

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: Coyote at Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain, Sue Cullen

Magpies, Ann Cooper

*Uncredited photos from BCPOS Collection

NATURE DETECTIVES

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Volume 47, number 4



26 Years of Working for Parks & Open Space

Therese Glowacki, Parks & Open Space Director

When I was 22 years old, my sister, a friend, and I biked across the western U.S., through Canada, and ended in Iowa. While riding through Nevada, I saw a huge mine that had stripped half a mountain. That night, as we wound down, I thought about how that mountain was going to heal: Is that a job, restoring the land after we humans have pillaged a place? I was overwhelmed with the sense that this could be a calling, helping restore wild places.

When I finished college, I joined the Peace Corps and went to Senegal with a program called Agro-forestry. At its core, it helped small villages in West Africa reverse the downward spiral of fertile land turning into desert. We planted fast-growing trees in combination with crops for soil stabilization, food, income, and ecosystem benefits. In other words, we restored the land.

Then, 26 years ago, I was hired by Boulder County Parks & Open Space. The job was a new one for the department: manager of the Resource Management Division. We had “ologists” of all kinds: plant ecologists, wildlife biologists, foresters, weed specialists, and more, and this position would unite and manage this group.

The department was growing and had enough funding to support some creative projects.



Therese Glowacki holds a snake at Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain in 2015.

One early project was restoring grasslands after they had been degraded from abusive agricultural practices. This was novel at the time. Most farmland was still being farmed, but here in Parks & Open Space, we were restoring health to this degraded land.

Another early project I was happy to spearhead was turning slash piles into wood chips and heating our Open Space and Transportation Complex with the biomass from our forest restoration projects. This was 20 years ago and a win-win! We put “waste” wood to use and replaced natural gas, a finite, nonrenewable resource, with a very sustainable, renewable heating source.

As director, I am involved in the land-changing practice of purchasing open space and developing new parks. The past four years have been very busy. Two projects highlight the importance of preserving open space in perpetuity. The first is Haystack Mountain. This natural landmark has been in the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan for decades but was always in private hands. When the golf course at its base was sold, we put an offer on the mountain top. We’d had a recent visit from the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes whose ancestors used to live in Boulder County, and they spoke of the importance of Haystack Mountain in their cultural stories. Our price negotiations were miles apart from the seller, who eventually decided to sell the property at an auction held in Hong Kong! Our dedicated real estate staff jumped through hoops to get us into the auction, and we sat in our office on a Tuesday evening, bidding on a natural landmark for Boulder County in this exclusive auction. We won the bid!

Every time I drive the Diagonal or Foothills Highway, or come into Boulder County from the south, Haystack Mountain stands out like a beacon. This iconic property will never have a multimillion-dollar house on it and can be enjoyed by us all, including descendants of the American Indians, who were here long before us.

A second success is Prairie Run. This stretch of East Boulder Creek was mined for gravel. The creek was straightened and denuded by agriculture, and oil and gas was extracted from the area. We planted native grasses, fought weeds, watched wildlife return, ticketed trespassers, and eventually developed a plan for a new park: Prairie Run. At the core of this project is stream and pond restoration. This improved habitat will provide more homes for bald eagles, otters, native fish, and hopefully even the endangered Preble’s meadow jumping mouse. It will also have trails, fishing access, and picnic areas for families to enjoy.

I am grateful to live in this amazing part of the world and to have been a part of supporting open space protection for the past 26 years. I look forward to seeing Boulder County open space continue to be an inviting place for biodiversity and human visitors for many years to come!



Before: Unstable, unvegetated land scarred by mining operations at the Hall Ranch rock quarry site, an example of a Parks & Open Space ecological reclamation project.



Reclamation in progress at the Hall Ranch rock quarry site, where crews reshape the landscape in preparation of revegetation with native plants to help heal the ecosystem.

Boulder County Ditch Wildfire Mitigation Program

by David Garcia

In recognition of the growing wildfire risk in the region, Boulder County has established the Ditch Wildfire Mitigation Program to address hazardous fuels along ditch corridors and waterways. These corridors, while critical for irrigation, agriculture, municipal water delivery, and ecological function, can also serve as vectors for wildfire spread because of continuous fuel loads and accumulated biomass.

The program is administered by Boulder County Parks & Open Space, via the Water Resources Group within the Agricultural Resources Division and is supported through perpetual funding from the 2022 ballot measure 1A Wildfire Mitigation Sales Tax Initiative. Its purpose is to reduce wildfire hazards along ditch systems while ensuring compatibility with water resource management, agricultural operations, and habitat conservation.

The program has four main objectives. First, we aim to reduce risk to the community through identification and mitigation of hazardous fuel concentrations, particularly in areas adjacent to residential development, municipalities, and critical infrastructure. Second, our hope is to collaborate with all of our stakeholders. The goal is to establish and maintain cooperative working relationships with ditch companies, homeowners associations, municipalities, federal and state resource agencies, and other land management partners. Third, we need to find the best ecological balance that maintains or enhances wildlife habitat and ecosystem function while prioritizing public safety. Our last objective is to create sustainable operations that prevent the reaccumulation of hazardous fuels in ditch corridors.

Because this program is still in its infancy, we are considering a number of strategies to implement our mitigation plans. Thus far we have found the simplest tool to be removal and transportation of all dead, woody biomass to offsite facilities for mulching so it can return the nutrients back to the land. In the long run, however, this may not be the most cost-effective strategy. We have also done some onsite chipping and redistribution of woody material. However, this may be perceived as rearranging of fuels unless we can incorporate the use of mycelium to accelerate decomposition. We have also incorporated some targeted grazing (e.g., goats) to manage fine fuels and regrowth, but again, these contracts might not be financially feasible for long-term planning. Despite being potentially hot topics, we are also exploring the use of environmentally friendly herbicides to manage woody growth along ditch banks and the use of prescribed fire where

feasible, recognizing the limited operational window and environmental considerations. Lastly, as the summer growing season winds down, we are focusing our efforts on elective thinning and clearing of legacy slash piles to reduce continuity of fire-carrying fuels.

