

The Field Press



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From the Desk of the Coordinator

By Raquel Wertsbaugh, CNAP Coordinator

Born and raised in Colorado, I was blessed with parents that took me on adventures all over this wonderful state. I went on to work for Colorado Parks and Wildlife as a wildlife biologist and have been lucky enough to work in all corners of Colorado and everywhere in between. I thought I'd seen most of the best places in Colorado. Oh how I was wrong! It's been almost two years since I took on the role of CNAP Coordinator and what a ride it has been. As I'm finally starting to get my feet underneath me, I'm able to sit back and think about not only all the new special places I've seen while working for CNAP, but just how incredibly important it is to have a program like CNAP to identify, designate, and help protect these amazing places. While some Natural Areas aren't what the average person would call "pretty", the natural features that they hold, whether a rare plant or a fossil, are simply amazing.

Also amazing, is how much the program has been able to accomplish with our small staff and outstanding volunteer stewards. It is always such a pleasure to meet our volunteer stewards in the field and not only be able to experience the Natural Area together, but also to learn from one another. In addition to the support of our stewards, the Natural Areas Council provides excellent guidance and the support we need to overcome challenges and lead us towards success.

We have numerous success stories to share from this last year, including:

- Two new Natural Area designations: Staunton Natural Area, in Park & Jefferson counties, and Logan Wash Mine, in Garfield County (read more about it in this newsletter).



- CPW/CNAP was awarded a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Land Acquisition grant to aid in purchasing a parcel near Pagosa Springs to protect the federally endangered Pagosa skyrocket (*Ipomopsis polyantha*). This acquisition will protect over half of the world's known population of this critically imperiled plant!
- The Natural Areas Council and CNAP staff collaborated on a 2016 CNAP Strategic Plan & Vision, recently adopted by the Council in December 2015. The document can be found on: <http://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/CNAP-About-Council.aspx>

- Staff visited over 30 Natural Areas in 2015, revisited 55 Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) documented element occurrences, and documented 6 new element occurrences.

I look forward to another year full of memorable Natural Areas visits, meeting more amazing volunteer stewards, and continuing our conservation efforts!

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Raquel Wertsbaugh(right) and Jessica Smith(left) at Staunton Natural Area

New Colorado Natural Area Designations

Over the past year, CNAP designated an additional Natural Area, bringing our total number of State Natural Areas up to 93, and added additional acreage to an existing Natural Area, bringing our total acreage of designated Natural Areas to over 177,000 acres.

Our newest Natural Area encompasses portions of Staunton State Park, in Park and Jefferson counties, and includes agreements with two landowners, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and the State Land Board (SLB). This Natural Area harbors the globally critically-imperiled budding monkeyflower (*Mimulus gemmiparus*), as well as the rare plant James' teleonix (*Telesonix jamesii*), unique montane riparian woodlands, peregrine falcon nesting sites, and the spectacular Elk Falls. CNAP celebrated the designation of Staunton in mid-September in a ceremony attended by CPW and SLB staff, CPW volunteers, and members of our governor-appointed council. Through a partnership between CNAP, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service, conservation activities for the budding monkeyflower were expanded in 2015, based on the results of a successful pilot project at Staunton (The Field Press, February 2014).



Staunton Natural Area Designation Celebration

In addition to Staunton, CNAP expanded the Mount Callahan Natural Area, owned by gas & oil companies Oxy and Occidental Oil Shale, Inc. The additional area, called Logan Wash Mine, is located in Garfield County and owned by Occidental Oil Shale, Inc. The Mount Callahan & Logan Wash Mine Natural Area now encompasses three of the four largest and most viable populations of federally threatened Parachute penstemon in the world. The agreement continues to build upon an almost 30 year history of voluntary cooperation between Oxy and CNAP.

CNAP continues to build the registry of places which harbor the state's most significant natural resources. We are working with the City of Colorado Springs to designate Corral Bluffs, a roughly 600 acre property in El Paso County, which is considered to be one of the best sites in both Colorado and the world to find mammals from the first one million years of the Age of Mammals (Paleocene epoch). The property also allows for the study of the floral response to the mass extinction event at the end of the Cretaceous period, with high quality fossil prints of leaves, twigs, fruits, seeds and cones. We expect this designation to be completed in 2016.



