

THE

CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN

STATE PARK

TRACKER



Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park Newsletter

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President's Message: Get Involved

Hello Friends. We just celebrated a birthday! We registered as a non-profit with the great state of Colorado in March of 2002. I went to our records and looked up our mission statement from those early days. Here it is:

"The Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park serves to protect, enhance and preserve for all time the natural state and spectacular beauty of the park. We are also dedicated to working in partnership with the park staff to promote recreational and educational activities as well as advocating for important park issues."

What do you think? I think that mission statement is just as relevant today as when we started as a Friends Group. You all can be proud of what we have accomplished since then both in terms of direct and indirect support to the Park and our community. A major part of our success has been due to our partners, specifically the Park staff. A Friend's Group without a supportive Park management staff is a waste of time, and I think our close partnership with the Park staff has been particularly effective.

So, as we go forward there are many things to look forward to as a Friends Group. Here are just a couple. Please consider getting involved in any or all of these:

- Further developing the Naturalist program at the Park. We recently received a grant from the El Pomar Foundation to assist with the Park Naturalist Program. Jerry O'Hare (Program's Committee Chair) is taking the lead on that, to include coordinating with the Park staff. If you would like to join that effort then please let him know.
- Friends' Events for 2009. We are exploring a "Friends' Only" event for this spring or summer. A top candidate on the list is starting with a gathering at one of the Park group picnic areas, and moving onward to the top of the mountain for hiking, etc. If you have ideas or suggestions for a good event please email any member of board. Our email addresses are at the back of the newsletter.

Finally, our Board of Directors meets the 3rd Thursday of each month in the evening. If you have issues or ideas you want explored at that meeting, or if you want to present something yourself, then please step forward and let us know.

Board President: Glen Scott

Park Manager's Update: Going Full Bore

Greetings Friends! Spring is now officially upon us and staff is ramping up for what promises to be a very busy season. This is typically the busiest time of year for State Parks staff...where the rubber meets the proverbial road! Non-stop fun for everyone.... advertising for seasonal positions, job fairs, applications, resumes, interviews, training, paying bills, balancing budgets, budget cuts, budget projections, de-winterizing buildings, trail maintenance, repairing tools & equipment, ordering supplies, interpretive planning, meetings, revenue reporting, campground opening, reservations.....on and on, and on! But you know what? Because we have the best staff around, a very supportive Friends groups, and incredible volunteers, we are up to the task!

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The rapidly approaching summer season is truly what we have all been dreaming of and working for all these years. It's now time to get **BUSY!!** We want our campground to be jam-packed every weekend! We want to see hundreds of vehicles in the Trailhead parking lot, and have people enjoying interpretive programs at the Amphitheater! Hikers, bikers, picnickers....come one, come all!

As many of you are aware, CMSP went live for campground reservations on March 1st, and the camping public did not disappoint! As of March 26th, we have raked in a total of \$31,536.00 in reservation funds, and are already completely booked for the Memorial Day and July 4th weekends! For Labor Day, there are still a few regular and group campsites available. Unbelievable! And get this – besides Colorado, reservations have been made by people from 21 other states as far away as Florida and Connecticut! Monique's our official demographic nut, and I'm sure before long she will be reporting reservations from the Fiji Islands and Timbuktu!



*Black-capped Chickadee Hunts Down
a Few Morsels*

Angie Verela of Colorado Getaways will be here next month to film a segment about the park. Angie visited the park long ago before any construction took place. The programs she puts together have proven to be very beneficial to Colorado State Parks, and there is every reason to believe Cheyenne Mountain State Park will reap significant visitation and revenue from this exposure.

Brian Kerrigan recently learned that once again, Cheyenne Mountain State Park will be receiving a Summit Award because we have amassed more volunteer hours than any other park in the Southeast Region! All told, our volunteers contributed 5,272 hours during the 2008 calendar year...outstanding! Truly, Cheyenne Mountain State Park would not be what it is today without our dedicated volunteers....A heartfelt thanks to all of you!