During the program's initial phase, the ditch mitigation staff will prioritize stakeholder engagement and joint planning to ensure coordinated action across jurisdictions and land ownerships. Operational priorities will focus on addressing the most hazardous slash accumulations, especially those near communities or within high-risk corridors. The areas of highest concern are outlined in the county's recently updated Community Wildfire Protection Plan. This is based on independent fire modeling and historical weather patterns in the area.

Over time, the program hopes to establish ongoing fuel management cycles to maintain reduced risk conditions, prevent fuel buildup, and enhance wildfire resilience across the county's ditch network. Adaptive management practices will be employed to incorporate stakeholder input, evolving science, and monitoring results into long-term strategies. This program will only succeed if we can maintain close coordination with our land management partners, local municipalities, ditch companies, and conservation organizations. The Boulder County Parks & Open Space Agricultural Resources Division is committed to balancing wildfire risk reduction with the protection of ecological values and the operational needs of water delivery systems.



Crews from multiple agencies work alongside Boulder County as part of a coordinated wildfire mitigation effort that brings together jurisdictions, landscapes, and communities to reduce wildfire risk and protect vital infrastructure.

Fifty Years Fly by When It Comes to Gardening in Colorado!

by Kristen Anderson

Boulder County was an early adopter of the Extension Master Gardener program, joining Denver, Jefferson, and El Paso counties in 1975 as the first counties to offer the volunteer program through Colorado State University Extension.

Extension master gardener volunteers support staff nationwide in their mission of providing unbiased, science-backed information to the public. The program was the brainchild of Dr. David Gibby in 1972 in Washington state. Since then, it's grown like a weed into 49 states and the District of Columbia, several Canadian provinces, and South Korea.

Each of the 46 Colorado counties with master gardener volunteers has a unique flavor, reflected in their programming. Here in Boulder County, our master gardeners are year-round resources for home gardeners through the in-person and online help desk. Look for them at Ask A Master Gardener booths at garden centers, farmers markets, and other public events. Classes and hands-on presentations, often in conjunction with our community partners, keep the public in the know on current best practices for sustainable home gardening.



Colorado master gardener volunteers answer the public's gardening questions at local gardening centers each spring.

We like to get our hands dirty in Extension, and our volunteers are no exception. Master gardeners help maintain the multiple educational demonstration gardens around the Natural Resources building at the Boulder County Fairgrounds. This includes the Chuck Bliss Grass Trial Garden, dedicated to longtime staff member and public

servant Bliss, who spent 30 years serving Boulder County residents through the Colorado State University Extension Office.

This season, a group of volunteers helped design and plant our new demonstration garden in downtown Longmont. They continue to monitor and maintain the garden in the space donated by the City of Longmont.

Each of these gardens showcases water-wise and native plants to inspire the public. Visit them any time on the Boulder County Fairgrounds or at 4th Avenue and Kimbark Street in Longmont.

Our dedicated Food Pantry Garden plot in the Boulder County Extension Community Garden is another opportunity for some serious hands-on work. Planned, planted, and harvested entirely by volunteers, the Food Pantry Garden provides fresh local produce to the OUR Center community food bank in Longmont.

Nurturing future gardeners by supporting childcare providers, participating in the Farm to Early Care and Education program is another of our long-term projects. Delivering donated seeds and mentoring the childcare providers in their on-site food gardens is a seasonal favorite.

Maybe you've chatted with a master gardener at one of our many Plant Mobile events. A generous Parks & Open Space Foundation grant helped us launch our Plant Mobile last year, and we've given away thousands of free native plant starts to folks around the county since then. In the off-season, we've provided free coleus plants, and next year we're planning to expand our offerings to include kitchen herbs. Breweries, climbing gyms, libraries, parades, just give us the chance, and we'll give away plants!

The new crop of apprentice master gardener volunteers is beginning their training now, mentored by experienced members of our team. They'll be joining this year's new master gardeners and folks who have been volunteering with us for years, some for nearly 40!

If you're interested in learning more about the Colorado Master Gardener program or other gardening courses and resources, visit cmg.extension.colostate.edu. For home garden questions, you can connect with our volunteers at mggpa@bouldercounty.gov. We hope to see you in the garden!

Magpies: Not to Be Underrated

by Ann Cooper

In the fall, many feathered migrants have headed south to the bugs and blossoms zone. Left behind are winter and year-round birds, including magpies. Some birders take them for granted, but “just magpies” is a dismissive label for these smart, glorious birds. Trek to the tropics, and a bird as vivid and arresting as a black-billed magpie would earn top billing on your seen list!

The nonprofit Colorado Field Ornithologists (CFO) documents 420 bird species in Boulder County, including rarities. My old, battered “Audubon Check List” contains eight “jays, crows, and relatives” (corvids), noting black-billed magpies as “very common at all times of the year.”

Magpies show up in all Christmas bird counts and, on most hikes and outings (provided you pay attention), and regularly visit urban or suburban parks, gardens, roadsides, and parking lots. Their glossy, iridescent, black and white feathering is elegant; their swooping, tail-trailing flight breathtaking; their raucous and insistent voices compelling; and their survival skills impressive. Forget the term “birdbrain,” and celebrate them.

Magpies are corvids, known for their smarts. Intelligent and self-aware (they recognize themselves in mirrors), they are problem-solvers when seeking food, whether in natural or human-contrived research settings. They once followed Native American bison hunts, feasting on leftovers from kills. Although bison are rare these days, magpies still follow other wild hunts, keeping beady eyes open to steal prey from foxes, coyotes, badgers, and other predators. They glean ticks from the fur of pest-ridden deer, elk, and moose. They’re supreme opportunists.

