

Volunteer News



Welcome to All Our Newbies!

By Sue Kenney, Education and Outreach Coordinator

Greetings Volunteers,

I am temporarily stepping in for Susan Schafer, your intrepid Volunteer Coordinator, who is on maternity leave. We have lots of news to share with you.



New Person

Susan, Eric, and big sister, Logan welcomed new baby girl, Emerson SuzAnn, on April 9. Emmy was 7 pounds, 10 ounces, and is growing rapidly. Susan will be back at the helm in July, working a Tuesday—Saturday schedule.



Welcome back, Susan! We missed you.

New Staff

Say “hi” to Jessica Miller, our new Education Assistant. Jessica started her position in February and has brought enthusiasm, knowledge, creativity, and energy to everything she does. Look for a message from Jessica on page 3.

New Volunteers

We also had very successful volunteer training sessions this year. We warmly welcome our new Volunteer Ranger Assistants (VRAs), Master Naturalists (MNs) and Master Naturalist Assistants (MNAs). Look for news about them on the inside pages.

New Database

Have you embraced *Nature Tracker* yet? We are loving it and so glad to be done with that *other* database. There are still a few tweaks we’re working and if you have questions or suggestions please let us know. Email zwhyman@fcgov.com

New Publications and Programs

Are you a *Junior Naturalist*? A “*Passporter*”? Have you seen this year’s edition of *Tracks & Trails*? Check out examples of these and more on page 9.

Our Newest Trail

See page 8 for news about the Foothills Trail extension.

In Other News

Have you made all your summer plans yet? Don’t forget to include the annual *Volunteer Appreciation Picnic* on August 24. It is *the* place to be this season! Look for all the details on page 7.

NATURALIST'S NICHE

By Sue Kenney, Education and Outreach Coordinator

Greetings to All New Master Naturalist and Master Naturalist Assistants!

The 21st Annual MN training and 5th Annual MNA training wrapped up with 29 talented people joining in the education fun. These newbies are signing up like crazy to lead and assist at many exciting programs.

**MASTER NATURALISTS
CLASS OF 2013:**

- Melinda Arrand
- John Atkinson
- Jim Boersma
- Sharon Boersma
- Charlotte Boney
- Victoria Gilbert
- Connie Gray
- Angela Juhl
- Paul Nordwall
- Betsy Perna
- Jan Rastall
- Karen Wheeler



**MASTER NATURALIST
ASSISTANTS CLASS OF
2013:**

- Justin Aguero
- Kendra Arbesman
- Mary Carlson
- Norine Duchane
- Sue Elliott
- Linda Hamilton
- Paula Hanlon
- Corrie Houser
- Gretchen Kastetter
- Jan McBroom
- Betty Mickey
- David Morse
- Chris Polazzi
- Lauren Rae
- Mark Serour
- Voni Simons
- Jim Smith



The newest class of Master Naturalists has a great attitude!



Our youngest MNA, 18 year-old Justin Aguero, will be studying Wildlife Biology at CSU this fall .

Meet the New Education Assistant, Jessica Miller



Courtesy of Jessica Miller

Jessica Miller joined the Natural Areas team in February 2013 as the new Education Assistant. She is a Colorado native, with a varied background in natural resources and environmental education. As a graduate of CSU,

Jessica has worked for 11 years with Colorado State Parks, Larimer County Parks, and several National Parks and Monuments in the west. She also volunteers with the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program and sings in the Loveland Choral Society. She enjoys hiking, birding, photography, camping, gardening, and traveling. Jessica and her husband James live in Loveland with their two dogs. She will be working with Susan and school programs, as well as special events. Her office is upstairs at Nix so come by and introduce yourself if you haven't met her yet!

School Programs Spring 2013

By Jessica Miller, Education Assistant

When Volunteer Coordinator, Susan Schafer went on maternity leave, we decided to suspend all school field trips until the fall — but, you wouldn't let us! A HUGE thank you to Barb Kittell and Eileen Sake for stepping in to fill those very large shoes and organizing and delivering nine school field trips this spring.

Another HUGE thank you to all the wonderful volunteers who helped make the school programs a success. Many of you braved chilly and windy days (once the snow quit), teaching these students about our magnificent natural areas. What fantastic opportunities we can provide with all your help!



Photo by Jessica Miller

These Master Naturalists and Master Naturalist Assistants worked enthusiastically to bring about very successful school field trips:

- David Bayer
- Janet Sitas
- Cindy Tunney
- Jean Whittaker
- Jack Vogt
- Mary Joyce Fink
- Alice Gibson
- Deanna Osborne
- Francoise Smith
- Michael Stone
- Corynne Hilbert
- Ron Briggs
- Bill Cornell
- Marguerite Gilles



David Bayer teaches youngsters at a spring school field trip. Photo by Jessica Miller.



Cindy Tunney teaches at a school field trip. Photo by Jessica Miller.

Volunteer News



Community Programs

By Deborah Price, Community Programs Educator, dprice@fcgov.com, 970-217-3075

The Community Loves You!

