



The Gabby Grebe



Larimer County Department of Natural Resources

Spring 2011

River Bluffs Open Space Grand Opening!

Larimer County is proud to announce the Grand Opening of River Bluffs Open Space. On April 16, things kicked off at the County's newest open space, with a dedication at 10:30 am, followed by a ribbon cutting ceremony. After that, visitors were able to get a bike tune-up courtesy of local bike clubs and checked out some binoculars and did some bird watching. River Bluffs is the newest addition to the Poudre River trail. The Poudre River Corridor is an intergovernmental effort dating back to the 1970s. At over 40 miles, this trail nearly stretches from Fort Collins to Greeley. Only 4 miles of trail are yet to be connected, and this remains one of the priorities for the County. Thanks to all who came out and made this a great event. See you on the trail!



River Bluffs Open Space, photo courtesy Harry Sitursky

Butterflies!



Butterflies play a key role as an indicator species in our ecosystem. By studying the distribution and abundance of Butterfly species over time, useful information can be gleaned about the overall health of the ecosystem. Butterflies are an important food source for birds and other animals, and are crucial to pollinating many plants. Their short life-cycle and

sensitivity to climate and environmental change also makes them a great indicator of biodiversity. A recent study at three County Open Spaces (Horsetooth Mountain, Rimrock, and Devil's Backbone) was aimed at identifying suitable habitat and rare butterfly species present. This study found the six survey sites to be in fair to good condition. All three sites have an abundance of native vegetation, however some sites are dominated by invasive species. In eight days of surveying, there were 10 observations of rare butterflies including: Dusted Skipper (*Atrytonopsis hianna*), Ottoe Skipper (*Hesperia ottoe*), and Hops Azure (*Celastrina humulus*). Using the data gathered from this survey, managers can develop a strategy to protect the habitat these butterflies depend on. Because these three open spaces are

in an 11-mile linear arrangement, a unique system of complimentary reserves is possible. To ensure the further diversification of the butterfly community the study recommends several actions. The most important being the improvement of habitat by eradication of nonnative plants. Options for this range from prescribed burns to grazing, the application of herbicides, biological control, and mowing or physical removal. The bottom line is that our open spaces provide important habitat for this important species in an area faced with development pressure.

Butterfly photos NR Staff



The Value of Volunteers

Volunteers are an incredibly valuable asset to the Natural Resources Department. Without them, the effectiveness of this agency would be severely hindered. In total, volunteers with Natural Resources have donated over 53,000 hours annually since 2009. This equates to \$1,137,910 worth of time! Being a volunteer with the NR may not be the most glamorous position, but it certainly doesn't go

unappreciated. These people donate their hard work because they want to have a positive impact on a place they love. Their passion and combined knowledge of this area is invaluable and could not be replaced. We would like to thank everyone who has, or still is a volunteer with the county. And we encourage anyone else who has an interest in volunteering to contact the Volunteer Program at cullins@larimer.org or



NR Staff, Boy Scouts, the DOW, and Loveland Fishing Club members pose at Colorado Youth Outdoors facility during a fishing outing. Photo courtesy of Boy



Spring has arrived as Pasque Flowers bloom in the meadow below Grey Rock. Photos by Paul Carlson



The Value of Interns



Natural Resources Intern Aaron Edwards at Hughey Conservation Easement.

The Larimer County internship program is an opportunity for students get there foot in the door and learn some valuable real-world experience before stepping into the workforce. It also provides the County with free, enthusiastic workers to help out in a variety of ways. Many of the natural resource programs in the region require students to fulfill internship obligations before graduating (400 hours at Colorado State University for example). Larimer County is happy to take interns under their wing and show them the ropes, in exchange for the experiences that will be gained. So much is taught in the classroom at universities, and without real-world experience its hard to put all this knowledge to use. The internship program is a great way for students to find there direction in the Natural Resources workforce and provides the County with valuable volunteer time. Students interested in the internship program should contact the Internship Coordinator, Zac Wiebe at zwiebe@larimer.org.





CJ Cullins accepts the Volunteer Manager of the Year award with her son John. Photo Courtesy of NR Staff

CJ Cullins: Volunteer Manager of the Year

A big congratulations goes out to CJ Cullins, volunteer coordinator for Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. Although CJ has been with the county only 2 years, her impact has been huge. Her first project, a volunteer strategic plan, was aimed at increasing internal efficiency through consistency. Standardizing the use, recruitment, hiring, acknowledgement and tracking of volunteers has transformed the county volunteer program into the “most sought after program in Northern Colorado”. With CJ’s new strategy in place, important projects are now accomplished with more volunteers and less staff time. One particular breakthrough was the Healthy Forests project. Collaborating with our Risk manager and County

Attorney, the Healthy Forests project allows volunteers to use chainsaws to clear fuels and provides County residents with plenty of ‘conservation’ firewood. CJ’s strategic plan was so effective that when she presented it at the Colorado Open Space Alliance in 2010, at least 5 agencies asked to duplicate parts of the plan. Since her arrival, CJ has coordinated over 53,000 volunteer hours each year since 2009, worth over \$1.1 million annually, an enormous value to the department and citizens of Larimer County. Larimer County is lucky to have CJ as part of the team, and thanks to her hard work and dedication, the volunteer program will continue to thrive.

Conservation Easement Volunteer Project

The Conservation Easement is one of the most valuable tools the County has. A Conservation Easement is a legal contract which separates the development rights from a piece of land. This ensures that as long as the easement is in place, no further development may occur on the property. In order to uphold the terms of the contract, annual monitoring must take place. This involves a site visit and following a protocol to determine the state of the land. A process that includes traveling to pre-determined photo points

throughout the property to make visual assessments. A written assessment must also be performed outlining some characteristics of land. When used appropriately, Conservation Easements benefit both the landowner and the citizens of the county by protecting open lands from development. Thanks to the time and resources invested by volunteers and the county, we will continue to protect the open landscapes, local agriculture and other values that make this a great community.



Block Conservation Easement, Photo by NR Staff

Upcoming Events & Volunteer Needs

Events & Trainings:

May 12th: Volunteer Campground Host Training (Still need Campground Hosts at Hermit Park Open Space & Mary’s Lake Campground in Estes Park)

May 26th: Volunteer Park Ranger Assistant Training

June 4th: Catch a Special Thrill

June 14th: Red Mountain Open Space Field School with Jason Labelle (call for more information)

Recruiting For:

Campground Hosts for Hermit Park Open Space & Mary’s Lake Campground in Estes Park—full hook up site in return for hosting duties.

Photographers

Park Ranger Assistants

Interns

Volunteer Campground Hosts at Eagle Campground near Carter Lake. Photo by NR Staff





Department of Natural Resources

Offices located at the Bison Visitor Center
1800 S. CR 31
Loveland, CO 80537
Phone: 970-679-4570
Fax: 970-679-4574
Director:
Gary Buffington
gbuffington@larimer.org
970-679-4560
<http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources/>

Mission Statement

To establish, protect, and manage significant regional parks and open lands providing quality outdoor recreational opportunities and stewardship of natural resource values.

We are committed to fostering a sense of community and appreciation for the natural and agricultural heritage of Larimer County for present and future generations.



To:

