

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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Thank you Nancy Stone Bernard!

by Todd Marts, Recreation & Cultural Services Manager



Nancy & Todd at CAEE Awards Banquet

One of my most challenging aspects of managing the nature centers is when an integral team member departs. To say Nancy Stone Bernard was integral, is an understatement. She was the constant for me and our Division at Fountain Creek Nature Center for fifteen years. I knew that she always had the mission in her heart, and I trusted that the nature center was in great hands.

While impossible to list all her accomplishments, there are several that must be mentioned. The nature center expansion and new exhibits were so successful because of Nancy's drive for

perfection and focus on providing the maximum space and interpretive opportunities for the public. Her leadership, depth of knowledge, and love of the natural and cultural resources brought understanding and joy to thousands through nature camps, environmental education field trips, and special events. And maybe most importantly, Nancy connected Fountain Creek Nature Center to the surrounding communities and forged a relationship for generations to come!

At the recent Park Advisory Board meeting, Nancy spoke of her time at the Fountain Creek Nature Center. She did what good interpreters do and had a common thread for her time at the podium. She spoke of the "Nature Center Miracles." Well I think I can speak for all of us... You were a Nature Center Miracle! Thank you!

Bird Festival Update by Jessica Miller, FCNC



At 10:00 a.m. on March 27th, dozens of birders from El Paso County and beyond sat at their computers ready to claim their spots in the amazing Pikes Peak Birding and Nature Festival. Within hours, many trips were at capacity. At the time of this print, 175 people are registered for a variety of field trips, virtual seminars ...continued on page 5

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Editor: Nancy Bernard

elpasocountynaturecenters.com



Message from Friends of EPC Nature Centers President, by Risë Foster-Bruder



EPC Friends President, Risë Foster-Bruder

For this president's message, I would like to recognize Nancy Stone Bernard as she retires. I became a docent back in 2002 and have worked with Nancy since she joined the nature center staff in 2006.

Through the years we have butted heads, shared many fun times, and earned each other's respect. I appreciated her perspective and often discussed some issue or another with her. She always gave me an honest opinion and helped me make the best decision.

She has been instrumental in developing and improving Fountain Creek Nature Center, and she will be greatly missed.

At her Park Advisory Board recognition, Nancy named many people as a "nature center miracle". She didn't include herself in that category so I am doing it now. Fountain Creek Nature Center went from being in danger of closing to nearly tripling in size. She created state recognized programs and made sure the natural and cultural history of the area was included in the center's story telling.

There isn't enough space to tell her complete story, but know that her professionalism and attention to detail have raised the bar for all of us.

Good-bye, Nancy. Enjoy the free time and I hope to see you back as a volunteer soon.



A rare photo of Nancy and Risë together with volunteer Judy Gearhart and Risë's husband John Bruder at the Grand re-opening of FCNC, 2014.

Volunteer Corner *by Paula Megorden, Volunteer Consultant*

Please welcome our newest volunteers, **Megan Holzapfel, Kathy Roemer, Ken Serafin, Hannah Crosby, Autumn Moser and Marlys Sowell**. They are joining our wonderful volunteers who are truly an asset to the nature centers. It is nice to see familiar faces at the information desks and helping with special events. The assistance of all of our volunteers is greatly appreciated!

The **Annual Interpretive Volunteer Recognition** is **May 21, 2-4 p.m.** at Bear Creek Regional Park. It will be held in the large pavilion on the west side of 21st St. with plenty of space to social distance, enjoy snacks, visit with fellow volunteers and recognize volunteer efforts for 2020. Look for invitations in the mail in early May.

Volunteers interested in leading environmental education programs are welcome to shadow programs. Contact the nature center staff to find out dates and times.

Please check the *Program and Events* brochure for programs of interest to you. Staff is scheduling some very innovative programs, so feel free to enjoy.

Become a Volunteer-

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



New volunteer Ken Serafin, working at Fountain Creek Nature Center

Volunteer Highlight

Geoff Dunn: A Passion for the "Woods"

by Paula Megorden, Volunteer Consultant



Geoff assisting nature campers with building nesting boxes

Retiring from a career in cabinet making and wood crafting, Geoff discovered volunteer opportunities at the nature centers. He enjoys interacting with people in the outdoors, watching their faces light up as they learn to enjoy, appreciate, and protect our natural world.

One of his most cherished moments was escorting a very shy 6-year old girl at Bear Creek Nature Camp. By the last two days of camp she was involved on her own. Her parents asked what he did to cause such a change in her. He simply said, "I provided her the protection she needed...until she was ready to walk on her own".

