

NATURE DETECTIVES

Spring 2020



Park Ranger on Patrol

Ranger Erin climbed into her patrol car and pushed the talk button on her radio. Her first task was to let the dispatch operator know she was on duty—starting now.

For the next ten hours Erin would be patrolling Boulder County Parks & Open Space.

Her job: helping visitors while at the same time protecting property, wildlife, and everything else in the parks.

Her main motivation: sharing her enthusiasm for the outdoors with the people she encounters.

Rangers Go the Extra Miles



Pull Out and Save

Like most of the county rangers, Ranger Erin spends a lot of time hiking the park trails and answering visitors' questions. Some days she hikes up to ten miles. Other days she could be looking for a lost hiker or helping an injured cyclist. She also encounters wildlife needing help. One time, Erin was able to remove a fishing line that was entangling a Canada goose.

When an emergency arises, the dispatch operator will radio the rangers on duty. The ranger closest to the problem will answer the dispatcher and respond to the call. Other rangers may provide backup.

The same dispatch calls go out to firefighters and sheriff's deputies too. All official communication goes through this central dispatch. The rangers keep in radio contact with each other during their shift so they know where the other rangers are patrolling.

Each time the rangers report to dispatch at the start of their shift, they have no idea what exciting or special moments might happen during their next hours on patrol. They do know they will be part of a team protecting people, wildlife and open spaces. And, they will be spending a lot of time outside!

Could You Be a Park Ranger Some Day?

Park rangers such as Erin come from many different backgrounds. Some may have once been young nature detectives—much like you. Rangers are a diverse group with unique individual skills, but they generally have certain characteristics in common. They tend to like people and like being outside in nature. They enjoy watching wildlife and learning new outdoor skills. Some may prefer to hike while others cycle or ski, but each one hopes to inspire others to share their interests and passions. Rangers are great at helping and encouraging others.

Knowing how to be safe on the trails and take good care of our open spaces are two of the main messages rangers like to share with people they meet in the parks. They model regard for human visitors and for wildlife. They protect historical sites with respect for past inhabitants such as the Arapaho tribes who hunted and lived here. They are protecting open space land for future visitors too.

When People Behave Badly

Rangers spend hours educating visitors about Boulder County **regulations**. Regulations are rules for the safety of visitors and the protection of the natural and cultural aspects of the parks. Most people do treat the parks and other visitors kindly, but what happens when people aren't acting safely and respectfully? In all cases, the rangers are tasked with enforcing county regulations fairly and consistently. Sometimes visitors just need the rules explained. Rangers may also give rule breakers a warning or issue a fine.

Example of an Open Space Regulation

Do you know the regulation that horses always have the right-of-way over bicycles and pedestrians? When Ranger Jeff patrols on his horse Rohan, a person going past him may not understand horses. Jeff would probably explain that Rohan is trained for patrol work and likely won't spook, but someone else's horse could be startled enough to hurt itself or its rider.

Bikes can alarm horses too. Cyclists are faster than hikers and runners. Cyclists must give way carefully to all other trail users. Informative signs on multiuse trails show a triangle. Arrows on the triangle show that cyclists give way to hikers and horses. Hikers give way to horses. Safety is the goal.



What About Crimes on Open Space?

County sheriff's deputies are also assigned to open space properties and parks. Their job is to enforce **criminal laws** of Boulder County and the State of Colorado. Park rangers and sheriff's deputies work together to keep open spaces safe. Wildland firefighters work with rangers and deputies too. Since all agencies use the same radio dispatch system, all ears hear calls at the same time and coordinate team responses to keep the parks safe now and for future visitors.



Emergency!

Ankles break, cyclists crash, and bears get mischievous. Even airplanes make emergency landings on open space property! Good news, the Parks & Open Space rangers are on the job and prepared. Rangers have been to Peace Officer Standards and Training School. They've passed self-defense and medical training. On top of that, they have emergency medical response training. Smoke in the air? With their wildland firefighting training and prescribed burn training, they can assist the firefighters when needed to have things under control.

Rangers are adept at moving wildlife out of unsafe areas. Sometimes they have to use rubber bullets to convince a reluctant animal to head back to safety. Rangers climbed to an osprey nest to remove stuff that could entangle nestlings. Ranger Erin removed a rattlesnake from harm with a looong garden rake.

Rangers are highly trained. All the rangers retrain every year. They take advantage of additional opportunities to learn new skills and keep their learned skills sharp.

Noses for Trouble

Despite all their skills, no human has a nose for finding lost people or wandering kids. That's when Ranger Jeff's search and rescue dog Dax or one of Jeff's other qualified dogs comes on the job. Jeff's dogs like people and are very good at finding them.



You Could Spot a Ranger on Patrol

You might see Ranger Jeff patrolling Pella Crossing on Rohan or Ranger Sarah riding Starlight on patrol. Maybe you'll see Sarah patrolling Caribou on skis. Ranger Erin might be hiking up a trail at Walden Ponds. You might meet Ranger Kevin at Heil Valley Ranch. A few rangers such as Kevin live on open space property. Ranger Denny lives on Walker Ranch and can be seen cycling the trails there.



Rangers can hike or bike over 1,000 miles a year on the job! Whenever you encounter a ranger on patrol, tell them thanks for their awesome work.



Learn from a Ranger

Hundreds of visitors, adults and kids, participate in ranger-led educational programs each year. Look in IMAGES magazine or on the Parks & Open Space website for opportunities to take part when programs are offered.

Junior Ranger Adventures

If you are a kid, 5 to 12 years old, who likes to spend time outdoors, you might enjoy the Junior Ranger Adventures program.

If you'd like to learn about wildland firefighting, helping injured people on the trail, how to search for lost hikers and sharpen your outdoor safety skills check out Junior Ranger Adventures.

Participants in the program sometimes have opportunities to interact with Boulder County park rangers, volunteer rangers, Boulder County deputies and others. There are usually four events in the summer plus other opportunities.

The program is free but you have to register. You may also sign up to receive email updates about upcoming Junior Ranger activities and events on this website:

<https://www.bouldercountyopenspace.org/jr>

Hope to see you in a county park or on an open space trail in Boulder County soon!



Sherlock Fox says: Be a Ranger Example

You can help rangers by setting a good example for others. Be sure you stay on the trails whenever possible, keep a distance from wildlife, don't leave trash behind, and follow the rules and regulations posted at each site.

Thanks for enjoying and protecting our open spaces!

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