



Parks & Open Space

Education and Outreach

Boulder County

2021 Annual Report

Cultural History

48 programs

887 participants

8,647 museum visitors

Natural History

44 programs

1,029 participants

Paid Staff

8 full-time

6 seasonal

Volunteer Staff

70 cultural history

84 naturalists

97 park patrollers

10 writers & illustrators

Call 303-678-6201
for a copy of the
full report.

2021 Highlights

- ◆ Some COVID-related restrictions were lifted in June so we could open museums and return to in-person programs after 16 months!
- ◆ 121 cultural history and natural history programs presented to 12,106 participants.
- ◆ 1,406 park visitors dropped by our trailhead displays.
- ◆ Bilingual exhibits at the Agricultural Heritage Center and welcome panels at park trailheads were installed.
- ◆ 8,647 people visited our museums.



Cultural History Education



List of Abbreviations:

Agricultural Heritage Center (AHC)

Altona School (AS)

Assay Office Museum (AOM)

Dougherty Museum (DM)

Nederland Mining Museum (NMM)

Walker Ranch Homestead (WRH)



- ◆ 70 cultural history volunteers contributed 2,019 hours in a variety of work.
- ◆ Virtual live programming continued throughout the year led by volunteers. Staff joined in as the Zoom host. Typically an hour-long, these programs combined live discussion and demonstrations and/or videos.
- ◆ 11 new videos were posted to the Cultural History Corner channel, averaging 60 views per video.
- ◆ Live virtual public programs included: Cross stitch 'n History, No Region for Tourists or Women, Farming in Olden Days, Shopping in Olden Days, Early Longmont, Meet Doc Susie, Women Breaking the Mold in Rocky Mountains, and Geology & Mining History of Boulder County.
- ◆ 57% of requested programs were for pre-school and elementary school aged groups.
- ◆ AHC remained closed to the public until June 18 due to COVID-19 restrictions. Over 2,100 people visited the property once it opened.
- ◆ AHC participated in a multi-site program that Eco-Cycle developed for school groups, hosting four fall field trips.
- ◆ NMM offered hands-on activities for the Nederland Area Historical Society's Heritage Day in September, including the train and mining PlayMobil tables, dress-up station, and a coloring-scavenger hunt.
- ◆ One private school visited WRH which resulted in more time for students to stay at each station. Both volunteers and teachers enjoyed the slightly slower pace and increased time for learning. Two new stations, teacher/parent self-guided group tour and old-fashioned photographs, were successful and will be included in future WRH school programs.
- ◆ Volunteers were not actively recruited due to concerns about COVID-19, but a yard sign at the AOM attracted four new volunteers. We also recruited a few new Livestock Caretakers at AHC who discovered the volunteer opportunity from current POS volunteers.
- ◆ The artifact cataloguing software, Past Perfect, was upgraded and moved to the cloud, allowing staff and volunteers to access records from anywhere. Not only is this new format easier to access, but the IT Department no longer has to host Past Perfect on county server.
- ◆ The Dougherty Museum was open only in August due to staffing shortage.

Natural History Education



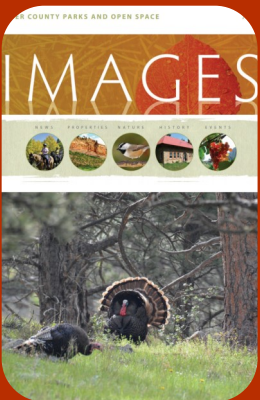
- ◆ 89 volunteer naturalists contributed 1,681 hours planning, preparing, and presenting interpretive and educational programs.
- ◆ 78 programs were led by volunteer naturalists (VNs) and staff, with more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of them were public programs. There were fewer requested program due to school districts' restrictions for classroom visitors and class field trips.
- ◆ 66% of requested programs were for pre-school and elementary school aged groups.
- ◆ 36% of all programs were about wildlife and wildlife habitat, followed by general ecology hikes (21%) and birds (12%).
- ◆ Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat hosted more than 50% of requested programs. Whereas public programs were more spread across the county; Walden Ponds was the top park, followed by Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain, Caribou Ranch, and Betasso Preserve.
- ◆ Unfortunately, programming with NKJN (Nature Kids/Jóvenes de la Naturaleza Program) with Lafayette elementary schools was impacted by the pandemic and we were unable to visit classrooms nor lead outdoor programs due to school district's restrictions.
- ◆ 77% of programs were led by VNs which was lower than usual (85% to 94%) and mostly due to volunteer's hesitancy to engage with the public during a pandemic.
- ◆ Learning opportunities, field trips, and lunch-time brown-bag sessions open to staff and volunteers are offered to volunteer naturalists throughout the year as avenues to engage with the department. Learning opportunities serve to enhance the VNs' knowledge and experience, as well as to provide opportunities for VNs to meet socially and share with other volunteers.
- ◆ Volunteers were offered three opportunities to visit Heil Valley Ranch to see the impact of the 2020 Cal-Wood Fire and learn about the department's recovery efforts.
- ◆ The upgrade of the VN Center at Walden Ponds made significant progress with construction of a new storage building and group shelter.
- ◆ Longtime program coordinator Larry Colbenson retired after 24 years of leading the Natural History Program.

