

Voice of the Canyon

WINTER 2020-2021

New Idea for collecting bridge donations in the Visitor Center

See the fun poster that's going to get donations flowing in the VC.



Page 2

Meet Friends' New Vice President

Creative Steve L'Esperance joins the Friends officers in making plans for the Wildcat Canyon Bridge.



Page 3

The Next Big Step is Helping Raise \$100k for the new Bridge

A small committee is going after grants as soon as final figures come in.

Page 5

A Lot of Information came out of Friends' October Annual Meeting.

There's a few highlights from the Annual Meeting on page 8, but most important is the link to Sharon Boyd's minutes that will bring you up-to-date.

Page 8

What's Ahead for Friends in the Coming Year?

Friends President Dale Campbell takes a stab at predicting what to expect in the year ahead. He suggests we have learned from suffering through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Page 12

Dale's Dispatch

Dale Campbell Friends President and Volunteer Naturalist

Whew, what a year! 2020 has, in one way or another, been challenging for all of us. Besides the impacts of the ongoing pandemic, I know that every one of us had other challenges to confront or problems to solve. Not that this part is any different than a "normal" year, but when circumstances adds the pandemic to our plate, well, that does make it tough.

Thankfully, the park remains a place of refuge, somewhere to either relax by enjoying the scenery during a hike, continue to focus our efforts as a volunteer and/or recommend to others to "escape" for a bit. We all have a passion of one form or another for the park. I'm just glad that it continues to be available for us.

Thinking along the lines of our Preserve, Protect and Promote this precious resource, I would like to remind everyone, as we approach the end of the year, that you too can help, all from the comfort of your home. If you're like many of us, you begin thinking about finalizing your charitable donations for the year. Would you consider Friends of Castlewood Canyon in that philanthropic gesture? See page 7 to learn just how you can make that donation. By the way, the article also explains how a donation can save on your taxes even if you don't itemize.

You'll also find a link to the updated presentation for the 2020 Friends Annual Meeting on page 8. We covered quite a bit of territory in the discussion; so, you might enjoy catching up on our accomplishments and challenges that your organization experienced in this most unusual year. At that meeting, the members elected our Board for the coming year. Steve L'Esperance joined this management team, while Jeannette Littlejohn chose to step back from the Board for a while. Not to worry, though, as she's still one of our Co-Treasurers and also continues to work with Membership for Friends.

During the November meeting, we elected officers for the organization for the coming year. Again, look further into this newsletter to see the leadership team for the coming year, with just a few changes. I want to thank Travis Brown for his leadership as Vice President over the last several years. Travis remains on the Board and will also continue as Co-Director of our Annual Dam Run. For more about the 2020 Virtual Dam Run and information about the 2021 Dam Run, again see page 7.

I wish everyone a safe, enjoyable and healthy Holiday Season and all the Best for 2021. I know that we're all looking forward to a new and better year. And you can rest assured that Friends of Castlewood Canyon will help to make that better year happen!

Wildcat Canyon Bridge Fundraising Takes a New Approach

Susan Williams
Friends Board Member
and Volunteer Naturalist

Volunteers have created a new eye catching poster in the Visitor Center that will entice visitors to leave their name and a donation to the Bridge project!

An evergreen tree poster is waiting to be decorated. It is located next to the diorama of the bridge and the bridge donation box.

Visitors can write their name(s) on stickers and drop their donation in the box. Then they can paste their name(s) on our tree for everyone to see. There is no limit on how many stickers a person can donate.



Showing off the new tree poster are left to right, Liz Bade, Bridget Milnes and Susan Williams.

The stickers are of different sizes and colors. The smallest package square is for donations up to \$4. The next step up is a star shaped sticky note for donations up to \$9. Finally, a GOLD STAR is for donations \$10 and more. The sky is the limit!

Watch for the next Donation Poster in our series to be unveiled at the beginning of 2021!

