

# Cheyenne Mountain State Park

## Friends

### Park Progress

By Rich Dudley, Park Manager

Many of you have undoubtedly witnessed the moving of dirt and pre-construction activities in the area near the future entrance to our Park. While very exciting, the activity to date has been the work of the developer who will build homes on about 500 acres of land just north of the Park. The developer's initial construction is required before we begin the work on our Park's infrastructure. With any luck, we will be able to put our roadway and utilities construction out for bid in March. Conceivably, considering a typical 60-90 day State bidding/contracting process, we could be turning dirt on-site sometime in June. Projecting a timeline for this work, we think it might be reasonable to believe the trailhead parking area (gravel only initially) might be in place sometime around October. This means we can open the park for trail use in the same timeframe...let's all keep our fingers crossed!

Fire issues at the park seem to be mostly resolved at this time. Colorado State Parks has made significant commitments to fire mitigation, efforts to be maintained over the long haul. These commitments include: special fire rings with ember screens and covers; an additional emergency hydrant adjacent to each campfire ring; areas around each campsite will be cleared of vegetation; an initial attack wildfire truck will be stationed at the park; all permanent field personnel will be certified wild land fire fighters; fuel breaks around the park will be phased in; State Parks will abide by all fire bans issued by Sheriff's Offices; etc. The City will undertake an annual review of these commitments. While the process to come to consensus on this issue was painful at times, we truly believe all stakeholders are better off for it.

### President's Message

As President of the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy New Year!!

It truly is hard to believe that 2003 has passed us by already, but if you need a reality check, take a look at what has happened at Cheyenne Mountain State Park. Trail building days have come and gone and after the dust settled, we found close to 16 miles of trails for hiking and biking. The final draft of the park master plan is complete and some infrastructure work has already begun. I hope that all Friends have had a chance to see what Park Manager Rich Dudley and State Parks Director Lyle Laverty have planned for "our park". Their hard work and vision for the future have left us with one awesome State Park.

As we move into 2004, the transformation of CMSP will continue at a rapid pace. I know that for some, rapid is not fast enough, but to get it done right, it takes time. That doesn't mean there won't be opportunities for planned hiking and biking events with our Friends group. We are in the process of putting these events together and will let you know as they come up.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone for your support of the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park. I hope that your support continues long after "opening day" at CMSP and that we can continue to work with the park staff to make sure that CMSP is the #1 gem of the Colorado State Park system.

Sincerely, Jerry O'Hare

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Volume 3, Issue 1

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Architectural design for the Visitor and Event Centers is proceeding nicely. Construction documents for these buildings should be available sometime in April. If our funding outlook is good, we could bid construction of the Visitor Center this summer and begin work this fall. This means the Visitor Center might be open sometime in late spring or early summer of 2005.

We have also hired a consultant to begin work on the trailhead kiosk signing. This promises to be an interesting project. Ideally, we would like to have this kiosk and associated signing in place by the time we “throw open the doors” to the public for trail use. We will see as several projects progress forward.



## Trails Progress

**“Awesome!” “Very well laid out.” “Takes advantage of cover, scenery and enhances environmental stewardship.”**

Just a few of the many positive comments from guest hiking and biking groups that have had a chance to join our guided tours of the Cheyenne Mountain State Park trail system. Arrowhead Trails and volunteer organizations have completed over 16

miles of incredibly well designed trails that rate from easy to rigorous.

The North Talon trail takes you to the highest point (on a trail) in the Park, practically touches the Southwest Park boundary and provides spectacular overlooks of the southeast face of Cheyenne Mountain, the Lime Kiln Canyon and Fort Carson.

The Blackmeer trail traverses several ecosystems and boulder gardens, passes through the old JL Ranch homestead and provides the most incredible views of southern Colorado Springs and Fort Carson (and if you look hard enough, Kansas). Tony Boone and his Arrowhead Trails group have several more loops and trails ready for our enjoyment.

The Zook Trail, built by volunteers organized by Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, is just a bit over a mile loop near the center of the Park. The trail provides a great perspective of the Park and will include several picnic areas for snack, lunch or rest stops along your way.

The Medicine Wheel Trail is also complete. Built by the Medicine Wheel Mountain Bike Club of Colorado Springs, this trail is a challenge to the best mountain bikers out there and a joy to hike. At just over a mile, the Medicine Wheel Trail connects the Blackmeer Trail where you can choose to return to the Hikers Pavilion (not yet complete) via the Zook Trail or continue on up to the JL Ranch Homestead on the Blackmeer Trail.

You have to hike these trails to understand how well designed and built they are. Contact Rich Dudley, Park Manager or Rick Upton (contact info listed on the Friends Board Members page) and schedule your group for a hike in your State Park.

## Board Update

You might think that without an officially opened park that there wouldn't be a whole lot for the Board to do. To the contrary, the last 3 years have been busy ones. We have had several picnics and hikes to show our members and prospective members all that the site has to offer. Many tours and hikes have been led for community groups (including one in a recent snow storm) wishing to find out about the Park. And board members have attended many public meetings to provide details and support of the park plans and preparation for opening efforts.