Park Manager: Rich Dudley

Monitoring Programs Record the Feathers Flying

One of the most popular volunteer-led programs at Cheyenne Mountain State Park is our Raptor Monitoring Program which has been active since March 2006. Sanctioned by the Colorado State Parks Resource Stewardship Program, "raptor monitoring gives useful tools to a land manager to assist in stewardship and decision-making. Raptors are a *keystone predator* – an animal without which the ecosystem would fail. The functioning of the Park ecosystem is dependent on raptors. Some raptors, such as Golden Eagles and Northern Harriers, are also an *indicator species* and by monitoring the presence of birds and nests, a clearer picture is drawn of the overall functioning of the system." (source: *Colorado State Parks Raptor Monitoring Handbook*)



*Long-eared Owl listens for his
supper*

Our park has many thriving raptors, from Golden Eagles, Turkey Vultures, and various hawks to falcons, Northern Harriers, kestrels and some owl species. A migrating Bald Eagle was seen at the park in January, probably grabbing a bite and some rest along its way. Thanks to our plentiful prairie dogs, rabbits and other prey species, our park has a very healthy ecosystem.

Monitoring raptors is a practical way to know our park is staying healthy.

The Raptor Monitoring Program is conducted throughout the year on a biweekly basis and consists of two parts. From March through September, the Raptor Monitor Group conducts Summer Nest Monitoring by reporting raptor nest and bird behavior observations, from nesting to hatchlings to fledglings. From October through February, the Group conducts Winter Monitoring Reports by making 5 to 10 minute observations on all wildlife at each of 12 specified locations throughout the park. All field observations are transcribed into reports that are forwarded to the State Parks Resource Stewardship data banks along with reports from other state parks to be utilized as needed.

This spring, volunteer Debbie Barnes started our Park's Owl Survey Program. This group monitors for owls in all areas of CMSP and these eager "listeners" participate from sunset into



*Janeen Igou releases a Northern Harrier at the
Pueblo Eagle Fest in early February.*

the night. Debbie prepared us with slide programs of the possible owls in our area and audio reviews of their calls, but local urban sounds (dogs, vehicles, aircraft, etc) and strong winds in the trees have made it difficult to verify actual owl sounds. However, the second session rewarded the monitor group with a Great-horned Owl silently swooping over their heads! Enjoying the wonders of CMSP after dark with a group of like-minded friends is a treat that's hard to beat. Debbie is also involved with the Breeding Bird Atlas II Program and has had several campouts along Rampart Range Road and at Mueller State Park in hopes of verifying owl species in her assigned areas.

If you are interested in more information about the Raptor Monitor Program, feel welcome to contact Janeen Igou at jwigou@comcast.net, or for the Owl Survey Program, Debbie Barnes at kfoopoo@yahoo.com. These programs are open to all CMSP Volunteers and provide wonderful opportunities to experience nature in the park, get to know other volunteers, and help preserve our park's wildlife and habitat. Come join the fun!



A Great-horned Owl relaxes on the nest

Did you Ever Wonder? Trivia to Teach Park History

In 1959, there were two states in the U.S. that did not have state parks. You will probably be surprised to learn they were Alaska and Colorado. Fortunately, Colorado changed that during that same year by developing a piece of significant property near Denver that eventually became our very first state park: Cherry Creek, and its reservoir. As most of you know, the state's newest park is one we are very proud of here in the Pikes Peak Region. You know...Cheyenne Mountain State Park!

Throughout the year, as Colorado State Parks celebrate their Fiftieth Anniversary, keep an eye out for a variety of events and activities meant to highlight this significant development.



CMSP Will Host Local DOD Fire

Cheyenne Mountain State Park will be hosting a portion of the first-ever Department of Defense Fire Academy on the park May 4-8. This is a partnership between CMAFS (Norad), Fort Carson, Peterson AFB, COS Fire Department, USFS and CMSP. The Academy will train over 200

firefighters throughout the week. This is one more effort that highlights the Park's commitment to fire safety. It also spotlights the Park's continued effort to develop positive relationships within the Pikes Peak Community.

Volunteer Trail Maintenance and Training Looms on Horizon

As another busy season sweeps down on the park, our volunteers will soon be gearing up to hit the trails again. Their weapons of choice: shovels, McCleods, Pulaskis, lopping shears, rakes and pick-mattocks. Ranger Brian Kerrigan has once again lined up his trail crew leaders, signed on his Adopt-A-Trail groups, and set the summer schedule.