Your Friends Board of Directors

Officers:

President Dale Campbell
(719) 592-9193

dale_campbell_co@msn.com

Vice President

Steve L'esperance
(720) 318-5702

stevelesperance48@gmail.com

Secretary Sharon Boyd

(719) 592-9193

sharon_boyd_co@msn.com

Co-Treasurer

Liz Bade (along with Jeannette Littlejohn, Friends member)
(303) 841-4874

epbincolo@gmail.com

Board Members:

Travis Brown

(303) 884-9982

travisab6@hotmail.com

Chris Glaeser

(303) 601-6391

chris.glaeser@comcast.net

Bev Finamore

(720) 289-5020

bevfinamore@gmail.com

Bridget Milnes

(303) 660-4986

milnes6739@gmail.com

Susan Williams

(720) 840-8886

Susanpw1994@gmail.com

Friends meetings are held by Zoom the 2nd Saturday of the month. The next two meetings are Dec. 12 and Jan. 9 at 10 a.m. Send an email to dale_campbell_co@msn.com for connection details.



Meet Our New Officer

Steve L'Esperance Named Friends' Vice President

I have been going to Castlewood Canyon State Park since my wife Shawn and I moved here from Michigan nine years ago! Whenever any of our three kids or visitors from out of town came into Castle Rock, they were sure to be bounding up to Rimrock, Lake Gulch, Inner Canyon or Creek Bottom trail. Little did I know that I'd be a part of this great Friends of Castlewood Canyon family. We joined up in late '19 and it's been a whirlwind learning experience ever since. We had planned on earning our Naturalist certification this year, but Covid took care of that.



Our new officer keeps busy not only working on the bridge committee for Friends, but he's been known to work with the LNT crew picking up dog waste and other trash.

Still this year has been full of new experiences- first time hike on the East Preservation trail, exploring the Homestead area, partaking in a few "off the grid Tribe hikes," manning the 'skulls and skeleton's' exhibit, helping out with our concert in June, to name a few. It's been a humbling experience finding out how much you don't know about an area you've frequented so often. I've learned to 'slow down' and enjoy each step vs "how fast can I do this loop"! And did I mention what a super team we have?!

My only bumner moment was getting spooked by a rattlesnake in July while hiking down the steps to the Dam trail— with nowhere to go I exited left rolling down the hill which eventually led to wrist ligament surgery. I guess the snake's bark was worse than the bite? At least I now know what that hissing/rattle sound is about.

I've also been fortunate enough to help the team in our fundraising efforts for "THE BRIDGE", aka Wildcat Canyon bridge. We've already raised \$20K toward the goal, and I just can't wait for that span to connect the trails over Cherry Creek. It's truly going to be a centerpiece. Wishing you all a "more normal" 2021,

News from the Top

Brent Lounsbury Park Manager

Along with the rest of the world, this has been an unprecedented year for Castlewood Canyon. First and foremost, with the pandemic and limited activity options for Coloradans, we saw our visitation spike from about 167,000 visitors in calendar year 2019 to about 246,000 for calendar year 2020. This also represented an increase of revenue from \$616,000 in 2019 to \$914,000 in 2020--that with a few weeks yet to go. Keep in mind that 2019 was our banner year to date, and that our visitation and revenue figures in 2016 were an estimated 148,000 visitors and \$475,000 in revenue.

So, to say that kept us busy would be an understatement! We've had significant challenges with litter, trail degradation and undesigned "social" trails damaging the landscape. While our total volunteer hours decreased in 2020 by about 1/3 from 2019 numbers (as well they should have with COVID-19 concerns), we owe a HUGE thank you to everyone who went out on our trails, picked up litter and gave socially-distanced talks to the public about Leave No Trace principles. These efforts were critical this year to maintaining the park as the beautiful place it is.

One added difficulty this year has been, starting on April 1st, Joe has been either off entirely or on desk-only duties due to medical conditions. He is currently on Short Term Disability and not at the park. We've missed having him, especially with all the people here! It has truly been a year of us doing a whole lot more with a whole lot less. We're hoping he has a swift recovery.

We were still able to get some trail work done through two Teamworks crews, funded by the Friends of Castlewood Canyon, a Mile High Youth Corps crew and some Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado. Tommy took lead on these projects, mostly along the Inner Canyon trail, and did an excellent job.



Bridge Initiative Fills “at Home” Volunteer Hours

Steve L'Esperance
Friends Vice President
and Volunteer Naturalist

While volunteer hours are down at Castlewood Canyon State Park because of the pandemic and forced cancellation of school groups and special events, many volunteers are keeping very active. Currently, a number of the volunteers have been focused on an initiative that is not only going to benefit the park's visitors, but also help improve the infrastructure of the park for decades to come.

