

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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Congratulations to Nancy Bernard, Mary Jo Lewis, Maria Petkash and Ian Wilson for winning the 2016 El Paso County Innovation Award presented at the Board of County Commissioners meeting on March 9.

“It’s unbelievable how much innovation we have within our community and our county,” said Board President Darryl Glenn. “We are a customer service organization. And these are teams and individuals that have really taken to heart the ability to give back and make all our lives easier.”

The team researched existing special events, festivals, and programs in the Pikes Peak region and looked for gaps in service. The Nature Center Innovative Programming Team worked diligently to successfully implement innovative programs and events for the residents in El Paso County. Their mission was to significantly expand the use of County Nature Centers through innovative programming that is valued by our residents and visitors. In addition, these innovations enhanced tourism opportunities and created new revenue streams to support operations.

With the wide diversity of programs and events in the Pikes Peak Region, it is a challenge to find something unique that will draw participants to the nature centers. The team was specifically recognized for the Fountain Creek Family Fun Day, Pikes Peak Birding and Nature Festival, Pumpkin Carving Party and Jack-o-Lantern Trail, Bear Creek’s Bear Run, Happy Trails and the Horse Drawn Wagon Rides and Santa Hikes. These events were enjoyed by 3,036 visitors and raised \$36,385.

I am proud to be a part of the team and am excited for 2017 and beyond! 🐾



Todd Marts, Nancy Bernard, Ian Wilson, Mary Jo Lewis, Maria Petkash

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Nature Centers*

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Nature Center**

320 Pepper Grass Lane

Fountain, CO 80817

719-520-6745

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elpasocountynaturecenters.com



Find Your Place In Fountain Creek History

by Nancy Stone Bernard

AN INVITATION TO GIVE

Fountain Creek Nature Center plans to install a new cultural history exhibit by the end of 2017 or early 2018. The exhibit entitled, **“Fountain Creek is the Pathway of History,”** will focus on the human history along Fountain Creek from early Ute Indian presence, French and Spanish explorers to agrarian settlers and railroaders to current environmental challenges. An esteemed advisory committee including Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum Curator of History, Leah Davis Witherow, Pikes Peak Community College History Professor, Katherine Sturdevant, Pikes Peak Library District, Pam Owens, and Ute Indian Elder, Austin Box have aided staff with planning and resources.

We have raised almost \$25,000 toward a \$35,000 goal. We need your help to finish the fundraising phase. Donations may be made to Friends of EPC Nature Centers. Giving Tree Recognition levels are:

◆ Gold leaf	\$500
◆ Silver Leaf	\$250
◆ Bronze Leaf	\$100
◆ Friend	\$_____

Mail your check to Fountain Creek Nature Center History Exhibit, 320 Pepper Grass Lane, Fountain, CO 80817.

See our video at: ww.elpasocountynaturecenters.com



2017 Festival Highlights

- Birding to the North Pole Seminar
- 2 trips to Brett Gray Ranch
- Trip to Chico Basin Ranch
- Trip to Fountain Valley School
- Insect Talk & Walk
- Venetucci Bird Walk
- Flamulated Owl Trip
- Photography with Bill Schmoker

Keynote by
Bill Schmoker

May 19-21,
2017



10th Annual Greenie *awards*



The 2017 Pikes Peak Earth Day Committee together with Veda Salons nominated **Fountain Creek Nature Center for a Greenie Award**. Other area organizations and individuals who work to raise environmental awareness were also nominated in a variety of categories. The Greenies were awarded at the 10th Annual Fashion Show & Greenie Awards hosted by Veda Salons on Saturday, April 29. Fountain Creek Nature Center won a second Greenie in the Community Category! Todd Marts, Nancy Bernard and Ian Wilson enjoyed their bodacious fashion show and were honored to win. Thanks to everyone who voted for us!



Thank you, Colorado Springs, for voting **Fountain Creek Nature Center the Best Field Trip**, Gold Award, in the Gazette's Best of the Springs Contest. Walk the Wetlands, Discover the Wetlands and Awesome Arthropods are FCNC's specialties. Book your field trip now at nancybernard@elpasoco.com.

