

Naturalist Notes



MISSION

El Paso County Parks Nature Centers connect people to their natural and cultural resources and inspire them to become stewards for the parks and our environment.



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Three Holiday Favorites:



- ◆ **Bear Creek by Candlelight**
- ◆ **Nature Hikes with Santa**
- ◆ **Horse-Drawn Wagon Rides**

Enjoy simple pleasures and memorable moments with your family and friends at **Bear Creek by Candlelight**, Friday, December 1, 5-8:00 p.m.

Warm chili, luminary-lit trails, live music, visits with Santa, animals and crafts make this a seasonal gift you give yourself!



Santa Claus is coming to **Fountain Creek Nature Center** December 9 and 16, 10-11:30 a.m. to take a hike with you. Hiking with Santa is an unforgettable experience for any child.



Follow that with a clip-clopping adventure over the trail and through the woods on a wagon pulled by **Suffolk Punch draft horses** generously provided and driven by the Miller and Evans families. 11:30, 12:00, and 12:30.

Prepaid reservations required.



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Nature Centers*

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Interpretive Prog. Coord.

Emily Henselin

Bear Creek Nature Center

245 Bear Creek Road

Colorado Springs, CO
80906

719-520-6387

Fountain Creek Nature Center

320 Pepper Grass Lane

Fountain, CO 80817

719-520-6745

Editor Nancy Bernard



www.elpasocountynaturecenters.com

Why We Do What We Do: Featuring Ashley Hamlin & Tyler Hamlin *by Nancy Bernard*

You might wonder if the work we do has any *significant* impact on the young people who attend nature camps, or is it all just fluff, fun and games? Siblings Tyler and Ashley told me that attending nature camps and volunteering here was an important part of their childhood; the nature center was their second home. Ashley said,



“Everything I learned in camp was reinforced in my AP Environmental class in high school.” Ashley was just accepted at CSU and wants to major in Environmental Science, Environmental Engineering or Pre-Law with emphasis on water law. Tyler said, “Middle school is where your morals come into place and kids have to think about protecting the environment by not being wasteful. Through playing camp games like Ninja, Camouflage, and Fire in the Forest we made friends and learned to enjoy nature and animals too. Magic Spot taught us

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Give the Gift that Keeps On Giving



The plugged in world of the young generation isn't a positive habit for childhood happiness according to recent research. However, children in our nature camps often say, “This is the best day of my life!” You can encourage happiness by GIVING

generously to Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers this holiday season to support operations at Bear Creek and Fountain Creek Nature Centers. YOU are the reason that children and adults can connect to nature through our innovative, outdoor programs for thousands of people. Three ways to give:

- **Colorado Gives Day**, December 5 at www.ColoradoGives.org.
- The **year-end letter** in your mailbox.
- Donate at our website, www.elpasocountynaturecenters.com.

Thank you!

Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization and your contribution is tax deductible to the extent of the law.

Why Do We Give to the Nature Centers?

by Nancy Bernard and Todd Marts



Nature Centers Mission Statement: El Paso County Nature Centers connect people to their natural and cultural resources and inspire them to become stewards of the parks and our environment.

Jim and Anne Mariner raised their kids outside, took them camping and now they and the grandchildren are all campers too! The Mariner Family recognizes that not all children have the encouragement to spend time playing outdoors, so providing funds to the nature centers to make nature camps and outdoor programs available for them is crucial for people's physical and mental health. Jim and Anne have donated financially to the nature centers for over ten years! Why? Jim says, "The mission is important!" The Mariners understand that with urban sprawl comes the loss of habitat and bio-diversity as well as less access to wild places. That affects people as well as wildlife. The Mariner's message is, "We encourage others to give because it is important to pay it forward for the next generation." Thank you, Jim and Anne for your committed giving each year!



Sometimes as a father, I see other people's kids do something that I hope my boys may do some day. This happened recently with two of our volunteers' children. Anne Schofield, active volunteer and currently running for President of the Friends, has always been very supportive in a variety of roles. Her husband Jeff, while not an active volunteer, can be seen at special events helping where needed. When you talk with Jeff and Anne, you know they have a passion and love of the nature centers and our mission to connect and inspire. They have gone extra steps to understand the critical partnership between the Friends organization and El Paso County and how to move the organization forward. I was recently contacted by Mark, one of their sons, with questions about the Bear Creek Nature Center exhibits and funding needs. Jeff and Anne recently celebrated their 50th anniversary and Mark and his brother Dan wanted to make a donation in their honor. Their significant donation will be used to shape the family friendly Cub's Corner exhibit. What a wonderful statement of Jeff and Anne's parenting and their love of Bear Creek Nature Center. I am looking forward to sharing the new exhibit with the Schofields and thousands of parents and children. Thank you Jeff, Anne, Mark & Dan - Connect and Inspire!





