

Boulder County Nature Association



"The Boulder County Nature Association is a private, non-profit membership organization committed to preserving the natural history of our region through research, documentation, and public education."

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Open Space Discussion Group Works toward Consensus on Trail Planning in the West Flatirons Trail Study Area

The City of Boulder Parks and Open Space is currently working on the West Flatirons Trail Study Area Plan (West TSA), which includes lands west of Broadway and SH93 from Linden to Eldorado Springs Drive. In an effort to improve the quality of the dialog, and increase mutual respect and understanding, representatives from groups with a stake in the open space usage began meeting last December to see if consensus on some issues could be reached. BCNA became involved in this process in the spring. Groups represented at the meetings include Boulder Area Trails Coalition, Boulder County Audubon, Boulder County Horse Association, Boulder County Nature Association, Boulder Mountain Bike Alliance, Boulder Trail Runners, Flatirons Climbing Council, Colorado Mountain Club, Friends Interested in Dogs on Open Space, PLAN Boulder County and Sierra Club.

The aspirations of each group were presented and discussed. We are now close to consensus on some issues and are bringing these proposals to our boards and membership for further input.

The first set of statements is broad. These would be the basis for any specific recommendations we would make.

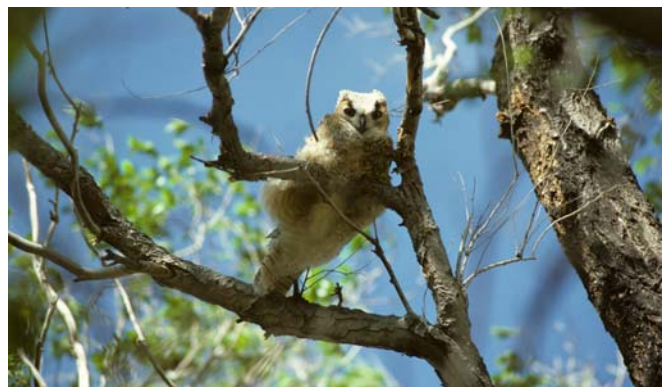
1. When necessary or appropriate, realign or relocate trails to reduce habitat fragmentation, increase the quality of the multi-use experience, and ensure the sustainability of the land for future generations.
2. To the extent possible, prior to entering into discussions regarding specific trail alignments or realignments, pursue a process that identifies all natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources as well as existing and potential use patterns.
3. The establishment of new trails, realignment of existing trails, and elimination of unsustainable social trails should be based on sound management policies with the mutually supportive goals of reducing impacts on the environment and providing a high quality experience for all users.

4. Apply more OSMP resources to the maintenance of our existing and planned trail network. Consider hiring a permanent trail crew to repair small problems as they occur and to prevent degradation of the resource.
5. Develop educational signage that encourages people to experience and enjoy nature while respecting sensitive resources. To the extent possible, use persuasive instead of coercive language and provide information in a way that reinforces a sense of wonder and generates a land ethic in adults and children. Provide enhanced and consistent enforcement of regulations as a secondary strategy.
6. Provide accurate, timely and easily accessible information to make the TSA public involvement process more inclusive, collaborative and efficient. Use the services of a professional facilitator to improve the efficiency and inclusiveness of the public process.

Specific proposals that are currently under discussion include the following: (Note that #2 above would underly any of these considerations)

1. Explore the possibility of designating Chapman Drive and the Old Mesa Trail near Eldorado Springs as official trails.
2. Construct no new trails in the Habitat Conservation Area west of South Boulder and Bear peaks, an area that provides refuge for black bears,

(Continued on page 2)



Owls have banner nesting season . . . See page 2

(Continued from page 1)

mountain lions, and other large mammals (with the possible exception of realigning or reconstruction the Eldorado Canyon Trail).

3. Develop an environmentally sustainable, multiple-use, bike accessible trail from Eldorado Springs to Walker Ranch through Eldorado Canyon.

4. Provide at least one designated trail or social trail to each crag or bouldering area identified in conjunction with the Flatirons Climbing Council.

5. Maintain current dog access and voice and sight privileges in this TSA.

6. Consider designating and/or rerouting high quality social trails and closing redundant social trails to make them environmentally sustainable, to minimize habitat fragmentation, and to provide a high quality recreation experience (e.g. The social trail network between McClintock Trail and Enchanted Mesa and in the Shanahan area).

7. Provide some additional multi-use bike accessible trails in the West TSA that, in conjunction with trails in the Marshall Mesa and Doudy Draw areas, provide a destination for mountain bikers that they can access without the use of a car.

We would like to hear from our membership regarding your thoughts on these proposals. You can discuss these with any board members or contact me directly by phone or e-mail. I will do my best to see that your ideas and thoughts are presented and discussed by the Open Space Discussion Group.

—Jan Carnes

jjcarnes@comcast.net

A Surprisingly Good Summer for Burrowing and Long-eared Owls

A few years ago we thought burrowing and long-eared owls were among the most endangered birds in Boulder County. From 1986-2005, we received no reports of long-eared owl nests within the county. Burrowing owls nested sporadically and often unsuccessfully during that same time period.