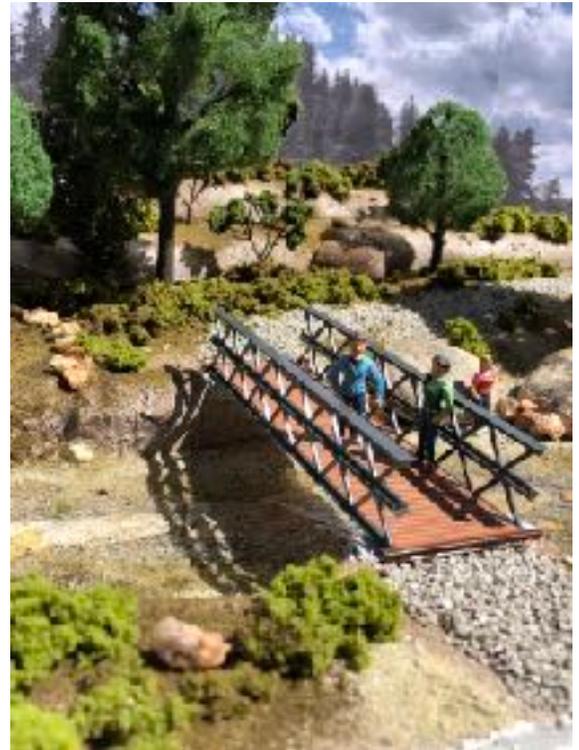
The Lake Gulch and Inner Canyon trail junction at Castlewood has been the subject of lengthy discussions and debate for many years. It's here that school children and hikers must cross the Cherry Creek over a series of boulders in order to complete a picturesque two-mile loop. This crossing is tricky even in perfect conditions. If the water is high, or after rains when the rocks are wet, the creek crossing becomes even more challenging. Ice and snow can make the conditions impassable.

Recognizing the importance of this issue for all park visitors, a dedicated group of Friends members and park volunteers has initiated a fundraising campaign to construct a bridge, the Wildcat Canyon Bridge. They have:

- created and distributed marketing/fundraising materials (paper & digital)
- engaged visitors about the Bridge solution
- created and placed signage in the park to notify the public that a project is underway
- worked alongside park staff supporting the project development and design efforts.

Most of these efforts have been accomplished without needing to physically be present at the park. Castlewood Canyon volunteers have been able to help in a new way we call VFH. By the way, VFH = **Volunteer From Home!**

Bottom line - thankfully there are to be a number of ways that CPW volunteers can continue to contribute their time and talents to CPW and the respective parks, in spite of a pandemic that has impacted our daily lives. If readers of this newsletter want to learn more about Castlewood Wildcat Canyon Bridge's story, just visit www.castlewoodfriends.org.



This fantastic traveling diorama by Board Member Chris Glaeser of the proposed Wildcat Canyon Bridge has been invaluable in getting the word out to park visitors. Sometimes it's in the Visitor Center, sometimes it's at a special event at the picnic shelters, sometimes it's down at the site of the future bridge. Chris used materials from model railroading to help him craft this unique piece.

You Can Help A Lot By Being a Friends Member

If you aren't a member of the Castlewood Canyon State Park Friends group, please recognize how important your membership is when Friends seeks grants. Think how important your ideas, input and time can mean to the organization dedicated to the park. Sign up today on the Friends website www.castlewoodfriends.org There you can pick the membership best suited to you.

Upping our Fundraising Game

Liz Bade
Friends Co-treasurer
and Volunteer Naturalist



Linda
Lawson



Samantha
Tanner

Wildcat Canyon Bridge is our big project. It's going to cost a lot – up to \$100k – but the payoff in visitor safety and habitat protection is well worth it. In addition to Friends' \$13,000 commitment, we have already embarked on fundraising to help with bridge construction. As of Dec 1, we have \$21,386 thanks to a grant from Liberty Community Giving, generous donations by individuals, our Donate a Dollar campaign, and the Friends' commitment. As soon as we get the final figures for its construction from CPW engineers, Bridget Milnes, Linda Staehler and I will be writing grant requests.