Geoff and his family have traveled extensively through the years in the US and Canada and have seen many amazing things, especially while hiking, rock hunting and getting "lost" on the back roads. This summer's travels will take them to Maine by whatever course suits their fancy, framed around visits to their grandchildren.

Of all the memories he treasures, the ones that leave the greatest impression are the ones in a setting with only sights and sounds of Mother Nature in all her glory. "Those often took my breath away and left an indelible impression on my soul".

Thank you, Geoff, for bringing to the nature centers your enthusiasm for the outdoors, your expertise, and appreciation of the "woods" of our natural world.

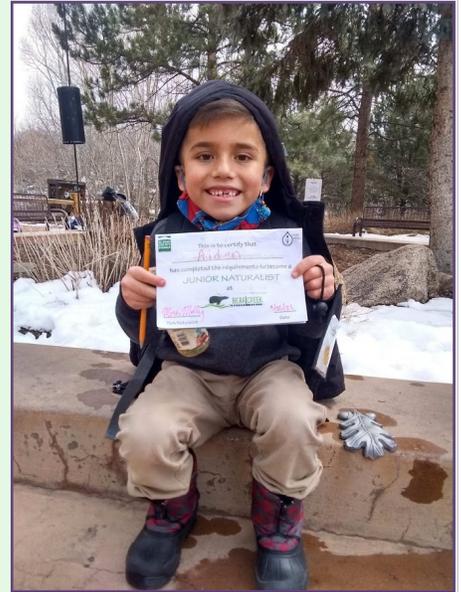


Nature Camper Profile

by Molly Hamant Takeute, BCNC Interpretive Program Coordinator

Name: Aiden Hulvey
Age & Grade: 7 years old, 2nd grade
Years in Nature Camp: 1 year

The first time Aiden walked through our doors for our Spring Break Nature Camp, he walked in with so much enthusiasm and joy, we knew he would fit right in. Although this was his first camp with us, Aiden has made his way confidently into our Nature Camp family. Every morning while reviewing our camp expectations, Aiden was sure to tell us that we should have a positive attitude, often saying, “Just be happy to be here! Be happy to be alive!” That positive attitude along with the joy that Aiden brought with him every day allowed him to really be “all in” for every activity, craft, game, and discussion we did together. Throughout each day, Aiden’s smile was infectious—even behind that mask.



Aiden at Jr. Naturalist Ceremony

When asked his favorite part of Nature Camp, Aiden told us, “Probably playing camouflage or the other games.” Aiden went on to tell me that other kids should go to nature camp to “learn lots about taking care of and respecting nature which is super important.” It has been an absolute joy getting to know Aiden, and we look forward with glee to see him return to camp again and again!

Rick's Cartoon



Rick Flores, an Interpretive Volunteer, keeps us laughing!

Summer Nature Camps
1st-8th Graders ~ Outdoor Adventures ~ Hikes
Songs ~ Crafts ~ Nature Games ~ T-shirts

Bear Creek Nature Center 719.520.6387
Fountain Creek Nature Center 719.520.6745
Fox Run Regional Park 719.520.6745
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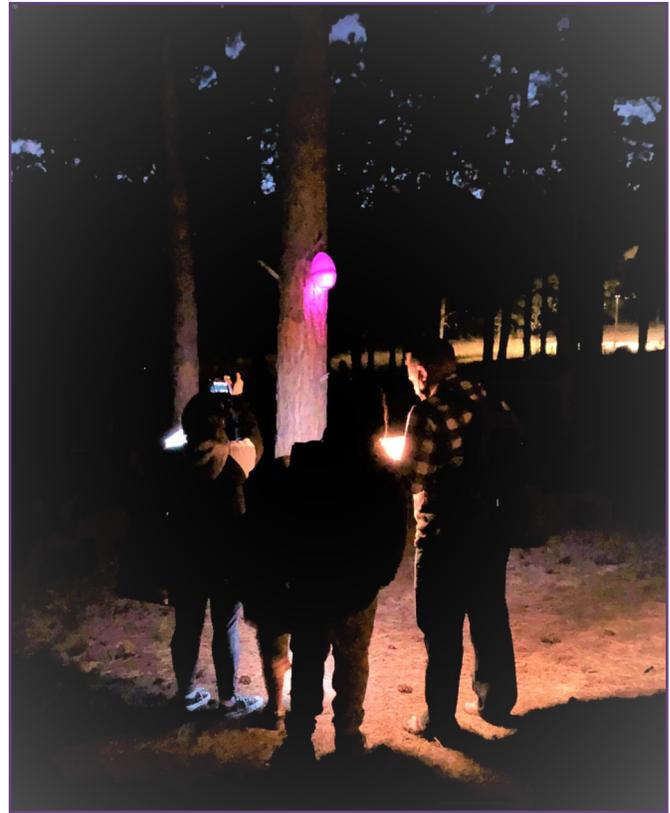
An EGGcellent Time! *By Mary Jo Lewis, BCNC Supervisor*