Yes, magpies steal eggs and nestlings of other birds, but milder, mainstay foods include insects, seeds, fruit, and carrion. They cache food if there’s plenty, returning later to reclaim it. This is a feat of memory; and sneakiness; to retrieve a stash furtively.

Do you relish quirky facts? Note: Magpies sometimes stash dog poop, but please don’t rely on them to clean up after your pooch!

Besides remembering where they hid food, magpies also recognize and remember individual human faces, even bearing grudges against people who have caused them harm.

Writing about magpies without slipping into anthropomorphism (describing them in human terms) is tricky. They walk with an apparent “swagger”, their long tails flicking “arrogantly” from side to side. Their calls sound “bossy” and “imperious.” They seem “opinionated,” especially when they gather in large groups, chattering.

Why do they assemble? A nursery rhyme, a relic of ancient ornithomancy (predicting the future through bird behavior), talks of magpie gatherings:

One for sorrow,
Two for joy,
Three for a girl,
Four for a boy,
Five for silver,
Six for gold,
Seven for a secret,
Never to be told.

What’s the true reason for assemblies? Sometimes, and it’s no secret, a group gathers to warn off a roosting owl, hawk, or climbing cat, mobbing the menace until it moves on. If you hear concentrated squawking and see a fussing, fidgety bunch of magpies, stop to figure out the cause. Magpies mob ground-based hunters, foxes, and coyotes, creating a hubbub so the hunter will move on.

When a magpie dies, other magpies may gather around the corpse. These groups, or “funerals,” suggest possible grief and emotional intelligence, attributes we cannot evaluate. Maybe the birds gather to assess whether the dead bird is known to them or linked to possible risks and hazards to them. It’s an open question.

Talking details: Male and female magpies look alike, but males are larger. They pair for life and jointly building huge stick nests, although she does more of the interior work, the cupped platform on which she lays one to nine brownish eggs. Watch the nest entrance, a round hole at the side of the untidy nest.

Females alone incubate eggs for 18 days. Their mates bring food for them and the nestlings as they hatch, pink, naked, and ravenous. Once chicks fledge, they leave the nest but stay with the family and differ from adults in their shorter tails and scruffier looks. They beg for food and learn about life’s dangers from vigilant (and loud) parents. Dangers abound, from feral cats to owls, squirrels, weasels, mink, and crows.

Whether you see two magpies and take joy in their behavior or see a host of them (a parliament, chatter, conventicle, gulp, mischief, or tittering, there’s no one accepted collective noun), please treat them as more than “just magpies.”



Black-billed magpies can be seen year-round in Boulder County and are commonly found in conifer groves, stream sides, and rangeland.

NATURE DETECTIVES

Winter 2025-26

Text by Leah Rosenblum

Illustrations by Emily Lark

Hibernation

Hot cocoa, long nights, snowstorms, and ... sleeping for six months? Winter in Colorado is a special time to snuggle up inside and stay warm. Hibernating animals are especially good at snuggling up to sleep for the winter!

Humans have many ways to stay comfortable in the winter. We use heaters, stoves, ovens, and clothes to keep warm. We eat chili and hot chocolate chip cookies from the oven.

Black bears, chipmunks, marmots, and other animals live outside. They can't turn on the heat or make hot chocolate to keep warm. Instead, they **hibernate**. When animals hibernate, they go into a special kind of sleep for the winter. Animals who hibernate slow down everything in their body. They don't need to eat or drink, their body temperature lowers, and their breathing and heart rate slows down.

In the winter, the berries, nuts, grass, and other plants that animals eat stop growing. That means animals don't have any food to eat for months! Can you imagine if your fridge and pantry were empty for the winter and you had nothing to eat? Some animals can survive without eating for months when they hibernate.

Hibernating Bears

Bears know it is time for hibernation when days get shorter and temperatures lower. Their hormones also change, letting them know that they need to start preparing. **Hormones** are natural chemicals in our bodies that make different functions happen.

In midsummer or fall, bears start to eat more than their usual amount of food to get ready for the winter. This is called **hyperphagia**. Hyper means "over" and phagia means "hunger". Bears eat 15,000-20,000 calories per day to prepare for hibernation. That is as many calories as 50 cheeseburgers! Can you imagine eating 50 cheeseburgers in one day?

The diet of bears consists mostly of berries, roots, insects, and nuts. These foods do not contain many calories, so they must eat a lot. During hyperphagia, bears spend up to 22 hours per day eating. Imagine how much work it takes to find and eat 20,000 calories of berries, roots, insects, and nuts!

Bears try to eat enough food to gain about 4 pounds per day, so they have enough fat stored in their body for the winter. Bears also drink a lot of water during hyperphagia to stay hydrated for the winter. During the fall, bears are constantly searching for food. If a bear finds food somewhere, it will remember that food source and come back. This is why it is so important to clean up all your food when you are camping and hiking. Some trash cans even have special lids to make sure bears can't open them to eat the trash!



Once bears are ready to start their winter long nap, they hibernate in a **den**. A den is a bear's bedroom for the winter. Bears make their dens in hiding areas protected from the snow. Their dens can be in hollow trees or logs, under trees, or in rock crevices. Bears can spend up to six months hibernating in their den.

During hibernation, bears use 4,000 calories per day of stored fat. But they aren't asleep the entire time. For them, hibernation simply means they can go without eating or drinking and may barely pee or poop at all. If you laid in bed for weeks, you would lose most of your muscle mass. Bears keep their muscle mass and only burn fat during hibernation. Bears use their bodies' waste products during hibernation to make new proteins. Fun fact: The fat that bears burn during hibernation also releases water into the bear's system!

