

WINTER 2014-2015

# Volunteer News



## Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner!

It's time to celebrate! Let us show our appreciation for all you do for the Natural Areas Department. You and your family are invited to join us for this very special and lively event featuring good food, a cash bar, presentations, and lots of catching up with friends!

**Mark the date:** Friday, January 23, 2015, 5:30-8:00 p.m. at the Lincoln Center, 417 East Magnolia Street, Canyon West Room

### Schedule:

5:30—Doors open and food served

6:30—Awards presentations

7:00—Dessert and fellowship

RSVP required! Respond to the E-vite or contact Susan at [sschafer@fcgov.com](mailto:sschafer@fcgov.com)

**See you there!**



*Volunteers enjoy the festivities at the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in January, 2014.*



**SEE YOU SOON!**

## COMMUNITY PROGRAMS SHINE ON

The community continues to love Community Programs! We offer a wide variety of high quality, meaningful, fun, educational programming for free! Volunteer Master Naturalists and Assistants are responsible for the on-going popularity of these programs.

In 2014, we delivered 235 programs to nearly 5,300 people — way to go!  
Here's some statistics:

**Nature Nuggets**—always a favorite with the younger set! These hands-on, active programs are targeted for ages 3-6 years. The most popular months were June with 293 people and July with 237 people. In 2015, we will continue to strategize about how to increase capacity and maintain quality.

### **Natural Areas After Dark**

People love to be on the natural areas after dark. We require registrations for these programs so we aren't overwhelmed but that continues to be a challenge, also.

### **Eagle Watches**

People attending Eagle Watches in January and February totaled 420 and there were 134 people in the last two weeks of December. As many as 26 eagles were spotted. People came out when it was bitter cold and snowing—those eagles are just so charismatic and the volunteers are so stoic (look for hand warmers in the notebook and binoculars bin)!

### **Museum Host**

Most shifts at the Natural Areas Departments display have been done by Charlie Sturgill— way to go, Charlie! He and others talked with 894 visitors and shared the amazing story of black-footed ferrets, prairie dogs, and all the features of the shortgrass prairie.



### **Continuing Education for Master Naturalists and MN Assistants**

We are firm believers in ongoing education for our volunteers and you all are life-long learners—a great combination!

Here are the opportunities from 2014:

- Jan. — Museum Host training
- Jan. — Volunteer Appreciation Dinner
- Feb. — Movie: School's Out - Lessons from a Forest Kindergarten
- Mar. — Wilderness Survival
- Mar.-Apr. — Master Naturalist Training
- Mar. — Outreach to Youth training
- April — Night Programs training
- May — Nature at Noon: *Wildlife Cameras*
- May — Soapstone Prairie Training
- June — Nature at Noon: *Mountain Lions*
- July — Nature at Noon: *Native Fish*
- Aug. — Nature at Noon: *River Restoration*
- Aug. — Volunteer Appreciation Picnic
- Oct. — Nature at Noon: *Messy Rivers*
- Oct. — Nature at Noon: *Forensic Botany*
- Nov. — Museum Host Training
- Dec. — Eagle Watch Training

We hope you continue to take advantage of these learning opportunities—there's nothing quite like them!

We're working on ideas for 2015, so if you have ideas for other continuing education topics and/or speakers, drop a line to Sue Kenney,

## SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN 2014

You delivered 70 high-quality school programs this year serving more than 4,000 students, teachers, and their parent chaperones—all in just four months! We launched a joint 1<sup>st</sup> grade field trip with the Gardens on Spring Creek which was very popular with teachers—loved having two types of field trips in one place. We also continued our partnership with the Water Festival which hosts every 3<sup>rd</sup> grader in Poudre School District for a one-day water extravaganza. And Phil Smith, single-handedly worked with 479 students at EcoWeek at Pingree Park!

Way to go, everyone!



## EVENTS IN 2014

We attended and/or sponsored 28 special events this year! Master Naturalists and Master Naturalist Assistants talked with more than 6,000 participants at these events. A big highlight was the Nature Festival on Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> which brought over 800 people to Nix for a day of exploration and adventure. What a huge success!



