

# Boulder County Nature Association



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

Volume 29, Number 2  
Spring 2011

## **Ecosystem Symposium Explores Fire Dynamics**

"Boulder Burns" is the theme of this year's Boulder County Ecosystem Symposium, Saturday, April 9, at the University of Colorado Ramaley Auditorium. Local scientists and naturalists will explore the fire history of the Front Range, the role of fire in native ecosystems, fire threats to mountain communities, and strategies for managing fire.

Free registration begins at 8 a.m. at Ramaley Auditorium, which is in the Ecology Department building opposite the main (east) entrance to Norlin Library. Parking (\$3 all day) is available at the UMC lot on Euclid Avenue and at the CU Recreation Center lot north of the library. But please consider taking public transportation. Several Broadway buses stop within 300 m of the auditorium.

*And most important, if you're planning to stay for the free buffet lunch, please bring your own plate, cup, and utensils so we can eliminate paper waste.* The symposium, now in its 17th year, is organized by Boulder County Nature Association and cosponsored by Boulder County Audubon, Boulder County Parks and Open Space, Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, Colorado Native Plant Society, and the University of Colorado.



Milbert's Tortoiseshell photo by John Barr. Look for other early spring butterflies in this issue!

## **Symposium Schedule**

8:00 - 9:00 a.m: Free registration.

9:00 - 9:30: Dr. Jeff Mitton, University of Colorado Ecology. Introduction and slide show of Fourmile Fire.

9:30 - 10:15: Dr. Tania Schoennagel, Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research. *"Fire History and Fire Risk in Boulder County Forests."*

10:15 -10:30: Break.

10:30 - 11:15: David Lasky, Sugarloaf Fire Department. *"Lessons Learned from the 2010 Fire Season."*

11:15 - 12 p.m: Jeff Connor, Rocky Mountain National Park. *"Are Fire Managers and Resource Specialists on The Same Page: Preserving Rare and Imperiled Plant Communities in Rocky Mountain National Park."*

12:00 - 1:00 p.m: Free Buffet Lunch.

1:00 - 1:45: Dr. Douglas Rideout, Colorado State University Western Forest Fire Research Center (Westfire). *"Fuel Treatments to Integrate Hazardous Fuel Reduction with Ecosystem Benefit in Colorado."*

1:45 - 3:15: Panel Discussion. *"Forest Fire Management: Diverse Perspectives and Practices."*

Panelists:

Meredith H. Gartner, University of Colorado Geography.

Steve Jones, Boulder County Nature Association and Boulder County Audubon.

David Lasky, Sugarloaf Fire Department.

Laura Snider, Boulder *Daily Camera*.

Deward Walker, University of Colorado Anthropology and a resident of Fourmile Canyon area.

***Inside:  
Night Life of the Four-footed. . . . Page 5***

**CCTWS Meeting, Ft. Collins – February 23, 2011**

This year the annual meeting of the Colorado Chapter of the Wildlife Society in combination with the Wyoming Chapter was held in Fort Collins. The theme of the conference was the Public Trust for our environment and was a reflection of the growing concern for our declining connection to the world around us. Attendees largely reflected concern over declining funding available for conservation activities which support a variety of outdoors interests.

Colorado depends to a large extent on license fees for hunters and anglers to support the Department of Wildlife, but fewer hunters come to our State and fewer kids in the next generation maintain the interest of their parents and grandparents. This has an important impact on not just hunters and anglers, but on all forms of outdoor activity from ecological research to hiking and observation of what's out there.

