

IMAGES

NEWS

PROPERTIES

NATURE

HISTORY

EVENTS



IMAGES

The mission of Boulder County Parks & Open Space (BCPOS) is to conserve natural, cultural, and agricultural resources and provide public uses that reflect sound resource management and community values.

PHOTOGRAPHS & ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover: Spring Mountain View, Brad Wincklemann
Watch Your Language, Ann Cooper
*Uncredited photos from BCPOS Collection

NATURE DETECTIVES

Article by Eva Lark
Illustrations by Emily Lark

EDITORS

Summer Alameel and Eva Lark.
Suggestions and comments are welcome.
Please email elark@bouldercounty.gov.
Uncredited articles are by the editors.

RECEIVE ISSUES OF IMAGES ONLINE OR IN PRINT

In print: Email rrobles@bouldercounty.gov or call 303-678-6222 to start a free subscription.

Online: Scan the QR code below using your smartphone, or go to boco.org/isubscribe. Enter your email address in the space provided. You'll receive four emails per year.



NOTE: To stop receiving the printed version, email rrobles@bouldercounty.gov.

Volume 47, number 1



Boulder County Open Space 50th Anniversary: How Did We Get Here?

by Tina Nielsen, Special Projects Coordinator

As we enjoy our open spaces today, we might forget that they weren't always protected. While we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Boulder County's open space program, let's recognize all the hard work that got us here.

RECOGNIZING THE PAST

Any comprehensive history of land in Boulder County is incomplete without recognizing the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and other Indigenous communities who lived and continue to live here today. Nearly 50 nations and tribes have ancestral ties to land in Boulder County and the greater Colorado area. Boulder County acknowledges the legacy of colonization, removal, and harm to Indigenous communities that led to the creation of these agencies. Acknowledging this painful history is one step Boulder County is taking toward meaningful healing, as we learn from the past and try repair the harm of our legacy.

EARLY EFFORTS

Boulder County residents and leaders were thinking about land conservation as long as 66 years ago. Some of the earliest county efforts were led by civic-minded people who foresaw the trends of increasing population and urban development leading to loss of rural landscapes, scenic views, and wildlife habitat. In the early 1960s, the county's Regional Planning Commission laid the groundwork with goals for parks, recreation, and open space, and established the institutional framework to accomplish these goals.

In 1967, City of Boulder voters became the first in the nation to pass a tax to preserve a greenbelt. That same year, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) appointed the first members of the Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee (POSAC).

The following year, 1968, was a big year for the county: In June, POSAC recommended the establishment of a Parks & Open Space District. In July, the Long Range Planning Commission adopted Basic Goals & Objectives for Parks & Open Space. In September, the BOCC requested the planning commission to draw up a plan for the formation of a County Parks & Recreation District (this concept eventually evolved to become Boulder County Parks & Open Space). In December, the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) presented the Regional Open Space Plan for the 12-county Denver Metropolitan Statistical Area, including Boulder County.

The notion of local funding to protect open space was catching on. In 1972, Jefferson County voters passed a sales tax to protect lands in their county, thanks to the efforts of the Jeffco League of Women Voters and PLAN Jeffco. This gave Jefferson County the distinction of the first county in the nation to pass an open space tax.

Here in Boulder County, the first open space planner was hired in 1972 to prepare an open space plan and the BOCC adopted an open space policy statement. The open space acquisition fund was established in 1973 with a private donation. Also in 1973, the county leased the 130-acre Bald Mountain holding from the Colorado State Land Board, and the Bald Mountain Scenic Area became the first county open space property to open to the public. After 49 years of leasing, the county purchased the Bald Mountain parcel from the State Land Board in 2022.

POSAC members worked hard to gather community input on the open space plan through surveys (30,000 were distributed through public schools!) and neighborhood meetings. In 1974, the BOCC adopted POSAC's proposal to reorganize the open space program.

COUNTRY COUSIN

Boulder County Parks & Open Space (BCPOS) became a reality on Jan. 1, 1975. With no dedicated funding source compared to the City of Boulder, Boulder County's program was akin to a poor country cousin, scraping together funding from a variety of sources: federal grants, donations, and the county's general fund. Some land came to the department through land use regulatory actions such as subdivision dedications for parks. Open space staff learned to be very creative with the use of rolling options to stretch land acquisition dollars and spread out a purchase over a period of years. This process was used for two iconic land purchases in 1977: the county's first large open space acquisition — 725 acres of Betasso Preserve for \$925/acre — paid in annual installments from 1977 to 1986; and the first 268 acres of the 2,566-acre Walker Ranch for about \$1,000/acre. The final Walker Ranch purchase was completed in 1984.

THIRD TIME A CHARM?

Boulder County's first and second attempts at an open space sales tax failed in 1978 and 1989. However, as population growth fueled development, people were becoming alarmed by the changing landscape in the county. While the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service manage a majority of the western portion of Boulder County, on the plains, farmland was disappearing, and towns were expanding and growing together. Former Gov. Dick Lamm famously predicted that Colorado's Front Range from Fort Collins to Pueblo would become one solid urban corridor. In the 1980s and 1990s, it seemed that every local election was dominated by debates about the role of local government in land conservation.

Meanwhile, the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1978, set forth a vision to channel development to urban areas, protect agricultural lands, and prioritize environmental and natural resources in land use decisions.

Thanks to the work of POSAC and early visionary leaders who worked hard to show the benefits of an open space plan, the third time was indeed "the charm," and the county's open space sales and use tax was approved by voters in 1993: 0.25% for 15 years, 1994 to 2009.