Grantors are very careful when awarding large sums like we'll be requesting. We need solid financial reports including balance sheets, profit and loss statements, and sources of income, for example. And grantors want to be assured that our numbers are right. Prior to 2020, Friends did not produce these reports and, due to the cost, our books had not been audited. That changed this year. We put out a call for financial help to our volunteers and two wonderful volunteers responded: Linda Lawson has an impressive background as a former CPA, treasurer of another non-profit, and is an adjunct professor of finance!! Samantha Tanner has over 15 years experience with QuickBooks. She expertly uploaded three years of our financial data and, on-going, is providing a variety of financial reports for us.

Working together, they reviewed our existing procedures and finances. Linda suggested that our annual budget reflect what we actually project to be spent in any given year. We had been including all funds committed to a particular project as that year's anticipated expenses. Now, what we don't plan to spend in the current year falls under a reserve liability and we'll know how much of our initial commitment for a project remains in our coffers for future spending. She also created Notes to Financial Statements that clearly describe how we maintain our books and facts about how the board runs our non-profit – important information to our potential grantors. Samantha worked out the Quickbook details and reclassified several financial items to accurately reflect our income/expense categories.

WOW! We now have solid procedures and professional financials. These are an important foundation for our Wildcat Canyon Bridge project as well as future projects that will require fundraising. Thank you Samantha and Linda for your expertise and willingness to help.

DONATIONS KEEP COMING IN

Jeannette Littlejohn
Friends Co-treasurer
and Volunteer Naturalist

During the year many people have made generous donations to Friends of Castlewood Canyon State Park and more keep coming in. This list is updated Dec. 13. Individual donations total \$4,792. A sincere thank you to everyone.

Ron Claussen, Dave and Sandra Rapley, Dave Labate, Jessica and Rob Moore family, Linda Staehler, Joan Arrowsmith, Ed Blum, Joanna Hardin, Richard and Susan Williams, Dale Campbell, Steve and Shawn L'Esperance, John Berry, Peg Callaghan, Pam Steinman, Brad and Susan Bruner family, Ellen Jones, Mark Bade, Karla James, Keith Lawer, Rebeca Jacobs, Weiwen Chen, Renae Hamstra, Chris Glaeser, Bridget Milnes, Thea Koehler, Thomas Boyd, Rudy and Alice Ramsey, Michael Shorts, Lynn Stricklan., Bev Finamore and Linda Vincent.

In addition to the above donations, for those who subscribe to Kroger/King Soopers and Amazon Smile, over the year we have received \$138.24 from Kroger/King Soopers and \$52.46 from AmazonSmile. As a bit of detail for Wildcat Canyon Bridge, we have \$1,759.50 from bridge donation boxes, and \$3,502 from individuals. We also received a \$3,125 grant from Liberty Community Giving. With Friends' \$13,000 contribution to the bridge fund there is a grand total of \$21,386.50 for the bridge in 2020.



Photos by Pam Steinman

Leave No Trace Put to Good Use

Bev Finamore
Friends Board Member
and Volunteer Naturalist

Friends awarded the Leave No Trace initiative at Castlewood Canyon State Park a grant in 2019 and it has proved to be money well spent. Volunteers continue to spread the word at other organizations and parks. Special clean-up events at CCSP have been invaluable as the deluge of visitors since March has left piles of trash and dog waste every week.

Despite the installation of bags for dog waste, there's still a problem of the bags not making it to the trash receptacles. At the latest LNT clean up in November, volunteers picked up 16 dog poo bags and 12 piles of dog waste that didn't make it into a bag. But after eight volunteers scoured the park including social trail use, it looked great.

Left, Fran Tate and Cathy Fischer pick up litter around the Event Facility picnic area and right, Fran Tate already had a bag filled with trash before the LNT event started.

Castlewood Canyon State Park's Leave No Trace program made it to television when Fox31 Denver filmed us making it to the Gold Standard. You can still watch the video: [Another Colorado State Park is now the 'Gold Standard' | FOX31 Denver \(kdvr.com\)](#). Mike Thomas, CPW Volunteer Naturalist at Roxborough State Park, discussed the seven Leave No Trace principles and Tommy Duff, CCSP Ranger, shared the positive impacts of the Leave No Trace principles at CCSP.

We also now have a water faucet for refilling bottles installed in the CCSP Visitor Center lobby which will cut down on the use of plastic bottles and the trash they make.