Logan Wash Mine Natural Area



Colorado Natural Areas Program

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vacant, *Executive Director*
Department of Natural Resources

Bob Broscheid, *Director*
Colorado Parks and Wildlife

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Gary Butterworth, *State Board of Land Commissioners*

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Melissa Smeins, *Member*

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

- **Native plant communities**
- **Geologic formations and processes**
- **Paleontological localities**
- **Habitat for rare plants and animals**

CNAP Supports the Conservation of Roadside Populations of Globally Imperiled Plants

Through joint funding from the CNAP and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) has produced a series of materials to direct maintenance activities to protect roadside populations of globally imperiled plants. This pilot project, completed in 2014, produced user-friendly location information called Special Management Areas (SMA) and species-specific best management practices (BMP) for 10 globally imperiled plant species in Colorado, threatened by roadside activities. To protect sensitive species information, the locations of these

populations was only shared with an agency once a data licensing agreement with CNHP was in place. CNHP delivered materials to many partners, including federal, state, county and local road maintenance operations. A full report on this project and BMP's for the ten species are available on our website: <http://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/CNAP-NewsResources.aspx>. Species included Bell's twinpod, Brandegee wild buckwheat, Colorado green gentian, Gunnison milkvetch, and DeBeque milkvetch, to name a few.

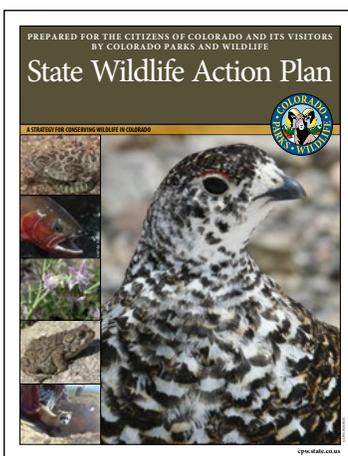


Gunnison milkvetch, *Astragalus anisus*

CNAP is continuing this project in 2016 through additional funding to CNHP. Special Management Areas and BMPs will be developed for an additional seven globally imperiled plant species with roadside populations. CNHP will also engage partners in follow-up communications, assist with the implementation of conservation measures, and qualitatively monitor roadside populations of rare plants.



Bell's twinpod, *Physaria bellii*



DID YOU KNOW?

Colorado now has a revised State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). We are very excited that the revised SWAP includes a Rare Plant Addendum, a document that provides strategic direction for the conservation of Colorado's most imperiled plant species. The SWAP was recently submitted as a final draft by Colorado Parks and Wildlife to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The purpose of the SWAP is to convey the state's conservation needs, with the intent to promote a prioritized effort within the conservation community.

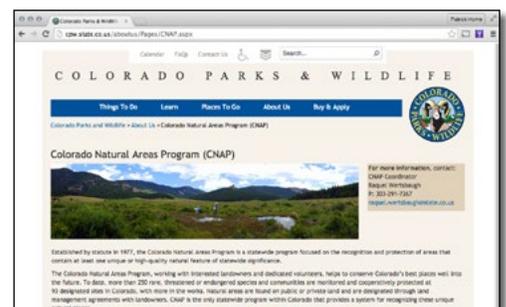
You can view the document on our website:

<http://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/CNAP/Rare-Plant-SWAP-2015.pdf>

Check out our updated website:

<http://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/CNAP.aspx>

Including new sections: FAQ, Rare Plant Conservation, and materials for current volunteer stewards



Orient Mine Natural Area

Orient Mine Natural Area, located in Saguache County, was designated as a Colorado Natural Area in 2004. The Natural Area is home to the largest bachelor colony of Brazilian free-tailed bats in North America. The Natural Area encompasses over 300 acres, and is privately owned by the Orient Land Trust (OLT). Additionally, Colorado Parks and Wildlife holds a conservation easement on the property, further helping to protect the bats and their habitat.

Orient Mine was once Colorado's largest producer of iron, producing approximately 2 million tons of iron ore from 1880- 1932. The "Glory Hole" area of the mine was later documented to hold a population of between 100,000 and 250,000 Brazilian free-tailed bats. The mostly male colony roosts at the site during the summer and completes a 110,000 mile migration, the longest documented of any bat species.

The Orient Land Trust has worked hard to protect the bats and their habitat, as well as provide excellent educational opportunities for the public to learn about and view the bats. Guided and



Brazilian free-tailed bat outflight at Orient Mine

self-guided hiking tours are available during the summer months to learn about the area's history and watch the amazing nightly out-flight of the bats. For more information on viewing the bats, visit www.olt.org. Please keep in mind that access to the Orient Mine is through Valley View Hot Springs, which is a clothing optional area.

