

# Volunteer News



## Notes from the Field

By Susan Schafer, Education and Volunteer Coordinator

It seems like there is never a slow season for Natural Areas Department anymore. There is always something new and exciting going on. This spring Natural Areas hosted 27 school field trips reaching more than 1,800 students. Forty Master Naturalists and Assistants worked 342 hours to make this happen—that is astounding! Thank you!

This summer volunteers are busy with all of their “normal” jobs—leading hundreds of Community Programs, assisting visitors on trails, and keeping the natural areas clean. In addition, volunteers are monitoring prairie dog populations at Soapstone Prairie in preparation for the black-footed ferret release this fall. Keep an eye out for future opportunities to participate in this. A new corps of volunteers is working to maintain and improve the gardens around the Nix Farmhouse and the new Main Office. We can always use more help in the garden so please let me know if you’d like to join us. The Restoration Corps go out into restoration areas each week to help with projects as they arise. This spring they have spent a lot of time responding to flood damage. Many volunteers assisted with National Get Outdoors Day which made it possible for 1,700 people to enjoy a day learning about nature! Did you know that a small group of volunteers spent countless hours sewing hand-made animal costumes for this event?

I see volunteers pitching in every day to help with the smaller tasks like folding school journals, organizing the new resource room, cutting toilet paper tube snakes, inventorying uniforms and work gloves, filling the bird feeders, and proofreading publications. It takes so many hands to keep this machine moving. We continue to be grateful for all you do. As I always say—YOU ROCK!

### Uniform Check?

Is your volunteer shirt stained and just won't come clean? Is your volunteer hat tired and faded? Is your jacket still sporting geese on the logo? How's your name tag? Do any of these still say "Natural Areas Program"? If any of these are the case, you need an upgrade!



Bring your old uniform in to Nix and we'll give you a new one. If you need a new name tag, please send your first name and last initial to [skenney@fcgov.com](mailto:skenney@fcgov.com) before July 1.



You are the public face of the Natural Areas Department and it's important to us that you wear the current uniform in good condition.



The City Manager has given the directive that the old City logo (with geese) must go now! Please help us stay in compliance by updating your uniforms.



## SOAPSTONE PRAIRIE THEN AND NOW: A YEAR OF CULTURAL EXPLORATION

By Deborah Price, Community Programs Educator

This year we celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Smithsonian Institute's first visit to Soapstone Prairie. The excavation and scientific exploration that happened for several years in the 1930s helped to prove humans had been at the site more than 10,000 years ago. To kick off our year of activities, we held a weekend event on May 17-18: "Lindenmeier: Looking Forward by Looking Back."



What an awesome way to draw attention to the significance of this wonderful natural area! Nearly 300 people enjoyed exploring a replica of the Smithsonian Director's tent with authentic contents and equipment, a sandbox "dig" for kids (and some enthusiastic adults!) to learn the techniques of uncovering artifacts, tried their aim out with atlatl throwing, and learned the history of the Lindenmeier Site and homesteaders, and the reintroduction of ferrets and bison to Soapstone happening this fall. There was also a flint knapper and a flag-making station.

Thank you to 35 wonderful volunteers who helped make this a success. Many of our visitors had never been to Soapstone Prairie before and were thrilled to learn about this important landscape conserved by the City of Fort Collins. Thank you all for the

enthusiasm, time, and commitment you shared! Your enthusiasm is contagious and was transferred to those in attendance.

I'd especially like to thank the volunteer committee who helped put this event together. We couldn't have done it without the many hours of time and commitment by **Brian Carroll, Michael Stone, Gary Raham, Bob Henry, Eileen Sake, and Vicky Carroll.**

See *Tracks & Trails* for more programs celebrating Soapstone Prairie and for information about the archaeology symposium in October. This special event brings speakers to Fort Collins who have direct connections to the original Smithsonian visit.

People have made Soapstone Prairie a special place for many generations, and you are helping to continue that today with your volunteer efforts!



## SERVICE LEARNING SUPERSTARS!

*By Cate Dillon, Service Learning Educator*

Service learning volunteers have had a very busy start to the season! This spring, volunteers planted over 1,000 trees and shrubs and picked up over 50 bags of trash along the Poudre River. Youth groups volunteered with their schools and churches. The Natural Areas Department launched a new long-term volunteer program: Restoration Corps. These volunteers assist with restoration work at McMurry and North Shields Ponds Natural Areas.

Anheuser-Busch celebrated 10 years of volunteering with Natural Areas! During this time Anheuser-Busch employees have donated and planted over 4,200 trees (including 430 this year). I am proud to say that the majority of these trees have survived the floods and drought we've experienced in recent years.



