

# THE CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN STATE PARK

## TRACKER



Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park Newsletter Volume 7 Issue 2 September 2007



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## Board Elections in October

FOCMSP Board of Directors Elections: Your Friends Board of Directors will have 5 positions available during our elections in October 2007. We also plan to add at least 1 alternate position. To be considered simply contact Lori O'Hare or Rick Upton via email or phone (our contact information is listed later in this newsletter) and/or come to the FOCMSP Board of Directors open

meeting on September 20, 2007 at 5:30 PM in the CMSP Visitors Center. We plan to BBQ some "burgers and dogs," fellowship with our Friends membership and accept nominations for FOCMSP Board of Director Positions. Please give some thought to helping our board stay fresh and vital by volunteering to run yourself, or nominate a Friend who you think would work well on the board.

## President's Message : Visitor Center Opens; Top of Mountain Gets Closer

Let us all celebrate! Our Cheyenne Mountain State Park is now open DAILY and the first official step has been taken to include Cheyenne Mountain as a part of our Park!

So if you haven't heard, let me be the first to tell you that you can now enjoy the Park's trails and Visitor's Center every day. The remainder of park services (picnic grounds, camping, etc) will be made available to the public as soon as practical.

As you know we have been advocating for quite some time the purchase of a group of properties that include the southern peak of Cheyenne Mountain. Obtaining these properties will preserve the mountain, provide a link to the Pike National Forest, allow for back country primitive hiking and camping and provide connections for several city and county existing and proposed trails. As the first official step to making the

purchase of Cheyenne Mountain a reality; the Colorado Springs Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's Trails and Open Space (TOPS) Working Committee recently voted to recommend that the city spend TOPS dollars and join with State Parks in a plan to purchase these properties. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (made up of citizens) must take the next step and recommend action to the City Council which must approve the plan and funding for our dream to become a reality. I must emphasize that both the city and State Parks will provide funds in the plan for this purchase, and that city funds can only come from TOPS dollars already set aside (by city taxpayers) for trails and open space.

If you agree with the proposal to purchase Cheyenne Mountain and preserve a historical part of the Front Range for all time, now is the time to express your approval. Write or email

the members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. Write or email our City Council members.

You can find contact information including email addresses on [www.springsgov.com](http://www.springsgov.com).

Rick Upton, Board President, FOCMSP

## FRIENDS CELEBRATE THE ARRIVAL OF SUMMER WITH MOONLIGHT HIKE

On June 30 the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park kicked off summer activities on the park's trails by hosting a BBQ for members of the Friends group, visitors, and park staff, followed by two moonlight hikes to view the second full moon of the month.

Highlights of the evening were presentations by two of the park's dedicated volunteer naturalists. Lucy Bell gave a program on the park's ecosystems. Later, Ann Brown, who has made herself into Cheyenne Mountain's unofficial historian, gave a wonderful talk on the history of the J.L. Ranch. During her presentation she spoke of the ranch's original owner, John Lytle, who settled here in the 1880's, as well as the Touzalin sisters who bought Lytle's land, and the Lloyd Jones family, who acquired the property from the Touzalains in the late Forties or early Fifties.

Having had time to digest their dinners, the visitors split into two groups and hiked different routes to the same lookout bench on Blackmer Trail, not far from the site of the old ranch house. Some hikers followed Boulder Run from the Visitors Center, while a second group started at the Event Center parking lot. Both groups were treated to a magnificent rising of a very orange "blue moon," so called because it is the second full moon of a month. Bronco fans in the group were delighted with the colorful display, even if it wasn't meant just for them.

Fortunately the hikers arrived at the lookout when they did, because not long after cloud cover moved in and moonlight was sparse as they returned to parked cars and the visitor center. As the group dispersed, many were heard marveling at another brilliant display from Mother Nature.

## PARK MANAGER'S UPDATE: THE INNER SANCTUM!

Cheyenne Mountain State Park, now open seven days a week...*IMAGINE THAT!* Several years from now, we'll no doubt look back on this milestone and think, "those were the good old days!" No campground to operate...no reservations to deal with...no pesky quiet-hour violations for Rangers to handle...no fire pits to clean...just our beautiful trails and



magnificent Visitor Center to worry about...*for the time being!*

Construction has been rolling along quite nicely, and I

am pleased to say that we currently have the first

layer of pavement laid throughout the park. Obviously, this is quite a pleasant change compared to the dusty, wash-board roads to which staff, volunteers and Friends have become accustomed. In mid-September, paving operations will resume, with the final layer of asphalt applied, followed by striping of all roads and parking areas. It's definitely nice to see a plan come to fruition, and goals realized!

