

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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5th Annual Bear Run-- *An Anniversary Worth Noting* by Mary Jo Lewis



Bear-ly making it to the finish line

On November 9, the trails of Bear Creek were teeming with 250 bears—barreling bears in a hurry and ambling bears that don't care how fast they get there. All of them were raising funds for Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers by participating in the 5th Annual Bear Run. In honor of five years, this year's run offered a 3k and a 5k course. This year's run had more participants than ever!

There are good reasons for the popularity of this event. It is a unique opportunity to experience the camaraderie of running on beautiful trails with hundreds of other bears. Prior to the run, participants limbered up with a family-friendly yoga class, participated in a costume contest to see who embellished their suit the best, enjoyed tunes by 103.9 RXP's

Morning Show host Summer Justice, warmed up with hot chocolate, had their faces painted like a bear, and visited Sponsor and Partner tables for information and fun giveaways. And the fun didn't end when the run was done. Participants headed over to Black Bear Diner in their bear suit to receive a free entrée!

This year's Sponsors included **Black Bear Diner** and **103.9 RXP** (both of whom have been Sponsors since the first year of the run), **OMtastic Yoga**, **Mountain Equipment Recyclers** and **Gold Hill Mesa**. The Sponsors really go the extra mile for this event. All were in attendance to chat with runners at their tables and some are even participated in the run!

We can *bear-ly* wait for this wonderful community event next year!



Papa, Baby, and Mama Bear with Goldilocks

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Nature Center**

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**Fountain Creek
Nature Center**

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Fountain, CO 80817
719-520-6745

Editor: Nancy Bernard

www.elpasocountynaturecenters.com



Why Do We Give to the Nature Centers? Featuring John Bruder & Risë Foster- Bruder An interview by Nancy Bernard

Risë and John have been solid financial supporters of and active volunteers with the El Paso County Nature Centers for longer than I can remember. Recently I had the opportunity to ask them why they feel that giving is so critical. Right off the bat John emphatically stated that, "It is important to support both of our El Paso County Nature Centers because of the impact they have on our community. It is a relaxing place to visit, especially if you still work. To see the birds and nature right in the middle of the city is special. When Fountain Creek Nature Center was expanding we felt it was important to support that effort. We've enjoyed bringing our kids and grandkids (to the nature centers) and we want to pass these special places on to the next generation."



John Bruder & Risë Foster-Bruder, happy donors!

Risë continued with the same emphasis. "Having been a high school teacher, I understand that schools are mandated to do certain classroom academics. Oftentimes "extras" get cut out like going outside. Students need a place to go and learn about nature and ecology, and the nature centers fill that niche." As an active Interpretive Volunteer and field trip leader for over a decade, Risë is amazed when a student says, "I've never seen a deer." She says, "As busy as we are as a society and connected to electronics, kids (and adults) often fail to notice the flowers blooming, seeds popping, or the deer, bobcats and birds. It's important to take time to sit, watch, relax and learn to see our home, our ecosystems."

I asked them what they would say to others who were considering a financial gift to the nature centers. Risë replied, "A decent, celebratory dinner out at a

Continued on next page

restaurant costs at least \$50 for a two-hour experience. Imagine what \$50 or more put toward the nature centers could do—expand exhibits, support new programming, fund the new proposed northern nature center!” She added, “Visiting the nature centers isn’t just a one-time shot. You can come back many times and keep learning more and more because the nature centers are constantly updating!”

John and Risë recently brought their granddaughters to Fountain Creek Nature Center where the children were captivated by trying on the bumblebee costume, bonnets, and more. The photo record of the children learning through play became a shared family treasure in frames and digitally. “You can’t *not* learn when you’re at the nature centers!”



The grandchildren learning at FCNC

An Enduring Investment

Please consider a year-end gift to the Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers and be like John and Risë. Here are some ways to give:

- Donate at our website, www.elpasocountynaturecenters.com, click on “**Donate.**”
- Look for the **Year-end letter** in your mailbox, enclose a check or credit card information.
- Come visit the nature centers and put your donation in the donation boxes.

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.

Special Holiday Events

Bear Creek Nature Center



Bear Creek by
Candlelight
Friday, December 6,
5:00-8:00 p.m.



Fountain Creek Nature Center

Nature Hikes with
Santa & Wagon Rides
Saturdays, December
14 & 21.
Times vary.