First on the agenda is a two-day trail maintenance workshop for new volunteers, as well as any looking for a refresher. The training weekend is set for Saturday and Sunday, May 30 and 31. Both sessions start at 8:00 AM. Kerrigan and the Friends Group supply the morning coffee and donuts. Bring your own lunch, gloves, boots, long pants and shirts.



Beginning in June, volunteers and several Adopt-A-Trail groups will begin to help maintain trails throughout the park. Their duties include clearing the trail corridors to maintain regulation height and width, repairing eroded sections of trail, and building erosion structures where necessary. Thanks to the hard work of these volunteers, the trail system at the park continues to get great reviews from new and old park visitors. If you are interested in joining any of these projects, contact Ranger Kerrigan (brian.kerrigan@state.co.us) at the park.

What's Going on at the Park? Come Check It Out

• Annual Cache Bash Invades CMSP on April 18

Once again Cheyenne Mountain State Park will play host to the third annual *CITO Celebration: Cache In; Trash Out*. Members of Colorado Springs Cache Venturers will meet at 8:00 at the Visitor Center. From there they will head out in groups to spend the morning gathering trash at various sites around the park. Friends of CMSP will then treat them to lunch at Prairie Skipper Group Event Facility.

At 1:30 Geocaching 101 will teach the basics of this great family game. GPS units will be provided. Meet at the Camper Services Building. This class is limited to 20 participants. Reservations are required at 719-576-2016.

At 2:00 another class, *Compass Course for the Directionally Challenged*, will take place. Meet at the Visitor Center for instructions. You will learn to use an orienteering compass, then navigate to hidden checkpoints by setting and following a bearing. Prizes for completing the course will be awarded at 4:00.

From 1:00-4:00 there will be a number of Family Activities at the Visitor Center. These include a kid's Letterboxing Challenge, a family Scavenger Hunt by automobile, a Trail Scavenger Hunt, a Visitor Center Scavenger Hunt, and a Map Quest Activity, as well as an opportunity to learn about the Park's Wild Residents. And if that's not enough, look for the KID'S PRIZE POND!

• CMSP Hosts *Climb to Conquer Cancer* on May 16

The American Cancer Society will present their second annual *Climb to Conquer Cancer* event at the Park that Saturday. Participants enter to either hike or mountain bike specific mileage routes throughout the park trail system. As of late March, they have already collected almost \$6000.00 from participants and their sponsors.

Chances are high that cancer will affect you or someone you know! Whether it's a family member, friend or colleague, this disease touches us all. With your help Climb to Conquer Cancer is working to change the course of this disease.

Sign up for *Climb to Conquer Cancer* and join thousands of people committed to combating the disease. Every dollar raised through Climb to Conquer Cancer helps bring us one step closer to more effective prevention, detection, and treatment of the disease.

We are moving toward a cancer-free future, but we can't reach our destination without your help! Sign up today for a fun filled morning of hiking and mountain biking all while making a difference! For further information you can contact LaDonna Reed @ 719.638.0501 or Deb Idleman @ 719.640.3745. For team information please contact Dana Kahlhamer @ 970.531-0041

• UCI Bike Race Returns to CMSP on June 13

The Carmichael Training System's Sand Creek Series is back! If you're a race fan, you probably know local celebrity Chris Carmichael, best known as Lance Armstrong's personal coach. Chris has been instrumental in keeping this fledgling series going. If you're not going to ride yourself, plan on coming out and enjoying the festivities.

This MTB race series in the Colorado Springs, CO area features the June 13th USA Cycling Pro XCT UCI race which is also the Western Final of the new US Cup Series. The race will be held at Cheyenne Mountain State Park on a new 8.8 km course in the shadow of NORAD! A course profile can be found on the web site at www.sandcreeksports.com.

The Series begins May 10 at the Bear Creek Terrace course built specifically for MTB racing and concludes August 1st with the State Games of America MTB race on Falcon Trail at the US Air Force Academy.