County voters have approved extending or increasing the sales tax a total of eight times since that first tax in 1993, enabling the county to increase its conserved lands from about 3,500 acres in 1993 to more than 107,000 acres in 2025. The current county open space sales and use tax is 0.475%. And today, most of Boulder County's communities have their own open space taxes, including Boulder (0.15%), Lafayette (0.5%), Longmont (0.2%), Louisville (0.375%), and Superior (0.3%). Boulder County works collaboratively with all communities in the county to prioritize open space acquisitions and trails.

COUNTY OPEN SPACE TODAY

Today, the county's open space program is so much more than land acquisitions, though that remains an important part of our work. Open space is one of the county's important tools for keeping cities from bleeding together, maintaining intact and productive farms and ranches, and protecting biodiversity.

OUR STAFF, PARTNERS, AND VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTE IN COUNTLESS WAYS:

- conserve our amazing biodiversity and habitat,
- protect against wildfires and invasive plant species,
- protect native wildlife,
- reclaim overgrazed grasslands, degraded stream corridors, and abandoned mines,
- enhance soils, protect water rights, and protect farms and ranches,
- provide world-class outdoor recreation.

What about you? Are you an avid hiker, biker, or horseback rider? Perhaps you enjoy fishing, picnicking, attending guided nature hikes or cultural history programs, or visiting one of our three museums. Perhaps you enjoy visiting the farmers market and county fair at the fairgrounds. Maybe you take advantage of the many experts at the Boulder County Extension office, such as master gardener or master wildlife resources. You might savor views of our preserved agricultural lands and scenic mountain vistas. And you might appreciate that local wildlife has a place to call home. Whatever the case, we can thank those early civic-minded residents and leaders for their vision and persistence!

For more information about the 50th anniversary celebration and BCPOS' history, please visit boco.org/OpenSpace50.



EVOLUTION OF COUNTY OPEN SPACE DEPARTMENT

- 1959: People's League for Action Now (today known as PLAN Boulder County) formed to advocate for land preservation. PLAN Boulder County successfully campaigned to pass the City of Boulder's "Blue Line" charter amendment, to prevent providing services in the foothills above Boulder.
- 1960: The Regional Planning Commission hired consultant Trafton Bean & Assoc. to prepare the report "Preserving Open Space." Boulder County's population was just over 74,000.
- 1962: The Regional Planning Commission appointed the Regional Park Advisory Committee, and the commission hired Trafton Bean & Assoc. to prepare "Parks, Recreation, and Open Space" with two parts: "Part I: Need" and "Part II: Standards."
- 1963: The commission issued "Part III: Organization of Parks, Recreation, and Open Space." The Parks Advisory Subcommittee submitted recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) for a cooperative board recreational administration, a Standing Citizens Committee, and a county parks coordinator.
- 1964: Boulder County hired its first parks coordinator, whose position was in the Land Use department.
- 1967: The BOCC appointed the first Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee (POSAC) members.
- 1972: A parks planner was hired; additional POSAC members were appointed to increase countywide geographic representation.
- 1973: The BOCC adopted a policy statement on parks and open space and established the Boulder County Parks & Open Space Fund, with a private donation from Ruth and Ken Wright. POSAC begins a series of neighborhood meetings to obtain input on the open space plan.
- 1974: POSAC analyzed survey and workshop results; the BOCC approved a proposal to create an open space department.
- 1975: The Boulder County Parks & Open Space department was created Jan. 1, 1975.

Building Community, One Trail at a Time: Boulder County Youth Corps LGBTQ+ Affinity Team

by Luiz Blanco-Bertolo

In 2023, the Boulder County Youth Corps launched its first-ever LGBTQ+ Affinity Team, a group of 10 youth and two adult leaders working on trail-building projects on various open space properties throughout the county. For many, these demanding work environments can feel less like a welcoming and illuminating experience and more like an isolating space where their identities are invisible or unwelcome. This is where the vital experience of the Youth Corps LGBTQ+ affinity spaces came into play.

The Youth Corps affinity experience, specifically designed for members of the LGBTQ+ youth community, offered a powerful space where they could come together to have an impact on their community while at the same time engaging in important self-identity work.

Sharing a common identity allows for deeper connection and understanding. Youth Corps affinity team members openly discussed their experiences, challenges, and joys related to their identities, fostering a strong sense of community and belonging. Throughout the eight-week season, individuals of a range of genders and abilities learned and contributed to the successful completion of many significant trail conservation projects. They also developed new skills in a supportive environment, boosted self-esteem, and empowered each other to take on new challenges, both on and off the trail.

The presence of the LGBTQ+ trail crew increased visibility and challenged the notion that the outdoors or trail-building work is a homogenous space. This representation encourages others to participate and help create a more inclusive culture. By participating in the Youth Corps LGBTQ+ affinity space, corps members connected with nature on a deeper level, fostering a sense of responsibility and commitment to environmental stewardship.



Boulder County Youth Corps LGBTQ+ Affinity Team members.

Meet the Weed Warriors

by Andrea Van Sambeek

Invasive species on our landscapes is a complicated issue. Boulder County utilizes many different methods of control in hopes that our native species will thrive. We utilize cultural, mechanical, biological, and chemical tools to suppress and eradicate invasive plants from our landscapes.

In the spring of 2024, the county presented a new Integrated Weed Management Plan, which outlines the ways in which we implement these different tools. One of the messages we received through public comment on this plan was the desire to reduce use of chemical tools in favor of cultural and mechanical methods.