This year things have turned around, at least temporarily. So far we've received reports of five burrowing owl nests that fledged at least 20 young, and four long-eared owl nests that fledged at least 9 young. We now know of six Boulder County long-eared owl nesting sites that have been active during at least one of the last three years.

The burrowing owl nests were on City of Boulder

open space properties near Boulder Reservoir, Valmont Reservoir, on Gunbarrel Hill, and on Davidson Mesa. In addition, at least three nests in Broomfield near 160th St fledged up to 20 young. The long-eared owl nests were found at Heil Ranch, Shanahan Ridge, Eldorado Mountain, central Louisville, in a shelterbelt near White Rocks, and in a shelterbelt near Erie.

Until recently, many of us thought that habitat fragmentation, burgeoning great horned owl populations, and marauding automobiles had doomed these two owl species to imminent extinction in Boulder County. From 1986-2005, burrowing owls fledged fewer than two young per nesting attempt in Boulder County, a production rate that is too low to maintain a viable population. Long-eared owls vanished from historically active nest sites at White Rocks and in Skunk Canyon. What has suddenly changed?

Search effort, for one thing. Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks wildlife technician Christian Nunes, who has been devoting much of his time with the department to monitoring nesting bird populations, found two of the new long-eared nesting sites and two of the burrowing owl nests. Christian's sudden success leads us to believe we may have been overlooking owl nests that were right under our binoculars.

So we've decided to launch a major, coordinated search for burrowing owls next spring. Look for an article in the winter newsletter describing the project.

Meanwhile, it looks like eared grebe, red-headed woodpecker, loggerhead shrike, and brown thrasher may now top the list of endangered birds in Boulder County. We haven't received nesting reports for any of these species for decades. Northern harrier is up there as well. Two nesting attempts west of Boulder Reservoir failed again this year, making eight consecutive nest failures at Boulder County's only recently-active northern harrier nesting site.

Here's the list of "rare and declining" species once again. If you saw any of these birds within suitable nesting habitat this spring or summer (generally late-May-July), please send us an e-mail with the date, location, and breeding behavior observed.

Northern Bobwhite, Eared Grebe, American Bittern, Northern Harrier, Burrowing Owl, Long-Eared Owl, Lewis's Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Loggerhead Shrike, Brown Thrasher, & Lark Bunting.

- Steve Jones (stephen.jones@earthlink.net)



A burrowing owl keeps watch near its nest. This species and long-eared owls (photo page 1) had a better than average nesting season. Owl photos by Steve Jones

Bluebird Success Story

Bluebird nest box trails at Walker Ranch, Betasso Preserve, Heil Ranch, and Shanahan Ridge fledged an astonishing 358 western and mountain bluebird young this summer, nearly double the number fledged just two years ago. Boulder County Audubon's George and Marti Oetzel have been working with Boulder city and county open space staff to refurbish and expand these nest box trails, originally established during the 1980s. About 15 volunteers help out with nest box monitoring.

Particularly surprising has been a skyrocketing increase in numbers of western bluebirds. During the 1980s, this species was included on the Boulder County Nature Association's "rare and declining" list. Last year 51 western bluebird nests fledged 233 young! Here are the totals by property:

Walker Ranch: 17 mountain bluebird nests fledged 72 young; 34 western bluebird nests fledged 156 young.

Betasso Preserve: 6 mountain bluebird nests fledged 32 young; 13 western bluebird nests fledged 58 young.

Heil Ranch and Shanahan Ridge: 5 mountain bluebird nests fledged 21 young; 4 western bluebird nests fledged 19 young.

For more information about this remarkably successful project, visit the Boulder County Audubon Society website: www.boulderaudubon.org

Sparrows and Pikas and Hummingbirds, Oh My!

The BCNA Education Committee is happy to report that participants were very enthusiastic about all of our BCNA class offerings in 2008, including four new classes: "Spotting Sparrows," "Bird Sketching," "Pika Encounter," and "Exploring Colorado Hummingbirds." Participant numbers in all classes were high, and many more scholarships were given out to participants this year than ever before, mostly to folks who have never taken BCNA classes before.

Our committee is now developing the BCNA 2009 Winter-Spring Field Class Schedule, which will be mailed to you with your January BCNA newsletter. You can also see the Schedule on the BCNA website in January. Be sure to sign up soon, because classes fill quickly. Also, please let us know if you have any suggestions for additional classes or instructors in the future; we are always looking for new ideas.

Thanks to all our excellent BCNA instructors who have provided such incredible in-depth, hands-on learning experiences to all of us through the years!

—Carol Kampert, Education Committee Chair
Kampert@comcast.net
 303-499-3049



Winter Raptors Surveys have been a mainstay of BCNA volunteers for 25 years. Join a group this fall! See page 4. Golden Eagle, photo by S. Severs.

BCNA Fall Calendar

Saturday, October 25, 10 to noon: Orientation for wintering raptor survey volunteers. New volunteers are always welcome for this 25-year Boulder County Nature Association survey of wintering hawks, eagles, and falcons. We'll go over survey protocols and look at raptors through spotting scopes. Meet at Lagerman Reservoir, on Pike Road one mile east of North 63rd. For more information, contact Sue Cass (720-684-6922).