CNAP is currently working with OLT and bat biologist Kirk Navo to monitor the bat population at Orient Mine. Please stay tuned for upcoming information on our monitoring efforts!



Visitors waiting for the bat outflight at Orient Mine

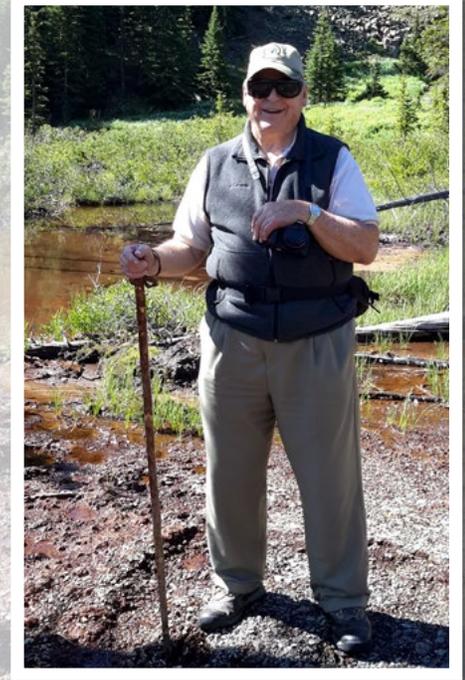
Volunteer Corner

Volunteer stewards are instrumental in accomplishing the on-the-ground monitoring of State Natural Areas. In 2015, volunteers contributed over 1,800 hours of time to the Natural Areas Program. Monitoring reports from stewards and staff were sent out in January to almost 40 different partner agency offices and landowners across the state. Your reports provide a record of conditions at these areas and can inform managers of potential issues. Thank you for your diligent efforts!

Many of you received an email earlier this year about an updated CPW volunteer database. CNAP staff will continue to add the hours which you submit on your field report into the database; therefore, you do not need to add your 2015 hours to the database. If you wish, you are welcome to use the new data-

base. It is user-friendly and you are able to enter and view your volunteer hours and update your contact information. The database can be accessed here: <https://cpw.civicore.com/public/>. We encourage you to still email us directly (dnr_cnap@state.co.us) if you have a change in status or contact information.

CNAP will be hosting a volunteer steward gathering this April at Garden Park Fossil Locality Natural Area, near Cañon City. Thanks to all who attended the volunteer steward gathering in 2015 at Roxborough State Park/Natural Area. Although the hike was snowed out, the event still provided a chance for stewards to interact with each other, staff, and a few of our Governor-appointed Council members at an open house event. We hope you will be able to join us at Garden Park!



Dave Bathke, Geneva Basin Iron Fen

Meet Our Long-time Volunteer Stewards:

The Colorado Natural Areas Program is fortunate to have a large number of volunteers who have been active with the Program for over a decade. Both the Program and landowners have benefited greatly from the knowledge of the Natural Areas which they have accumulated and shared. We are grateful for their long-term commitment to the protection of significant natural features in Colorado.

Volunteers, their Natural Area, and their years of service:

Marian and Peter Rohman, McElmo, 16 years

Jeanne Wenger, formerly Escalante Canyon, 15 years & Steve Wenger, Pyramid Rock, 10 years

Barbara Galloway, Rough Canyon, 15 years

Janet Potter, formerly Wheeler Geologic, currently Slumgullion, 14 years

Larry and RuthMary Allison, Badger Wash and Raven Ridge, 14 years

Danni Langdon and Carl Jacobson, South Cathedral Bluffs, 14 years

Alix Gadd, Dave's Draw and Hoosier Ridge, 14 years

Mary Mourar, Fourmile Creek and Hurricane Canyon, 14 years

Travis and LaDonna Ward, formerly Elephant Rocks, currently Haviland Lake, 14 years

Megan Bowes, Paradise Park, 13 years

Judy Hopper, Copeland Willow Carr, 13 years

Dave Bathke, Geneva Basin Iron Fen, 10 years

SAVE THE DATE!

Please plan to join us on April 15th for a Spring 2016 CNAP Volunteer Steward Gathering at Garden Park Fossil Locality Natural Area near Cañon City! Detailed information coming soon in an email to you



Carl Jacobson and Danni Langdon, South Cathedral Bluffs

We asked the volunteers the following questions:

Why have you stayed with the program so long?