Cultural and mechanical methods rely upon people out on the landscape doing the work. The county combined these two methods into a new pilot program that uses volunteers (a cultural tool) to remove weeds by hand (a mechanical tool) — the Weed Warriors were born!



Weed Warrior volunteers work together to identify invasive weeds.

Weed Warriors are volunteers who go out independently to mechanically remove weeds from the Walker Ranch property. County staff from the Parks & Open Space volunteer work projects and invasive plants teams train these volunteers to identify, remove, and dispose of weeds growing along the Walker Ranch Loop trail. Weed Warriors are assigned a 1-mile section of the loop trail to maintain. Each member of the team keeps data on the weeds they remove and also reports back data from two monitoring posts along their section. In this way, parks employees can track progress over the five years the pilot program is set to run.

While the Weed Warriors pilot program is in effect, there will be no chemical treatments of the Walker Ranch Loop area. Before the program started, no herbicides were used on the loop for more than a year. We will use the data Weed Warriors and our invasive plants team collect to monitor the efficacy of using only mechanical methods on the property. After the approved five-year period, we will use these data to decide if the program should be extended and if it is viable to expand the program to other properties.

Over the course of their first season, volunteers put in 608 hours treating and monitoring their trail sections for weeds. Staff conducted training sessions to familiarize the Weed Warriors with both the native plants of the area as well as the invasive plants that needed removing. Each volunteer acts as an eco-steward for their patch of Walker Ranch by removing the invasives to ensure space for native plants to thrive.



Weed Warrior volunteer Molly Seggelink removes mullein.

These methods take time. Many of the invasive plants produce seeds that can last years if not decades. Some species are listed as control species, meaning, they will never be completely removed.

Other species are eradication species, such as List A weeds that must be completely removed from the landscape. Therefore, Walker Ranch will not be cleared of invasives after just one season of treatment. It takes an incredible amount of time and effort to make an impact. We still have much work to do, and we would love for you to join us! We cannot do this without our amazing volunteers! Learn more and apply for the program at boco.org/WeedWarriorsVolunteer.

Next time you are hiking Walker Ranch Loop, keep an eye out for the monitoring posts along the trail and don't be surprised if you see big trash bags of weeds at the trailhead. Rest assured that these are all signs of volunteers hard at work.



Weed Warrior volunteers Amy Iwata, Jim Paulmeno, and Jere Paulmeno carry bags of knapweed up the trail at Walker Ranch.

Watch Your Language!

by Ann Cooper

Millions of wondrous life forms surround us, and, since the dawn of science, scientists have developed naming schemes to distinguish among them. The folks studying these creatures need to be sure they are not talking at cross purposes, one thinking of an orange, while the other has an apple in mind. So, the scientists sort like with like in much the same way we might put spoons with spoons in the cutlery drawer, or red knee-high socks with their matching partners in the sock drawer.

Nature lovers wander along the trails, enjoying the arrival of spring, welcoming small life stirring. And we use verbal shortcuts to sort what we see — bugs, creepy crawlies. What does it matter? Those names are useful shorthand. We are separating them into kinds. Yet these catchphrases can be scientifically ambiguous, and if you are talking to avid fans of tiny animals, it's useful to get names right.

Dictionary definitions are revealing. The weird bug you spot might be a True Bug, which is an insect within the animal order Hemiptera.* True Bug is the only correct language to use if you are talking about a shield bug, a stink bug, a water strider, a backswimmer, a leaf-footed bug, an assassin bug, or an ambush bug. It is precise. Hemiptera literally means “half (hemi) wing (ptera).” These insects have modified forewings that are half membranous wing and half hard shell, like a beetle. Their hind wings are thin and gauzy. When their wings are at rest and cross on their backs, their wings form of an “X” — a good hint for recognition. They have sucking mouth parts to obtain the juices from plants or small dead animals.

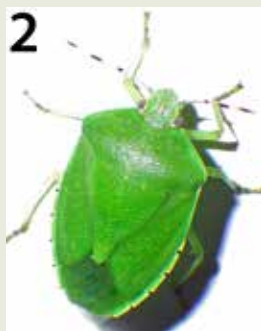
Other names are vague and ambiguous. Creepy-crawly is a makeshift catch-all for any small invertebrate animal (no backbone) that you see crawling around in the undergrowth, leaf litter, soil surface, garage floor, and so on that may elicit the response, “Ew!”

Bug (without the True attached) varies by context. It might mean any small leggy mini-beast such as a beetle or spider that might vaguely resemble a True Bug. It might mean any insect, such as a head louse, commonly judged obnoxious. It could be a bacteria or virus that causes illness (a bug going around . . .) or it could refer to a glitch in your software!

Of course, the animals in question don't care what we call them. Names are a human construct. But precision does matter because using the proper terms for small creatures makes you pay more attention to them. Their body forms make sense when you understand how they make a living on the land, how they hide from enemies, and how they find and consume food.

What do you gain from seeing this detail? You acquire a whole new level of outdoor awareness and a deeper appreciation of a group of small creatures that we cannot live without. Let's hear it for True Bugs and relegate the terms “bugs” and “creepy-crawlies” to those times when a deep dive into biological categories is not in the cards.

*Other orders among insects are Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) and Coleoptera (beetles).



