

Summer 2011

Volunteer News



*FROM YOUR
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR*

SUSAN SCHAFFER

TIME FOR A PICNIC!

*You and your families are invited to the annual
Volunteer Appreciation Picnic
on Saturday, August 20, 2011
10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
at Gateway Natural Area*

Summer means lots of outdoor fun and, of course, that means getting out in the natural areas! Join us to enjoy a beautiful day filled with great food, relaxing hikes, fun games, and much more. Watch your mail box for an electronic invitation with all the details.



The Natural Areas Program just wouldn't be as awesome as it is without our wonderful volunteers.
We really appreciate what you do!

See you there!

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NATURALISTS' NICHE

Master Naturalist Are Not Only Giving Education Programs...

Many volunteers wear more than one hat with the Natural Areas Program and Master Naturalists are no exception. Take a look at what a few people are up to:

The usual place to find Master Naturalist **Phil Smith** is up at Bobcat Ridge, checking cameras and downloading photos. His organizational skills with the wildlife photos has been an invaluable help to our wildlife camera project. Recently, he created a customized spreadsheet to record attendance numbers for all our public programs, school field trips, service learning projects, and special events. While it sounds small, it actually was a huge project. The challenge was making it "fool-proof" to keep the staff from messing up the numbers! We all appreciate the work and time that Phil put in to create and troubleshoot this program for us. Thank you, Phil, for stretching your skills and helping to keep us on track!



Have you ever worked with a librarian? In retirement, Master Naturalist **Helen Boggs** spent a couple of years cataloging, indexing and organizing at a local library. And recently she's used her considerable organizational skills helping us do the same with the massive amount of materials and equipment pertaining to Soapstone Prairie Natural Area. These mate-

rials include a whole lot of background information, current management issues, education topics and activities, and many pertinent



photos. Soapstone Prairie Natural Area is such a significant and diverse site it's no wonder there was a lot to do. We hope you will enjoy giving programs at Soapstone Prairie even more with these useful materials all now nicely organized in several notebooks and crates – thank you, Helen!

Master Naturalist **Bob Babbs** just doesn't get lost. He's been busy navigating around the hidden corners of natural areas as the most active volunteer in the geocache project. This project seeks to remove illegal geocaches in natural areas. Bob has helped us locate over 30 geocaches in 23 natural areas! When he finds one, we send a message to the owner requesting removal. We revisit the site two weeks later to confirm that the cache has been removed; if not, we remove it and hold it for 30 days. It's a process that involves a lot of walking, GPS work, and even venturing out in a boat or finding reflectors at night! Thank you, Bob!



MORE NATURALIST NEWS

MEET THE CLASSES OF 2011!

This spring a new group of Master Naturalists and Master Naturalist Assistants joined the program. They have been very busy with spring and summer programs along with our "seasoned" naturalists.

New Master Naturalists are Pam Craig, Rose Debruin, Amanda Finch, Jeane Foster, Marguerite Gilles, Jacque Haines, AnnMarie Kirkpatrick, Ryan Kirkpatrick, Barb Kittell, Amanda Laban, Jen Logan, Carol McCluskey, Jerry Partin, Judy Putnam, Michael Stone, and Charlie Sturgill.



New Master Naturalist Assistants are Linda Brisbane, Sally Dunphy, Herb Geist, Marilyn Geist, Mike Holland, Allie Knoecklein, Leslie Mussetter, Gina Small, Jean Whittaker, Carol Wiebe, and Dawn Wilson.

WELCOME ABOARD!



Students "Go Wild" in Natural Areas

Spring time breathes new life into everything, including kids. Just ask any teacher who has tried to get her students to concentrate on a warm day in May. Things get a little crazy around the Natural Areas Program as well. This spring more than 2,000 schoolchildren went on field trips to natural areas to explore a plethora of topics from fish to ferrets. Not only did this get them out of the classroom, but thanks to you, they received high-quality, standards-based lessons in a fun, hands-on environment.

THANK YOU NATURALISTS AND ASSISTANTS!



VOLUNTEER RANGER ASSISTANTS

Volunteer Ranger Assistants Are Moving and Doing

VRAs patrol the natural areas by foot, bike, and horseback offering information and helping visitors. They average about 70 patrols per month. But that's not all they do!

This summer, the VRAs have been lending a hand with special events and projects. These dedicated volunteers helped inform and educate visitors at the Running Deer trailhead during a prescribed burn, staffed the gate station and welcomed visitors to Soapstone Prairie Natural Area, assisted with education programs, showed their smiling faces at the new natural playground grand opening at Gateway, and will help anglers during the upcoming Carp Fishing Derby (July 23).

The Natural Areas Program seeks to offer high quality continuing education to volunteers and sixteen VRAs recently attended a Search and Rescue seminar. Look for more education opportunities in the coming months.



VRA Charlie Sturgill photographs the burn at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area.



Staff, VRAs, and Master Naturalists helped out at the new natural playground at Gateway Natural Area.

SERVICE LEARNING VOLUNTEERS



Service Learning Volunteers have dug in, gotten their hands good and dirty, and accomplished an impressive amount of work! In just three months volunteers have donated 1,715 hours!