“Our task
must be to
free
ourselves...
by
widening
our circle
of
compassion
to embrace
all living
creatures
and the
whole of
nature and
its beauty.”

~Albert
Einstein

Volunteer Corner

Welcome new volunteers Claire Evangelist, Jim Hammer, Melanie Helton, Kara Laszczyk, Coral Marts, Diane Salkovich, Brooks Stevenson, and Susan Visintin! Thank you for choosing Bear Creek and Fountain Creek Nature Centers' volunteer program.



New volunteers Susan Visintin, Paula Clifton, (Nancy Bernard, staff) Coral Marts, Diane Salkovich, Kara Laszczyk

by Paula Megorden, Volunteer Consultant

This is a great place to volunteer and we know you will enjoy your experience.

Training—Environmental Education

Training was held on October 1st at Bear Creek Nature Center and October 3rd at Fountain Creek Nature Center.

Participants are now shadowing, leading, and inspiring their first groups of school children to discover the fun and exciting outdoor world.

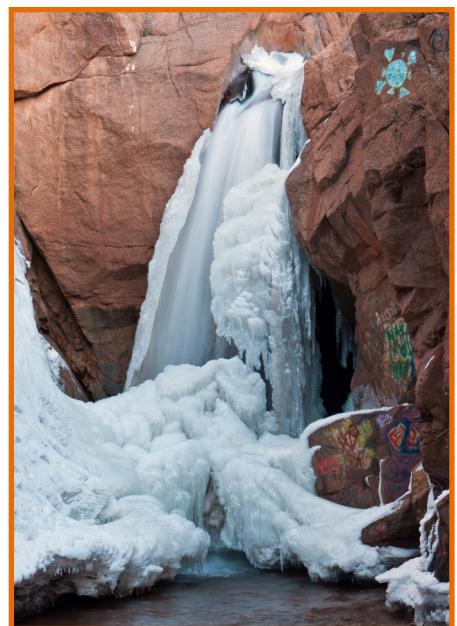
Please check the *Program and Events* brochure for programs of interest to you; up to 6 hours of continuing education credit may count toward the minimum annual contribution of 40 hours.

Become a Volunteer—Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact the Volunteer Consultant at bcfcvolunteers@gmail.com or either nature center.

Recreation Roundup

by Theresa Odello, Recreation Coordinator

It seems that all at once, fall collapsed into winter! While I am still trying to hold on to the changing colors of the leaves, I think of all the fun programs and events that occurred this Fall season. The Family Cornhole Tournament at Fountain Creek Regional Park had the largest turnout yet and delivered over \$400 worth of prizes to the winning cornhole teams. The National Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day was a success as over 50 kids came to learn how to mountain bike at Fox Run Regional Park. Finally, Rainbow Falls Historic Site wrapped up its season with 5,141 visitors in the Fall, contributing to a total of 30,925 visitors for the year. When the site re-opens in April 2020, there will be two new interpretative signs to discover. Recreation events that are coming up in winter include: Photography workshop at Rainbow Falls on January 11, Winter Waterfall Viewing at Rainbow Falls on February 8, Winter Hobby Wine Competition in February, Wine Tasting Event on February 15, and more. Stay tuned for more fun recreation events!



A frozen Rainbow Falls

Volunteer Highlight

Micheline Perreault: A Welcome Smile

by Paula Megorden, Volunteer Consultant



Roller Bear & Micheline
think they come once a week and she was so surprised when I remembered her son's name. Everybody likes to feel acknowledged."

A welcome greeting with a warm smile awaits you when Micheline is volunteering at Bear Creek Nature Center. She decided to volunteer after a walk in Bear Creek Park led her to the trails, the quietness, and nature. A volunteer at heart, she already volunteered at the Food Pantry at her Parish and at the Marian House. You may notice her French accent. She grew up in Baie Comeau, North East Quebec, Canada. Summers on the beach, access to fishing, hunting, skiing, canoeing, and hiking drew her to an enjoyment of the outdoors. With her husband Dan, she rafted the Grand Canyon, skied Whistler and visited Paris. When their children were younger, they visited her family in Canada every summer. Other travels included Puerto Rico, Cuba, Paris and they have lived in Louisiana, Texas, Kansas and Canada. Once in awhile she meets somebody who speaks French. But she also recalls other special experiences with visitors. "There is a lady who comes with her 5-year old. I

What does Micheline most enjoy about volunteering? She meets people from all over the country and enjoys the caring and upbeat staff and the great programs they offer. "It is important to try to make people feel welcomed and it is good for the heart to give a smile and receive one."