How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

~Anne Frank



Volunteer Corner by Paula Megorden, Volunteer Consultant

School programs and special events have kept staff and volunteers busy at the nature centers this Fall. We thank all of our dedicated volunteers and extend our great appreciation to them for their endeavors.

Upcoming Volunteer Training

New Volunteer Orientation

- Saturday, January 20, 10 a.m.-12, Bear Creek Nature Center

Environmental Education Program Leader Training

- March of 2018

Big Event of the Year! Annual Recognition Night

- Thursday, March 15, 5-7 p.m., Fountain Creek Nature Center



Teen and adult volunteers help scoop pumpkins for the Jack-o-Lantern Trail at Fountain Creek Nature Center.

Please contact the Volunteer Consultant, Paula Megorden, to become a volunteer. bfcvolunteers@gmail.com 

Exhibits Update: Bear Creek

The long-awaited new exhibits at Bear Creek Nature Center are underway! The exhibit contract was awarded to Condit Exhibits of Denver, Colorado in September. Kick-off meetings, input from taxidermists, and aquarium specialists have already taken place. The exhibit goal of \$250,000 has also been reached. Now, sit back and watch the magic transformation begin! 

Exhibit Update: Fountain Creek

Through YOUR generosity and gifts from the Robert Mollo Estate, Friends of EPC Nature Centers, Fountain Valley Foundation, Fountain Historical Society, Kohl's and many others, we raised over \$42,000. The Cultural History Exhibit, "Fountain Creek is the Pathway of History" is on the path towards reality. Request for Proposals from exhibit companies is now with El Paso County Procurement and will be advertised in the coming weeks. 

Volunteer Highlight

Pat Leveille—A Warm Greeter *by Maria Petkash*

Thursday afternoon rolls around and you can expect to see volunteer, Pat Leveille, at Bear Creek or Fountain Creek Nature Centers' front desk. As of January 2018, Pat will have been volunteering with us for six years! Six loving, donated years of greeting guests with her warm smile and assisting with special events. Pat is a Colorado native who grew up on a farm near the Spanish Peaks. She first began her regular visits to Bear Creek with her two-year-old grandson, one of six grandchildren born to her and her high school sweetheart's three children. Pat went to college in Denver, but after marrying and having her first child, she pursued a nursing degree in California, where her husband was stationed with the Air Force. After four years it was time to move back to Colorado Springs. Here, she worked as a pediatric nurse at St. Francis, Eisenhower, and Penrose Hospitals. After having another two children, the Levelles moved to Germany, where Pat pursued another passion of hers—travel. It's a joy speaking with her about different foods and traditions. She fills my mind with dreams of world travel and new cultures. With hearts filled with love and joy, thank you for being a part of our nature center family, Pat!



Pat Leveille, smiling about volunteering!

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 to sit still and give our brains a rest so we could work better. Social media is designed to addict people so it is hard to make a practice of getting outside.” Ashley wants to create a nonprofit organization designed to get people outside. “It’s not just about money and power,” she said, “but about giving the next generation a life and a planet to sustain life.” We couldn’t agree more! Ashley recently authored a research paper indicating that with the Front Range population growth, parks in general need more funding to maintain trails and open space! They both said, “Keep doing what you’re doing! Educate young people by starting them off with outdoor fun and it creates a love of the outdoors.” You couldn’t stop us if you tried!

“It’s not just about money and power,” she said, “but about giving the next generation a life and a planet to sustain life.”
—Ashley Hamlin, Nature camp graduate & teen volunteer



2018 Pikes Peak Birding and Nature Festival
May 11-13



Meet Emily Henselin, New Interpretive Program Coordinator at Fountain Creek Nature Center

by Nancy Stone Bernard, Supervisor

Fountain Creek Nature Center is happy to welcome Emily Henselin as the new, full-time, Interpretive Program Coordinator. Emily and her husband moved to Colorado Springs from Wisconsin for her new adventure in the wetlands. Growing up in Chicago, Emily's parents made sure she visited plenty of nature within the city and also around the country. Canoeing the Kickapoo River in Wisconsin, exploring the temperate rain forest in Seattle, and biking around Lake Michigan were some of the early experiences that influenced her career path. Her journey has wound its way through many residential camps and even to Romania!

In her undergraduate education at Beloit College, she majored in sociology, loving to research and read about the underlying forces behind human behavior. During her sophomore year of college, a test to help determine career and life choices revealed that she loved the outdoors and sharing that love with others.