Another complex project took place at the Visitor Center recently, thanks in large part to two key volunteers: Barbara Scott and Linda Overlin. From the beginning of our design process for the Visitor Center, I realized that it made sense to incorporate xeriscaping in the courtyard" area on the west side of the building. With Linda and Barb's considerable knowledge, experience, and vision, this project was completed this month, as well. It was no easy task to

identify suitable species from around the park, first transplanting into temporary pots, then keep the plants alive during transition, prior to the final planting at the Visitor Center. Ultimately, this beautiful area will help visitors learn about the diversity of vegetation found at the park, not to mention lessons about sustainability, etc. A heartfelt “Thank You” to all the volunteers and staff who worked so hard to make this xeriscape garden a reality!



August also saw the “Grand Opening” of our retail sales program. On Sunday, the 12th, visitors to the park encountered a large tent in the Visitor Center parking lot, filled with enthusiastic staff and volunteers peddling our extensive line of products. The Black Bear Coffee Shop and Coca-Cola helped to sponsor the event, donating refreshments. There were also interpretive programs presented in the Visitor Center, hikes led on various trails, and drawings for some very nice prizes. This event was a huge success, and demonstrated that our retail program promises to be a big part of our operations in the years to come.

And, yes, things are looking up at Cheyenne Mountain State Park...*literally*. Our eyes are affixed to the top of the mountain in anticipation of acquiring this beautiful property in partnership with the City of Colorado Springs. As many of you know, the effort to purchase the acreage on top of the mountain has been underway for quite some time, but the good news is that there is finally light at the end of the tunnel! After negotiations with the current owners, the City and State have fleshed out a plan to purchase the roughly 950-acres over a 3-year (fiscal) period, which in reality translates to an 18-month timeframe.

While there is an obstacle or two (City Council approval) to overcome, we are very hopeful that we can close on the first phase of the purchase in October, at which time the owners will lease the remaining property to us at a cost of \$1. Ultimately, this entire property will become part of Cheyenne Mountain state Park, and be managed by the Colorado State Parks under an Operations agreement with the City.

Much progress has been made since our last newsletter, I am happy to report. The park is evolving and rapidly becoming an anchor in the Pikes Peak Region for outdoor recreation, interpretive and educational programs, as well as resource stewardship. Thanks to all of you that have poured your hearts and souls into building this park into a true “crown jewel” for Colorado Springs and El Paso County.



## TALES FROM THE RANGER STATION: From Monique Mullis

Years from now when I look back at the beginnings of Cheyenne Mountain State Park, I will remember lots of things: the long construction process, the hard-work to get everything put together, introducing the public to the amazing trails, meeting great people, and working through the many lumps and bumps along the way. One of the most memorable aspects of our inaugural summer will be the great seasonal staff we were able to work with.

There are only five full-time employees at the park and we could never do it without the hard work and dedication of our amazing seasonal staff! From working in tight quarters at the regional office, to pulling endless weeds, or trying to keep the pods mouse-free and moving countless boxes around, our hardy seasonals were able to help us get this park open and stay in good spirits!



I want to take this opportunity to recognize the seasonals who worked so hard to get Cheyenne Mountain open and who come to work everyday to make sure the park becomes the premiere state park in Colorado. A great big thank you for your dedication to our park!

**Maintenance Staff:**

Michelle Casey, Steven Hedberg, Mario Hernandez, Thomas Pantoja

**Visitor Center Staff:**

Joanna Harter, Jacob Seiltz

**Entrance Station Staff:**

Kathy Funk, Cassie Strodtman

**Ranger Staff:**

Lindsey Hightower, Grant Lockwood, Eric Los

**GOCO Naturalist:**

Cheryl Holling

I would also like to welcome our fall/winter seasonals. Be sure to say hi when you see them at the park.