LOCALLY SEEN TRUE BUGS:

1. Burgundy Stink Bug: Why stink? Because it's their defensive smell.
2. Green Stink Bug: Why stink? Because it's their defensive smell.
3. Brown Marmorated Stink Bug: An accidental import native to China, Japan, Korea, and other Asian regions. Larvae and adults feed on more than a hundred plants species, including crops. Marmorated means “marbled,” for blotchy coloring.
4. Leaf-footed Bug: This is named for the leaf-like expansions on the hind legs.
5. Two-spotted Stink Bug: Why stink? Because it's their defensive smell.
6. Box Elder Bug: Harmless to people and pets, but they may come indoors at the start of winter.

NATURE DETECTIVES

Spring 2025

Text by Eva Lark
Illustrations by Emily Lark

Spring Bird Migration and Nest Building in Colorado

Every year, as the weather begins to warm up, we can see the signs of spring all around us. One of the most exciting things to watch for is the arrival of birds back to their homes. Birds travel long distances to find food, warmer weather, and places to raise their young. This is called bird migration, and it happens twice a year. Birds fly south to escape the cold in the fall and return to their breeding grounds in the spring.

Pull Out and Save

What is Bird Migration?

Bird migration is when birds move from one place to another at certain times of the year. Birds migrate for several reasons. The main reason is to find food. When the cold winter comes, many places have very little food for birds. There are fewer insects, berries, and seeds to eat. So, birds leave their homes in search of warmer places where they can find plenty of food to eat and stay healthy.

But how do birds know where to go? Birds have special instincts, which means they know what to do without having to be taught. They also use the sun, stars, and even the Earth's magnetic field to guide them on their journey. Some birds fly as far as thousands of miles during migration! Some birds migrate from Canada to the southern United States. Some birds travel even farther to places like Central America or South America.

Not all birds migrate in the same way. Some birds fly in big groups, called flocks. Some birds travel together in a V-shaped pattern, which helps them save energy. Some birds, like swallows and warblers, fly alone. No matter how they travel, all birds know the importance of traveling safely.

Once the weather warms up and food is more plentiful, the birds begin to head back to the places where they came from. These birds return to their homes in the spring, where they can start the next part of their journey: nest building.



The Importance of Nesting

When birds return to their summer homes, their main goal is to find a safe place to build a nest and raise their babies. Nesting is a very important part of a bird's life cycle. A nest is not just a cozy home — it is a safe place where eggs can be laid, kept warm, and protected. It's also where baby birds will be raised until they are strong enough to leave the nest and fly on their own.

In Colorado, many species of birds migrate to the state in the spring to build their nests. Colorado's mountains, forests, wetlands, and grasslands offer a variety of places for birds to nest. Whether you live in the city or out in the country, you might spot some of these amazing birds preparing for their new families.

Birds of Colorado that Migrate and Build Nests

Colorado is home to many different species of birds, some of which are migratory. These birds travel back and forth every year, coming to Colorado in the spring to build nests and lay eggs. Let's take a look at some of the most common birds you might see migrating and nesting in Colorado.

1. Barn Swallow

The barn swallow is a beautiful, long-tailed bird that migrates to Colorado in the spring. These swallows build their nests in barns, sheds, or under eaves of buildings. Their nests are made of mud and grass, and they often return to the same spot each year. Barn swallows are insect eaters. They are helpful for controlling bugs in gardens and fields. Once their nests are built, the female lays her eggs, and both parents take turns feeding the young.



2. Western Meadowlark

The western meadowlark is a songbird found in the grasslands and open fields of Colorado. In the spring, these birds build their nests on the ground, hidden among tall grasses or in low bushes. The nests are made of grass and leaves, and the birds use their strong beaks to weave everything together. Western meadowlarks have beautiful, melodic songs. They can be heard in the early mornings and late afternoons.



3. Broad-tailed Hummingbird

The broad-tailed hummingbird is another migratory bird that comes to Colorado in the spring. These birds are strong fliers and can cover long distances, even flying nonstop for hours! They must find flowers along the way so they can drink nectar to keep their energy up. The female hummingbird builds a tiny nest. They make it out of soft materials like spider silk, plant fibers, and tiny feathers. The nest is so small it can fit in the palm of your hand!



How Do Birds Build Their Nests?

Building a nest is hard work for birds. They start by finding a good location. It's important that the nest is in a place that is safe from predators. Animals such as house cats, raccoons, and other birds might try to harm their eggs or babies. Some birds like to build their nests high up in trees, where they are harder to reach. Other birds might choose to nest in the branches of a large shrub, where they can hide the nest and keep it protected.

Once they have chosen a safe spot, the birds begin to gather materials. They collect twigs, leaves, grass, feathers, and sometimes even things like string or bits of fabric. Some birds even gather mud and use it to help stick their nests together. They carefully weave or arrange these materials to create a strong and safe home for their eggs.

The Circle of Life

Bird migration and nest building are important parts of a bird's life cycle. Migration helps birds find food and safe places to live. Nest building is the way they create homes for their eggs and raise their babies. Without migration and nests, many birds would not survive.

In Colorado, when we see birds returning and building nests in the spring, we know that the circle of life is continuing. The birds are raising the next generation, and soon there will be even more birds flying through the sky. Whether they are migrating, building nests, or raising their chicks, birds are always busy in the spring. The next time you see a bird building a nest or flying overhead, you'll know that they are part of the circle of life.



To learn more about bird migration visit, the National Audubon Society's Bird Migration Explorer website: explorer.audubon.org

SPRING BIRD QUEST

Keep a record!

Date: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

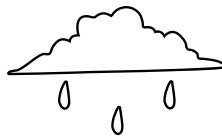
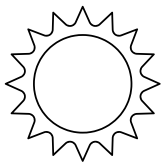
Helpful things to take:

Field guide to birds

Binoculars

Color the weather today.

