

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

MEET DENISE BRETTEING

Denise leads the monthly bird surveys at Bobcat Ridge Natural Area. She began as a participant in the survey around 2004 and has been the leader since the fall of 2008.

Denise has always been interested in nature and birds. As a small child she recalls her grandmother being excited about a rose-breasted grosbeak at the feeder. Denise's birding really increased when she moved to Colorado in 1995.

Denise enjoys the Bobcat Ridge surveys as it gives her the opportunity to re-visit the same area repeatedly.

"I love getting familiar with a place. I really enjoy going back over and over," she explains. Denise now knows what birds to expect in different seasons, and gets excited about new birds that visit Bobcat Ridge. Denise leads a core group of volunteers each month and is diligent about reporting her results, including the participants and the numbers of hours donated.

As a result of hers and other birder's efforts the checklist for Bobcat Ridge is becoming a reality, and it is revealing important information about species diversity. The Natural Areas Program staff really appreciates her dedication and professionalism.

Thank you, Denise!



Denise conducting monthly survey at Bobcat Ridge, assisted by Ranger Norm Keally. Photo by Sol Miller.



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Summer 2010

Volunteer News



SUSAN TAKES A SUMMER VACATION (?)

Well, not exactly a vacation, but I will be on maternity leave this summer. My husband, Eric, and I are expecting our first baby (a girl!) around June 8, so I will be away until the beginning of September. Everyone on the Education and Outreach staff is pitching in to help while I'm gone. Please contact any of them if you need assistance:

- Dolores Daniels will be taking care of requests for Master Naturalist programs: masternaturalists@fcgov.com or 416-2480
- Deborah Price will be coordinating all public programs and special events: Dprice@fcgov.com or 217-3075
- Pam Smith will be coordinating one-day volunteer projects, adopters, and scouts: psmith@fcgov.com or 219-1106
- Rhonda Peckham will remain the lead contact for the VRA program: rpeckham@fcgov.com or 631-2933

I'm planning to attend the Volunteer Appreciation Picnic August 28 (see page 7) and show off my "summer project." Thanks for all your well-wishes. I look forward to seeing you all when I return. Have a great summer!

- Susan Schafer



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NATURALIST'S NICHE

MEET THE CLASS OF 2010!

This spring a new group of Master Naturalists and Master Naturalist Assistants (MNAs) joined our program. The MNAs serve as important aids to Master Naturalists assisting with group management, equipment, and activities.

Master Naturalists provide educational programs on the natural areas to groups including schools, clubs and scouts. Often groups are large, the outings take place in remote areas, or the activities are complex, and Master Naturalists need a helping hand. MNAs provide just this assistance. They can take an active role in the education program without the time commitment or specialized training required of Master Naturalists. It's also a great way to gain experience in interpretation, natural history, and group management, and to experience a variety of natural areas.

Master Naturalists like it, too!



Class of 2010 poses at Primrose Studio.

New Master Naturalists and Master Naturalists Assistants: Seth Anderson, Jimmy Cervelli, Renee Duval, Amanda Haggerty, Kathy Hallmann, Ellen Heath, James Hetland, Margie Knaub, Julie Legg, Linda Lightsey, Aria Marco, Daria Moskowitz, Deanna Osborne, Evie Gaston Reuter, Maureen Ryerson, John Vogt, Warren Wolf, Mary Fransen, Barb Kittell, Amanda McCurnin, Rebecca Metcalf, Sharon Raham, Francoise Smith, Diane Speer, and Janet Wood.

SAVE THE DATE!

ANNUAL VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION PICNIC IS SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 28!

Our Annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic is scheduled for Saturday, August 28, 10 a.m.—2 p.m. at beautiful Gateway Natural Area. We are planning an old-fashioned celebration with a barbecue, baking contest, sack races, fishing, prizes, hiking, and more. Watch your email boxes for more information and registration details in July. You and your family won't want to miss out!



CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

By Sue Kenney, Education and Outreach Coordinator

This summer you can get even more knowledgeable (if that's possible!) by signing up for some great continuing education and training opportunities. Here's a preview of what's in store:

Become a member of the Critter Camera Crew at Bobcat Ridge! Master Naturalists, Master Naturalist Assistants, and VRAs are all invited to take part in training sessions that teach you how to download photos from the on-site cameras and record information. There will be two dates in late June: one to learn how to locate and check the upper trail cameras, and one for the lower trail cameras. If you're interested, contact Deborah Price to get on the list for more information, dprice@fcgov.com or call 217-3075.