While bears are hibernating, their heart rate, metabolism, and breathing slow down. Their body temperature can lower by about 12 degrees Fahrenheit! Bears don't actually sleep the whole winter during hibernation. In fact, they enter a state called **torpor**. Torpor is a state of lethargy. Bears sleep a lot and sometimes wake up and move around, but they are not completely awake. This is why the mother bears can give birth during the winter!

Cubs are baby bears. Cubs are born in the middle of hibernation, between mid-January and early February. When they are born, they are tiny! Newborn cubs are about the size of a can of soup and weigh less than half a pound.



What else do animals do in the winter?

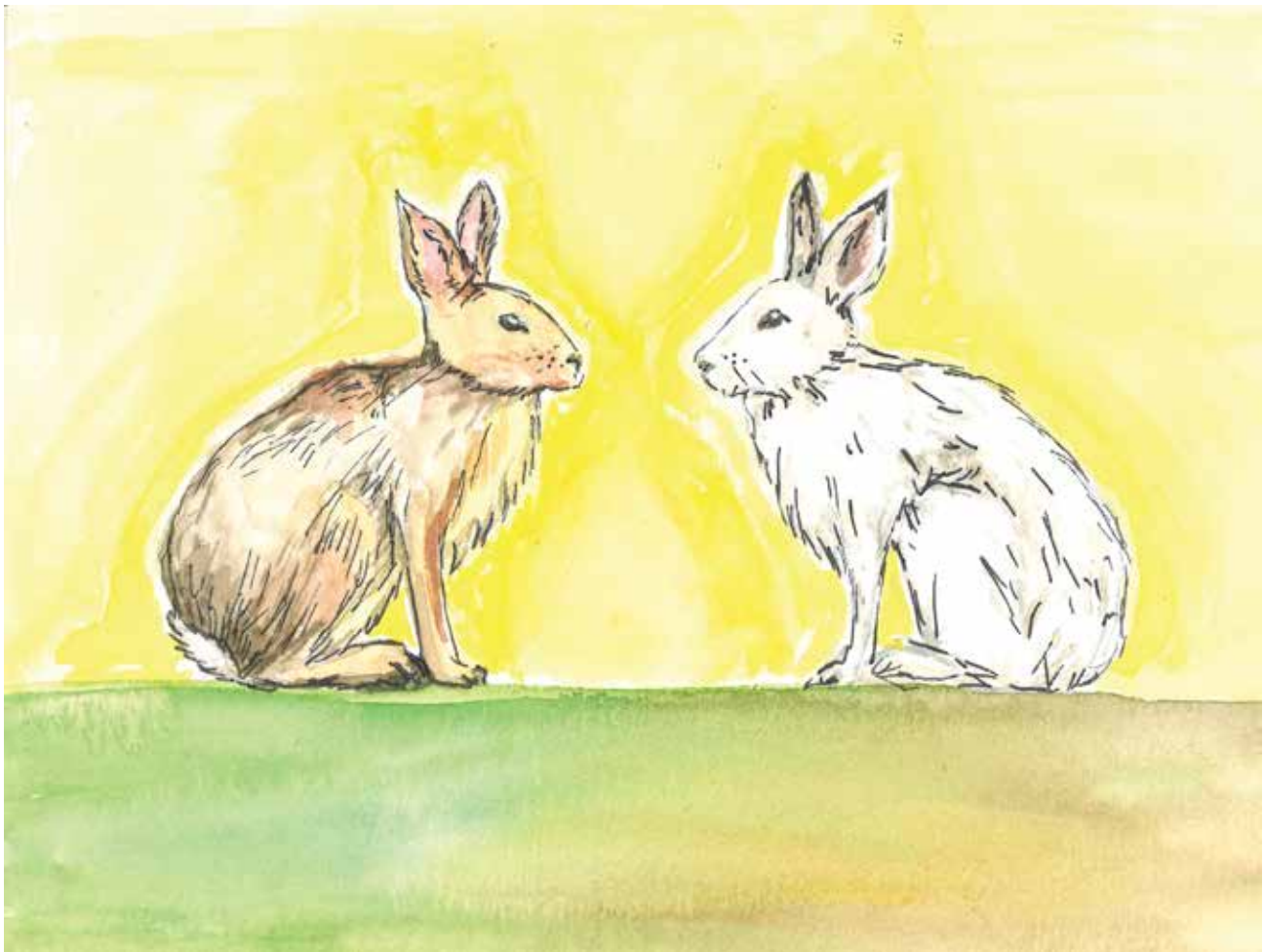
Colorado is very cold in the winter, especially in the mountains. When we go outside in the winter, we wear a lot of clothes to keep warm, and we take breaks from the cold by warming up inside. Animals adapt to the winter too! Besides hibernation, what are some tools that animals use to survive the winter?

Animal Winter Superpowers

- Some animals **migrate** to find warmer weather. **Migration** is the seasonal movement from one climate to another. In the fall, monarch butterflies move from cold Colorado to warm Mexico to escape our frigid winter.
- Other animals grow a winter coat. This is a thicker fur used to keep warm. This is like wearing a sweater to **insulate** our body temperature. Fun fact: Snowshoe hares, Arctic foxes, and ermines change color in the winter too! These animals grow a white winter coat that keeps them warmer and helps them stay camouflaged! **Camouflage** means that an animal blends in with its surroundings. This makes it harder for other animals to see them.
- Animals in the arctic huddle for warmth. One such huddler is the emperor penguin, who stands close together with others to keep their whole group warm. These huddles can include as many as 500 penguins!

What are some of your favorite ways to keep warm in the winter?

What are some things you do in the winter that you don't do the rest of the year?



Activity

You learned a lot of new words today. Complete this word search to practice new vocabulary.