Temperature: _____



Close your eyes and listen. Describe any bird sounds you hear:

What are the birds doing? For each bird you see, make a check mark in the box or boxes that best describe its behavior.

Singing

Flying

Eating food

Making a nest

Tending chicks

Resting

Partners with Parks: Stewarding the Land and Building Community

by Amanda Hatfield

The Open Space Partnership Program began with a mission to connect businesses, organizations, and communities through meaningful opportunities to care for the land. This initiative provides participants with a chance to engage in hands-on service projects that promote environmental stewardship while fostering team bonding and earning recognition for their contributions.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

The program is thriving, with six active partners: Qualcomm, KBI Biopharma, Cemex, New Vista High School, Emerson-Micro Motion, and Corden Pharma. Together, these partners dedicated an impressive 376 service hours in 2024, making a significant impact on the environment and the community.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

This year, partners contributed to a range of impactful projects, including:

- Clearing ditches to enhance agricultural land.
- Cutting regenerative growth and creating slash piles to improve forest health.
- Maintaining trails and trail structures to ensure safe and enjoyable access for visitors.
- Controlling noxious weeds to protect native ecosystems.

GET INVOLVED

We are always looking to grow the program with new partners who share our passion for stewardship. To make sure the program is the right fit, we encourage groups to participate in a custom volunteer work project before committing. Once part of the program, we ask partners to contribute 24–45 service hours annually, depending on their group size.

Join us in making a difference! Together, we can steward the land, strengthen community bonds, and create a lasting impact.

To learn more or to schedule your custom volunteer work project, go to boco.org/OpenSpacePartnerProgram



Cemex volunteers building trail drainages to help mitigate muddy trails at Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain.



Volunteers help cut lodgepole regenerative growth and build slash piles to be burned at a later date.



Qualcomm employees help to clear an overgrown ditch so that water can freely flow to active agriculture land.



Verily employees pose after maintaining trails at Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain.

Calendar of Events

Registration is required unless otherwise noted. Children must be accompanied by an adult. **NO PETS, PLEASE!**



STORY IN THE ROCKS: THE GEOLOGIC HISTORY OF BOULDER COUNTY

Thursday, March 6, 6:30-8 p.m.

Lyons Community Library, 451 4th Ave., Lyons

Adult Program (Ages 13 & older)

The geologic history of Boulder County's remarkable landscape goes back nearly two billion years! Rocks contain a record of the earth's history that can be read like the pages in a book. Join volunteer naturalists for this slide program and learn how to read this fascinating story in the rocks. Register at boco.org/StoryInTheRocks

BIRDS OF PREY DRIVING TOUR

Saturday, March 15, 9 a.m.-noon

Lagerman Agricultural Preserve, Longmont

Adult Program (Ages 13 & older)

Hop in your car with friends and family and join us for a driving tour of some of Boulder County's best areas to view birds of prey. Follow the tour map to designated stops with a volunteer naturalist, search the skies for raptors, learn about their habitat and behavior, and work on your observation and identification skills.

AMAZING GRASSES AT SANDSTONE RANCH

Thursday, March 20, 6:30-8 p.m.

Parks & Open Space Building, Longmont

Adult Program (Ages 13 & older)

Boulder County supports an amazing variety of grasses. The grass family is one of the most important and common plant families, yet grasses are often overlooked because some don't regard them as very showy. But look closely, and you'll develop a new appreciation for these beautiful plants! Grasses provide critical food for people and wildlife, prevent soil erosion, and are heroes in the fight against climate change.

LIVING MAP: PLANTS OF BOULDER COUNTY

Saturday, March 22, 10:30 a.m.-noon

Goodhue Farmhouse at Rock Creek Farm, Lafayette

Join us for an eye-opening exploration of the great diversity of plant communities in Boulder County, using our room-size map. While we are one of the smallest counties in the state, we are also one of the most biodiverse! Learn about the various life zones of the county and what growing things to look for when you visit them.

SLIME AND SCALES: KIDS PROGRAM

Saturday, March 29, 10 a.m.-noon

Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat, Boulder

Family Program

Enter the world of amphibians and reptiles as we explore these fascinating creatures. Through hands-on activities and exploration, learn about how these amazing animals are the same and very different. This program is geared toward children ages 5 to 8, but all are welcome.

ALL ABOUT EVERGREENS SLIDESHOW PROGRAM

Saturday, April 5, 2-3:30 p.m.

Parks & Open Space Building, Longmont

Get in the spring spirit and join us to celebrate our native evergreens! When other trees have dropped their leaves and skies turn cold and gray, evergreens keep our forests bright. Learn all about our conifers in this slideshow and hands-on event. You'll have a new appreciation for the wondrous abilities of these trees and their associations with other members of the forest community, some quite strange and unexpected. You'll also learn how to identify our native pines, firs, spruces, and junipers.

NATURE DETECTIVES IN THE FIELD: SPRING MIGRATION MADNESS

Saturday, April 12, 1-3:30 p.m.

Pella Crossing, Longmont

Family Program (Ages 6 & older)

Calling all Nature Detectives! Spring migration madness is upon us! Have you ever wondered where birds go when the weather changes? Join us for an adventure as we uncover the mysteries of bird migration and nesting. Perfect for families with children ages 6 to 8, this program will have you exploring nature, playing games, and learning fascinating facts alongside our volunteer naturalists. Get ready for some hands-on fun as we discover the incredible journeys these feathered friends take.