A Celebration of Pollination! *by Mary Jo Lewis*



Did you know that approximately 75% of all flowering plants need the help of animals to move their pollen from plant to plant for fertilization? Some of these flowering plants are important food sources for humans and other animals. Many important pollinators are small insects doing jobs that have BIG impacts for us and other living things! On June 10th, **Bear Creek Nature Center** will host a **Pollinator Festival**, an opportunity to learn about and celebrate these beneficial beings.

The day's festivities will include puppet shows, a pollinator-themed art show and sale, games, educational activities, valuable take-home crafts like hummingbird and butterfly feeders, and guided hikes

to search for pollinators and some of the plants at Bear Creek that rely on them. In addition, we will offer a plant sale sponsored by **Rick's Garden Center** to help you create a pollinator-friendly-habitat in your own backyard. And of course, Pollinator Fest wouldn't be complete without visiting our resident bee colony to see what's buzzing in the hive! We hope you'll join us on June 10th between 10am and 3pm for our celebration of pollination! 🐾

Nature Night at Gold Hill Mesa—a Success!

Nature Night at Gold Hill Mesa on April 7 was an enjoyable and successful fundraiser for El Paso County Nature Centers adding \$1,272 to our revenue. Thank you to our volunteers, attendees, silent auction sponsors, and of course, Bear Creek Nature Center's **Partner in the Park, Gold Hill Mesa!** 🐾



Welcome New Seasonal Park Interpreters!

Old Friends, New Staff *by Maria Petkash*

Bear Creek Nature Center is ecstatic to announce the return of 2016 Seasonal, **Tyler Taylor**.

Tyler is currently in Colorado Springs, but will soon be moving back to her home town in northern Colorado. She received an associate's degree in wildlife biology and hopes to obtain her bachelor's at CSU Fort Collins in wildlife conservation. Go RAMS! During her lunch breaks, we often find Tyler water coloring, crocheting, or discussing the cool factor of tanning and taxidermy.

We are also excited to welcome 2013 volunteer inductee, **Jones LeFae**, to our staff. Jones has had her fair share of moving from Fresno, San Diego, and San Francisco, California, even jumping the pond to England. She has a bachelor's degree in anthropology from UCCS and recently earned her master's degree from UC Denver. Jones is also equipped with an associate's degree in art and her work has been sold in previous art shows at Bear Creek.

We cannot wait for Jones and Tyler's passion for art and outdoors to bring innovative and fun learning experiences to the public. Welcome to the team ladies! 🐾



Staff Migration *by Ian Wilson*

Migratory birds aren't the only thing making a return to Fountain Creek Nature Center.

Please help us welcome back **Tim Weaver**, Seasonal



Park Interpreter. Tim returned to educate, inspire, and share his love of the outdoors. When asked why he chose to return he said, "I came back because I missed the fulfillment I got from educating people about, and working with our natural environment." He added, "I enjoy working at the nature center for the same reason I was nervous about it at the beginning of my first season. THE KIDS! Once I learned to talk and interact with kids on an educational and interpretive level, I found endless joy in seeing their faces light up when I saw them care about nature as much as I do. When I see that glimmer in their eye, I know I just made a difference."

Please welcome Tim as he continues to spread his love of the outdoors with all who make their way through the doors of Fountain Creek Nature Center. 🐾

Volunteer Corner *by Paula Megorden, Volunteer Consultant*

Welcome to our new volunteers **Pat Grove, Judy Hood, Crysta Kehren, Jane Lawless and Sean McCorkle**. We appreciate your volunteer service and look forward to working with you.

- **Annual Recognition Night**— Good food, socializing and recognitions highlighted this annual event. Special recognition was awarded to **Mary Smith** for 40 years of service in 2017. **Jutta Carter, Risë Foster-Bruder, Russ Lambert, Bobbie Lewis, Sue Luenser, Eileen Somers and Lynn Wilson** were recognized for contributing over 200 hours of service in 2016. Thank you to all of our very dedicated volunteers.