Check Out Stocking Stuffers in Visitor Center



There's something new in the Friends' "store" in the Visitor Center. Jeannette Littlejohn ordered QR Guides, "Weather" and "The Night Sky" laminated fold-outs to add to the Friends merchandise.

A number of Colorado State Parks have the "Dark Skies" designation. Stars become a glittering canvas for the Colorado mountains.

The fold-outs will make excellent Christmas Stocking stuffers and Christmas gifts. This summer, volunteers and Park Rangers may organize CCSP night skies events.

And don't stop there—you can really fill up a Christmas sock by stuffing in one of the popular cap and t-shirt combos. And there's a new color! Come check out all the new items.

Virtual Race Held Our Place, For 2021, It's Going All the Way

Travis Brown
Friends Board Member
and Volunteer Naturalist

The Dam Run at Castlewood Canyon 2020 - Virtual Version was a success. It provided our running community, 44 participants, the opportunity to come out in support of Castlewood Canyon and enjoy a great run, jog or walk in one of the nicest places in the state for the 7th year. In doing so we were able to keep this great 5 and 10 kilometer run alive safely in a quite different year. The immense help of the Castlewood Canyon volunteers and park staff, as always, is what allowed us to provide this wonderful opportunity.

The 8th annual Dam Run at Castlewood Canyon is scheduled tentatively for Sunday, Sept. 19, 2021. For everyone who has helped before and everyone who wants to join in, please keep this magnificent event in mind for next year. If you might be interested in taking on new roles in support of the event, we will start planning in March and April. There's lots of jobs to fill.

My sincere thank you to you all.



Photo by Dale Campbell

Pictured left to right, Sharon Boyd, Roger Patrizio and Linda Fladland were part of the 44 runners who participated in the CCSP 2020 Virtual Dam Run all through September. Runners signed up on-line and ran the trail when it was best for them.

Help Castlewood Canyon State Park ... and Yourself, Too!

Dale Campbell
Friends President
and Volunteer Naturalist

Here's an excellent opportunity for you to make a year-end contribution to Friends of Castlewood Canyon State Park. And, make it count toward reducing your 2020 tax burden.

With the passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in 2020, Congress included a provision that permits eligible individuals who do not itemize to deduct \$300 of qualified charitable contributions as an "above the line" deduction. (<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/special-300-tax-deduction-helps-most-people-give-to-charity-this-year-even-if-they-dont-itemize>) The \$300 limit is per filing unit regardless of filing status. Deductions must be in cash, check, electronic funds, or payroll deductions (no property i.e. old clothing, furniture, or household items); and given to a 501(c)(3) public charity.

Since 1998, Friends has operated as a 501(c)(3) public charity. This year, we are directing donations toward the construction of the Wildcat Canyon Bridge. Learn more about this outstanding project at [The Bridge Fundraiser | FoCCSP \(castlewoodfriends.org\)](#). Donations are welcomed via an on-line contribution at the [Friends website](#) or by a check sent to our postal address: Friends of Castlewood Canyon State Park PO Box 403, Franktown, CO 80116.

Now that the CARES Act allows the \$300 above-the-line charitable contribution deduction per filing unit, this is a great way to reduce your adjusted gross income and help construct the Wildcat Canyon Bridge to improve the Park's support of a growing number of visitors to this amazing Colorado resource.

Park Manager Trained to Share Leave No Trace Principles

A grant from Partners in the Outdoors was awarded to Roxborough and Castlewood Canyon State Parks and helped send Park Manager Brent Lounsbury to a week-long master educator training in the Colorado backcountry. Brent and eight students with two instructors ventured into the Holy Cross Wilderness to put the Leave No Trace doctrine to use. Classroom sessions were held in a log cabin in the forest before they ventured into the wilderness.

They entered the backcountry for high-level outdoor sessions that emphasized the consequences of man on the wilderness. Brent says it was a wonderful week, with no cell/internet for eight days.

Graduates of the Leave No Trace Master Educator course now have the skills to teach others about Leave No Trace and train the trainers. Brent will share additional information and photographs of the Master Educator experience at a Friends or volunteer meeting sometime in the coming year.



Photos by Brent Lounsbury



Lots of Information Came Out of Annual Meeting

The Park and the Visitors: The park experienced a dramatic increase in the number of visitors, along with challenges of a new type of visitor enjoying the park during the pandemic restrictions. In the latter part of April, the Visitor Center was closed until mid-June. As a result, the Iron Rangers experienced very long lines, frustrating visitors. The massive visitation increase caused conflicts with COVID-19 regulations; social distancing (6 feet separation) and wearing masks.