We can barely keep *Tracks & Trails* on the shelves or on the racks of the many places that request them. They disappear like hot cakes! This is an indication of how popular the programs are that you provide to our community. My husband took a box of *Tracks & Trails* to the Forestry Building on the south end of the CSU campus and they said, "Bring us as many as you can—the City has great programs!"

Thanks to all of you for your willingness to provide these programs and for sharing your enthusiasm and knowledge about natural areas with people of all ages.



Karen Wheeler helps Brownies use binoculars. Photo by Sue Kenney.

In May alone, we provided 26 different community programs that reached 368 people (that's an average of over 14 people per program). Community programs include those listed in *Tracks & Trails*, as well as programs by request for groups and organizations.

We have lots of great programs coming up this summer, so keep watching NatureTracker for opportunities. If you have an idea for a program you'd like to present, let me know your ideas. If you are passionate about a topic, there's a chance others will be, too.



Victoria Gilbert teaching at Nature Nuggets. Photo courtesy of Gretchen Kastetter.

Happy Hiking!



Betsy Perna teaches Girl Scouts about cottonwood trees. Photo by Sue Kenney.

SERVICE LEARNING

By Cate Dillon, Service Learning Educator

Service Learning Volunteers have had an outstanding spring! Over 800 people have volunteered to maintain trails, plant trees, remove non-native weeds, protect cottonwood trees, pick up trash, and even restore historic structures. Local youth have been some of the most inspiring (and adorable) volunteers. A special thank you goes out to all of the education institutions who have gotten youth of all ages outside to volunteer.



Local businesses have also contributed a lot. For the second year, Natural Areas has been awarded a grant from REI to sponsor public volunteer events. This spring volunteers planted shrubs at Kingfisher Point Natural Area to celebrate Earth Day and helped maintain trails at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area on National Trails Day. Anheuser-Busch donated funds to plant trees along the Poudre River in Kingfisher Point Natural Area and over 100 employees attended the planting. Through the efforts of Mountain Whitewater Descents, community members filled two dumpsters full of trash from the Poudre River Corridor.



Many local organizations have been busy maintaining trails. With the help of Overland Mountain Bike Club, Babes on Bikes and the OtterCares Foundation, the Natural Areas Department Public Improvements staff was able to complete a large reroute on the Foothills Trail in Reservoir Ridge Natural Area.

Thank you to all who help to make natural areas great!



SUMMER 2013

VOLUNTEER NEWS



Celebrate 20 Years of Natural Areas!

By Zoe Whyman, Community Relations Manager

It has been two decades since the first citizen-initiated sales tax to fund natural areas was passed. Citizens have voted to approve four ballot measures since then! Natural Areas are currently funded by a City and a County sales tax, each a ¼ cent on the dollar. The City sales tax is in effect until 2030 and the County sales tax until 2018.

Before 1992, the City had conserved some natural areas such as Pineridge and Reservoir Ridge, encompassing 1,190 acres. After 1992, land conservation really took off. Fort Collins has conserved 41,665 acres to date!



Photo courtesy of Zoe Whyman

Everyone is invited to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Natural Areas Department in 2013:

- Watch the inspiring video, *Celebrating Your Natural Areas* at www.fcgov.com/naturalareas.
- Complete *Your Passport to Natural Areas*, a checklist of natural areas to visit, activities and volunteer opportunities. Win a prize by completing your passport and be entered into a drawing in November for a backpack full of outdoor supplies.
- Contribute to the multi-media *Natural Areas Journal* by submitting a photo, written story or video (www.fcgov.com/naturalareas).

The accomplishments of the last twenty years could not have been possible without the incredible volunteer support of the community. Thank you so very much for your important role in making twenty years of natural areas possible!



Astronomy program at Bobcat Ridge. Photo courtesy of Charlie Davis.



Master Naturalist Victoria Gilbert teacher youngsters about insects at a recent Nature Nuggets program. Photo courtesy of Gretchen Kastetter.

TIME FOR A PICNIC!

*You and your families are invited to the annual
Volunteer Appreciation Picnic
on Saturday, August 24, 2013
10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
at Gateway Natural Area*

Summer means lots of outdoor fun and, of course, getting out in the natural areas!

Join us at beautiful Gateway Natural Area and enjoy a day filled with great food, relaxing hikes, fun games, and much more.

Go to naturetracker.fcgov.com to register for this event.

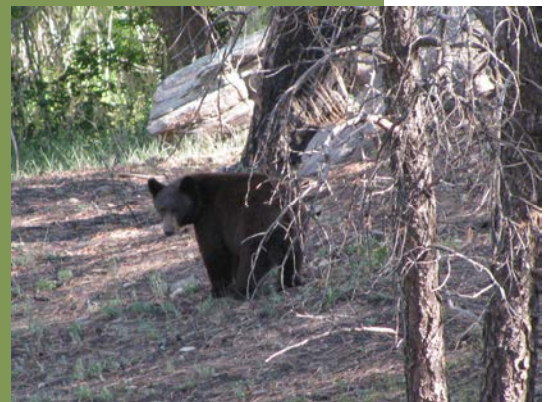
See you there!