It is increasingly clear that this is a trend which is here to stay unless we understand the forces at work and create plans for addressing it. One person noted that in middle schoolers may spend as much as 56 hours per week with electronic devices, more than kids eat and sleep much less get outside. The exciting and fascinating theme at this conference recognized how important it is to develop a variety of programs to educate the public about the pleasures of outdoors activities, and especially to start early and repetitively. Thus, Ken Finch of the Green Hearts Institute in Omaha talked about his program for nurturing and certifying pre-school nature programs. Bob Hewson of Colorado Youth Outdoors focused on teenagers, introducing them to outdoor activities. One sees a picture of a teenager with a bow and arrow and his mother next to him waiting her turn. Suzanne Roller of the Wildland Awareness and Educational Institute, spoke of engaging young women in college in the use of guns and pistols in the outdoors providing them with a group-centered experience in the mountains which most had never been exposed to before. The head of the Wyoming pheasant society is focusing on developing school programs to introduce kids to basic principals of hunting and appreciation of weapons. All of these efforts are very gratifying.

The underlying theme is education and imaginative approaches to repetitive exposure of people to the pleasures of almost any outdoor activity. Even more is the understanding that learning is a matter of repetition more than one-shot experience, and that the best educational experiences occur in the context of meaningful relationships with caring adults,

especially parents. In addition was a presentation by the President of the US Humane Society, focusing on the notion of the public trust for our environment and the relationship we have to animals that are dependent on us. Perhaps unlikely partners, there is much that all these organizations have in common.

Education is central and bonding relationships are crucial. This is hardly a surprise, but it is a hopeful sign that it is becoming such an active part of our discussion. It led me to wonder how our local groups can further pursue this discussion in the future, and figure out better ways to engage the next generation of Conservationists. --Peter Kleinman, BCNA



New County Land Purchase - Loukonen Hill, *story page 3.*

**Quarterly Program: "Galapagos Islands," with Cyndra Dietz  
Wednesday, April 6, 7-8:30 p.m.  
George Reynolds Branch Library, Boulder**

During the summer of 2009, Cyndra taught English for two months on the Islands and toured extensively on her own and with local guides. Join her for a slide show of travel tips (for independent travelers, as well as those planning a cruise), Ecuadorian culture, and the detailed biology of the Islands' famous and lesser-known inhabitants.

*Cyndra Dietz* is director of the Boulder County School Recycling and Environmental Education Program. In her 20 years as director, the program has become the national model for school recycling and has won several state and national awards. Cyndra has degrees in biology and environmental science from the University of California, as well as previous environmental education experience with the National Park Service, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, University of Colorado, and Denver Public Schools Outdoor Education Program.

## New Purchases Bolster County Ecosystems

Boulder County voters have made possible the preservation of important land throughout the County. The success of County Issue 1B in November 2010 allowed the County to sell \$60.595 million in bonds this month. The Parks and Open Space Department has recently concluded negotiations of several high priority properties that have high environmental value as well as a very prominent urban shaping parcel. Important natural resource land includes the purchase of the Loukonen Hill and Loukonen Dairy Farm properties and the Hall Ranch II property (due to be completed March 30). The 756-acre AHI/Double Dove property on 75<sup>th</sup> Street adjacent to the western city limits of Longmont is a key urban shaping parcel.

The Loukonen Hill Property, purchased for \$1.6 million in November, spans 76 acres and is located north of Highway 66 and the Foothills Highway just east of Lyons. The Dairy Farm Property comprises over 805 acres along the east side of the Foothills Highway approximately one-half mile north of Nelson Road. The Dairy Farm closings are scheduled yearly for the next 10 years, totaling \$16.7 million.

Each of properties lie adjacent to many thousands of acres of preserved open space and their purchase provides a chance to connect large blocks of undeveloped land and provide connections between open space parcels that serve as habitat corridors.

The Dairy Farm Property contains some of the most biologically diverse habitat in Boulder County. The site contains high-quality native grasslands, shrub communities from the foothills, lush wetlands, and two small riparian areas that support large plains cottonwoods.

The Hill Property is primarily a foothills shrub habitat of mountain mahogany and three-leaf sumac. It is used by the well-known North Boulder elk herd, as well as mule deer and cougars that use the ridgeline as a travel route of undisturbed habitat.

At Hall Ranch II almost every kind of foothills transition ecosystem is represented. There are high meadows, magnificent rock outcroppings, riparian corridors and ponderosa forests. Its acquisition completes and connects a natural habit zone that covers more than 13,000 acres. Parks and Open Space feels very pleased that Boulder County's voters have stepped up to preserve these important lands and others that will be made possible by these new County revenues.

