



Parks & Open Space

Education and Outreach

Boulder County

2022 Annual Report

Cultural History

141 programs

2,842 participants

15,582 museum visitors

Natural History

112 programs

1,726 participants

Paid Staff

9 full-time

7 seasonal

Volunteer Staff

84 cultural history

91 naturalists

129 park patrollers

7 writers & illustrators

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for a copy of the
full report.

2022 Highlights

- ◆ After nearly two years, COVID-related restrictions were lifted so we returned to in-person programs, and museums were open for full season!
- ◆ 253 nature and history programs were presented to 4,568 participants.
- ◆ 2,315 park visitors dropped by our trailhead displays.
- ◆ 15,582 people visited our museums.
- ◆ Remodel of Volunteer Naturalist Center was completed, along with additional storage building and group shelter.



Cultural History Education



List of Abbreviations:

Agricultural Heritage Center (AHC)

Altona School (AS)

Assay Office Museum (AOM)

Dougherty Museum (DM)

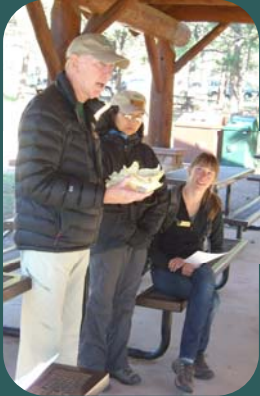
Nederland Mining Museum (NMM)

Walker Ranch Homestead (WRH)



- ◆ 84 cultural history volunteers contributed 2,534 hours. Volunteer positions included museum guides, gardeners, livestock caretakers, seamstresses/tailors, and living history demonstrators.
- ◆ Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, virtual programming continued as an option for history programming. Programs were led by volunteers, with staff acting as the Zoom host so we could provide live discussion along with demonstration, slide program or video. Public programs included Pike’s Peak Gold Rush, Tales from a Miner, and the Betasso Family: Mountain Living Gives You One Shorter Leg.
- ◆ The Agricultural Heritage Center (AHC) participated in a multi-site program Eco-Cycle developed for school groups. At the AHC, tours focus on how farmers follow the “3 R’s” by reducing, reusing, and recycling. Although this collaboration is still rebuilding its capacity, we served 15 school classes.
- ◆ Barnyard Critter Day returned in 2022 with 478 attendees. Yoga on the Farm and Fun on the Farm returned as public programs and were well received.
- ◆ People from 29 different countries visited the Nederland Mining Museum (NMM), including Netherlands, India, Taiwan, Brazil, Guyana, Trinidad Tobago, and Micronesia, as well as 49 of the 50 United States.
- ◆ Two dates in September were dedicated to opening the historic Cardinal Mill. Guests were scheduled for one of three visits each day that started at NMM.
- ◆ The vintage baseball game was filmed by volunteer videographers. These recordings will be used for volunteer training, virtual educational programs, and special event promotion.
- ◆ 435 students and adult chaperones enjoyed field trips to the Walker Ranch Homestead (WRH).
- ◆ Because we had a Gold Hill volunteer firefighter on staff, a demonstration about “old fashioned firefighting” took place at one of the three special events at WRH. Horseback history was also featured at special events with volunteer rangers, who brought their horses to share horses’ roles on a ranch in 1880s.
- ◆ 105 people visited the historic Altona School during summer open houses. Also, 155 people attended more formal requested programs.
- ◆ Staffing at the Dougherty Museum changes from senior tax work-off participants to seasonal positions because of regulations for tax work-off programs.
- ◆ Boulder County Parks & Open Space was awarded a Collections Assessment for Preservation grant through the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation to assess the department’s artifact collection storage. We look to make incremental improvements based on this report.

Natural History Education



- ◆ 91 volunteer naturalists contributed 2,020 hours planning, preparing, and presenting interpretive and educational programs.
- ◆ It was a “rebound” year with 112 programs, a 53% increase from 2021. The largest increase was for requested programs (compared to public programs).
- ◆ A 300% increase in youth participation was a strong sign that school programs were rebounding after two years of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.
- ◆ Public program locations are often selected by volunteer naturalists. Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain was the most popular site for public programs, followed by Betasso Preserve. Heil Valley Ranch also hosted several public programs about fire ecology when it reopened in June.
- ◆ Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat was the most popular location for requested programs, followed by Pella Crossing; both are great sites for wetland studies, as well as birding programs. Mud Lake had several school programs that were coupled with a morning visit to the Nederland Mining Museum. This combination of history and nature was a very appealing opportunity for schools.
- ◆ Programs about birds (27%) were the most popular public programs offered by volunteer naturalists, followed by general nature hikes (23%) and wildlife-related topics (22%).
- ◆ Most popular requested program topics were birds (19%), geology (16%), wetlands (13%), and the living map (13%).
- ◆ Overall, we reached a wide range of audiences: 59% of requested programs were for elementary-aged participants, followed by 30% for adults and seniors. Since public programs often rely on personal transportation, we continue to see those programs serving older county residents: 56% were adults and 32% were seniors.
- ◆ There was a decrease in the participant-per-program ratio. Since 2019, our participants per program have dropped from 22 to 12 participants. This change is attributed to required registration (not true for most programs prior to pandemic), program cap of 20 participants, and participants who registered but did not show-up or cancel their registration. Staff will experiment with different strategies to address this decline in 2023.
- ◆ After nearly three years, the expansion of the Volunteer Naturalists’ Center was completed. The estimated \$350,000 project included remodeling and upgrading the interior of center and constructing a storage building for educational equipment and supplies. Also, a small shelter for volunteer naturalists to use as part of programs and/or meet other volunteers to plan for programs was added to the complex.