Tales From the Ranger Station: WWW.WildlifeSpy.Fun Proves Popular



Thanks to the skill of Seasonal Ranger Ryan Downing, the multitudes of visitors that swarm the park each week in search of all forms of elusive wildlife—from common sparrows to black bears, from Mule deer to bobcats—have had their search suddenly become easier. Downing has recently presented two well-received programs at the Visitor Center that answered the **What, Where and Why** of Wildlife Spotting. During these presentations he taught both the ethic and technique of spying out animals.



Downing himself is certainly well qualified for instructing all of us. His resume includes thousands of hours in the field. It covers work with Colorado State Parks and U.S. National Forest Service, as well service with Wildland Firefighting crews. If that wasn't enough, he trained in the U.S. Army as a "scout." He commented, "while training for sniper duty, I never thought this would help me in my civilian career." Obviously it has.

The best part of his program were the hundreds of photos of wildlife he has captured on film while at CMSP. And the best of the best are a whole series of bobcat pictures. These particularly elusive cats have obviously become so familiar with his presence, he has many shots of them yawning and napping while he is twenty to thirty yards away!

Unfortunately, Downing's current stint at CMSP ended in late March. Hired as a seasonal ranger, his six-month "tour of duty" has come to an end. From all the

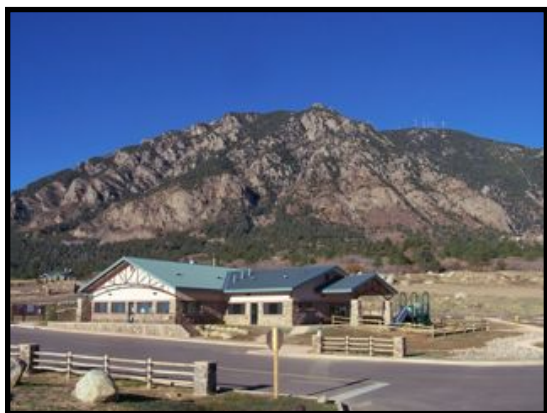
Friends, volunteers, staff and visitors to the park who have been enlightened by his time with us, a hearty good-bye and best wishes. Hopefully we will get to see more of him in the not-too-distant future.

Cheyenne Mountain Website Camping Page Updated



For those of you who enjoy browsing the internet, please be informed CMSP's website has recently seen important additions regarding camping at the park. If you go to our home page and click on **Camping** in the left column, you can find reservation information, maps of the campgrounds, and a photo and description of every one of our 61 campsites! That's hard to beat. Congratulations to Monique Mullis and Brian Greenleaf for completing this timely and time-consuming task.

If you are a camper, you should understand how helpful this can be. What a treat to not only get a map of the campgrounds, and a description of each campsite, but better yet, to have that photo, too. Who knows, before we turn around, we're liable to have real-time video of those sites. Just kidding, Rich. We know that is NOT on the horizon just yet.





Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park Board

Have questions or want to find out how you can help support Cheyenne Mountain State Park? Contact a Board Member for more information.

Officers:

President Glen Scott gscott06@gmail.com
 Vice Pres. Jack Busher jbusher@qwest.net
 Secretary Lori O'Hare lajohare@msn.com
 Treasurer Barb Scott bscott03@gmail.com

Programs: Jerry O'Hare lajohare@msn.com
 Finance: Barb Scott bscott03@gmail.com
 Members: Jim Purdy jpurdy@aol.com
 Nan Scranton NanScranton@elpasoco.com
 Janeen Igou jwigou@comcast.net
 Pam Scott pscott1644@cpmcast.net

Committee Chairs:

Communications Jack Busher jbusher@qwest.net
 Membership Lori O'Hare lajohare@msn.com

Non-Voting Members:

Park Manager Rich Dudley rich.dudley@state.co.us
 Park Ranger Monique Mullis monique.mullis@state.co.us

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 Colorado State Parks.

Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park Membership Application

I / We wish to join the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park

New / Renewal (circle one)

| | | |
|-------|--------------|---|
| _____ | \$30 | Annual Individual Membership |
| _____ | \$40 | Annual Family Membership |
| _____ | \$60 | Annual Supporting Membership |
| _____ | \$100 | Annual Contributing Membership |
| _____ | \$100 | Annual Small Business Membership |
| _____ | \$500 | Annual Corporate Membership |
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