After many seasonal jobs in residential camps, but no degree in outdoor education, she decided to make herself more competitive for a permanent position, so graduate school was her next step. Now with a Master's degree in Natural Resources from University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, she has successfully placed the next piece of her career puzzle by joining El Paso County. She looks forward to event planning, trying out new ideas within an interpretive-based framework, administrative support and figuring out more pieces in her nature career puzzle.

In Emily's spare time she loves to cook, read mystery novels, play board games and hike. In her short time of living here she has already explored Seven Bridges, Section 16 and Palmer Park. Please make a point of welcoming her to our team!



Emily Henselin, at her new post at Fountain Creek Nature Center

Thanks For a Successful 3rd Annual Bear Run!



Fountain Creek Happenings

by Emily Henselin, Interpretive Program Coordinator



When was the last time you received a gift-wrapped present? Were you filled with anticipation about what might be inside of the lovely package? Did you admire the gift wrap and bow, perhaps thinking it was too beautiful to unwrap? Surprises can be delightful, and nature gives us many of them, sometimes wrapped in their own pretty little package that inspires awe and wonder in and of itself. One of the things we love to ask children on their field trips to the nature center is: “What do you wonder?” This question opens up a world of inquisitive thought, and sometimes they wonder, “What are those bumps on that plant?” Maybe you’ve noticed them too, those round lumps on plant stems or leaves that seem to have no relevance to the plant itself. Of course, if we’ve been lucky enough to have investigated and learned about the natural world, we may know that they are galls: homes for insect larva. Each type of gall is uniquely made by a different type of insect, its larva stimulating the plant growth into fascinating shapes. The gall in the picture accompanying this article is on the rabbitbrush plant, which lines parts of our trails. We have not been able to identify the insect larva within, but let us pose the question to you: “What type of insect do you think is inside?” Or better yet, “What do you wonder about this mysterious orb?” Keep your eyes open for nature’s little gifts, and give yourself time to wonder about what treasures may lie within.



Galls on rabbitbrush, gift wrapped for winter.



Bear Creek Sightings

by Berenice Amezcua, BCNC Seasonal Interpreter



Bear Creek Nature Center has had many recent wildlife sightings from bobcats to mule deer to black bears. The black bear is the only bear species in Colorado. Although they are referred to as *black* bears, they come in many different colors such as cinnamon, blonde, and brown. They are also known to have a blue-gray color to them! Bears typically enter hibernation in early November. They will eat anything in preparation for it. Mother bears often times forage for food with their cubs to teach them where to look for food. Bears unfortunately have learned to live off of human trash and sometimes forage in dumpsters. Here at Bear Creek

Nature Center, we found bear scat with a big purple balloon it in. Unfortunately, if a bear is caught interfering with humans twice, it will be put down by wildlife officials. We can do a lot to help keep bears wild. There are many ways we can bear-proof our home. One easy way is to take out your trash the morning it is picked up instead of the night before. This is an effective way to bear proof your home; and be careful to secure your balloons so they don't end up in a bear's stomach! Do your part to keep Colorado bears wild!



Rick's Cartoon



Did you check out the special
on the exit 132 off-ramp?

Interpretive Volunteer Rick Flores, keeps us laughing with humorous cartoons of his experiences at the nature centers.

**GOLD
HILL
MESA**
RE-ESTABLISHED 2005

**Gold Hill Mesa is
Bear Creek Nature Center's
"Partner in the Park."**



Winter Program Highlights



Pup Pictures with Santa Paws

Saturday, December 2, 10:00 AM-1:00 PM

Exploring CO's World of White with 2 Adventure Photographers

Friday, December 8, 7:00 PM

Active Adults: Paint Mines Photography Workshop

Saturday, December 9, 9-11:00 AM

Kids' Winter-iffic Night Out

Friday, January 12, 5:30-9:00PM

Winter Woodland Wonders Walk at Fox Run

Saturday, January 13, 10:00 AM

Warm Hearts Hike

Wednesday, February 21, 7:00 PM

Saturday Morning Hike & Campfire

Saturday, January 6, 10-11:30 AM

MLK Service Day

Saturday, January 20, 10:00 AM-Noon

Story Trail to Celebrate World Wetlands Day

Saturday, February 3, 10-11:30 AM

Night Sky Program

Friday, February 9, 7-8:30 PM

Family Nature Camp Day

Saturday, February 17, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

Kritter Karavan

Saturday, February 24, 10:00 AM-Noon

For a full listing of Winter programs, visit www.elpasocountynaturecenters.com