Different community groups have also volunteered their time for several projects within the park. The Board itself has undertaken to clean up trash at the entrance to the park and along highway 115.

This fall, the Board received a very generous anonymous grant to pay all expenses for one individual to attend The National Association for Interpretation Annual National Workshop in Sparks, NV. The five-day workshop included 12 tracks of interpretive an associated subjects sessions and a one-day field trip. Rich Dudley, our Park Manager was selected by the Board to attend. With about 1000 people in attendance, Rich reported that besides attending many useful sessions, he had a chance to learn and visit with personnel from the National Park Service, USDA Forest Service, BLM, Army Corps of Engineers, USGS, state and city parks, instructors, students and professors from many colleges, park planners, exhibit and sign designers.

Dick Taylor, from the Board, also attended the workshop, on his own, with the addition of a pre-workshop three-day two-night field trip up and down the Owens Valley and Eastern Sierra. Dick reported learning about several successful ecological projects and studies in the area. Together Dick and Rich will provide a wealth of knowledge and experience as the Park's operational plans unfold.



Photo Courtesy of Don's Hiking Group

# Zen and the Art of Flower Identification

by Dick Taylor

*The second in a series*

Flowers are not just found on the plants we normally think of as “flowers,” but on any plant having even minute indistinct flowers. They always have their seeds enclosed in an ovary or fruit. These plants are known as angiosperms (gymnosperms are cone-bearing plants having the seeds exposed like pines, firs, or spruce. Did the cone in some ancient past develop into the flower? ). Grasses have flowers too, but don't seem to attract our attention, as their flowers don't need to be colorful. They are pollinated by the wind and not by insects or other animals (birds and bats). You may think that the colorful flowers are there for our delight. What egos we have. All that color does have a purpose and that is to attract pollinators and color is but one attractant. It has even been suggested that the flower may be used by a plant to attract man and have him/her used as a devise to continue the species by propagating vast fields of the flower. Is the purpose of life to continue life? I suppose you could argue that this would be just another evolutionary take advantage of what ever the environment may offer and run with it. Guess we better blame that fellow Mendel who, back in the middle of the 19th century, discovered that plants had dominant and recessive color genes which produced predictable patterns of inheritance and flower color.

Getting back to color, which we said in the last essay, was not the best method

for flower identification. Did you realize that eyes don't all see the same thing? Most insects with the exception of some beetles cannot perceive the red end of the color spectrum. Bees, for example, can see ultra violet light or what has been termed bee violet. You and I can see red OK, but not “bee violet” except by using film that will record that part of the spectrum. In the same vein, when is the last time you ran into someone with X-ray eyes? Hey, your pet dog can't even see color, but probably knows a lot more of what goes on where you walk from its sense of smell. Birds on the other hand have eyes that are very attuned to seeing red. Nature doesn't produce many red flowers but hummingbirds are very adept at finding them. Red flowers that you may find in your nursery you can blame on that fellow Mendel and subsequent plant breeders. The red flowers that we do see may look like a different color to the insect. It all comes down to all eyes are not the same; the eye has evolved many times and in many forms. Eyesight is one of the senses and one could even say that plants have eyes. They certainly have cells that can detect light and heat. We previously pointed out that some flowers open at night and close in the daylight. Others will close up on overcast days and still others may track the sun in various ways. Why no green flowers? Some grasses may have green flowers, but it is thought that to most animals green appears to be a background of gray and why produce a flower that will be lost in a background of green or is it gray? Why do you suppose that so many berries and fruits turn red at maturity? Is this a signal to the birds to come for desert and transport the seeds for the plant? Or perhaps insects may not be tempted to feast on them because they are red. Color, shape, smell, reward, imitation and trickery, as well as one could almost believe, a subscription to the “Economist” may be in a flower's play book.

To attract a pollinator and the right one and at the right time can be considered a life and death matter for future generations of the plant. Some flowers

may appear to go out of their way to do this. There are flowers, for example, that have what are called nectar guides to guide the insect to a reward of nectar. These are patterns like airport landing stripes that lead to the runway and the nectar reward. What triggers the insect to follow this pathway is difficult to say. Nature can be mysterious as with the partnership of insect and flower.

## Park Stewardship Plan (Part One)

“Significant Natural Resources”

Following the initial natural resource survey and assessment conducted by the Colorado State Parks Stewardship Team, it is clear that Cheyenne Mountain has a rare quality of natural resources on Colorado's Front Range. Evidence of the outstanding resource conditions found here are exhibited by the well preserved plant communities, the active presence of diverse wildlife species, and the dramatic mountain tops and unique geophysical features. Preserving the integrity of the park will depend on the planning approach, the design and construction practices, careful policy development, reducing impact potential, long-term monitoring, and maintaining an unwavering commitment to protecting these assets.

The current condition and the quality of the **vegetation** communities here will provide visitors the opportunity to experience:

1. Good quality mixed grass prairie and outstanding foothill prairie with very few weed infestations.
2. An extensive oak shrub land and grassland mosaic extending over much of the eastern side of the park.
3. The presence of *Carrion flower*, a somewhat rare vine native to the Front Range, and an unusual community of Scribner's needle grass and Ponderosa pine.