## BCNA Spring Calendar

Wednesday, April 6, 7-8:30 p.m. **"Galapagos Islands," with Cyndra Dietz.** George Reynolds Branch Library, Table Mesa Drive, Boulder. See description on page 2.

Saturday, April 9, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. **"17th Boulder County Ecosystem Symposium: Boulder Burns."** University of Colorado Ramaley Auditorium. See schedule and description on page 1.

Tuesday, April 26, 7-11 a.m. **"Ecosteward Walk in Four Mile Canyon," with Christine Guzy and Steve Jones** (303-494-2468; curlewsj@comcast.net). Everyone is welcome on this gentle hike up the Anne U. White Trail. We'll focus on early nesting birds and spring butterflies. Meet to carpool at the Open Space parking area on Lee Hill Road a half-mile west of Broadway.

Saturday, May 7, 7:30 a.m. to noon. **"Spruce Gulch Botanical and Birding Trip," with Dr. Tim Seastedt.** Visit this secluded canyon near Heil Ranch where Tim and his colleagues have successfully controlled invasive knapweed by introducing two Asian knapweed-munching weevils. We should see Golden Eagles and a variety of nesting birds in the canyon, as well. Limited to 15 participants. To reserve a space, contact Steve Jones (303-494-2468; curlewsj@comcast.net).

Saturday, May 7, 8:30 a.m. **"Roll and Stroll on South Boulder Creek Trail,"** with Boulder County Audubon's: Mary Balzer and Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks ranger Topher Downham. Audubon birders team up with Topher to provide this fun and easy-paced bird-watching experience for people who use walkers, wheelchairs, canes, or just regular legs. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have them, and personal water. Dress for the weather. Snacks provided. Email Mary [marybalzer@qwest.net](mailto:marybalzer@qwest.net) to sign up or if you need more info.

Saturday, June 18, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. **Lichens, with Ann Henson.** Spend a day looking for lichens in the forest and learning a little about these amazing organisms. Moderate walking with no real destination in mind. Bring a hand lens, lunch and water. Your usual good sense about dressing in layers and being prepared for showers is appreciated. We will carpool from a central destination once attendees is known. To register, contact Ann at 303-772-8962 or [annhenson@kwabena.us](mailto:annhenson@kwabena.us)

POEM FOR THE NATURE TRAILS WEST OF BOULDER

This is a series of lures, simple 3/5/3 word counts

no anger, just  
a few memories (& prospects)  
west of town

1948, age 16  
living in a fishing cabin  
facing Bummer's Peak

Mom and Daddy  
taught school, Denver suburbs, driving  
an old Pontiac

- ah! -

up Magnolia (most  
beautiful road in the world)  
bit by bit

learning the calls,  
chips of music spotted along  
Sugar Loaf Road

yellow warblers singing  
variously, among the cottages, down  
by Boulder Creek

lighting on wire,  
a broad-tailed hummingbird; evening grosbeaks  
yellow & black

in the pines  
drawn-out questions, siskins perching on  
the very top

mountain chickadees, wheezy  
tonic fifths, plus white lines  
over the eyes

my father spied  
a bobcat back of Old  
Man Tinsley's place—

& anywhere, suddenly  
that wild, tame tropical sun  
the western tanager\*

little red fox  
smiling off to one side  
of the McClintock

what am I  
saying? These delicate meetings demonstrate  
culture loving nature?

as it must  
to ride nature's oceans (us, human-  
"bubble-clusters") and survive?

let us save  
the trails, as intimate interfaces  
with our source

let's leave things  
in their own complexity, as a  
sign of civilization.