MOOSE ON THE LOOSE!

Tuesday, April 15, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Lafayette Public Library, 775 Baseline Rd., Lafayette

Have you noticed more moose in the high country lately? Join us for an engaging indoor presentation exploring the fascinating world of moose in Boulder County! "Moose on the Loose" aims to inspire curiosity and understanding of these majestic creatures, fostering a commitment to their continued health and well-being. Learn about the successful reintroduction of moose in Colorado and how we can coexist safely with them.

RAVENS AND WOLVES: VILIFIED, REVERED, AND FASCINATING

Saturday, April 19, 10-11:30 a.m.

Mud Lake, Nederland

Explore the habitat and behaviors of ravens and wolves (as well as crows and coyotes) — creatures known for their intelligence, social bonds, and misunderstood reputations. All are native to Colorado, though wolves have been absent from Boulder County since the 1940s. Join us to discover what makes these animals so interesting, how they interact, and the unique partnership between wolves and ravens. The program includes hands-on exploration of mounts, pelts, scat, and prints, followed by a 1.5-mile hike to observe habitats and, with luck, some wildlife.

ECO-ART: MAKING NATURE-BASED CRAFTS

Tuesday, April 22, 4-6 p.m.

Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat, Boulder

Using natural materials, we will make crafts that foster artistic creativity and a sense of connection to the natural environment. We'll imagine what roles our found materials played in nature before they were collected, and relatedly, some interpretations will be discussed. This program is geared toward children, but participants of all ages are welcome. All supplies will be provided.

CITY NATURE CHALLENGE INATURALIST BIOBLITZ

Friday, April 25, 4-6 p.m.

Harney-Lastoka Open Space, Louisville

Join volunteer naturalists on a memorable nature hike to find and report plants and animals around Harney-Lastoka and Coal Creek Trail as part of the City Nature Challenge. The City Nature Challenge is an international effort for people to find and document plants and wildlife in cities across the globe. It's a bio-blitz-style competition where cities are in a friendly contest to see who can report the most observations in nature, who can find the most species, and who can engage the most people. Join us at the Harney-Lastoka community gardens and bring a camera or smartphone with the iNaturalist app ready to use!

EARLY SPRING FLOWERS

Wednesday, April 30, 4-6 p.m.

Bald Mountain Scenic Area, Boulder

Join volunteer naturalists for a wildflower hike in the foothills west of Boulder. We will hike about 1.5 miles through forest and meadows in search of early spring wildflowers while enjoying beautiful views of the snowy high country.

ASTRONOMY: EXPLORING OTHER WORLDS SLIDESHOW PROGRAM

Thursday, May 1, 6:30-8 p.m.

Lyons Community Library, 451 4th Ave., Lyons

Adult Program (Ages 13 & older)

There is much to learn about the cosmos. The night sky has brought wonder to all for millennia, and we have only just started to see what's really out there. Join us for an interactive slide presentation about our universe and the stars, moons, and planets in our galaxy. Learn about the latest discoveries and how you can observe the big night sky for celestial bodies! Register: <https://lyons.librarycalendar.com/event/astronomy-slide-show-7727>

ART IN THE PARKS: SKETCHING, LIGHT & SHADOW

Sunday, May 4, 2-4:30 p.m.

Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain

Join volunteer naturalists for an afternoon of art exploration. Whether you're a newbie or an experienced artist, come out to open space and become inspired by the nature and beauty of picturesque landscapes. See core elements in the environment, recognize positive and negative space, and explore contour drawing with the support of other art enthusiasts! All supplies are included.

FOSSILS AND FLOWERS HIKE AT SIX-MILE FOLD

Saturday, May 10, 10 a.m.-noon

Six-Mile Fold, Boulder

Adults (Ages 13 & Older)

Join volunteer naturalists for a short, moderately strenuous hike to explore a landscape created by folding and faulting and see evidence

of the seas that once inundated this area. Learn about the endemic plant species that rely on the unique soils found in this area.

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY AT WALDEN PONDS

Saturday, May 17, 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat, Boulder

World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) is a global campaign that serves as a beacon for conservation efforts to protect migratory birds and their journeys across borders. Celebrated twice a year — in May and October — WMBD reflects the cyclical nature of bird migration and the varying peak periods in the northern and southern hemispheres.

ASSAY OFFICE MUSEUM OPEN HOUSE

Saturday May 17, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Assay Office Museum, 6352 Fourmile Canyon Dr., Boulder

Stop by the unique Assay Office Museum on this open house day. Learn about assaying, hard rock mining, and the families in the area from long ago. Registration not required.

WANDER, WONDER, & WATERCOLOR: A NATURE JOURNALING JOURNEY

Saturday, May 3, 10 a.m.-noon

Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat, Boulder

Embark on a creative adventure at Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat! This all-ages program will guide you on a nature walk, observing the beauty of the landscape. Then, unleash your inner artist and capture the wonders you see through sketching, writing, and colorful exploration in your nature journal. All supplies are included. No artistic experience is necessary, just a love for nature and a curious mind! **FUN ON THE FARM: SHEEP - WOOLY WONDERS**

Friday, May 23, 9:45-10:30 a.m.