Thank you, Micheline, for your welcoming smile and for being a superb volunteer.

New Winter Seasonal Interpreter at Fountain Creek

by Nancy Bernard

Please welcome Emily McDermott, the newest addition to the Fountain Creek Nature Center staff.

Emily was born and raised in Massachusetts, has lived on both coasts, and now calls land-locked Colorado her home for almost a year. She graduated from the University of New Hampshire with a degree in Zoology in 2014. Since then her professional experiences have included an internship at Pinnacles National Park in Hollister, California, where she served as the Community Outreach Ambassador reaching new audiences for the park; a year working for AmeriCorps on Cape Cod for the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). While there she was an integral part of rescuing dolphins who became beached due to extremes in sea level. Wearing dry suits and lifting them onto stretchers, her team released the animals back to their watery world. Since moving to Colorado, although not a coastal state, she likes the easy access to trails and being able to be in the mountains in fifteen minutes. When asked what she likes most about working at Fountain Creek Nature Center she says, "I love sharing in people's excitement in learning and discovering new things and especially the field trips!" We are excited to have Emily on our team!



Emily McDermott, Winter Seasonal

Fall Events: Harvest Festival & Pumpkin Carving & Jack Trail

On Saturday, October 12, the community center of **Gold Hill Mesa**, Bear Creek Nature Center's **Partner in the Park**, was filled with thousands of people enjoying the many attractions of a **Fall Harvest Festival**. This is the second year Bear Creek has partnered with Gold Hill Mesa for this popular community event, which boasts attractions such as a free concert by Americana band Thunder and Rain, pony rides, petting zoo, pumpkin patch (what fall festival would be complete without one?) as well as craft and food vendors.

Gold Hill Mesa provided the music and attractions while nature center staff and volunteers managed various stations to serve the crowds of people that came out on a beautiful day to enjoy a family-friendly event. This one-day event raised **\$6,750** that will help the nature centers carry out their mission. Thank you to Gold Hill Mesa for a successful event and wonderful partnership!



Harvest Festival, Gold Hill Mesa

The **Pumpkin Carving Party and Jack-o-Lantern Trail** event on Saturday, October 26 at Fountain Creek Nature Center, was an overwhelming success! The two events welcomed almost **1,700** people! We surpassed attendance and revenue records



Punkin' pickin' volunteers & staff as well. We were lucky that the weather held out giving us a beautifully warm day before the winter storms. Traffic was backed up ½ a mile on Highway 85 waiting to get in!

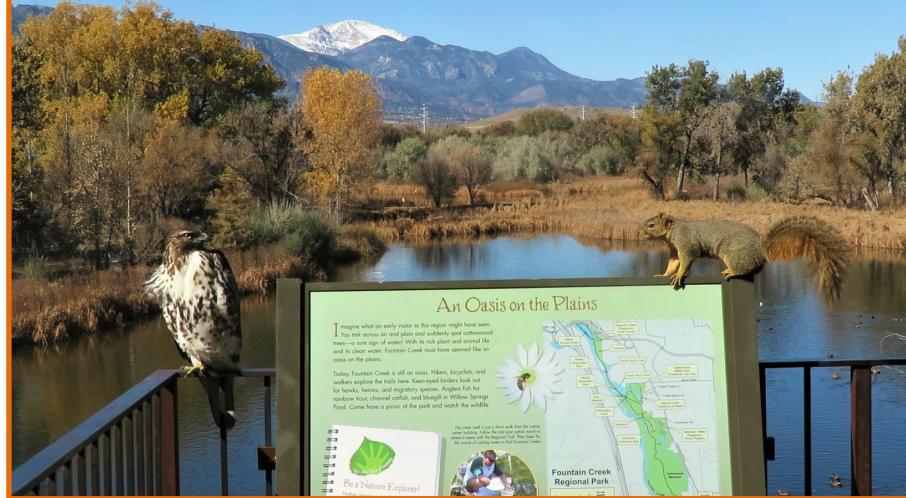
Shout outs to **Sally and Rex Miller, Shane Milberger of Milberger Farms** for donating 200 pumpkins for the event; pumpkin pickers **Rex and Sally Miller, Diane and Rick French and grandson, Rory, Spencer Hogan, and Winstead Family**; Pumpkin Carving volunteers: **Jessica Davis & the Colorado Springs Utilities Volunteers, Glenda Leonard and the KOHL's Associates**, and nature center volunteers **Jacqueline Jones, Rene Chatham, Mary Taylor** and family, and our **teen** volunteers, **David and Calista**. Thanks to **Tyler of Sunbelt Rentals** for donating two light towers; nature center volunteers **Tyler and Jessica Stuart, Sue Wilson** at Admissions alongside staff, **the Hartzel Family** for facilitating the marshmallow roasting; **the Winstead Family** for facilitating the Touch Table, to **Brenda McCreight and Sue Luenser** for storytelling at Rabbit Gulch Theater, **Kleist Family** for keeping the crafts organized; to **Alex with PPCC Wild Things** for bringing the creepy animals, **Eileen Somers** as Trail Monitor, **Risë Foster-Bruder and John Bruder** for managing the nature center desk and taking photographs.