## SERVICE LEARNING TAKES ON NEW CHALLENGES

By Cate Dillon, Service Learning Educator

In 2014, more than 1,000 people worked on 73 service learning projects. They donated 3,875 hours to restoring and cleaning up the Poudre River, maintaining trails, monitoring prairie dogs, planting native trees, landscaping at the Natural Areas Department's offices, and protecting cottonwood trees.

Many of these projects are supported by a \$4,000 grant from REI. We purchase tools, meals, project supplies, and volunteer thank-you gifts (such as reusable water bottles and zipper pulls). Many community projects are family friendly and are open to volunteers of all ages.

### Business Community

Team-building projects have become a popular way for local businesses to build camaraderie while giving back to the community. We customized 15 volunteer projects to meet local business needs and were able to accomplish large projects with their employees' help. *Make a Difference Week* has become a very popular time for businesses to volunteer.

### Young Professionals

More than 120 young professionals (college students and interns) donated over 450 hours to the Natural Areas Department. Colorado State University students participated in programs such as CSUnity and the Northern Colorado Nature Festival. Two local businesses, HP and OtterBox, also requested customized service learning projects for their summer interns. These volunteers worked on landscaping, trail maintenance, plantings, and event assistance.

### Restoration Corps

We piloted a new volunteer program with the goal of engaging community members in Poudre River restoration. Twenty-nine community members attended the mandatory three hour training and 17 volunteered May – August. Restoration Corps volunteers donated 204 hours and assisted staff in tasks such as planting, weeding, watering, trail maintenance, and cottonwood tree protection. Restoration Corps volunteers also stepped in to help after McMurry and North Shields Ponds natural areas were inundated by spring flooding. Volunteers dug out our mud-buried plantings, cleaned up flood debris and rebuilt trails.

### Youth Participation

We increased our outreach to youth—pre-teens and teens in middle and high school. We offered 14 youth-specific projects with over 150 youth participants. These groups donated nearly 600 hours. . We also added in a youth trail group at National Trails Day. Youth participated in projects such as landscaping, beetle-kill log removal, trash clean-ups, and weeding in restoration areas. High school

service learning clubs even volunteered by packaging wildflower seeds during their study hall!



THANK YOU, EVERYONE!

## RARE PLANTS...RARE PEOPLE

This is the 7<sup>th</sup> year of the Rare Plant Survey. This unique volunteer opportunity offers heat, cold, rain, wind, and rattlesnakes so it is not for the faint of heart! Volunteers surveyed for the Colorado butterfly plant and donated 361 hours of time at Soapstone Prairie. Volunteers also assisted Crystal Strouse and collected over 50 different species of native plants. These plants will be used to facilitate restorations at Coyote Ridge, Arapaho Bend, Springer and Soapstone Prairie.



## How Does the Nix Garden Grow?

Every year a small cadre of dedicate volunteers quietly works to keep the Nix Farm garden beautiful. They are dedicated and extremely hardworking. This spring we moved into our new office building and that meant additional landscaping. It was no small task to keep this jungle under control.

The entire Natural Areas Department thanks these volunteers for their tireless efforts.

- \* Ken Dunnington,
- \* David Tweedle,
- \* Nancy Courtney
- \* Helen Boggs

We truly appreciate it every day!



# VOLUNTEER RANGER ASSISTANTS

By Rhonda Peckham

The City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department and the Larimer County Natural Resources Department co-manage the Volunteer Ranger Assistant program. Volunteer Rangers Assistants (VRA) greet visitors on the City's natural areas and the County's open space trails, promote outdoor safety, and assist rangers by explaining the reasons for policies and regulations. These one-on-one contacts are invaluable to our visitors and to our departments.

## Continuing Education

In 2014, VRAs received training in medical emergency litter evacuations and helicopter procedures, and CPR/AED. Volunteers participated in a wide variety of activities other than patrol such as trail counts, wildlife camera checks, resource surveys, geo-cache monitoring, and assisted with special education programs and events where large crowds were registered or expected.