Jack Collom      January 2011

**Front Range Pika Project**



Calling all citizen scientists! The Front Range Pika Project is a citizen science program that engages the public in conservation research on the American pika. Pika Patrol volunteers follow monitoring protocols

to collect data about pikas and their habitat in high altitude field sites, thereby informing efforts to assess whether pikas are impacted by climate change. The project will provide long-term data to aid the conservation of this little-understood alpine species and its associated habitats. Join the Pika Patrol to

contribute to pika monitoring studies currently underway throughout the West and help us better understand this native Colorado species.

Check out [pikapartners.org](http://pikapartners.org) for more information and watch for volunteer trainings in early and mid-July. Volunteers must be able to hike on talus at high altitudes, willing to navigate to somewhat remote field sites independently, and able to attend both an evening classroom training and a half-day field training. Please contact Amy Masching at Denver Zoo at 303-376-4935 or [amasching@denverzoo.org](mailto:amasching@denverzoo.org) if you have questions or are interested in volunteering. Thank you to Boulder County Nature Association and Chipotle Mexican Grill for helping this project get underway!

**Night Life of the Four-footed**



Stealth Cam 02/04/2009 01:26:19 36F

I have never been a formal ecosystem monitor—except for my own backyard. For nearly forty years I’ve

paid attention to wildlife comings and goings here, enjoying my backyard habitat in all weathers and seasons. Our yard sits on the west edge of town on the rocky upslope beneath Dakota Ridge, and has an irrigation ditch running behind it. These features almost guarantee a good mix of species. And as a compulsive list-keeper, I’ve tracked sightings. We’ve had 113 species of birds, a number that includes flyovers. Prized among them were a Northern Goshawk that consumed a rock dove as we watched; a Varied thrush one winter count week; and an unexpected Ovenbird. A fair number of mammals have stopped by over the years. The most surprising were a Fourth of July elk and an ambling porcupine. However, it wasn’t until we started tracking the night life that a whole dark scene opened up.

One night, we heard sounds of lapping (a big kitty?) coming from our small garden pond. Soon after that, we invested in a motion sensor camera to watch the pond for us. The night-drinkers turned out to be a family of cougars. The mother was lactating and probably desperate for water when all natural water was solidly frozen. They became regular visitors. That changed our mindset about late-night dog outings. It also made the wild feel wilder—the way it was always supposed to be.

Bears showed up late last fall, long after Halloween. We knew something of their activity not only from their cavorting in our yard, but also from the spilled garbage cans along the alley. That taught us two

things—first, our neighbors are not mindful enough of the damage they do to bears when they don’t secure their garbage, and second, bears have learned our garbage-collection day.

We even “hosted” a trap set in our back yard by CDOW to try and capture a young bear on the loose. All we managed to catch and release was a delicate and beautiful skunk.

Of course, foxes are a given—both red foxes, and an occasional gray fox. Raccoons are ever-present, leaving footprint trails on the paving stones near the pond as the dabble out. Mexican woodrats drink at the pond, too. We live in hope each morning when we check to see the new set of flash pictures. Maybe a bobcat to come?

All this is by way of saying how grateful we are for the many acres of Open Space, for wildlife corridors, for a live-and-let-live backyard . . . all ensuring that our wild stays as wild as it can be on an urban fringe. And we

are endlessly prepared and happy to change our lifestyle to accommodate our four-footed day or night visitors. —Ann Cooper



Stealth Cam 10/13/2010 23:20:10 46F

**Board of County Commissioners**

Cindy Domenico Ben Pearlman Will Toor

*presents*

**PARKS AND OPEN SPACE  
2010 LAND CONSERVATION AWARDS  
CEREMONY**

**April 13, 2011**  
3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

**Award Presentations**  
by the Commissioners  
and  
Ron Stewart,  
Director of Parks and Open Space

*honoring*

**RUTH ALMQUIST**  
*Land Conservation Award*

**WILDLANDS RESTORATION VOLUNTEERS**  
*Environmental Stewardship Award*

**THE GOLD MINER HOTEL -  
SCOTT BRUNTJEN & CAROL RINDERKNECHT**  
*Heritage Award for Excellence in Historic  
Preservation*