The events raised almost **\$9,000** for the nature centers. Thanks to everyone who attended!



Fountain Creek Happenings

by Jessica Miller



Who's stalking who? Juvenile Red-tailed hawk and Fox squirrel face off.

relaxing on our back deck, spooking the small mammals under the bird feeders, and annoying the adult red-tails in the area. One morning he swooped past seasonal interpreter Emily so closely that she couldn't help but duck! He seems to have his limits though. One day while surveying the bobcat's "prey buffet" of bird feeders, a fox squirrel challenged him to a stare-down which resulted in a draw. Hopefully this tough guy will keep learning the ropes and settle down here at Fountain Creek so we can enjoy his antics for a while!



Bear Creek Sightings

by Ellie Hopkins Brown

This summer we installed Bear Creek Nature Center's newest exhibit, a video microscope called the MicroEye, made possible by a donation from Catherine Quail in memory of her brother Patrick. Ever since it was first plugged in, visitors and staff alike have been enthralled with the unique perspectives it can offer. Visitors have studied pinecones, rocks, insects, and more using this new technology. The looks of amazement can be found on faces of every age as they see for the first time the fragile scales that make up a butterfly's wings or the delicate hairs that cover a beetle's legs. One memorable story came this fall when a family was studying a gall on a willow leaf (a gall is the growth that results from insects laying their eggs on plants). Suddenly, the staff heard excited voices and exclamations coming from the exhibit room. Sure enough, the family was witnessing an insect larva beginning to emerge from its chamber within the gall! We all watched in wonder as the larva chewed itself an opening, its head nearly invisible to the naked eye but enlarged into extraordinary detail under the MicroEye. After watching it work for a short while, we were sure to bring the gall back outside so that the larva would be able to find food and survive. If you haven't yet had the chance to check out the MicroEye at Bear Creek Nature Center, be sure to stop by soon – and prepare to be wowed!



Eye-popping magnification with MicroEye



Partners in the Park:

**Gold Hill Mesa for Bear Creek Nature Center
Olson Plumbing & Heating for Fountain Creek Nature Center**

THANK YOU!

Winter Program Highlights



Film Screening of Teton Gravity Research's: *Winterland*
Thursday, December 12, 6:30 p.m.

Family Yoga: Animal Theme!
Saturday, January 25, 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Winter Fun at Fox Run (Regional Park)
Saturday, February 1, 10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.

Sustainability Series: Back to Nature with Essential Oils
Saturday, February 29, 12:00-3:00 p.m.

Full Moon Kids' Night Out at Bear Creek
Friday, January 10, 5:30-9:00 p.m.

A Valentine's Evening in Nature
Friday, February 14, 6:00-8:30 p.m.

Jr. Bird Club
Saturday, December 7, 8:00—11:00 a.m.

Morning Hike & Campfire
Saturday, January 4, 10:00 a.m.—11:30 a.m.

Wolf Moon Hike
Friday, January 10, 7:00—9:00 p.m.

Live Birds of Prey!
Saturday, January 25, 10:00—11:00 a.m.

Valentine's is For the Birds
Saturday, February 15, 10:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

Trolls in the Woods STEM Competition
Saturday, February 29, 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

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