Informal Education & Outreach



- ◆ **Trailhead Displays:** 2,315 park visitors stopped by one of our 63 trailhead displays. The majority of displays were scheduled on weekends during peak-use hours and the themes included: animal signs & tracks, black bear, beaver, bird nests, bobcat, dog safety & regulations, eagles, elk management, fire ecology, turkey, moose, trail etiquette (free bike bells), mountain lion, osprey, rattlesnake, prairie ecosystem, squirrels, wetlands, and wildflowers. Trailhead displays were offered at Anne U. White, Betasso Preserve, Caribou Ranch, Cattail Pond, Carolyn Holmberg Preserve at Rock Creek Farm, Coalton Trailhead, Heil Valley Ranch, Hessie Trailhead, Mud Lake, Pella Crossing, Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain, Coal Creek Trail, Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat, and Walker Ranch Loop.
- ◆ **Park Patrollers:** 58 Volunteer Ranger Corps (VRC) and 71 Boulder Mountain Bike Patrol (BMBP) spoke with visitors on open space properties. The annual volunteer meeting was held virtually in 2022, but many more special assignments were offered this year as COVID protocols eased during the year. We recruited 20 new volunteer rangers, which we haven't been able to do since 2019. Bark Ranger training was completed in June with four new dogs. Volunteer Rangers observed and/or contacted 18,860 visitors in the parks this year!
- ◆ **Fishing Events:** We held four fishing events this year. Thirty anglers attended two Catfish Nights events at Stearns Lake when the lake was open until 11p.m. Twenty-nine 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. For the first time since 2019, we offered drop-in fishing at Cattail Pond during the Boulder County Fair for kids ages 15 years and under. We provided fishing poles, worms, and lessons to 14 children and their eight accompanying parents. We held the Seniors Fish-off at Wally Toevs Pond; 17 anglers were thrilled that the annual fishing derby had returned.
- ◆ **Volunteer Work Projects:** 1,492 volunteers participated in one-day projects on open space properties. During these 126 projects, volunteers learned about a property's cultural and natural resources and how their work that day played in the overall management of the property. Twelve partners participated in at least one stewardship project, including: Boulder Mountain Bike Alliance, Boulder High School Mountain Bike Team, Community United Church of Christ, Emerson, New Vista High School, Verily, OptTek, Watershed School, Defenders of Wildlife, Qualcomm, and TetraTech.

Informal Education & Outreach



- ◆ **Roving Interpretation/Park Patrol:** During spring weekends, all Education & Outreach staff conducted weekend patrol since we could not hold programs or open museums. Similar to volunteer patrollers, staff provided the “eyes and ears” for the department about visitor activities. They also answered questions from park visitors about a variety of topics while staffing trailheads and hiking trails.
- ◆ **Shelter Talks:** Offered a semi-informal talk for groups who reserved a group picnic shelter. Groups could select time for a park naturalist to drop by for ~20 minutes to present information about the property, a specific topic, or just to answer questions about the park. We talked with 217 participants and received positive feedback about the opportunity for groups to meet park staff.
- ◆ **Local Town Festivals:** We spoke with 569 people about BCPOS properties and management activities at three festivals held in unincorporated Boulder County communities: Louisville’s Critter Day, Superior’s National Trails Day, Lafayette’s Earth Day festival, and Longmont’s Pride festival.
- ◆ **Art Programs:** Four artists stayed at Caribou Ranch as part of the Artist-in-Residence Program.
- ◆ **“Images” Magazine:** 729 subscribers received hard copies, and 1,413 people received electronic copies of the quarterly magazine that highlights the department’s management activities, natural resources, recreational opportunities and local history.
- ◆ **Nature Detective Club:** Between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend, 214 children explored nature and recorded their observations by completing a “mystery guide,” earning a prize for their future outdoor explorations. It was a 25% increase from previous year.
- ◆ **Email Listserve Communications:** 994 people received monthly notices about hikes & event, and 637 people received notices for kids’ events. That was 7% and 9% increases respectfully from the previous year.
- ◆ **Impressions Messages:** When Heil Valley Ranch reopened, notebooks were placed on the Lichen Loop and Wapiti Trail for six weeks with a prompt to “take a moment to share your thoughts about Heil Valley Ranch reopening.” Overwhelmingly, the public was happy the park was open again, and there was a wide range of comments about the landscape. Scanned copies of those messages can be found on the Heil Valley Ranch webpage.

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 2022 Objectives

- ◆ Led fire ecology and Heil Valley Ranch recovery hikes for volunteers and public.
- ◆ Offered 20-minute talks to shelter reservation groups.
- ◆ Created Heil Valley Ranch trailhead displays and brochure information about flash flood safety.
- ◆ Bilingual staff attended Agricultural Heritage Center’s (AHC) special event to engage with Spanish-speaking guests.
- ◆ Worked with consultants to develop long-range interpretive guidelines for AHC, Nederland Mining Museum, and Assay Office Museums so educational themes better reflect a more inclusive human history of Boulder County.
- ◆ Conducted the Five-year Visitor Study at regional trails to look at long-term trends in visitor demographics, preferences, attitudes, and behaviors.
- ◆ Contracted with Collections Assessment for Preservation grant program to assess collection storage and exhibit conditions and make recommendations for three separate cultural history sites.

