



The Field Press



A Publication of the Colorado Natural Areas Program

Volume 8, Issue 1

Spring 2006

Colorado Natural Areas preserve some of the finest examples of Colorado's original and unique landscapes for the benefit of present and future generations. Sites qualify as Colorado Natural Areas when they contain at least one unique or high quality feature of statewide significance:

Native plant communities

Geologic formations and processes

Paleontological localities

Habitat for rare plants and animals



Colorado State Parks
www.parks.state.co.us

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State Parks Staff to Visit Natural Areas

What do State Park Rangers and Colorado Natural Areas Program (CNAP) staff have in common? Starting in 2006, they both get the opportunity to visit and protect Natural Areas around the state! That's right; the 2005 Colorado State Parks Strategic Plan includes an action item intended to "provide stewardship for the designated Colorado Natural Areas... *through Parks staff monitoring Natural Areas at least once annually.*" This means that park managers, rangers, interpreters, and maintenance staff will work closely with CNAP to coordinate efforts for the protection of these special areas.

Since 1988 CNAP has been part of Colorado State Parks. State Parks has provided financial and programmatic support for CNAP, while CNAP has performed natural resource inventories on Parks' land, as well as given guidance on resource protection and restoration. This year, however, the Natural Areas Program and Parks will begin collaboration at a higher level.

Imagine the benefits for Natural Areas, which can now count on the expertise of State Parks law enforcement, interpretation and maintenance staff! And Parks staff can refer to nearby examples of high-quality ecosystems while building relationships and exchanging ideas with adjacent landowners. This is a win-win relationship. CNAP is excited to work closely with State Parks staff in the coming years.



High Mesa Grasslands Natural Area



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From the Program Manager



There have been many changes over the last few years with the Natural Areas Program, but as I write this, the future looks bright and our program is strong, healthy and growing. As a conservation biologist I have been working for State Parks for the last seven years and assumed leadership of the program in late 2004 after Ron West departed. Since then we were able to restaff one position with Brian Kurzel, a smart and talented forest ecologist, and we have Jeff Tiemann, a GIS specialist with a strong geologic background. We also have continued support via State Parks GOCO funding and federal grants for seasonals, contractors, and protection projects.

Our program currently enjoys great support from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and parks leadership, and we have a strong and active council. Russell George (DNR Director) has been very supportive, and Lyle Laverty (State Parks Director) and Larry Kramer (Deputy Director) have helped us take a major leap forward. As of this year we will begin having State Parks staff visit natural areas regularly. We'll be getting out with them and our volunteer stewards together as much as possible this summer. This will help the stewards greatly when they have law enforcement questions, and will help State Parks staff to both appreciate and feel more ownership of these awe-inspiring designated areas.

Our vision of priorities for the program include being responsive and effective stewards of the 78 designated and 25 registered natural areas. Many dedicated and talented volunteer stewards are diligently identifying concerns at natural areas around the state, so one of our top priorities is following through with all the information that comes in to protect these sites. Another top priority is coordination of protection to extend our reach beyond our time spent in the field. This is a tough balance to strike, as we want to get out to all sites and check on plant populations as much as possible. We are currently working on an outreach plan to help guide our future, and will be posting that on our Web site soon to begin soliciting comments from our stewards and friends.

We value all the support our program has received over the last several years from many of you out there, and I hope that Brian and myself will get a chance to work closely with you soon. Please feel free to call us and chat at any time.

Coming Up!!

Don't forget! The next Natural Areas Council Meeting and Volunteer Steward Gathering will be on April 7th in Fort Collins.
Contact Brian Kurzel for more information at
303-866-3203 ext. 301 or brian.kurzel@state.co.us.



Friends of Colorado Natural Areas

Please help revitalize the Friends of Colorado Natural Areas! In the past, the Friends group has supported CNAP in a variety of ways. Over the last couple of years, there has been a lull in activity by the Friends, though a small membership still exists. We would like to build a stronger constituency for the Natural Areas Program, and find new ways to involve the Program's faithful supporters. If you are interested in playing a role in reviving the Friends group, please contact Lynn Riedel or Linda Mahoney at conaturalareasfriends@gmail.com.