Word Search

X M X V I U K K R N M W D H K
H I D Z T T I C Z J J P I Y S
V G T R D H M C O E M E B P I
A R C A M O U F L A G E K E F
D A I D M I M D K I A W V R H
R T X E W F Z H U O J P C P T
H E J N C T I V A G A E N H L
F I J I J E U R O K Q C E A T
O C B C N W I N T E R B H G L
G U P E S S R B L U R E M I B
S B U Q R O U F P H O A C A W
Z S U C U N R L S K M R M B B
P X B C Q O A N A H B K J R Q
H O R M O N E T S T Q W P W M
W V I T X Z M C E G E Q D O L

Hyperphagia

Insulate

Winter

Camouflage

Hormone

Den

Hibernate

Migrate

Bear

Cubs

Conservation Awards

On Sept. 23, Boulder County Parks & Open Space (BCPOS) held the annual Conservation Awards ceremony to celebrate the 2025 winners for their outstanding contributions made to the conservation, preservation, and protection of land-based environmental resources as well as their contributions toward connecting our communities to open space. Here are highlights from the special gathering for this year's recipients:

LAND CONSERVATION AWARD

The Land Conservation Award recognizes contributions that demonstrate notable achievements in preserving Boulder County's open space lands through the sale or donation of land or conservation easements, donation of funds, or through significant activities that resulted in the preservation of open space.

Linda Holubar Sanabria is recognized for preserving the 493-acre Spruce Gulch property with conservation easements held by Boulder County, forever ensuring the protection of its pristine wildlife habitat and intact ecosystems. Spruce Gulch has been in Linda's family for almost 100 years. The property is located on Lefthand Canyon adjacent to Heil Valley Ranch, United States Forest Service land, and other privately conserved land. Protection of the Spruce Gulch property has been on the county's priority list for decades. With its pristine ecological condition, unfragmented wildlife habitat, and proximity to the county's Heil Valley Ranch open space, this property has been the missing puzzle piece to thousands of contiguous acres of open space protected by the county. Thanks to Linda's conservation-minded foresight, Spruce Gulch is now permanently conserved and contributes to thousands of acres of contiguous protected land in this area of the Rocky Mountain foothills.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARD

The Environmental Stewardship Award recognizes contributions and activities that have made a significant impact on the conservation, preservation, and/or protection of Boulder County's land-based environmental resources through on-the-ground actions or program management.

Dave Sutherland has dedicated his life to protecting and preserving the natural world through his work as an environmental educator. He has been offering his amazing skills and talents as a naturalist in Boulder County for at least 30 years. After retiring from his job as a lead environmental educator for City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, he has continued to offer quality environmental education programs free of charge to the lucky people of Boulder County. Dave also offers programs through Boulder County Audubon and Environment for the Americas.

OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER AWARD

The Outstanding Volunteer Award honors individuals whose leadership and support of the BCPOS volunteer programs have enhanced our community partnerships and improved public service. This year, BCPOS bestowed this honor twice.

Roberta Johnston has served as a dedicated Wildlife Master Volunteer since 2016, contributing significantly to the success of Boulder County's Wildlife Master Program—currently the only active

program of its kind in the state in partnership with Colorado State University. Each year, Roberta completes the required trainings and volunteers for three or more weeks, providing research-based, unbiased information to the public regarding human-wildlife interactions. As the population of Boulder County continues to grow, so do the number and complexity of wildlife conflicts. Roberta has played a vital role in addressing these challenges by offering science-based recommendations and practical solutions to residents. Her work not only helps community members navigate these encounters safely and responsibly but also alleviates the workload of county staff.

Kumiko "Amy" Iwata has been volunteering with Boulder County Parks & Open Space since at least 2019. She is passionate about all things plants, but she will be the first to say, her real passion is killing weeds! She is extremely knowledgeable, not only in plant identification, but also ecological processes and truly understands the importance of a healthy ecosystem. Amy has volunteered extensively on native seed collections, seed cleanings, and weed eradication efforts. She was one of our founding members of the Weed Warriors program that started in 2024. The success of the Weed Warriors program has largely been due to volunteers like Amy. She is always ready to learn and do some hard work. Her passion and commitment not only inspire the other volunteers, but staff as well.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AWARD

The Community Connections Award recognizes individuals, families, community groups, and organizations for programs and activities that have made a significant community impact and/or reach underserved residents of Boulder County. These programs include activities that connect the community to open space values, goals, and access to public parks and trails.

Andrea Yoloteotl Nawage is recognized for work with Harvest of All First Nations (HAFN), which is focused on Indigenous-led reparations, rematriation, and Earth-based decolonization for the benefit of BIPOC+ communities for cultural education and health equity. HAFN is a grassroots community-based organization guided by the council of leaders creating change in BIPOC+ communities in the Denver/Boulder Front Range, and beyond. Over the last two years of working with HAFN, they have provided a space for Indigenous people to connect back to the Land through Traditional Ecological Knowledge and provide education for allies.

CULTURAL AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD

For nearly 15 years, Stephanie Wendorf has been a devoted partner of the Agricultural Heritage Center (AHC) at Boulder County Parks & Open Space, playing a vital role in preserving and sharing the county's agricultural legacy. Since 2011, she has generously loaned her goats, sheep, cows, and occasionally horses each year from late March through early November, ensuring that the AHC's educational livestock program remains vibrant and immersive. Stephanie has also expanded AHC's reach by connecting staff with other local farmers, sharing knowledge and building bridges across the agricultural community. These connections enrich programming and foster public appreciation for Boulder County's living agricultural traditions.

DISCOVER BOULDER COUNTY

Calendar of Events

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



ASTRONOMY: EXPLORING OTHER WORLDS

Wednesday, Dec. 10, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Lafayette Public Library, 775 Baseline Road, Lafayette

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.