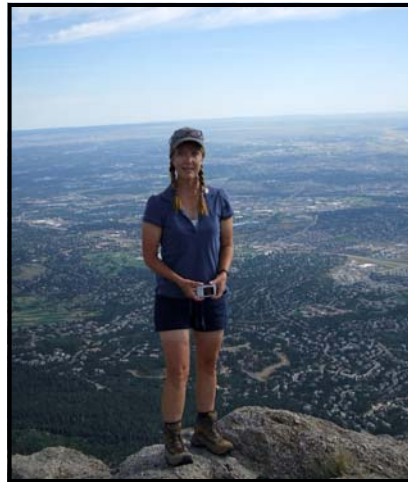
**Entrance:** Robert Kidwell, David Lettenmaier, and Glen Stryker

**Visitor Center:** Mary Ann Hartman, Ed Kirby, and Trudy Landshuetzer

**Ranger:** Ben Williams



**Ranger Power:** *Lindsey Hightower, Grant Lockwood, Brian Kerrigan, Eric Los, and Monique Mullis gather "On Top of the Mountain"*



**GOCO Naturalist:** *Cheryl Holling stands atop Cheyenne Mountain, pondering just which raptors will soar past her now that she has come up to meet them.*

## MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT:

We would like to welcome our 20th lifetime member, Lucy Bell! Lucy is also an active volunteer at the park who has worked on many projects including the herbarium, the trails brochure, xeriscaping, and lots of naturalist work. Thanks Lucy! New and renewing members include: Lee Tatum, Steve Mitchell, Major Rudy Greis, Monique Mullis, Lynette Reagan, George Stolz, Linda & Dave Overlin, Jane & Tom Titus, L.D. Harris, and Grant Lockwood. Welcome and thanks for your support of the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park!

## VOLUNTEERS CONTINUE TO SPRUCE UP THE PARK

Cheyenne Mountain State Park continues to benefit from the active Volunteer Program overseen by Ranger Brian Kerrigan. One of the more noticeable programs has utilized between fifteen to twenty trained volunteers who have begun maintaining and improving the trail system throughout the park. Besides clearing trail corridors to park specifications, they also deal with erosion problems, building check dams, reverse grade dips and armoring drainages where appropriate. The volunteers also serve as trail hosts, work with the GOCO Naturalist to lead interpretive hikes and programs, clear weeds, hang signs, develop xeriscape projects, and assist in the Visitor Center. If you would like to join any of these programs contact either Senior Ranger Monique Mullis or Ranger Kerrigan.



*Before...*



*After*



*During...*



*After*

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## *Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park Board*

### **Officers:**

President	Rick Upton	<a href="mailto:uptonrus@comcast.net">uptonrus@comcast.net</a>
Vice Pres.	Glen Scott	<a href="mailto:glenscott@comcastnet">glenscott@comcastnet</a>
Secretary	Lori O'Hare	<a href="mailto:lajohare@msn.com">lajohare@msn.com</a>
Treasurer	Jim Schwerin	<a href="mailto:jim@windycreek.net">jim@windycreek.net</a>

### **Committee Chairs:**

Communications	Jack Busher	<a href="mailto:jbusher@qwest.net">jbusher@qwest.net</a>
Membership	Lori O'Hare	<a href="mailto:lajohare@msn.com">lajohare@msn.com</a>

Programs:	Jerry O'Hare	<a href="mailto:lajohare@msn.com">lajohare@msn.com</a>
Finance:	Jim Schwerin	<a href="mailto:jim@windycreek.net">jim@windycreek.net</a>

### **Members:**

Jane Dillon	<a href="mailto:TEXASNY@aol.com">TEXASNY@aol.com</a>
Nan Scranton	<a href="mailto:NanScranton@elpasoco.com">NanScranton@elpasoco.com</a>
Pam Karr	<a href="mailto:mjkarr@yahoo.com">mjkarr@yahoo.com</a>

### **Non-Voting Members:**

Park Manager Rich Dudley	<a href="mailto:rich.dudley@state.co.us">rich.dudley@state.co.us</a>
Senior Ranger Monique Mullis	<a href="mailto:monique.mullis@state.co.us">monique.mullis@state.co.us</a>



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.