Agricultural Heritage Center, Longmont

Ages 5 & younger

Learn about sheep and the important role they play on the farm. Program includes a short story time, hands-on activities, and a take-home craft. Afterwards, explore the farm. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

RATTLESNAKE HIKE

Saturday, May 24, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain, Longmont

Watch your step! Join volunteer naturalists on a moderate trek through prime rattlesnake habitat and learn about these often misunderstood and feared creatures. Meet at the shelter to share in a discussion about rattlesnake habitat and behavior, and learn things you'd never imagine through seeing and feeling. You'll walk away feeling more comfortable about sharing open space with these scaly friends.

ALL ABOUT EVERGREENS HIKE

Saturday, May 31, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Mud Lake, Nederland

Join us to meet some of our most important native conifers. We will walk about 2 miles around Mud Lake and down to the creek, looking for examples of the diversity of conifers in this ecosystem, including pine, spruce, and fir. We will attend to the habitats of the various evergreen species — why they are, where they are — and look for evidence of their relationships with other plant and animal members of the forest community. We'll talk about how climate change affects conifers and will learn some identification tips.

HIKES FOR SENIORS

SPRING AWAKENING

Thursday, March 27, 10 a.m.-noon

Carolyn Holmberg Preserve, Lafayette

Easy Hike. Spring forward and join us for a leisurely walk at Carolyn Holmberg Preserve where we will look for signs of spring's return. Join volunteer naturalists in exploring what makes spring the great awakening that it is.

FOOTHILLS GEOLOGY

Thursday, April 17, 10 a.m.-noon

Heil Valley Ranch, Boulder

Easy/Moderate Hike. Join volunteer naturalists for a 1.3-mile moderate hike along the Lichen Loop trail to learn how this landscape has changed. Tales told in the rocks span 200 million years, from ancient sand dunes to tidal flats to riverbeds where dinosaurs roamed.

WILDFLOWERS ON THE TRAIL

Thursday, May 15, 10 a.m.-noon

Walker Ranch — Meyers Gulch Trailhead, Boulder

Moderate Hike. Wildflowers are blooming and showing their bright colors. Purples, yellows, whites, and reds dot the hillsides and valleys at higher elevations. Bask in the natural beauty that sprouts from the ground. Find these flowers along the trail as volunteer naturalists share stories and uses for some of our native plant species.

VOLUNTEER WITH BOULDER COUNTY PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Did you know that we rely on volunteer power to improve our open spaces, protect wildlife habitat, provide public programming, and share the history of Boulder County with the public? Our volunteer opportunities range from one-time to ongoing and all skill levels are welcome.

Learn more and get involved at

[boco.org/
BCPOsvolunteer](http://boco.org/BCPOsvolunteer)



Sign up to receive volunteer emails at

[boco.org/
VolunteerEmails](http://boco.org/VolunteerEmails)



HAMMERING ON THE FARM

Saturday, March 1

Friday, April 4

Friday, April 18

Friday, May 2

Friday, May 30

10 a.m.-noon. Agricultural Heritage Center, Longmont

Drop by anytime from 10 a.m. to noon to watch the blacksmith work his craft. Listen to the clang-clang-clang of the hammer and the hum of the coal forge blower. Learn about blacksmithing tools such as hammers, tongs, anvil, swage blocks, and more. All ages welcome. Registration not required; you may register to receive updates in case of inclement weather or cancellation.



ASTRONOMY PROGRAMS

Join volunteer naturalists and astronomers from the Longmont Astronomical Society as we gaze at the night skies and learn about the cosmos and our place in the universe. Presentations will be at the picnic shelter, followed by stargazing in the parking area. The Longmont Astronomical Society provides telescopes. Bring a chair or blanket, a light jacket, and a red flashlight, and get ready to enjoy a night under the stars!

ASTRONOMY: ECLIPSE THIS!

Friday, March 7, 5:30-8 p.m.

Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain

Get ready for the total lunar eclipse the following week. Discover why eclipses happen, when and how to best watch, and find out about future eclipses.

ASTRONOMY: GREET VENUS, OUR MORNING "STAR"

Friday, April 18, 7:15-9:45 p.m.

Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain

Venus shines big and bright in the morning sky in April and is often called the morning or evening star. Planets Venus and Mercury are only visible in the morning or evening sky — find out why and discover how the planets' orbits affect their visibility from earth.

ASTRONOMY: A VISIBLE ASTEROID

Friday, May 23, 7:45-10:15 p.m.

Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain

In addition to naked-eye planets and stars, we can also see the asteroid Vesta in May. Learn more about Vesta, plus discover the wandering paths of other asteroids and comets.



Senior Fish-off



Friday, April 25, 6:30-10 a.m.

Wally Toevs Pond at Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat, 75th St., between Valmont Road and Jay Road, Boulder

The trout have fattened up and are biting! Prizes will be awarded for heaviest rainbow trout, most experienced (oldest) angler, best fishing hat, and first to catch the limit.

- Open to seniors 65 and older.
- All anglers must sign in — no fishing before 6:30 a.m.
- Valid 2024 Colorado fishing license required.
- Live bait and artificial flies/lures permitted — bring your own fishing gear.
- Wheelchair-accessible fishing pier is available.

For more information, contact Michelle Marotti at mmarotti@bouldercounty.gov or 303-678-6219.

Agricultural Heritage Center Opens April 4



Come to the farm! Enjoy the rural setting and learn about the agricultural history of Boulder County. The farm includes two barns with exhibits, a milk house, and a furnished 1909 farmhouse.

There are also animals on site, including chickens, pigs, sheep, and other critters.

Hours: open every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. April through October.

Admission: Free

Location: 8348 Ute Highway 66, Longmont

Guided Tour: A guided tour starts at 11 a.m. during visiting hours (no registration required).