**You have been busy!** From 2013 to 2014 the total number of hours donated increased by 8% and total number of contacts increased by 12%.

## Here's some more statistics:

VRAs on Roster – 122

Active VRAs – 86

Total Patrols – 1204

Total Contacts – 4481

Total Hours Donated – 2763

*Every hour donated equals two miles of walking; so that's 5,526 miles you travelled!*



## Contact Types

- ⇒ Cordial - 3612
- ⇒ Informational/Educational - 487
- ⇒ Regulatory (non-enforcement) - 149
- ⇒ Welfare/Medical - 48

THANK YOU!



## YOUR EDUCATION STAFF

Here's an overview of our staff positions and what we do:

**Community Relations Manager** = Zoe Shark oversees the education program, does marketing and promotion for the department, updates the website and other media, and works tirelessly behind the scenes! [zshark@fcgov.com](mailto:zshark@fcgov.com), 970-221-6311

**Volunteer and Education Coordinator** = Susan Schafer coordinates all the department volunteers, oversees school programs, events, and many other duties too numerous to list! [sschafer@fcgov.com](mailto:sschafer@fcgov.com), 970-416-2480

**Education and Outreach Coordinator** = Sue Kenney works on interpretive signage, brochures, training volunteers, and oversees Community Programs. [skenney@fcgov.com](mailto:skenney@fcgov.com), 970-224-6118

**Service Learning Educator** = Cate Dillon matches community members to Natural Areas Department's stewardship needs such as trail work, weeding, planting, trash pick-ups and more. [cdillon@fcgov.com](mailto:cdillon@fcgov.com), 970-224-6153.

**Community Programs Educator** = This position organizes and implements more than 150 community programs each year. These are mostly out on the natural areas but include indoor venues, too. Currently vacant —new person starts soon!

**Education Assistant** = This position assists with school programs and events. In the summer they also help out with events and other programs. Currently vacant—new person starts soon!

### 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)



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.



*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:*

### *What is Deborah Price Up To?*

After eight highly productive seasons with the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department, we reluctantly said good bye to Deborah Price in August. She left to work as the Education Liaison for Boulder County Parks and Open Space.

Deborah was hired as one of our first seasonal educators in 2007. Through a grant from the Pulliam Trust (previous owners of Bobcat Ridge) she became the Bobcat Ridge Educator. She initiated many new programs including Nature Nuggets, astronomy, remote wildlife cameras, and pioneer history.

Deborah was so successful, that when we wanted to expand this programming to all the natural areas, of course, we wanted her to do it! Deborah met many challenges head on, found ways to make things work, and was always enthusiastic about nature, programming, and the volunteers.

Here's a note from Deborah to all of you:

After four months as Education Liaison with Boulder County Parks and Open Space, I am figuring out my job! The department is at least twice as big as Fort Collins Natural Areas Department so there is a lot to learn. I am the liaison between the school districts (Boulder Valley and St. Vrain Valley) and Open Space Department. I help connect them to field trips, classroom programs, and other opportunities. I work with both the natural history and cultural history coordinators in this process, and I'm also helping to design some new programs for both natural and cultural history to begin this spring and summer. I get to work with a great staff and a great group of volunteers, so it is rewarding.

I do miss all my friends at Natural Areas Department in Fort Collins though and think of you often. Thank you all for being such an important part of my life and career! Please look me up if you're down towards Longmont (where our office is located). You can reach me at [dprice@bouldercounty.org](mailto:dprice@bouldercounty.org) or call 303-678-6215.

--Deborah Price

We really miss Deborah around the office, in the natural areas, and doing programs with her. We are very happy that she will continue as a volunteer leading astronomy programs, checking cameras at Bobcat Ridge, and helping out with some trainings. We know she'll do great things in Boulder County—definitely our loss and their gain!



*Deborah Price and NAD volunteers, along with Rocky Mountain High School teachers and students at Bobcat Ridge doing the cameras checks on Jan. 3, 2015.*