A project that the Friends can rally around right away is the protection of important habitat for a federally endangered plant species on the Western Slope. The clay-loving wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum pelinophilum*), found only in a few places near Montrose, is well protected on Fairview Natural Area (Bureau of Land Management), but has lost habitat to off-road vehicle use and development in other areas. Fairview Natural Area and an adjacent private property hold the largest known populations of the rare buckwheat. Though the private property next to the natural area has been very well managed as a registered Colorado natural area, buckwheat's habitat is immediately threatened. Friends of Colorado Natural Areas would like to join with other conservation groups to collect donations that will

help a land trust protect the property. If you would like more information on how to help with this rare plant habitat preservation project, please contact Lynn or Linda at the conaturalareasfriends@gmail.com.

Are you looking for a way to roll up your sleeves and help with the protection or management of a State Natural Area this year? The Friends group would like to organize a group volunteer project in 2006. Please contact us if you can assist with this event. Let's do what we can to help CNAP protect Colorado's best places!



Involucre and flowers of *Eriogonum pelinophilum* • Photo by Jim Reveal



Friends of Colorado Natural Areas Application

I/We wish to join or renew our membership in Friends of Colorado Natural Areas!

\$15 Individual \$25 Family \$8 Student or Senior

A larger gift is greatly appreciated and will help protect individual natural areas.

\$50 \$100 \$1000

Name(s) _____ Phone () _____

Address _____ E-mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Yes, I would like to be a volunteer.

**Make checks payable to:
Friends of Colorado Natural Areas
Mail to: Friends of Colorado Natural Areas
PO Box 876 • Lafayette, CO • 80026**

Natural Area Profile: Aiken Canyon

Where do you go when you are **achin'** to see a great example of woodland and shrubland communities that once dominated the foothills of the Front Range? Or how about if you are **achin'** to observe more than 100 species of birds and a number of other wildlife species? Grab your boots and binoculars and head to **Aiken Canyon Natural Area**.

Aiken Canyon Natural Area is part of the Aiken Canyon Preserve located southwest of Colorado Springs and managed by The Nature Conservancy. The Canyon was named after ornithologist, Charles Aiken, who conducted the first biological survey of the area in the 1870s. The site boasts prominent red spires and outcrops formed by the Fountain Formation, diverse foothills plant communities including two rare plant associations and several plants found on the edges of their range, and a diverse fauna that includes over 100 species of birds, mountain lions, black bears and golden eagles.

Visitation of Aiken Canyon Natural Area is encouraged! Located approximately 16 miles southwest of Colorado Springs just off State Highway 115 on Turkey Canyon Ranch Road, the site is one of the easier State Natural Areas to access along the Front Range. Facilities include a parking area, a Visitor Center and approximately five miles of trails and interpretive signs. The Preserve is open

on Saturday, Sunday and Monday 10am-6pm. The Field Station/Visitor Center is open Memorial Day to Labor Day on Saturday, Sunday and Monday 10am-3pm. During the rest of the year it is open Sunday only, from 10am-3pm. For more information visit The Nature Conservancy Web site at www.nature.org and search for Aiken Canyon.



Aiken Canyon • Photo courtesy of The Nature Conservancy

Go Paperless!

If you'd like to receive the Colorado Natural Areas Program newsletter *by email only*, please email us at: brian.kurzel@state.co.us

In the subject or body of the email please state:
"Newsletter via email only"

If you want to continue getting paper newsletters, there is no need to contact us.

Staff Introductions

The CNAP staff now has three employees working on the designation and protection of Colorado's natural areas with part time help from several others. **Rob Billerbeck** has been the Program Manager since fall of 2004, and he also manages the Resource Stewardship Section for Colorado State Parks. Rob has a Master's in Conservation Biology and brings expertise in ecological inventory and monitoring, GIS and noxious weeds. The person who tackles the day-to-day CNAP duties and works with volunteer stewards is **Brian Kurzel**, the new Natural Areas Coordinator. Brian has a Master's in Forest Ecology, an extensive background with volunteers and growing experience with Colorado rare plants. **Jeff Tiemann** comes to CNAP through a cooperative agreement with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. Jeff supports the program with his expertise in GIS and geology. **Elizabeth Gillespie** was recently hired by State Parks to coordinate the Resource Stewardship section, and she helps CNAP with weed, rare plant and restoration expertise. Finally, as the CNAP seasonal, **Lynée Cavaille** brings rare plant experience from her work with the US Forest Service. Our staff is excited to do all we can to protect Colorado's most special places, and (it's no secret) we're looking forward to the field season ahead!