For additional information, visit boco.org/ahc

Know before you go! Remember to plan ahead, know your limits, and do not take unnecessary risks.

Check boco.org/closures or boco.org/trails for the latest information on your favorite parks.

Caribou Ranch Annual Closure April-June

This annual spring closure from April 1 through June 30 protects spring migratory birds, overwinter elk survival, and elk calving and rearing activities. Please respect wildlife needs for solitude.

Migrating from lower elevations, the local elk herd arrives every spring. Females calve on the property and remain until June or July, when they move to higher elevations.

Parks & Open Space strives to find a balance between providing recreational activities and protecting wildlife habitats and natural resources.

Violators of the closure can be fined up to \$300 by the resident ranger and county sheriff deputies who patrol the open space property.

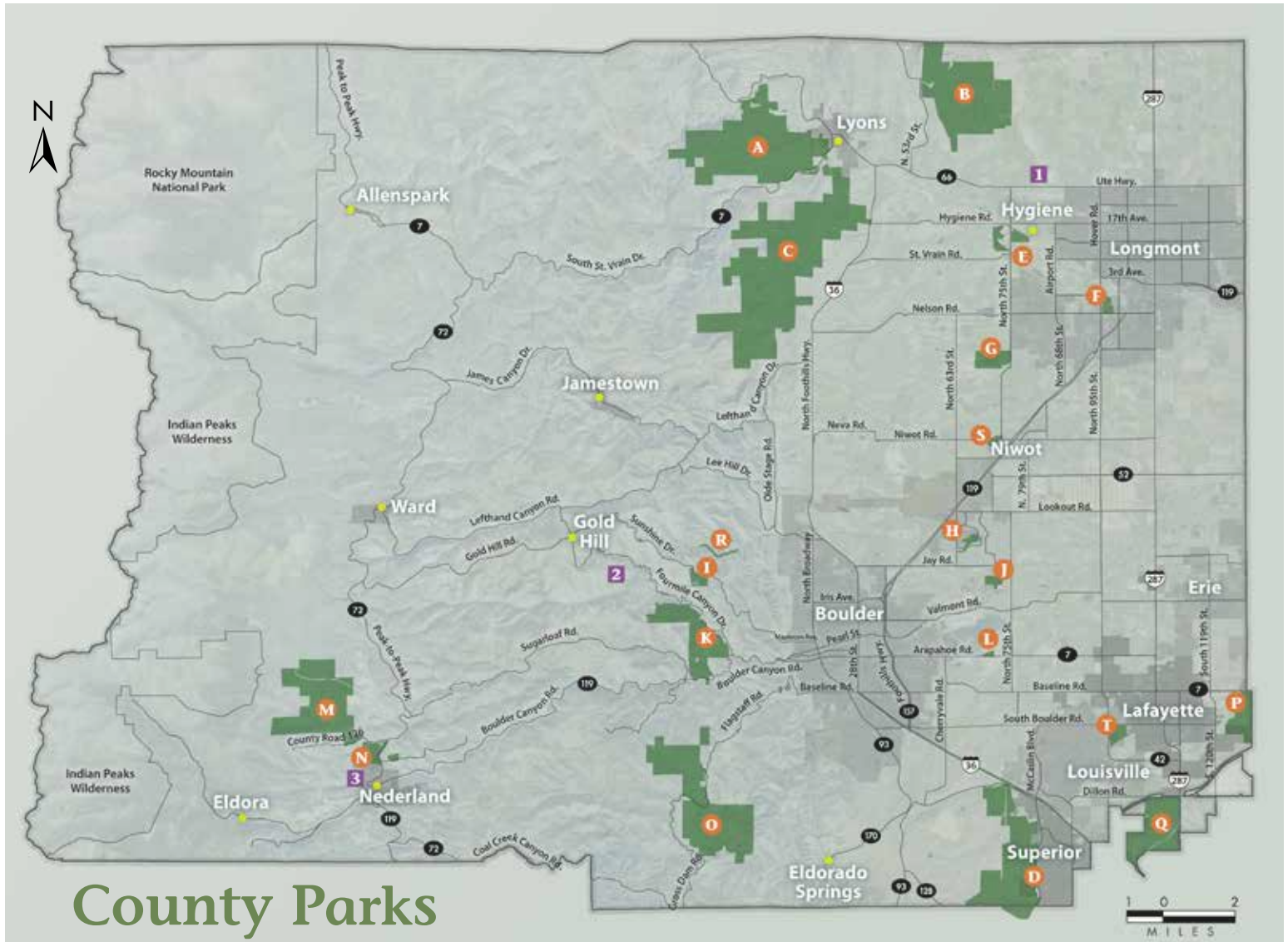




Parks & Open Space

5201 St. Vrain Road, Longmont, CO 80503

BoulderCountyOpenSpace.org



County Parks

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| A Hall Ranch | F Boulder County Fairgrounds | L Legion Park | R Anne U. White |
| B Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain | G Lagerman Reservoir | M Caribou Ranch | S Dodd Lake |
| C Heil Valley Ranch | H Twin Lakes | N Mud Lake | T Harney Lastoka |
| D Coalton Trailhead | I Bald Mountain Scenic Area | O Walker Ranch | 1 Agricultural Heritage Center |
| E Pella Crossing | J Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat | P Flagg Park | 2 James F. Bailey Assay Office Museum |
| | K Betasso Preserve | Q Carolyn Holmberg Preserve at Rock Creek Farm | 3 Nederland Mining Museum at Rock Creek Farm |