## WILD NATURE COMES TO CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN

If there were a prize for “Insect of the Month,” the park has its own candidate. Within two days in early September, there have been three sightings of an unusual insect inhabitant of the park. While working on Blackmer Trail, volunteers Jim Purdy and Jack Busher noticed a rather large wasp hovering near them. As it turned out, they weren’t on the wasp’s radar. Instead, the wasp was seen to drop onto a tarantula, drag it several inches along the trail, then circle about before dropping back down to continue dragging its prey.

Thanks to information supplied by park naturalist Cheryl Holling, what the trail crew had seen was a Tarantula Hawk wasp, doing what such wasps do best. This formidable (two and a half inch long body and bright orange wings) insect had already paralyzed the tarantula and was busily dragging it back to the her own nest. She would then lay her own eggs on the abdomen of the spider. As the larvae hatch, they then feed off the tarantula. So, keep your eyes peeled as you walk the park. Who knows what interesting finds you can discover.

It may not be the official State Insect of New Mexico, as the tarantula hawk is, but you just never know what story might unfold for you here at the park. Remember, this was one of three different instances of this phenomenon in the park in just two days!



Photo by DJ Craig

## WORKING WITH MOTHER NATURE AT THE PARK

With all the media coverage lately of bear and mountain lion sightings throughout southern Colorado, you might wonder about your favorite park south of Colorado Springs. Well, wild animals are continually spotted roaming our hillsides. Plenty of prairie dogs, wild turkey, mule-eared deer, elk and bear have been spotted. But recently, Ranger Eric Los was called on to assist in a tamer incident.



Ranger Eric Los with untamed friend, ready for release.

On July 21 three small rabbits were found abandoned in the Trailhead parking lot. They were very small, and hadn’t even opened their eyes yet. Evidently “Mom” had put them in the lot during a rainstorm, and for some reason was never able to return to care for them.

After they spent several lonely days near the trailhead, park personnel decided to intervene. Ranger Los covered the bunnies and the staff watched them closely over the weekend, hoping that Mom would return to them. When she didn’t, they called *Wild Forever* and Anita Bush came out to the park and rescued the three tiny and now pretty sick bunnies. Ms. Bush hand fed the 3 week old bunnies with a syringe and watched them grow like weeds. Eventually, she was able to put them in a larger pen with 5 other bunnies, were they thrived.

On August 20, she brought two of the bunnies (along with three others) back to the park to release. (The other bunny received a hair-line fracture in his back

leg from playing too rough with the other bunnies. She kept him a little while longer, but expected him to be fine.)

Los and Senior Ranger Monique Mullis were able to

meet at the Trailhead parking lot and assist with the release. Not necessarily “big game,” but the park staff does what it takes to assist mother Nature when appropriate. Thanks for your stewardship. And keep up the good work!

## PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT: MILITARY WEEK-END

As a continuing effort of the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park, the board’s Program Committee, in conjunction with the Colorado Spring’s District Attorney’s Office, sponsored a Military Appreciation Weekend on August 25-26. Entry passes were donated by the D.A.’s Office, while Coca-Cola donated several cases of water to be given away. There was also a pair of Rockies tickets that were donated by the park. Mili-

tary families also received a 20% off coupon for merchandise at the Visitors Center.

Based on park records, forty-three families took advantage of the Weekend special. And we at the park are only too happy to express our appreciation for what these families commit to the rest of us. Thank you and your Loved One for what you do for the rest of us!

## PHOTO ESSAY: *SIXTEEN TONS, AND WHAT DO YOU GET?... ANOTHER DAY WITH THE TRAIL CREW*



# Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park Membership Application

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

**New / Renewal** (circle one)

- \_\_\_\_\_ **\$25 Annual Individual Membership**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **\$35 Annual Family Membership**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **\$50 Annual Supporting Membership**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **\$100 Annual Contributing Membership**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **\$100 Annual Small Business Membership**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **\$500 Annual Corporate Membership**
- \_\_\_\_\_ **\$500 LIFETIME MEMBER: Never pay dues again!**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail Address** \_\_\_\_\_

Help us save postage! Please check here to receive "The Tracker" newsletter via e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Make your check payable and please mail your application to:**

**Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park**  
**P.O. Box 51453**  
**Colorado Springs, CO 80949-1453**

**Thank you for your support of Cheyenne Mountain State Park!**