WINTER SOLSTICE NIGHT WALK (LONGMONT)

Saturday, Dec. 20, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Pella Crossing, Longmont

On the longest night of the year, experience what the night has to offer. Join volunteer naturalists for a flat, easy, 1-mile walk around the ponds at Pella Crossing. Explore open space after hours and discover the secrets of the dark, including local nocturnal wildlife and the winter constellations in the night sky.

WINTER SOLSTICE NIGHT WALK (BOULDER)

Sunday, Dec. 21, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat, Boulder

On the longest night of the year, experience what the night has to offer. Join volunteer naturalists for a flat, easy, 1-mile walk around the ponds at Walden Ponds. Explore open space after hours and discover the secrets of the dark, including local nocturnal wildlife and the winter constellations in the night sky.

WOLF MOON NIGHT HIKE

Saturday, Jan. 3, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain, Longmont

Celebrate the first full moon of 2026 by hiking with volunteer naturalists in a park that usually closes at sunset. We'll meet at the picnic shelter at 4:30 p.m., enjoy both the sunset and the moonrise, then meander on easy trails under the full moon.

We'll observe, talk about what we see, and maybe share poems or stories. Bring a headlamp, preferably with a red light, and layers for the weather.



THE WINTERING BIRDS OF BOULDER COUNTY

Friday, Jan. 9, 1:30-3 p.m.

West Boulder Age Well Center, 909 Arapahoe Ave., Boulder
Seniors

When the temperature drops, and the snow settles in, what birds stick around and call Boulder County home? The bird species that reside in the area during the winter face risky challenges and have adapted unique behaviors and physiology that help them meet these challenges and survive. Register on the City of Boulder's Age Well Center website.

A SNOWSHOE WALK AMONG THE ASPENS

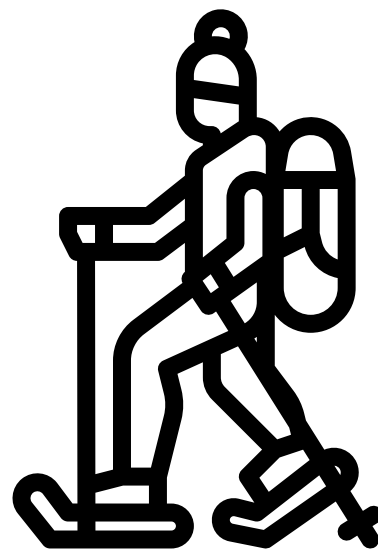
Wednesday, Jan. 14, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Caribou Ranch, Nederland

Adults (Ages 18 & older)

Join volunteer naturalists on a mostly flat, 3-mile, out-and-back snowshoe walk to an aspen grove at Caribou Ranch. With the leaves gone, we can enjoy the subtle colors of winter and the stories in the aspen bark. While resting among the aspen, we will practice mindful observation.

We'll take time to reflect together on what we've observed, what we know about aspens, what remains unknown, and what we can still learn from nature.



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

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

Calendar of Events

BIRDS OF PREY SLIDESHOW PROGRAM

Sunday, Jan. 25, 2-3:30 p.m.

Louisville Public Library, 951 Spruce St., Louisville

Join us for a fun slideshow program and learn to recognize birds of prey, including hawks, eagles, and falcons, that fly in the skies above Boulder County. Volunteers will share tips to help you distinguish among raptors by identifying field marks, behavior, location, and time of year.

GET TO SNOW WINTER: KIDS PROGRAM

Sunday, Jan. 18, 10:30 a.m.-noon

Mud Lake, Nederland

Families (Ages 5 & older)

Let's get to "snow" winter a little better. What animals might we see in winter when many animals are gone or sleeping? How do the plants and trees survive in the cold and snow? We'll even dive into information about snow while we have fun and learn ways to stay safe outside in the winter. This program is geared toward children ages 5 to 8, but all are welcome.

ALL ABOUT EVERGREENS

Thursday, Feb. 5, 6-7:30 p.m.

Lyons Community Library, 451 4th Ave., Lyons

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.

BUSY BEAVERS: OUR ECOSYSTEM ENGINEERS

Saturday, Feb. 7, 1-3 p.m.

Pella Crossing, Longmont

Families (Ages 5 & older)

Chew on this! Beavers are more than just busy; they're brilliant builders and vital players in our local ecosystems. Join us at Pella Crossing for a hands-on, nature-filled adventure as we dive into the fascinating world of these furry engineers. Through guided exploration and interactive activities, participants will gain a deeper understanding of how beavers survive, adapt, and even help restore ecosystems. Come ready to observe, discover, and maybe even spot signs of beaver activity in the wild!

BAT MYTHS AND MOONLIGHT: AN EVENING OF STORYTELLING & SCIENCE

Thursday, Feb. 12, 6-7:30 p.m.

Ron Stewart Parks & Open Space Building, 5201 St. Vrain Road, Longmont

Adults (Ages 18 & older)

Step into the world of bat myths and moonlight, an evening of storytelling and science that explores how humans have imagined bats through time. From ancient legends to modern misconceptions, we'll uncover the truth behind these mysterious creatures of the night. Learn how bats actually live, communicate, and benefit our world, and how understanding their real story helps us protect them. Join us to see bats not as symbols of fear, but of wonder and ecological balance.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Tuesday, Feb. 17, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Lafayette Public Library, 775 Baseline Road, Lafayette

This program explores how bird plumage changes with age, season, and breeding status, and what that reveals about survival and adaptation. Through colorful visuals and interactive discussion, tweens and adults will sharpen their bird identification skills while discovering how feathers help birds thrive in Boulder County's diverse habitats. Learn how climate change and habitat loss threaten these adaptations, and what we can do to help our feathered neighbors flourish.