Sunday, October 26, 8:00 a.m. to noon. Fall migrant search at Pella Crossing
 Scott Severs (303-684-6430) will lead a search for songbirds and fall raptors at this beautiful open space. Meet at the Pella Crossing parking lot on 75th Street, just south of the town of Hygiene. Jointly sponsored by Boulder County Audubon.

Sunday, December 14, 2008, dawn to sunset: Christmas Bird Count. Take part in one of the oldest counts in the nation. Join one of the teams of 2 to 5 birders to count all or part of the day or at your backyard feeder. Please contact count coordinator Bill Schmoker at 303-702-9589 or bill@schmoker.org. Birders of all experience levels are welcome; the more pairs of eyes the better.

Sunday, December 21, 7-10:30 a.m. 21st annual Winter Solstice sunrise hike on East Boulder (White Rocks) Trail. Meet at the Teller Farms North parking area on Valmont Road a half-mile west of 95th St, at 7. Dress warmly and expect frosty scenes populated by ducks and hawks. Bring a thought, poem, or quotation to share at a brief sunrise ceremony at the Boulder Creek bridge. Optional breakfast afterward (around 9) at the Garden Gate Café in Niwot. RSVP for breakfast to Steve Jones (stephen.jones@earthlink.net; 303-494-2468).

BCNA Board of Directors

President.....Sue Cass 303-494-5345
 Vice President.....Kim Graber 303-494-7971
 Treasurer.....Michael Delaney 303-494-8583
 Secretary.....Natalie Shrewsbury 303-494-6102

Carol Kampert 303-499-3049
 Mort Wegman-French 303-543-0150
 A.D. Chesley 303-938-8150
 Jan Carnes 303-827-3024

Committees and Contacts

-*Avian Species of Special Concern:*
 Dave Hallock (dheldora@rmi.net) and
 Steve Jones (stephen.jones@earthlink.net)

-*Ecosystem Stewardship:*
 Steve Jones (303-494-2468)

- *Education:*
 Carol Schott (303-530-9108) and
 Carol Kampert (303-499-3049)

- *Indian Peaks Bird Counts:*
 Dave Hallock (303-258-3672) and
 Bill Kaempfer (303-939-8005)

- *Membership*
 A.D. Chesley (303-938-8150)

- *Newsletter*
 Scott Severs (303-684-6430)
 Steve Jones (303-494-2468) and
 George Oetzel (303-543-3712)

- *Publications:*
 Steve Jones (303-494-2468)

- *State and Regional Wildlife Issues:*
 Jim McKee (303-651-2414)

- *Website:*
 George Oetzel (303-543-3712)

- *Wintering Raptor Survey:*
 Sue Cass (303-494-5345)
 and Jim McKee (303-651-2414)

Results of the Boulder County Elk Tour by John T.

6 participants: 1 from Longmont, 2 from Westminster, 2 from New Jersey, and 1 from Louisville. Over 200 elk seen - lots of 5 and 6 point bulls in prime form. Many seen very close up. Elk ecology and elk signs and tracks were studied, as well as some plant life (edibles and medicinals), and other animal signs. Bird life was scant. Places visited included: Moraine Meadows, Cub Lake Trail, Halloway Park, Sprague Lake, and Upper Beaver Meadows.

Birds

mountain and western bluebirds - 100
 black-billed magpie - 10
 common raven - 2
 American crow - 16
 Steller's jay - 12
 gray jay - 1
 mountain chickadee - 12
 pygmy nuthatch - 4
 white-breasted nuthatch - 4
 red-breasted nuthatch - 11
 American pipit - 15 (migratory group in Moraine Park)
 yellow-rumped warbler - 15
 Wilson's snipe - 1
 American robin - 11
 song sparrow - 1
 pine siskin - 7
 turkey vulture - 1
 red crossbill - 2
 northern flicker - 4

Squirrels

pine squirrel - 22
 golden mantled ground squirrel - 9
 chipmunk ssp. - 4
 Abert's squirrel - 1

All in all, a good trip with great photo ops for the elk.



Bull Elk, Rocky Mountain National Park. Photo by John T.

Support the Boulder County Nature Association

Name _____

Address _____

Phone and/or E-mail (optional) _____

Type of Membership:

_____ Student/Senior (65 or over)	\$15
_____ General Member	\$20
_____ Family or Household	\$30
_____ Supporter	\$40
_____ Founder	\$100
_____ Life Member	\$300
_____ Corporate	\$500

_____ Donation to General Research Grants	
_____ Donation to Evenson Big Cat Research Grants	
_____ Donation to General Research Fund	

The membership year is January 1 to December 31. Those who join after October 1 are considered members in good standing through the following year. All members receive this quarterly newsletter. Supporter-level members and higher also receive a complimentary copy of each BCNA publication.

Please make checks payable to "Boulder County Nature Association" or "BCNA" and mail to:
P.O. Box 493, Boulder, CO 80306.

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