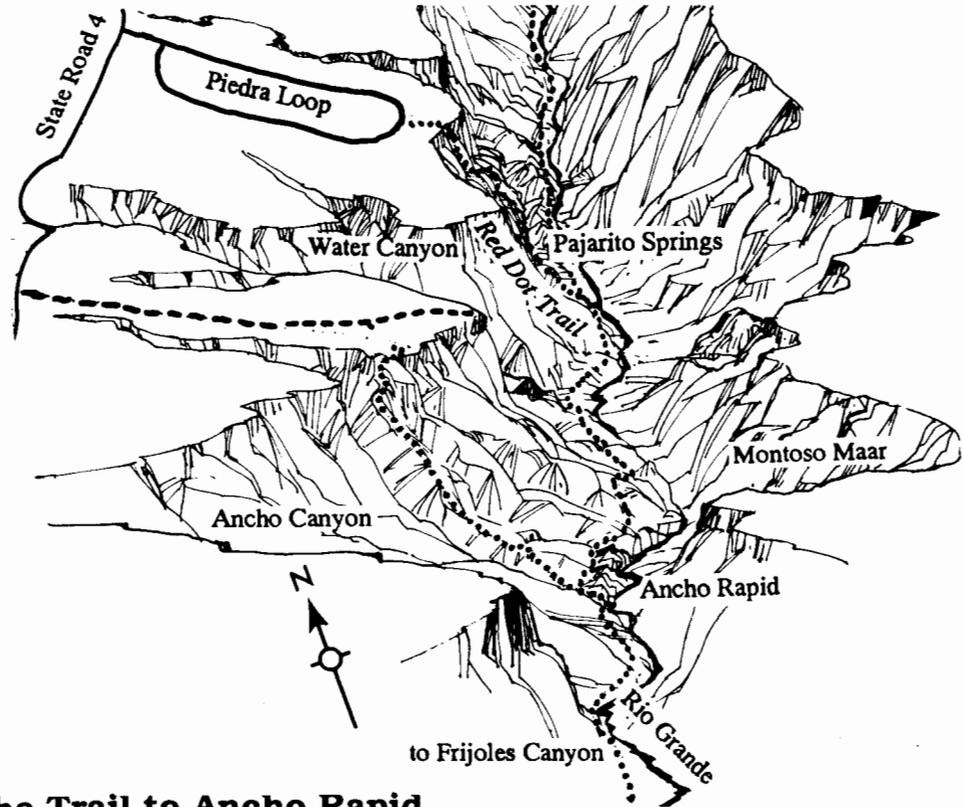
*Clawed quadruped.*

Near the top of the trail and on the slope just above the springs are many petroglyphs. Other glyphs line agricultural fields. Some figures hide in secret alcoves.

Petroglyphs are found even in the midst of talus slopes and rock piles. I always wonder why these people, barefoot or shod only in yucca sandals, inscribed their beautiful glyphs in such inaccessible places.

Petroglyphs usually occur in clusters. People who interpret petroglyphs claim they are a form of rock writing. The meaning of each glyph depends on its arrangement within the cluster, as well as on its posture and any ornamentation. A glyph by itself has no more meaning than an *e* or a *qu* in a sentence. Few people who have seriously studied petroglyphs believe they are merely a form of doodling or graffiti. However, archaeologists object to the analogy to writing, which implies use of a standard alphabet. Glyph designs denote different ideas to different Indian tribes and may express different ideas within the same petroglyph panel.





**The Trail to Ancho Rapid**  
**Rim to River - 1 mile**



One-half mile before the road reaches Powerline point (about 1.5 miles in from State Route 4), a second rough road leads off to the right (south). It ends at a trailhead on the rim of Ancho Canyon near the south edge of Powerline mesa. The mesa top shows an odd feature here. The surface rocks are basaltic lavas, but the edges have been smoothed as if eroded by running water, indicating that a water course once ran across the mesas at this level.

From the trailhead, the trail to Ancho rapid snakes through some boulders then cuts downward beside an orange cliff. This cliff is part of a sequence of ashflow deposits that were erupted from the Valles caldera twelve miles to the west. Hot ash and gas poured from the volcano like a flood moving at hurricane speed. Temperatures ranged from one thousand to thirteen hundred degrees Fahrenheit. Then the ash deposits cooled and hardened, forming a rock called tuff.