Voices of Open Space

Voices of Open Space is a podcast that invites listeners behind the scenes to explore how conservation, sustainability, and community stewardship shape the landscapes we love. Through authentic conversations with naturalists, volunteers, scientists, land managers, authors, and community members, the series highlights the values, challenges, and triumphs of preserving and protecting Boulder County's open spaces.

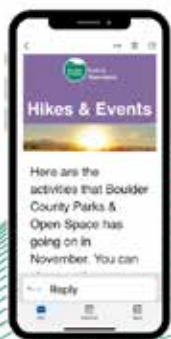
Listeners will hear episodes featuring diverse voices and topics, ranging from prairie restoration to wildlife research, to youth engagement, and to the evolving role of public lands in community life. Whether you're a lifelong local or new to the area, Voices of Open Space aims to inspire you to see the land, and your role in it, in a new way.

The podcast is available on all major platforms, including YouTube.



boco.org/podcast

Never miss an
adventure — sign up
for a monthly hikes
and events email at
boco.org/HikesEvents



HIKES FOR SENIORS

Join volunteer naturalists for a moderate hike to explore and learn about the unique geology, history, plants, and wildlife of these beautiful properties. Groups are encouraged to join!

WINTER IN THE FOOTHILLS

Thursday, Dec. 18, 1-3 p.m.

Heil Valley Ranch, Wapiti Trailhead

Meet us in the foothills to welcome winter and the changes the season brings. Hike among the ponderosas and discover how animals and plants find refuge during this time.

WINTERING BIRD HAVENS

Thursday, Jan. 22, 1-3 p.m.

Lagerman Agricultural Preserve, Longmont

Join us for a leisurely walk around this winter haven for many species of waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors. Learn about which species visit us in the winter, and which stick around all year. Come prepared for some fantastic bird observation opportunities!

WINTER UP TOP!

Thursday, Feb. 19, 1-3 p.m.

Caribou Ranch, Nederland

The montane ecosystem is a dynamic ecosystem that transforms in the winter. As the snow falls and the temperatures drop, plants and animals must adapt to survive in harsh conditions. Join us for a moderate 1.5-mile hike as we explore this ecosystem.

Transportation from Boulder is available for non-mountain drivers. Details provided upon registration

BIRDS OF PREY DRIVING TOURS

Near Longmont. Location provided when registering.

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 volunteer naturalists and search the skies for raptors, learn about their habitats and behaviors, and work on your observation and identification skills. Space is limited.

Driving tour dates:

- Saturday, Dec. 6, 9 a.m.-noon
- Saturday, Dec. 13, 9 a.m.-noon
- Saturday, Dec. 27, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. (Extended Tour)
- Saturday, Jan. 10, 9 a.m.-noon
- Saturday, Jan. 31, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. (Extended Tour)
- Saturday, Feb. 14, 9 a.m.-noon
- Saturday, Feb. 28, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. (Extended Tour)



2026 Artist-in-Residence Program

Are you an artist who dreams of unplugging and creating art in nature? We have just the opportunity for you.

Boulder County Parks & Open Space invites artists of all skill levels and disciplines to apply for the Caribou Ranch Artist-in-Residence program. Nestled in the beautiful Caribou Ranch open space, the historic DeLonde Barn typically hosts artists working in a variety of mediums between July and September.

Be inspired by the beautiful landscapes of Caribou Ranch, including streams, waterfalls, forests, and wide-open skies. The program provides a rare opportunity to focus on your work in a peaceful, natural setting that is rich with history.

Artists will be selected based on the creativity demonstrated in their submitted work samples and their expressed interest in the program.

Applications open Jan. 19 and close Feb. 23.
Learn more and apply at boco.org/artist

Be Prepared for Winter Weather

Make sure you have:

- Waterproof coat, hat, and additional layers
- Fully charged cellphone
- Extra food and water
- Sun protection
- Flashlight or headlamp

Bring supplies for your pet:

- Food, water, layers, and booties

Have in your car:

- Emergency kit, including snow shovel and jumper cables

Plan ahead:

- Visit BoulderCountyOpenSpace.org for more information, including trail closures, park maps, and regulations.

Call 303-441-4444 for non-emergency dispatch.

- Store this number in your contacts for quick access.

WINTER HOURS & EVENTS

Agricultural Heritage Center



8348 Ute Highway 66, west of Longmont
Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. the first Saturday of each month
November through March

Come to the farm and learn about the rich agricultural history of Boulder County. The farm includes two barns with interactive exhibits, a milk house, blacksmith shop, and a furnished 1909 farmhouse. Admission is free.

HAMMERING ON THE FARM

Saturday, Dec. 6

Saturday, Jan. 3

Saturday, Feb. 7

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. Registration not required; you may register to receive updates in case of inclement weather or cancellation.

Get Muddy!

Why should I get muddy?

Wet ground is fragile. Winter snow saturates and softens the ground, making it very susceptible to recreation impacts.

When trails are muddy:

- Use trails before 10 a.m.
- Visit another park that has hard-surface trails.

Stay on the trail, and go through the mud.

Shortcutting switchbacks and bypassing mud puddles greatly increases erosion, widens trails, and destroys vegetation.

Boots, bikes, and horses clean up fast, but trails take years to heal.

Before you go:

Visit boco.org/trails for current trail conditions.

Pick the right trail.

In wet conditions, use hard-surface trails at lower elevations, such as:

- Coal Creek Trail
- Boulder Creek Path
- St. Vrain Greenway

Sharing Snowy Trails

The air is cold and crisp. Snowflakes flutter gracefully to the ground, and trails are blanketed with snow. We know you are eager to strap on that new pair of snowshoes, head out to your local trail, and enjoy the crunch of snow beneath your feet. Follow these simple guidelines, communicate with your fellow visitors, and help reduce conflict on the trails in winter.