**SMARTWOOL**  
*Partnership Award*

**CLARE SHIER**  
*Outstanding Volunteer*

**JENN ARCHULETA**  
*Outstanding Volunteer*



**BCNA Board of Directors**

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**Committees and Contacts**

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

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

*- Education:*  
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Scott Severs, layout (303-684-6430)and George Oetzel,  
support (303-543-3712)

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

*-Research Grants:*  
Peter Kleinman (303-554-5320)

*-State and Regional Wildlife Issues:*  
Peter Kleinman (303-554-5320)

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

*-Wintering Raptor Survey:*  
Sue Cass (720-684-6922) and Jim McKee (303-651-2414)

**Spring Butterflies by Jan Chu**

March 10 on Anne U. White Trail saw Milbert's  
Tortoiseshell, Mourning Cloak, and Hoary Comma.

We invite you to report your sightings to  
[www.coloradofrontrangebutterflies.com](http://www.coloradofrontrangebutterflies.com)

### Dakota Grassland Conservation Area Proposed

(February 9, 2011) An important program to protect key grassland and wetland complexes in the core of the U.S. Prairie Pothole region has been proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is called the "Dakota Grasslands Conservation Area", and would dedicate \$588 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to protect more than 240,000 acres of wetlands and 1.7 million acres of privately-owned grasslands in North Dakota, South Dakota, and eastern Montana.

Conservation would occur through the purchase of conservation easements from willing landowners. This program is meant to serve as a critical piece of a broader conservation strategy targeting more than 10 million acres of grassland habitat in the Prairie Potholes over the next few decades. Without such efforts, it is estimated that one-third to one-half of these critical habitats will be converted to other uses within 35 years.

Prairie potholes are seasonal, primarily fresh water wetlands found in North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and other states in the upper Midwest and into Canada. This formerly glaciated landscape is pockmarked with an immense number of depressions which fill with snowmelt and rain in the spring.

In addition to being known as North America's "duck factory", the Prairie Pothole region is the core of the global range of several U.S. WatchList birds. Ninety percent of the global population of Baird's Sparrow breeds in the Prairie Potholes, and 86% of the Sprague's Pipits. These areas are also crucially important to the Short-eared Owl, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Nelson's Sparrow, and McCown's Longspur. Most of these birds have seen significant declines in available habitat throughout their ranges.

"It will be impossible to stem the tide of grassland bird declines without implementing widespread conservation strategies in the Prairie Pothole region," said Dan Casey, Northern Rockies Coordinator for ABC and primary author of the Prairie Potholes Joint Venture's Landbird Implementation Plan. This plan is designed to identify strategies for implementing biologically-sound landbird habitat protection and enhancement in the Prairie Potholes Region.

"Working with willing landowners to acquire conservation easements will not only protect these crucial wetland and grassland habitats, it will help

maintain traditional land uses and lifestyles of the prairies. Similar work is needed throughout the range of these birds wherever native prairie can still be found," Casey said.

Although the official public comment period for the project's initial environmental analysis ended in mid-January, the opportunity to comment will continue for those on the mailing list for the draft land protection plan. Email [dgca\\_comments@fws.gov](mailto:dgca_comments@fws.gov) to request to be added to this list. A fact sheet on the project is available at: [www.fws.gov/audubon/dakotagrassland.html](http://www.fws.gov/audubon/dakotagrassland.html). —American Bird Conservancy



New Boulder County Open Spaces, Loukonen Dairy above, Hall Ranch II below. Story page 3. Photos courtesy Boulder County.



# Support the Boulder County Nature Association

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone and/or E-mail (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership:

_____ Student/Senior (65 or over)	\$15
_____ General Member	\$20
_____ Family or Household	\$30
_____ Supporter	\$40
_____ Founder	\$100
_____ Life Member	\$300
_____ Corporate	\$500
_____ Donation to General Research Grants	
_____ Donation to Evenson Big Cat Research Grants	
_____ Donation to General Research Fund	

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

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

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P.O. Box 493  
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