By Sept. 30, 2019, the park had 143,000 visitors. This year, from Jan. 1 to Sept. 30, 2020 the park had 203,000 visitors. In many ways, the overall park visitor attendance has jumped ahead by about 10 years from what was previously projected.

Trail Improvements: TeamWorks efforts in June helped rescue several damaged sections of trails within the park. Funding for two weeks of trail crew work was provided by Friends. The team built a retaining wall and installed steps for visitors to be able to move safely to the water. During the week TeamWorks was at Castlewood Canyon, the Inner Canyon Trail bridge over Cherry Creek failed. TeamWorks assisted in transporting building supplies to the site for constructing a new bridge.

For further information regarding a summary of the financials, summary of the Wildcat Canyon Bridge initiative and other aspects of what was accomplished for 2020, please review the [Friends October 3, 2020 Annual Meeting Presentation](#).

“Pandemic Inspired” Nature Escapes

**Sharon Boyd,
Friends Secretary
and Dale Campbell,
President**

During the challenging times of the Pandemic, we have enjoyed a variety of "Nature Escape" adventures during spring, summer, and fall. Colorado's state parks became our best friends.

In spring, summer and fall, Eleven Mile Canyon near Lake George became our favorite Nature Escape during five mountain bike rides, a camping trip at the Spillway Campground, and a hike up the mountain to the dam overlook. We saw Ospreys, Seagulls (Colorado Natives that never see the coast!), Great Blue Heron, Bald Eagles, Red-tail Hawks, and Common Merganser Ducks. It was fun to learn the Common Merganser males and females feather color patterns. The male has a long body that is mostly white with a black back, a dark green head, and a long, straight orange-red bill. The female has a reddish head with a ragged crest, white chin, white chest, and orange-red bill.



Early July, we camped at Buffalo Springs Campground with a group of friends. We saw an abundance of wild flowers, lush meadows filled with Mule Deer, riders on horseback, and snow-capped mountains with 14,000 foot peaks. We mountain bicycled on dirt roads with no traffic and also hiked to an ancient grove of Limber Pines. Some Limber pines in Colorado exceed 1,000 years in age. The oldest known Colorado Limber pine is a small 1,660 year-old tree in South Park. Limber pines have an absence of cones and resembles Whitebark pine. Like the Bristlecone, the wood of ancient Limber pine can be sculpted by wind and ice into complex and curved forms.

During Summer and Fall, we camped at Mueller State Park that has 5,112 acres of land and 55 miles of trails to enjoy hiking and mountain biking. There are massive rocks of Pikes Peak Granite, native grasses and wildflowers, as well as stands of Engelmann spruce, Douglas fir, Ponderosa and Limber pine and Aspen. Wildflowers we found were Shrubby cinquefoil, Colorado blue columbine, Monkshood, Bluebells, Golden banner, Yarrow, Harebell, Penstemon, Pussytoes and Stonecrop. The ponds provided excellent habitats for Bird Watching. While hiking, we saw Broad-tailed hummingbird, Common flicker, Yellow-bellied sapsucker, Hairy woodpecker, Steller's jay, Clark's nutcracker, Mountain chickadee and Mountain bluebird. Common raptors in the park that we looked for were Golden eagle, Red-tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk, Goshawk, American kestrel, Great horned owl and Turkey vulture. While looking for elk, bighorn sheep, black bear, and mountain lions, we saw plenty of Chipmunks, Abert's Squirrels, Pine Squirrels and Mule Deer. We observed a number of midden piles.

On the #17-Cheesman Ranch Trail we found an old log cabin. And further along, we climbed to the top of Grouse Mountain, a forested ridge with massive rocks. We were able to view the “back side” of Pikes Peak, and the mountain ranges to the south.



Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

In August, we took Sharon's birthday present to celebrate by enjoying a morning of stand-up paddle-boarding at Monument Lake. It is a 40-acre lake with beautiful mountain views. Gliding across the lake, watching the water birds, Mule Deer and mountain tops in the background is peaceful and very relaxing.