ETIQUETTE ON SNOWY TRAILS:

- Snowshoers yield to cross-country skiers.
- Whenever possible, snowshoe along the edge of the trail and avoid walking on ski tracks. This may require you to travel single file.
- Before passing another visitor, slow down, politely call out, and pass with care.
- Similarly, if you need a break, step off to the side so as to not block the trail.
- Consider visiting the Meyers Homestead Trail at Walker Ranch, Mud Lake, and Caribou Ranch. All are great destinations for winter recreation.



Call for 2026 Research Projects

Each year we award small grants for research and biological inventories on Boulder County open space lands. These research projects and inventories provide valuable data to monitor management practices and improve resources and park visitor experiences. We are accepting proposals for grants up to \$12,500 per project. Department staff have identified 27 priority needs, including these four topics, but all proposals are considered:

- A comprehensive plant survey of the greater Tucker/Elk Draw properties, that encompass 640 acres of diverse montane and wetland habitats west of Nederland.
- Investigate the effects of beaver activity on hydrology and hydrogeology of transition zone and plains streams in Boulder County, at sites to be selected in coordination with BCPOS wildlife staff.
- BCPOS is interested in conducting a county wide public survey to gauge perception on acceptance activities, effective communication strategies, and preferred methods for participation in scoping of forestry and fire projects adjacent to private property.
- Estimate seasonal and annual visitation to Boulder County's regional trails (Coal Creek, Rock Creek, and Longmont to Boulder [LoBo] Trails). Boulder County may be able to provide trailhead counters for the researchers to use throughout the project.

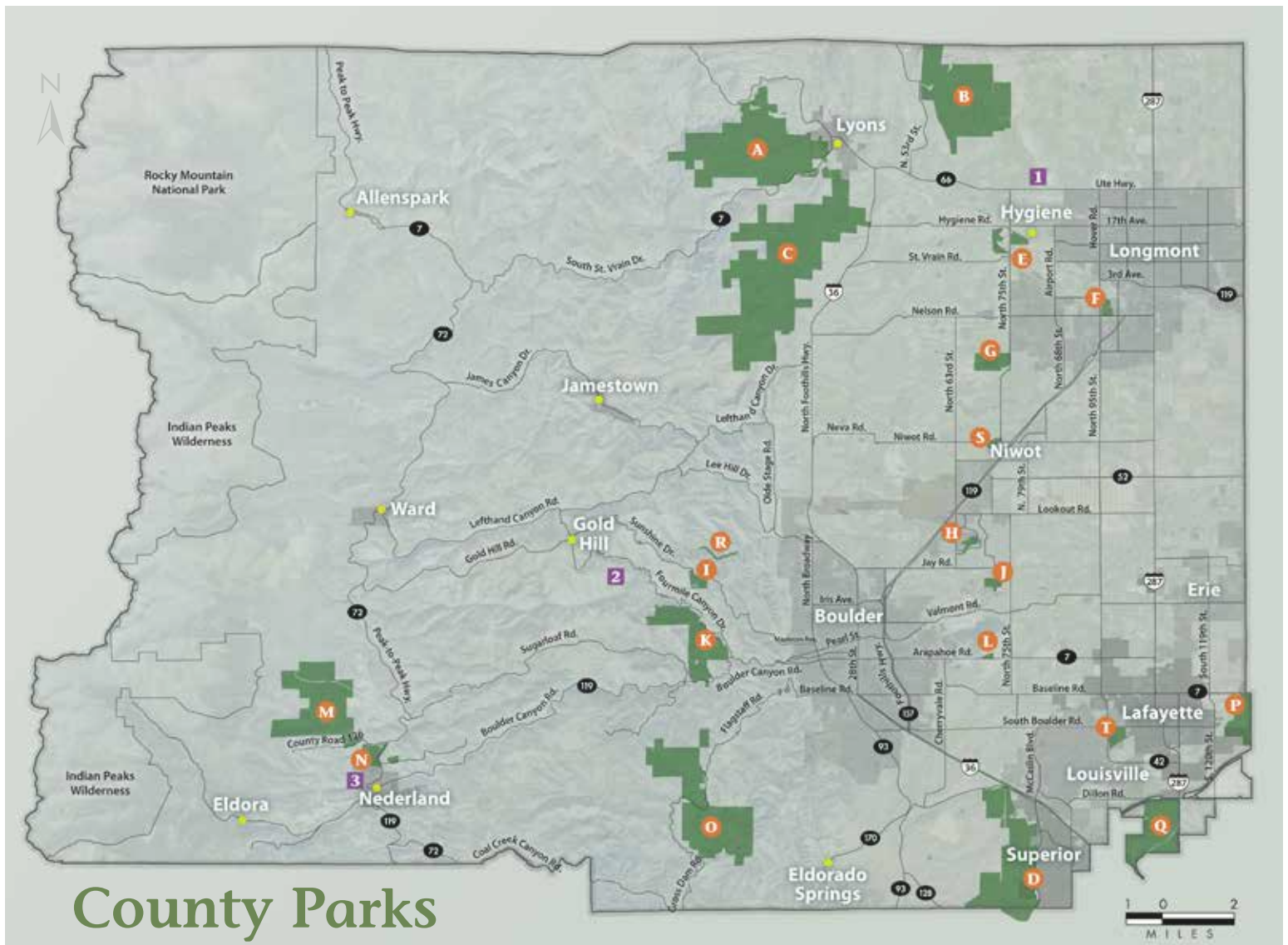
The deadline for proposals is Friday, Jan. 9.
Learn more and apply at boco.org/research



Parks & Open Space

5201 St. Vrain Road, Longmont, CO 80503

BoulderCountyOpenSpace.org



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|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 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 |