Our very valued volunteers at the Annual Recognition Dinner

- **New Volunteer Orientation**—Saturday, May 13, 10:00 a.m.—12:00 Noon, Bear Creek Nature Center.
- **Environmental Education Program Leader Training**— Thank you to everyone who attended training in March. Our volunteers rekindled enthusiasm for upcoming spring programs and were treated with a visit from a Great Horned Owl at Fountain Creek Nature Center. The next training is in September.
- **Continuing Education**—Saturday, June 17, 9 a.m., Paint Mines Interpretive Park. Geology professor, Mark Izold will teach us about the beautiful colors and formations in this amazing gem.
- **Continuing Opportunities**—Please check with the nature centers for desk and program leader opportunities. We appreciate your assistance and so do the visitors!
- **Become a Volunteer**—If you are interested in becoming a volunteer please contact the Volunteer Consultant at bcfcvolunteers@gmail.com or Bear Creek or Fountain Creek Nature Center. 🐾

Harley the Heron's Makeover



Thanks to Interpretive Volunteers, Lenore Fleck and Eileen Somers for giving FCNC's well-worn heron puppet a complete makeover! It was a colossal effort!





Fountain Creek Happenings by Tim Weaver, FCNC Seasonal Park Interpreter

At Fountain Creek Nature Center spring is in full swing. One of the most definite signs of spring is the arrival of dozens of spring migratory birds. They are here for our number one resource, water! Wetlands are an invaluable resource for these cross country travelers. One could think of our wetland as an exit on the migration highway, with all the lodging, food, and drink a migrant could need. One of the more notable species moving through is perhaps the largest as well—the American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*). These magnificent, huge birds with their 9 foot wingspans, are riding warm thermal layers from wetland to wetland, heading for their summer breeding grounds in the northern United States and the interior of Canada. Their journey began in areas such as the southern Californian, Texan, and Mexican coasts. As they move along they stop at wetlands like ours for a short while to eat and rest. Their large bill and huge throat pouch enable them to catch many fish, hence the saying, “What a wonderful bird is the pelican, his beak can hold more than his belly can.” It is a real treat to see our temporary residents that stop at Fountain Creek Regional Park, so come down soon, before they all move on! 🐾



American White Pelicans on the nature center pond.



Bear Creek Sightings by Tyler Taylor, BCNC Seasonal Park Interpreter

Winter is beginning to melt away, revealing fresh buds on our willows and cottonwood trees. Everything smells fresh and clean. Take five minutes outside our front doors and listen to the myriad of birds singing away and hummingbirds buzzing around, defending their feeders full of sugar water. On a



Young mulie growing into its big ears!

hike with a school group today, we saw an entire herd of mule deer. Their young from last year are almost old enough to leave the herd, but they still need to grow into their huge ears! Two of last year's fawns are beginning to grow antlers this year and we watched them nudge at each other with their newfound head-ware. The mule deer are really enjoying the fresh buds on the low growing shrubs and almost every trail is riddled with their tracks as they search for more tasty things to eat. It will be exciting to watch them change through the seasons! 🐾

El Paso County Nature Centers
245 Bear Creek Rd.
Colorado Springs, CO 80906

Rick's Cartoon Corner



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



Summer Program Highlights

Pollinator Festival & Pollinator Plant Sale

Saturday, June 10, 10:00 AM-3:00 PM

Moonlight Storytelling Hike at Fox Run

Friday, July 7, 7:30 PM

Nature on Tap at Fossil Craft Beer Company

Wednesday, July 19, 5-8:00 PM

Bear Creek Nature Center Plant Walk

Saturday, July 22, 9-10:30 AM

Active Adults Series: Clear Spring Ranch Hike

Saturday, August 12, 9-11:30 AM

Happy Trails BBQ

Friday, August 25, 6-9:00 PM

Forests & Families

Saturday, Jun 17, 10-11:30 AM

Firefly Celebration & Night Hike

Friday, July 7 & Saturday, July 8, 7:30-9:00 PM

Wildlife Gardens & Backyard Habitats

Saturday, July 8, 10-11:30 AM

Are There Fish in Fountain Creek?

Saturday, July 15, 10-11:30 AM

Fountain Creek 25th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday, July 29, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

Fountain Creek Treasure Hunt—Intro to Letterboxing

Saturday, August 19, 9:00-11:00 AM

For a full listing of Summer programs visit www.elpasocountynaturecenters.com