- 4. The largest stands of plum found in the Colorado Springs area and some of the most northern wild grape populations.
- 5. A minimally disturbed and highly diverse transitional zone between Great Plains grassland communities and montane coniferous forest.
- 6. A quality and diversity of vegetation that rivals Aiken Canyon, a nearby Nature Conservancy Preserve!

- 4. The park provides habitat for several rare or threatened species, including two rare butterfly species, and potential habitat for the burrowing owl and the endangered Mexican spotted owl.
- 5. The park area has had a historical presence of peregrine falcons, with a high probability of peregrines nesting near the park. An active prairie falcon nest has also been observed at the southern edge of the park.

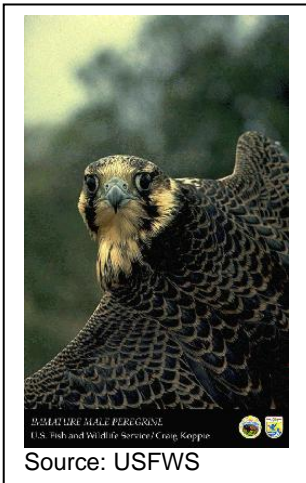


Source: Stewardship Team 2000

*The article above was printed, with permission, from the Cheyenne Mountain State Park Stewardship Plan. The Stewardship Plan details the vegetation, wildlife and geology of the area included in CMSP and explains why the area is so important to protect, maintain and nurture for all future generations. Our next several newsletters will include excerpts from the Plan.*

Accompanying the high quality vegetation at Cheyenne Mountain is another valuable biological resource, abundant and diverse

**wildlife.** The qualities that make this area so important in respect to fauna include:



Source: USFWS

- 1. The Limekiln drainage is an important wildlife corridor, and part of an elk migration route, that passes through the park.
- 2. It is an important turkey breeding area with a substantial population of wild turkeys.
- 3. The park provides excellent habitat for mule deer, elk, black bear, mountain lion, fox, bobcat, prairie dogs and coyote, as well as many species of raptors and songbirds.

## Membership Renewal

Are you ready to renew your Friends membership? If you joined our Cheyenne Mountain State Park Friends between October 1, 2002 and February 2003 you should renew for the next eventful year (the Park should be opening to hiking in 2004!). Already we have all enjoyed 3 CMSP picnics, many guided hikes and been kept abreast of the latest Park progress and issues through our Newsletters and Community and Board meetings.

Take this opportunity to stay involved, help your community and preserve this "near pristine" parcel of land for all time. Consider making the one-time tax-deductible donation of \$500 to become a lifetime member.

Complete the membership renewal application on page 5, attach your check, send it in and let's get going on a banner year for our newest State Park!

## Coming Events

Spring and Summer Friends CMSP events have not yet been finalized. Our next newsletter will report planned activities, dates and times. Below is a list of events that we are planning.

- Members Only Hike/Bike**
- Friends CMSP Open House**
- 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Friends Picnic**
- Hiking/Bicycling Guide Training**

What would you, as a Friends member, like to learn/do in your Park? Let one of the Board members know.

## Prefer Email?

Would you prefer receiving your Friends of CMSP newsletter via email? You would be saving the Friends group the cost of postage and receiving your newsletter in a timelier manner. Email your preference to Rick at [uptonrus@adelphia.net](mailto:uptonrus@adelphia.net).

## New Lifetime Members!



Please join us in welcoming Brain and Dorothy Kern as the newest, Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park lifetime members.

*Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park Board*

President	Jerry O'Hare	lajohare@gbronline.com
Vice Pres	Rick Upton	uptonrus@adelphia.net
Secretary	Lori O'Hare	lajohare@gbronline.com
Treasurer	Pam Miller	alemap@prodigy.net
Newsletter	Rick Upton	uptonrus@adelphia.net
Member	Mary Hahn	otter201@adelphia.net
Member	Glen Scott	glenscott@adelphia.net
Member	Dick Taylor	DickrT8311@aol.com
Member	Jim Schwerin	jim@windycreek.net
Park Manager	Rich Dudley (Non-voting member)	rich.dudley@state.co.us

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P.O Box 51453  
Colorado Springs, CO 80949-1453



# Join the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park

(New/Renewal)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Annual Membership Dues

Individual	\$ 25.00
Family	\$ 35.00
Supporting	\$ 50.00
Contributing	\$100.00
Small Business	\$100.00
Corporate	\$500.00
<b>Lifetime</b>	<b>\$500.00</b>

Make check payable to:  
 Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park  
 P.O. Box 51453  
 Colorado Springs, CO 80949-1453

### Become a member of the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park!

Help to ensure that your State Park provides the best possible environment for you, your family, your friends and all people to learn and enjoy.

Complete the application to the left, detach this page from the newsletter, fold this page in half so that our address (page 5) is visible and mail the application, along with your check.

Contact a Board member and find out how you can provide time and talent in support of your newest State Park.

This newsletter represents the opinions and views of the Board of Directors of the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park. Except as specifically identified in an article, the views and opinions do not necessarily reflect official policy or endorsement by the State of Colorado or the State Department of Parks and Recreation.

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