New Natural Areas Coordinator, Brian Kurzel at Mt. Emmons Natural Area.

"The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value."

~
Theodore Roosevelt

Volunteer Stewards Corner: We Can't Do It Without Them!

The 73 CNAP volunteer stewards may be the luckiest people in Colorado. Our committed corps of volunteers not only get to see the best places in the state, but they contribute in many ways to the protection of these areas! What could be better?

Volunteer stewards deserve recognition for their commitment and contributions over the past year. Without assistance from these volunteers, the monitoring and protection of natural areas would be infinitely more difficult. For example, **Dr. Janet Potter** of Lake City informed CNAP about illegal OHV use in the Slumgullion Earthflow Natural Area. Janet's work with CNAP brought about an incredibly quick response from the Bureau of Land Management, who erected barriers to protect the area. The great botanical skills of **Alix Gadd** led to several new rare plant occurrences on the Hoosier Ridge Registered Natural Area. With Alix's help, CNAP will submit new records of these plant populations to add to the statewide database. **Ann and Tim Henson** have discovered a noxious weed invasion that threatens a rare plant at Jimmy Creek Natural Area. CNAP staff will work closely with the Hensons in addressing the problem this summer. **Andy Herb**, a wetland ecologist, has volunteered to help CNAP with their new *Roving Stewards Program*, which will utilize volunteer's skills to conduct targeted surveys and assessments of natural areas around the state. And, as yet another example of the

contributions of volunteer stewards, **Al and Betty Schneider** not only helped to re-construct fences at Narraguinnep Natural Area, but led CNAP staff to a mechanic when our field truck had engine trouble. What would we do without volunteer stewards?!

These examples are just a glimpse of the benefits volunteer stewards have brought to CNAP. Our staff is working more closely with volunteers to tap into their knowledge and expertise, and hope to visit more natural areas with stewards in 2006. And, as a reminder, there is a volunteer steward gathering in Ft. Collins on April 7th! It's a great time to meet other stewards and find out about future projects.



Volunteer Steward Alix Gadd with new plant occurrence on Hoosier Ridge Registered Natural Area

Natural Areas Council News

The Colorado Natural Areas Council (CNAC) is pleased to introduce a couple of recent additions. **Dave Anderson**, botanist from the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, has been a member of the Council as a governor appointee since October of 2004. **Kathy Yates** has been re-appointed for another four-year term, and will be with the Council until 2009. The Colorado Division of Wildlife recently appointed the newest Council member, **Tom Burke**. We are excited to work closely with Tom for the next four years. Tom will be replacing **Phil James**, who served on CNAP's Council since 1998.

CNAC has been active with their quarterly meetings, taking time to visit the natural areas that they designate and protect. In June of 2005, the Council took their first overnight camping trip, visiting Irish Canyon and Lookout Mountain Designated Natural Areas in Moffat County, as well as evaluating a site for possible designation. Council and staff also made use of our meetings to build relationships with various CNAP partners. The Council met with the Nature Conservancy at Aiken Canyon Natural Area in July and, in October, toured Fruita Paleontological Natural Area with a

BLM paleontologist, Museum of Western Colorado staff and volunteer stewards.

The first Council meeting of 2006 will be held on April 7th in Ft. Collins. A volunteer steward gathering will follow this meeting. If you are interested in attending any of these meetings, please contact Brian Kurzel at 303-866-3203 x 301.

The Council wishes to thank the program staff, allied agency professionals, legislative supporters, volunteer stewards and other interested citizens for their continued support and help. Without their help, the program would be hard pressed to carry out its mandate to identify and protect those unique natural assets that make Colorado such a wonderful state.

Visit the Colorado Natural Areas Web site!
Type the web address: www.parks.state.co.us, and
point to the "Programs" link on the left sidebar.
Scroll down to "Natural Areas Program"
and explore!



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