For years, Bear Creek and Fountain Creek Nature Centers have hosted annual Chocolate Bunny Egg Hunt events, which bring joy to hundreds of families and children. Bear Creek staff hoped to bring the same merriment and excitement of an egg hunt to an older audience this year, which led to a new program—the **Nighttime EGGstravaganza** at Fox Run Regional Park.

This experience offered a mix of education and traditional egg hunting...in the dark! Teams of participants were supplied with a booklet of color-coded natural history questions upon check-in. Their goal was to travel the trails, finding glow-in-the-dark eggs along the way. The eggs contained the answers they needed to complete their booklet and earn their prizes.

The event was filled to capacity with four waves, proving that there was indeed a market among an older audience for an egg hunt with a twist! A surprise event soundtrack was provided by resident Great Horned Owls high in the Ponderosa pine trees who called to each other as the egg hunters searched below. (Can we book them for next year?!)

One participant shared their gratitude with the following comment, “It was a wonderful event that the whole family enjoyed. Our kids LOVED it!! We learned quite a bit at each station! Thank you for putting it on!” Looks like this event will be a new EGGcellent annual tradition!



Glow in the dark egg hunt at Fox Run Park

Continued from page 1... and workshops, and the Birds and Brews happy hour event. This 6th annual festival is packed with opportunities to be led by experienced local birding guides across the variable habitats that makes our area such a birding hotspot. From prairies and ranchlands through riparian cottonwoods and creeks and into the mountains past Pikes Peak, this festival gives hard-core birders and casual nature enthusiasts the opportunity to see all the landscapes and species El Paso County has to offer. No wonder most field trips are full! There are a few programs left to register for, so check them out at www.pikespeakbirdingandnaturefestival.org.

pikespeakbirdingandnaturefestival.org



Nancy's Farewell Message



My heart overflows with gratitude for so many people, volunteers, staff past and present, nature camper families, members of the public, and local partners. Thank you for entrusting your children to me and partnering with us to bring top notch environmental and cultural education experiences to our community. These fifteen years have been the most challenging and rewarding years of my professional career since coming to the Pikes Peak Region in 1979 to do my college internship. You have enriched my life immensely.

Nature is here to continue to support us and teach us what we need to know if we will just listen and learn. I have confidence that our youth who have spent their days at the nature centers will be effective leaders and shining examples of what it means to be stewards of the parks and our environment. They know that “where there is water there is life.”

I am honored to have served you. Ubuntu is a Zulu word that has been defined, “I am because we are.” Indeed.

Happy trails always, ~Coyote
Be kind to each other and to the planet.



Nancy (Coyote)

Recreation Round-up by Theresa Odello, Recreation Coordinator

Did you know that 88% of cardiac arrests occur at home? When provided immediately after sudden cardiac arrest, CPR can double or triple a victim's chance of survival, but only 32% of cardiac arrest victims outside a hospital get CPR. Invest in life and take a CPR/First Aid/AED course offered through your local nature center so you can help save the life of a loved one.

Also, invest in your personal health by joining us for the **El Paso Pacers** walks or for the **50k for 50 Years hikes to celebrate El Paso County Park's 50th Anniversary!** The El Paso Pacers are geared for “seasoned adults” and enjoy a walk on the third Thursday of every month. 50k for 50 Years participants have already logged 9km at the Paint Mines and Homestead Ranch Regional Park, and we have the Palmer Divide Trail hike coming up soon. Join us for these hikes or do them on your own to celebrate 50 years of parks! <https://communityservices.elpasoco.com/parks-and-recreation/el-paso-county-parks-50th-anniversary/>

As we look forward to the summer, be sure to check out the Concerts in the Park at El Paso County Parks, including **Wednesday night jazz concerts at Bear Creek Regional Park**, and **Thursday concerts at Fox Run Regional Park and Homestead Ranch Regional Park**. If you have little ones, don't miss the **Tiny Tot Games on June 26**, which will introduce a variety of sports geared for children ages 2 to 6 years old. Stay tuned for more fun recreation events!