Informal Education & Outreach



- ◆ **Park Patrollers:** 44 Volunteer Ranger Corps (VRC) and 53 Boulder Mountain Bike Patrol (BMBP) spoke with visitors on open space properties. Parks were very busy due to public's concerns about indoor activities during a pandemic. Park patrollers made thousands of contacts with visitors at trailheads, shorelines, and trails. (Sometimes with their dog who participated in "Bark Patrol" training) Volunteers answered questions about a property's natural resources, park amenities, recreational opportunities, and land management activities.
- ◆ **Trailhead Displays:** 1,406 park visitors stopped by one of our 34 trailhead displays. Themes included: black bear, dog safety and regulations, elk management, rattlesnake, moose, mountain lion, Abert's squirrel, aquatic insects, bats, the Cal-wood Fire, raptors, the prairie ecosystem, wetlands, and wildflowers. Trailhead displays took place at these locations: Anne U. White, Betasso Preserve, Caribou Ranch, Heil Valley Ranch Picture Rock Trailhead, Mud Lake, Pella Crossing, Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain, Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat, and Walker Ranch Loop.
- ◆ **Fishing Events:** We held three fishing events this year. Twenty-two anglers attended two Catfish Nights events at Stearns Lake when the lake was open until 11p.m. for drop-in fishing. Eighteen people attended the Junior and Senior Fishing Derby in October held at the Wally Toevs Pond at Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat. Fishing partners (one senior and one junior) worked together to fish for prizes. We also offered a fishing clinic for the Explorando Senderos de Boulder group at Stearns Lake. Everything needed for fishing (poles, hooks, bobbers, weights, and bait) was provided to the 33 participants that day.
- ◆ **Volunteer Work Projects:** 1,197 volunteers participated in one-day projects on open space properties. During the work, volunteers learned about a property's cultural and natural resources, and how their work that day played in the overall management of the property.
- ◆ **School Stewardship Project:** Throughout the pandemic, Longs Peak Middle School students continued to monitor several wildlife cameras at Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain. Fifteen students and their teacher studied photos and provided information about elk movement and behavior, plus other wildlife observations, to department wildlife biologists.
- ◆ **Partnership Program:** Despite the ongoing pandemic, 12 businesses and organizations were able to participate in outdoor stewardship projects. Also, donor partners (businesses or organization that contribute cash, supplies, or assistance) included the Ocean First Institute, St. Vrain Valley School District, Longmont Astronomical Society, Boulder County Open Space Foundation, and the cities of Louisville and Lafayette.

Informal Education & Outreach



- ◆ **Roving Interpretation/Park Patrol:** During spring weekends, all Education & Outreach staff conducted weekend patrol since we could not hold programs nor open museums. Similar to volunteer patrollers, staff provided the “ears and eyes” for the department about visitor activities. They also answered questions from park visitors about a variety of topics while staffing trailheads and hiking trails.
- ◆ **Nature Detective Club:** Between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend, 161 children explored nature and recorded their observations by completing a “mystery guide” and earning a prize for their future outdoor explorations.
- ◆ **Local Town Festivals:** We spoke with 569 people about BCPOS properties and management activities at three festivals held in unincorporated Boulder County communities: Superior’s National Trails Day, Lyons Watershed Festival, and Wild Bear’s Enchanted Forest in Nederland area.
- ◆ **Art Programs:** Four artists stayed at Caribou Ranch as part of the Artist-in-Residence Program. The department held the sixth En Plein Air exhibit, with approximately 150 attending the event opening.
- ◆ **iNaturalist:** The project was converted from the department’s Boulder County “Wildlife” project page to include all observations within the county, whether or not contributors were members of our project . That provides a much richer picture about wildlife within the county. It also resulted in a jump from about 26,000 observations to over 68,000 by the end of the year! We also added a “Flora of Boulder County” project page that ended the year with over 62,000 observations contributed.
- ◆ **Images Magazine:** 719 subscribers received hard copies, and 507 people got electronic copies of the quarterly magazine that highlights the department’s management activities, natural resources, recreational opportunities and local history.
- ◆ **Email Listserve Communications:** 923 people received monthly notices about hikes & event, and 581 people received notices for kids’ events.
- ◆ **Trailhead Posters:** Patrol staff now have 21 attractive bilingual posters to inform park visitors about leave no trace, nature studies, and safety issues. These posters were intended to highlight hot topics and removed within two weeks after installation.
- ◆ **Welcome Kiosk Panels:** Replaced all 13 welcome panels at parks with new design that provides both English and Spanish messages about the property’s natural and cultural resources and what visitors can expect during their outing on county open space.

Strategic Plan

Desired Future Conditions: The community connects with natural, cultural, and agricultural resources and values the importance of county open space.

Goal 1: Inform the public about the county’s open space resources, management practices, and visitor opportunities.

Goal 2: Offer opportunities throughout Boulder County that meet the interests of our diverse population.

Goal 3: Evaluate the department’s services and programs to better meet the public’s needs.

Goal 4: Recruit, train, and offer volunteer programs that meet interests of our diverse community.

Completed 2021 Objectives

- ◆ Updated all park kiosk welcome panels with new messages and in English and Spanish.
- ◆ Collaborated with the *ELPASO Movement* (an organization devoted to advancing Latinx children’s early development) to provide educational programs for their families.
- ◆ Updated exhibits at the Agricultural Heritage Center to be bilingual and be more inclusive about under-represented groups’ contributions to Boulder County’s agricultural history.
- ◆ Contacted Out Boulder County to schedule educational programs and volunteer work projects.
- ◆ Conducted the Five Year Park Visitor study at parks to look at long-term trends in visitor demographics, preferences, attitudes, and behaviors.
- ◆ Shared volunteer opportunities on the county’s Spanish Facebook page and CRISP partners' websites.