Other continuing education efforts include an update on a large-scale chronic wasting disease study in mule deer in northern Colorado, including Soapstone Prairie Natural Area; we hope to host a local author who recently wrote a book about prairies; another round of training for Master Naturalists and Master Naturalist Assistants on teaching the black-footed ferret and prairie ecology programs; a public program on bats and their fascinating natural history; the results of the wildlife camera study at Bobcat Ridge; and a winter Project Wild workshop later in the year.



Wildlife camera capture training given by Bonnie Greenwood and Tory Wilson CSU students and wildlife researchers.

All the schedules and other details are still being worked out—watch your email for more information.

VOLUNTEERS GIVE THEIR TIME

By Susan Schafer, Education and Volunteer Coordinator

You did it again! 2009 was another banner year for volunteer activities in natural areas. More than 400 volunteers donated 10,749 hours of their valuable time, saving taxpayers \$216,667! Every hour of volunteer time is equal to a \$20.25.

Each volunteer group increased their hours from previous years.

Master Naturalists were busy spending almost 4,000 hours providing unique recreational and educational experience for the public.

Volunteer Ranger Assistants spent 2,507 hours patrolling the trails in the City's natural areas and the County's open spaces. VRAs serve as ambassadors on the trail, providing helpful hiking tips, directions, safety assistance, and give us valuable feedback.

Adopters spent 305 hours keeping their natural areas litter-free and more user-friendly.

Citizen Scientists were busy surveying frogs and rare plants. Close to 100 people showed up in the midst of an April blizzard to attend the Second Annual Audio Frog Survey training.

The Rare Plant Survey got off to a great start with almost 500 hours in its first season.

Bio-blitz participants donated 1,066 hours in just a 24-hour period!

In addition to all these on-going programs hundreds of citizens participated in one-day projects, donating 2,393 volunteer hours.

Volunteers are an integral part of the Natural Areas Program. Without you there would be little point to the work we do every day. You give us the arms to reach out to the public, the eyes to watch over the land, the ears to listen to concerns, and the hearts to make it all worthwhile. Thank you



Volunteer Coordinator, Susan Schafer



VOLUNTEER RANGER ASSISTANTS

MAKING THE NATURAL AREAS BETTER



In 2009, the Natural Areas Program and Larimer County hosted two separate trainings for fifty-four new VRAs. These and previously trained VRAs logged 2,333 hours hiking and riding the natural areas and open lands.

In 2009 Diamond Peaks mountain bikers patrolled Bobcat Ridge Natural Area and donated 163 hours. Patrollers contacted 561 hikers, bikers, equestrians and dog walkers (illegal at this natural area!).

Thanks to all our patrollers for making the natural areas safe and friendly!

MEET INTERN RYAN SEDWICK

Intern Ryan Sedwick joins the Natural Areas and Trails Ranger team as an intern this summer. He is a senior at CSU, majoring in Parks and Protected Areas Management. Ryan is spending his time assisting the rangers, attending training, and helping with the traffic counter project, visitor use, and biological surveys. He will also be periodically staffing the gate at Soapstone Prairie, helping with the upcoming fishing derby at Arapaho Bend, and, of course, all the “other duties as assigned”!

Welcome, Ryan!



RARE PLANT SURVEY CONTINUES

By Crystal Strouse, Botanist and Natural Areas Technician

In 2010, a group of Rare Plant Surveyors trekked high and low, in wetlands and drylands, on prairies and mountains, searching for those elusive rare plants on City of Fort Collins natural areas. And they found them! Here’s some highlights:

American Currant—*Ribes americanum*

We surveyed thirty natural areas for *Ribes americanum* and found over 6,000 plants including a new undocumented population at Kingfisher Point Natural Area. We have two more natural areas to search later in the summer when we can gain access to the sites.

Wyoming Kittentails—*Besseya wyomingensis*

We searched but so far Soapstone Prairie is the only natural area with Wyoming kittentails. We really had a lot of good luck finding this plant! The first population was found by our very own botanist, Pam Smith (also the Soapstone Prairie Natural Area Educator).

Volunteer Jerry Duncan accidentally found a population of about 1,500 plants (you will have to ask him about the accidental part). Jeff and Scott Kehoe found a population along the Towhee Trail and Allison Shaw found the largest population at Soapstone Prairie—around 50,000 plants!

We have already completed the third week of rare plant surveys so far in 2010 and our wonderful volunteers have already logged 138 hours.

I couldn’t have covered so much territory without all you.

Thank you all so much!



American Black Currant
Photo courtesy of Wisconsin State Herbarium and Joanne Kline