Photo courtesy of Jack Hicks.



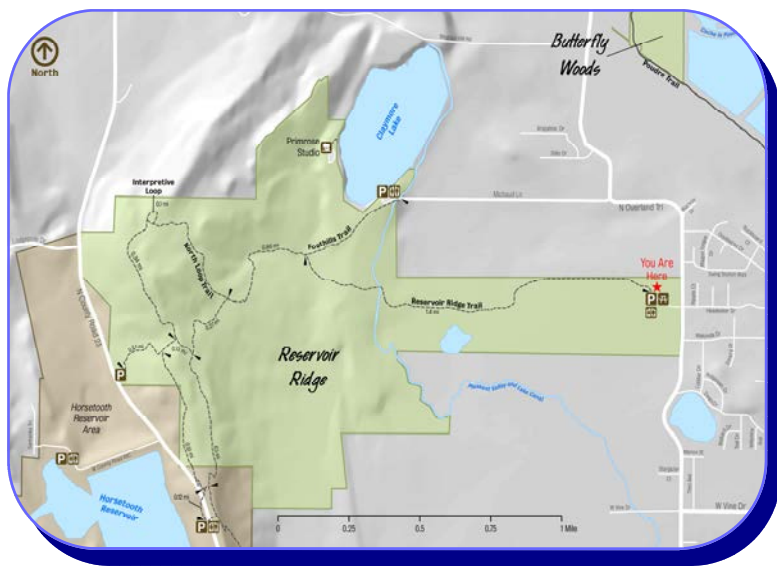
Natural Areas Department Manager, Mark Sears, enjoys an ice cream sandwich at the 2012 Volunteer Appreciation Picnic. Photo courtesy of Jack Hicks.



Bear seen on a hike at last year's picnic.

Foothills Trail Extended!


Check out the new trailhead and Foothills Trail extension at Reservoir Ridge Natural Area. This is located at 1425 North Overland Trail. The trailhead features parking, a picnic area, a kiosk and a vault toilet. From the new parking lot, visitors may hike, bike, walk leashed dogs or ride horses. You'll travel along hay fields, cross a wetland slough via a boardwalk, and travel over the Pleasant Valley and Lake Canal on a bridge. The Foothills Trail is now 8.2 miles long!



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!



Are you a blogger? Tell us about your experiences as a volunteer on the natural areas. Send in your story, photo, or video to www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/na-stories.php. We'd love to feature more of our volunteers in the *Natural Areas Journal*!



From the pages of the *Natural Areas Journal*:

Bird Cooperation

Submitted by Bob Babbs on May 13, 2010

As a Volunteer Master Naturalist with the City of Fort Collins, I lead a number of “birding” hikes for school age kids. During those hikes it’s common to not have the birds cooperate and have to really search for them, their nests, or signs. On one particular hike, I had a group of about 15-20 kids in one of four groups that rotated between various activities throughout the day. As I was exchanging them with another group and going over the use of binoculars with the new group I spotted an Eastern Screech Owl perched in tree crevice, not 3 feet off the trail and not more than 15 feet high. I had the kids test focus on that particular tree near the ground and then had them slowly move their line of site up the tree. When they came to the owl, those that could see through the unbelievable camouflage started squealing in delight. We called the other group back so they too could observe this shy woodland creature. The owl stayed there, sound asleep, throughout the day, through four rotations of kids and tens of hikers and bikers along the trail. Now, every time I pass under that particular tree, I always look for my little friend and educational partner.

Our Newest Publications

Explore and learn about the natural areas with friends and family using these handy brochures with lots of fun activities.

These are available at all trailhead kiosks or call the Natural Areas Department at 970-416-2815.



Volunteer Ranger Assistants Summer Report

By Rhonda Peckham, City of Fort Collins Natural Areas and Trails Ranger

As a rule, summer begins slowly for Volunteer Ranger Assistants. But, just as regular as the summer solstice each year, VRA business booms by July. The business of being a VRA encompasses that very special relationship with the public as a point of contact and representative of both the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas and Larimer County Open Lands.

The new class of 29 volunteers who entered the ranks in February have once again stepped forward and provided a large share of hours with enthusiasm and dedication for which we are always at a loss to adequately express our gratitude.

The month of June was a representative example of how VRAs interact with the public. Reports from the field show that VRAs have provided excellent public service with over 200 hours and contacts ranging from cordial (500) to educational (22) to regulatory (36). With recreational activities on the upswing during the month, VRAs also checked on the welfare of 12 individuals and provided aid in six incidents.

Opportunities continue to expand for VRAs with requests for Night Sky Monitoring, Conservation Easement monitoring, geocache detection, assistance with public programming and special events logistics, and directed patrols. Since the program began in 2007, the scope of duties continues to evolve as VRAs prove their mettle and professionalism.



VRA Class of 2013 along with Chunka, the scenario wonder dog.