While paddling and seeing the waterfowl take flight from the water or land adds to the enjoyment of floating along. The waterfowl are Mallards, Cormorant, and Canada Geese. One afternoon, we watched the delivery of cut-throat trout trucked from a CPW hatchery to restock the lake. Monument Lake and Palmer Lake have a rich history providing water for the Arapahoe, Cheyenne, Kiowa, Mountain Ute, and Sioux Cheyenne Native American Tribes.



Over Labor Day, we camped at Trinidad Lake State Park on a cliff overlooking the lake. Bordered by the historic Santa Fe Trail and the scenic Highway of Legends, the lake has 800 surface-acres of water filled with largemouth bass, rainbow and brown trout, walleye and saugeye fish, black crappie, channel catfish, yellow perch, bluegill, and wiper. Additionally, we enjoyed geology hikes since an exposure of the Cretaceous–Paleogene boundary is visible in the southern part of the park. Mountain biking to the dam provided us with panoramic views of Southern Colorado's beautiful landscape scenery and bird watching. Trinidad State Park offers Star Parties in summer, since the park is designated a "Dark Skies" location.



One fall day, we enjoyed the colors on a mountain bike ride with the Colorado Springs Cycling Club at Eleven-mile Canyon. In 1887, the first Colorado Midland passenger train chugged up Granite Canyon (now named the Eleven Mile Canyon). Locomotive residue can still be seen around railroad tunnels blasted through solid granite. We road nine miles along the South Platte River toward the dam, during which we passed through three tunnels. Before we headed back to the entrance, we climbed a large rock to observe fishermen in waders fly-fishing for trout. The water is so clear, we could see 18-inch long trout. During our snack time, chipmunks climbed the rock in hopes that we dropped crumbs. During the return, we watched rock climbers scale the steep canyon rock walls.



After the mountain bike ride, we drove to Eleven Mile State Park. The park has nine campgrounds and is located on one of Colorado's largest reservoirs; Eleven Mile Canyon Reservoir has 3,400 surface-acres. We hiked Coyote Ridge Trail and found large islands of rock to climb on.

How do you celebrate your Wedding Anniversary during a pandemic? On November 8th, our 34th Wedding Anniversary, Dale packed a lovely picnic lunch for a drive down memory lane. We drove south along the Front Range to Westcliffe, a small mountain town. The snow-covered Sangre de Cristo mountains were just beautiful. We forgot how lovely Colorado's mountain scenery and rocky canyons south and west of Colorado Springs are. Along the journey, we saw plenty of Mule Deer and Red-tailed Hawks. Near Castle Mountain, surprise! A beautiful Golden Eagle flew right over our pickup truck.



We had our picnic at "Pinnacle Rock" recreation area and then continued our journey, turning at Royal Gorge and Paradise Cove/Guffey Gorge near Florissant where we have memories of past trips, biking, white-water rafting and snow skiing.

It's a Wrap

Bridget Milnes
Friends Board Member
and Volunteer Naturalist



The East Canyon is closed, and hopefully the bluebirds and tree swallows have reached their winter destinations. A quiet peace has settled over the trail and the 80 nesting boxes throughout the park stand as silent sentinels casting long shadows across the dry short grass of the prairie.

COVID forced many changes and monitoring the bluebird trail was no exception. In order to maintain social distancing the trails were divided and monitoring activity was limited to pairs. Instead of filling out the logs in the Visitors Center, one person on each trail filled out each week and submitted the completed logs to Kathy Dressel at the end of the nesting season.

By February the days are getting longer and bluebirds arrive to check out the real estate. On a warm, sunny winter day it's amazing how many bugs are flying around so there is a good source of protein for these early birds.

Toward the end of March monitors walk the trails checking boxes and making necessary repairs. In 2020, the nest box count was 80, down from 86 in 2019 when bears destroyed five boxes on the Event Facility Trail.

By late April we begin weekly monitoring until the nesting cycle is complete and the boxes cleaned out. This year monitoring began April 28 and ended August 4. In 2019, the season started earlier on April 16 and ended later on August 27. However, in both years the last fledglings left the boxes on July 16, 2019 and July 15, 2020. See how much fun citizen science can be!