Adopt-a-Trail volunteers pitched in to maintain trails along the Poudre River and in the foothills.

Over 100 volunteers celebrated National Trails Day and maintained trails at Bobcat Ridge Natural Area. Participation of children and youth grows every year! It is amazing to see our future trail stewards developing trail maintenance skills and learning the

value of stewardship. This project is sponsored by REI, Larimer County Conservation Corps and Backcountry Delicatessen. Backcountry Delicatessen employees put in a solid morning of trail work before serving the lunch that they donated to the event.

Volunteers from Colorado Addicted TrailBuilders Society spent numerous evenings and weekends to build a causeway at Coyote Ridge Natural Area. This elevated trail structure allows seeping water to pass under the trail, while keeping your feet dry.

Trout Unlimited volunteers constructed new trail and a bridge at McMurry Natural Area and maintained trails at Gateway Natural Area. The new steps they constructed on the Black Powder Trail are beautiful.



*Take a hike and check out the work of all of these amazing volunteers!*



## VOLUNTEER RANGER ASSISTANTS DEMONSTRATING INTEGRITY

*By Rhonda Peckham, Natural Areas and Trails Ranger*

VRA position description: *Works independently, on their own schedule, with little supervision.*

VRA interview question: *Is there any reason why you would not be comfortable in a volunteer position that requires you work under these conditions?*

Class member of 2014 answer: *"I have worked independently in most jobs and consider myself to have integrity. Integrity is what you do when you think no one is looking."*

And everyone is looking! The general public notices the presence of VRAs on City and County

owned properties, they report talking to volunteer "Rangers," and they even weigh-in on appearance of your uniforms!

Watching leads to curiosity, which leads to questions about how to fulfill a long-held desire to get involved, which leads to new Volunteer Ranger Assistants. The City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department and Larimer County Open Space would like to welcome the 2014 class of VRAs and celebrate their first half-year of demonstrating integrity.



### **VRA Class of 2014**

Mary Anderson, Brenda Boulware, Nico Davis, Linda Flynn,  
Indy Hart, Ed Harvey, Mark Kelley, Shannon Lacy, James Lantz,  
Kevin Lundeen, Bud McDonough, Harry Miller, Michael O'Brien,  
Ali Recio, Carol Rogers, Kris Schott, Chris Scully, Garth Silvernale,  
Todd Swazoe, Hugh Templeton, Isabelle Vogt, Karl VonZwehl,  
Jan Waterman

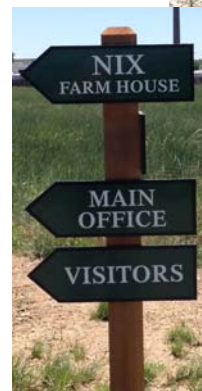
## Welcome to Our New Offices!

*By Jessica Miller, Education Assistant*

As many of you are aware, we (finally!) moved into our new office building at Nix in early May. This building (called Main Office) has been in the works for many months, eagerly anticipated, and now happily inhabited.

All of the education staff is located on the first floor: Sue Kenney, Susan Schaffer, Deborah Price, Cate Dillon, Jessica Miller, and Zoe Whyman. Administrative staff have moved from downtown and are now located on the second floor: John Stokes, Mark Sears, Daylan Figgs, Justin Scharton, Eric Rubenstahl, and Barb Brock. Additionally, our friendly secretary, Michelle Vattano, is at the front desk to greet visitors.

We are very excited about this new space as it allows all of the Natural Areas staff to be together at one location and provides us with a great deal more space. We have a huge new resource room where all the education materials are available, and a great conference and meeting room. We plan on holding trainings here.



The old building (now called Nix Farmhouse) is still in use and is the office space for the natural resources and public improvements staff, field crews, and law enforcement. Many people have shuffled offices around in the farmhouse, so you may not find familiar faces in their previous locations.

Feel free to stop by and visit either building!

# PICNIC

It's summer and that means that the Volunteer Appreciation Picnic is coming up! The ever-popular dessert contest is back (who will win the coveted silver fork this year?) and we're making it a side-dish potluck. So, cook up your favorite summer dish and bring it along. We'll provide the drinks, utensils, hamburgers, and all the fixings.

Mark your calendars and come celebrate with us.

**When:** Saturday, August 9, 2014

**Time:** 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Location:** Gateway Natural Area (come see the new bridge!)