## Pajarito Canyon

West Jemez Road to Camp May Road - 3.5 miles

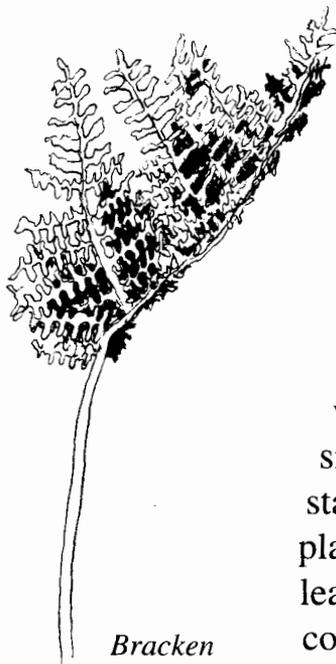


Caution: Trail becomes indistinct.

Another mile north along West Jemez Road (State Road 501), a dirt road leads into Pajarito Canyon. This road extends only a quarter of a mile, ending at a rocky narrows where Pajarito Canyon Trail FS-280 begins. Here are the remains of another dam, constructed by laying bags of cement in place, then wetting them. Old pipe works still lie at the outlet in the streambed.

Homesteader James Loomis started a rough water system here in 1914, but Loomis, ill and deeply in debt, was soon forced to sell his homestead. The project was completed for Anchor Ranch. A wooden flume delivered water to ponds located on the mesa below the fault. The ponds are still visible just east of West Jemez Road between Pajarito Canyon and Cañon de Valle. In 1943 the Army Corps of Engineers raised the dam in Pajarito Canyon to six feet and installed pipe to the ponds. The water was used for fire fighting at nearby laboratory sites. The development was removed when most of the system was abandoned in 1960.

Pajarito Canyon Trail FS-280 continues up the canyon beyond the end of the road. The stream in Pajarito Canyon flows year round. This is one of the few habitats of bracken fern in our area. Bracken, which grows about two and one-half feet tall, is found throughout the world. The leaves (fronds) branch from a single stem about a foot above the ground. A stand of bracken forms a lacy canopy over the plants beneath. Indians burned the roots and leached the ashes to recover salt, a scarce commodity in this area. They sometimes ate the starchy roots as food, though more often they



*Bracken*

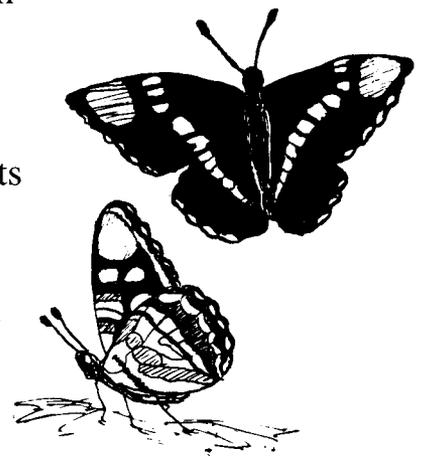
used them as a diuretic and worm medicine. They cooked the young shoots, which curve like fiddlenecks, just as one cooks asparagus.

The narrow trail leads up the canyon on the north side of the stream, often high above it. About a mile above the narrows it almost disappears as it climbs north up onto the mesa. At the ridge a maze of trails and logging roads appears. By paying attention and heading north, one can within a half mile or so arrive at the Camp May Road. It is almost impossible to find the Pajarito Canyon trail from Camp May Road. It is best to take this route from West Jemez Road as described. Most hikers find it rewarding enough to hike up and back along the stream.

### Valle Mesas

Fires and logging have cleaned out crowded trees and debris on the open mesas separating Water, Valle, and Pajarito canyons. Parklike meadows and brushy thickets alternate with groves of scattered pines. Wisps of old logging and security roads provide easy access to the entire area.

The groves are filled with butterflies and a delightful assortment of forest birds. Sharp-billed tree-dwellers, searching the bark for grubs and insects, perform amazing acrobatics as they go about their task with single-minded concentration. The brown creeper is a small bird with white underparts and a long curved bill. It spirals up and around the main trunk, maintaining its balance with long, stiff tail feathers; then it flies to the base of another tree to repeat the spiral search. Nuthatches, with legs so short that the birds seem to glide on their bellies, appear to defy gravity as they travel with equal abandon straight up, or straight down, the trunk. Mountain chickadees hang upside down from the branches to get their meal. A single tree may be host to several different species, its trunk a thoroughfare for busy birds.



*Black and white with orange spots, the California Sister flutters around the oak brush and rain puddles on Valle mesa.*