During the past two years weather, wildlife activity and "hostile" takeovers of boxes have played a major part in nesting success or failure. Kathy Dressel noted that in 2020 "there was one freezing 2-3 day spell that probably froze some early eggs. After that, the weather was good for egg laying and incubating. However it was hot and dry the remaining season with few insects resulting in a lack of food for nestlings and adults. Many birds did not fledge and died in the box. A year earlier three snow storms at the beginning of the nesting season froze a large percentage of eggs. But once the weather turned warmer nestlings were successful. "

While these discoveries are disheartening, nature is amazingly resilient. This year two pairs of mountain bluebirds and nine pairs of Western blue had two successful broods.

CASTLEWOOD CANYON STATE PARK BLUEBIRD TRAIL SUMMARY

	Fledged birds	Eggs Not Hatched	Birds Not Fledged
Mountain Bluebirds			
2020	48	9	11
2019	52	55	41
Western bluebirds			
2020	113	12	42
2019	61	63	18
Tree Swallows			
2020	119	51	36
2019	175	57	21
Violet Green Swallows			
2020	19	2	1

AVAILABLE NEST BOXES		BOXES NOT USED
Total 2020	80	6
Total 2019	86	7
Visitor Center Trail		
2020	18	0
2019	18	0
Event Facility Trail		
2020	13	0
2019	19	5
East Canyon Trail		
2020	28	3
2019	28	2
West Side Trail		
2020	21	3
2019	21	0

What Will 2021 Bring for Friends? Let's Take a Look



Dale Campbell
Friends President
and Volunteer Naturalist

Looking back over the last nine months, it's almost hard to summarize the challenges to us all from the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially, I thought that as an all-volunteer organization, impacts to Friends would be minimal. But I quickly learned there were some hidden repercussions, such as lost revenue from merchandise sales due to a shuttered Visitors Center, or operational difficulties resulting from the inability to support Friends meetings as we had previously. However, true to the vitality of this wonderful group of people called Friends of Castlewood Canyon, we quickly adapted and overcame many challenges. For example, our monthly meeting transitioned from in-person to video conferences supported by ZOOM. The hidden advantage here is that inclement weather (think snowy Saturday mornings as one instance) was no longer cause for concern. Can't get to the park? Let's get on Zoom!

As individuals or as an organization, we always grow and get stronger from our experiences. That's why I'm very excited about what 2021 may bring. Let me pass along a few thoughts from looking into my "crystal ball."

For 2021, I see:

A new way for Friends to support volunteer training: Here's an excellent opportunity to use Zoom for bringing the Class of 2021 together to cover the classroom portion of the training. For the field work, here's where a mentoring program will help support getting that hands-on experience. Currently, there are plenty of long-time volunteers who would work one-on-one with their chosen/assigned trainee to pass along knowledge about the various subjects and resources within the park.

An expanding **Wildcat Canyon Bridge** fundraising effort: Since the official kick-off of the fundraising campaign on Dam Day 2020, we've learned a lot about how to reach out to potential donors and to create informative publications about the project. Based on this experience, and moving further into the project plan, we will expand our horizon to reach a broader audience of potential donors. As we move into spring 2021 and better weather, stay tuned for how we will begin to accomplish that goal.

Development of a Bridge Construction Timeline: With expanded fundraising and more details about the actual bridge construction, we will begin creating, in conjunction with CPW and Park Management, a more definitive timeline for construction of the bridge. In my optimistic view, I think some of the work on the project will begin during 3Q 2021, probably with the initial site work and abutment construction. As to the actual construction of the bridge structure itself, well, that's going to depend on how much progress we make with the fundraising (see the discussion immediately above). Just remember, there are multiple ways as Friends members that you can help. Something as simple as passing along information about the project or just mentioning it to your friends and neighbors helps!

Finally, expanding outreach and new projects: With the anticipation of effective vaccines and further adoption of preventive measures, it's logical that the consequences of the pandemic and the resultant impacts to our day-to-day activities will wane. This will not only allow us to get back to business as usual, but will also create new opportunities for Friends to support the park, its visitors and environmental resources. With the creation of new projects comes further need for support from members like you. Support in the form of submitting your suggestions about how Friends can further improve what we do is just one example. Others include joining a project committee, spending some time with one of the Board members to learn more about the organization, or even helping greet visitors down by the bridge site to tell folks about what the future will bring at that location. Want to learn more? Just contact us via the Friends Website.

Think there's more to come in 2021? I do, too! Let's get back together at the start of summer 2021 and talk about what's to come!