*Education staff enjoying the Volunteer Appreciation Picnic in August, 2013.*



## Lindenmeier Symposium Brings World-Renowned Archaeologists to Fort Collins

*Lindenmeier: Ancient Lives, Ancient Dreams* is a symposium celebrating Soapstone Prairie Natural Area's Lindenmeier archeological site, the largest Paleoindian site in North America. This year marks the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Smithsonian Institution's visit to the National Historic Landmark. Scientists discovered a Folsom point wedged into an ancient bison bone at Lindenmeier, helping to prove the presence of humans at the location at least 10,000 years ago. The symposium, featuring Edwin N. Wilmsen as the keynote speaker (co-author with Frank H.H. Roberts of *Lindenmeier: Concluding Report of Investigations*), will be October 19-22. Registration and details are at [www.fcmod.org](http://www.fcmod.org).

### Details & Schedule

Sunday, October 19- Wednesday, October 22, 2014

Invited speakers include:

- Dr. Jason LaBelle, about current research onsite
- Dr. David Meltzer, about Folsom Paleoindians
- Dr. Steven Holen, about the peopling of North America
- Dr. Frederic Sellet, about the Smithsonian Lindenmeier collections
- Nicole Waguespack, about Colorado Folsom-era Paleoindians at Barger Gulch
- Experts on the Denver Museum of Nature and Science collections
- Local historians



This line-up of speakers represents a "who is who" of expert archaeologists from around the world, together for the first time ever. The symposium is a once in a lifetime opportunity and includes presentations and panel discussions at the Northside Aztlan Center, receptions at the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery including a behind the scenes tour, a banquet at Rio Grande restaurant, and a field trip to the Lindenmeier site. Registration is \$150 until July 1, then registration will be \$175, at [www.fcmod.org](http://www.fcmod.org).

A variety of events and activities focusing on Soapstone Prairie Natural Area's historical and natural importance will be offered throughout 2014. For a full listing of events and activities, visit [NatureTracker.fcgov.com](http://NatureTracker.fcgov.com), call 970-416-2815, or email [naturalareas@fcgov.com](mailto:naturalareas@fcgov.com).

It is all made possible by Fort Collins and Larimer County voters. Your citizen-initiated sales tax dollars conserve land and provide visitor services such as educational events, and trails. Thank you!

*From all of us at the Natural Areas Department: Thank you to every volunteer. No matter what your service is, we appreciate it and feel honored that you want to contribute your time, efforts, and talent to the natural areas. You make a difference every day!*





## *Inquiring Minds Want to Know:*

### *Brian Carroll's Secret to Success as a Master Naturalist*

By Deborah Price, Community Programs Educator

As a special agent with the FBI, Brian Carroll developed an inquiring mind, the patience to seek answers to questions, and the knowledge of where to look for answers. He applies these skills to his presentations as a Master Naturalist.

When you see Brian, he is often toting a suitcase of background information and materials. He has a knack for finding any type of props he needs on E-bay or garage sales.

His favorite programs to lead include *Hike to a Homestead* at Soapstone Prairie, history hikes at Bobcat Ridge, and any presentations involving the Lindenmeier Site. He enjoys these programs because participants are hungry for the information, and their questions inspire him to continue his research for the next presentation.

Brian has participated in a variety of programs since 2006, but by far his favorite are those that incorporate cultural history with the natural landscape. "I believe the more we know how different cultures have used our natural areas, the more we can appreciate the environment that these people experienced," says Brian. "When visitors are told about the cultural significance of the natural area they leave with a better appreciation of the nature present in it." Visitors have shared with him their awareness of the need to conserve and preserve, but seeing the cultural history of the area reinforces that notion.



*Brian Carroll (right) puts finishing touches on the Smithsonian tent at Soapstone Prairie with the help of Master Naturalist Michael Stone. Photo by Deborah Price*

Brian is spending many hours volunteering this year, along with a cadre of other dedicated volunteers, for the *Soapstone Prairie: Then and Now* series which celebrates the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Smithsonian Institute visit to the Lindenmeier Site. Following a kick-off weekend at Soapstone Prairie in May, the year will climax with a symposium about the Lindenmeier Site in October.

Brian's inquisitive mind and detective skills have proven invaluable in making these events a success.

While sharing information is a passion for Brian, he also has a deep respect for the volunteers and visitors he meets along the way. During a hike at Bobcat Ridge with about ten people, he was planning a stop at the stone circle. Two of the women on the hike were very interested but didn't think they could make it up the steeper trail. The rest of the group convinced them to continue and slowed their pace for the two hikers. "I admired the ladies," says Brian, "but more so, the other hikers who demonstrated their true outdoor spirit by wanting the whole group to experience it."

Brian obviously puts a lot of work into what he does, but never seems to tire of looking forward to the next project. "Volunteering as a Master Naturalist is easy because of the support of Natural Areas staff, and their availability when needed. The opportunities they provide for continuing growth is a strength of the program, second only to the dedicated group I get to volunteer with."