In April, 82 *CSUnity* students removed fences and structures, planted trees, and recycled old NAP uniforms. *Anheuser-Busch* employees volunteered for the seventh consecutive year to plant native fruit bearing



shrubs in Running Deer Natural Area. Ninety-three volunteers planted 139 shrubs in less than two hours!

On Earth Day, 46 volunteers braved cold and wet spring conditions to plant 36 trees.

In May NAP and *Mountain White-water Descents* sponsored a Poudre River Cleanup. Over 100 volunteers filled a 3-yard dumpster with trash and 150 gallons of mixed glass and aluminum. Eighty volunteers celebrated National Trails Day at an event organized by *REI*, *Larimer County Youth Conservation Corps*, and *NAP*. These volunteers



went to Bobcat Ridge and filled in the deeply rutted equestrian trail and did some much-needed maintenance on the Valley Loop Trail.

Members of the *Northern Colorado Nature Tribe* planted native shrubs at the new natural playground at Gateway Natural Area—and then tested out the playground!



Employees from the *LSI Corporation* spent a sweltering afternoon raking and stacking logs around Sunfish Pond at McMurry Natural Area. Youth group participants from the *Church of Latter Day Saints and Christian Crusades for Christ* helped pick up two large trailer loads of rock that is being used to build fishing platforms.



The new Adopt-a-Trail program has some new members committed to maintenance and improvement of their adopted trail for one year. *Overland Mountain Bike Club* adopted the Foothills Trail on Reservoir Ridge and *Trout Unlimited* adopted trails at Gateway Natural Area. Check out the new and improved conditions on these trail systems!

And in June, ten volunteers built erosion control waddles to stop roadside soil runoff at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area.



THANK YOU, EVERYONE!

Cameras Illuminate Wildlife at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area



Since 2006, remote cameras have been clicking away at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area as part of wildlife

monitoring efforts. Cameras are heat- and motion-sensitive and are one of the least invasive methods to monitor wildlife. We are able to monitor species presence and absence and identify trends in usage and populations. This is a long term project headed up by Natural Areas Technician Chris Metz.



Chris says, "I'm surprised by the sheer number of photos of predators: mountain lions, bobcats, and coyotes. I was also surprised to see a mountain lion casually walking across the porch at the Roman house." This rustic house is used as a maintenance facility.



Chris has noticed that mountain lions and bobcats are almost always nocturnal, while he see photos of coyotes at all hours. He has also noticed that coyotes will wait to scavenge a large mountain lion kill (elk or deer) until about day five. They arrive in groups and are very skittish.

This data from this and other monitoring projects are used to help shape management decisions as well as assist the academic community with their research projects. These efforts will continue into the future for the long term.

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Cameras Illuminate Wildlife at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area



Mule deer doe and fawn



Coyote



Swift fox

Check out the camera photos from Soapstone Prairie and Bobcat Ridge natural areas, Lory State Park, Horsetooth Mountain Park, and Rocky Mountain National Park at **Wild Shots Exhibit 2011: Photographs of local wildlife by local wildlife** on September 17, 2011, 11:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. at the Bellvue Bean, 5032 Rist Canyon Road. More details will be sent in September.



Bobcat



Bobcat

The Nights are Shining with Wonder

The popularity of our public evening programs prompted staff to increase night offerings this year. A group of Master Naturalists stepped up to the plate for the night hike training this summer, and we are now able to offer both family and adult night hikes at Bobcat Ridge and Coyote Ridge. Thank you to these brave volunteers for venturing out into the night! Visitors are so appreciative of being in a natural area after dark and thoroughly enjoy all the information they learn along the way.

Our monthly astronomy programs continue at Bobcat Ridge Natural Area and Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space. Even if you are not leading a night program or helping with an astronomy event, feel free to sign up to come as a participant. Take advantage of these opportunities to enjoy our beautiful natural areas after dark and experience a whole new world!

If you have any questions about evening programs, contact Deborah Price, 217-3075 or dprice@fcgov.com.

Upcoming Events

Bring your friends and families to these fun, free events!

Wade the River

Saturday, July 30, 1-5 p.m. Lee Martinez Park

Discover what lives in the water. Use dip nets, field microscopes, bug boxes and hand lens. All equipment provided. *Note: If high water has not receded this event will be canceled. Check www.fcgov.com/naturalareas for updates.*

Wild Shots

Saturday, September 17, 11 am-4 pm, Bellvue Bean Coffee Shop, 5032 Rist Canyon Road

View photographs of wildlife taken by wildlife with self-triggering remote cameras. See the extraordinary images, meet the project scientists, visit the interactive wildlife booths, and enjoy food and drinks.

And join us for more service learning volunteer events in August:

Trail Maintenance, Saturday, August 13, 8-11 a.m. Bobcat Ridge Registration required: 970-416-2815 or email naturalareas@fcgov.com to register.

Poop de-Doo: Saturday, August 27, 9 a.m.-noon, Spring Canyon Park We can always use a few more volunteers for this fun event. Contact bonesdujour@msn.com for more information.



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