CPR class demonstration



Fountain Creek Happenings *by Andy Talley, FCNC Interpreter*



Fence lizard warming in the sun

As the year progresses, I am looking forward to spending more time with friends. I am not talking about the end of our recent pandemic. I am talking about the coming of spring. To a nature nut like me, spring is a wonderful series of reunions with friends that I have not seen for months.

For me, a spring hike is a search for old friends. At the pond, I might see turtles basking in the sun, or frogs sitting in the shallows as Pied-billed Grebes, Blue-winged Teals, and Cinnamon Teals swim among the cattails. Fence lizards greet me, scurrying along the rocks. Overhead a turkey vulture circles high in the sky. Orioles say hello from the trees and hummingbirds flit among the earliest flowers.

Others who saw me may have thought that I was hiking alone. They have no idea how many friends I saw along the way.

On a warm day, fence lizards can often be seen sunning themselves on rocks and fences, of course. They, like most other reptiles, spend the winter in a state of dormancy similar to hibernation. For reptiles, we call it brumation. If you see them in the early spring, sit quietly and observe them for a minute. Sometimes they will do what looks like lizard calisthenics—push-ups, tail lifts, and head bobbing. They are not just exercising after a winter of slumber, but putting on a territorial display to warn off rivals or attract a mate.

Bear Creek Sightings *by Autumn Moser, BCNC Interpreter*



Spring is here and one of the best signs of spring at Bear Creek are the birds! There is one in particular that really knows how to make an entrance. Have you ever heard a bird call that sounds like it is laughing at you? Or heard what sounds like drilling on the side of your home or a nearby telephone pole? You could be hearing a Northern Flicker. Being part of the Woodpecker family, it is no wonder they are so noisy!

Now, why would they want to make so much noise? It's really for love! The louder they are, the better chance they have of attracting a mate. They will also make noise to defend their territory. The sounds they make aren't the only striking thing about them. Northern Flickers are usually a brownish color adorned with black spots and a black crescent on their breast. Depending on where you live, they can also have bright red or yellow on the undersides of their wings and tail feathers. Northern Flickers are fun birds to watch for and listen to, so be on the lookout for these noisy neighbors, especially in spring!



Northern Flickers drumming their hearts out!

To combat COVID-19 all programs are tentative. Please call or check on-line for up to date information about programs.

Nature Center Summer Program Highlights



Forest Bathing Walk

June 12 & 26, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Kids' Night Out: Creek Night

Friday, June 18, 5:30-9:00 p.m.

Preschool Creek Adventure

Saturday, July 24, 10:-11:30 a.m.

Essential Oils for Immune Support and Travel

Saturday, August 7, 1:00-3:30 p.m.

Family Animal Yoga with Peaceful Warriors

Saturday, August 14, 10:00-11:15 a.m.

Honeybee Celebration Day

Saturday, August 28, 10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

Eco-Caching in EPC Parks

On your own all summer! Register to receive coordinates. Prizes!

Fountain Creek Adult Birding Club

Once/month Thursday classroom session & Saturday field trip. (wait list)

Annual Firefly Celebration & Night Hike

Friday, July 9 & 10, 7:30-9:00 p.m.

Wisdom, Wood, & Wine

Saturday, July 17, 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Monarch Magic

Saturday, August 14, 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Jr. Bird Club

Saturday, August 28, 8:00-11:00 a.m.

Paint Mines Interpretive Park *by Theresa Odello, Recreation Coordinator*

Have you been to **Paint Mines Interpretive Park**? Since the pandemic we have noted exceptionally heavy use of the park by visitors. While we love that the park is getting more loved, sometimes visitors are unintentionally damaging the formations that are millions of years old. Luckily, we are now able to have a Park Caretaker/Interpreter at the site to educate visitors about the geology and cultural history of the area, encourage them to use the park wisely, and to preserve it for generations to come. Take the drive out to Calhan to visit these fantastic geological formations including spires and hoodoos that form through erosive action that creates incised gullies and exposed layers of selenite clay and jasper. Be sure to bring your camera to take some colorful pictures of these geological formations, or better yet, sign up for a photography class at the mines and get tips on what is needed to take amazing photographs there. The park includes a restroom facility, four miles of trails, interpretive signage, and many natural wonders.



Partners in the Park for Bear Creek & Fountain Creek Nature Centers



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