“I love CNAP because of how it leverages volunteers to help protect special places in Colorado, places that... are unique and important for what they protect.” -Mary Mourar

“Every time I think I’ve seen it all, something new and amazing pops up that I’ve never noticed before.” -Janet Potter

“Over time, I’ve developed a sense of ownership, responsibility, caring, for Pyramid Rock Natural Area; in a word: stewardship. It’s “my” area. I’m always interested in seeing the place, seeing if the rare plants I monitor are blooming this year, or discovering strangely eroded formations.” -Steve Wenger



Mary Mourar, Hurricane Canyon

What advice do you have for new stewards?

“Learn the treasures that are protected by your Natural Area. If it is a plant, it may be a quest of many years.” -Larry Allison

“Explore for something new each time.” -Dave Bathke

“Pick a Natural Area to monitor that is nearby so you can visit it more than once a year and find a good hiking buddy to go along with you.” -Janet Potter

“Take your time during your visits so that you really get to know your adopted natural area. Take lots of notes about your observations, and try to fill out your field reports soon after your visit.” -Peter Rohman



Janet Potter, Slumgullion Earthflow Natural Area

What is one of your best memories at your Natural Area?

“I watched as the cow (moose) turned her head to the right, and out from behind a Doug fir two baby moose walked/wobbled directly to safety under the mama’s belly -- no stooping required – newborns... the cow returned to staring directly at me, and one of the babies positioned himself between the mama’s front legs to also stare in my direction. This incredible picture is seared in my brain, because one never has a camera along when one really needs it!” -Janet Potter

“An April trip (to Escalante Canyon) was perfect for finding shooting star, *Dodecatheon pulchellum*, in bloom within and surrounding the cordgrass community. During late summer trips to visit the seeps I’ve seen *Parnassia parviflora* in bloom (a plant typical of subalpine wetlands).” -Jeanne Wenger

“Working with the Wildlands Restoration Volunteers in doing restoration and rehabilitation for the site. It was very inspiring and it helped in protecting the site for many years.”

-Dave Bathke



Travis and LaDonna Ward, Haviland Lake

CNAP Volunteer Steward Photo Contest Winners

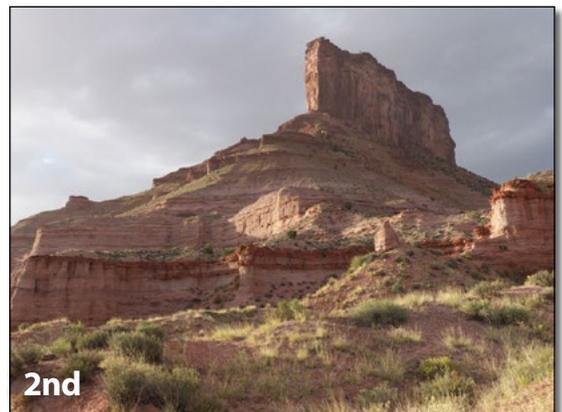
We initiated the 1st Annual CNAP volunteer steward photo contest in 2015. Thanks to all the volunteers that submitted photos and congratulations to our contest winners! Photo judging was completed by the Natural Areas Council at our December 2015 meeting and winning photos are printed below. We look forward to many more beautiful photos next year!

Wildlife:

1st: Longnose leopard lizard - Loraine Yeatts

2nd: Plateau lizard - Marian and Peter Rohman

3rd: White-tailed ptarmigan - Scotty Smith



Landscape:

1st: Lookout Mountain - Mo Ewing

2nd: Gateway Palisade - Loraine Yeatts

3rd: Jimmy Creek - Linda Smith

CNAP Volunteer Steward Photo Contest Winners



Plants:

1st: *Lilium philadelphicum*, wood lily
- Travis and La Donna Ward

2nd: *Oreocarya caespitosa*, tufted cryptantha
- Mo Ewing

3rd: *Spriogyra* sp., algae
- Dave Bathke



Volunteers:

1st: Peter Rohman, McElmo - Marian Rohman

2nd: Dick Yeatts, Gateway Palisade - Loraine Yeatts



Become a Volunteer Steward and help protect Colorado's best natural features!

The Colorado Natural Areas Program hosts volunteer stewards to monitor some of the most spectacular and sensitive areas in the state! Natural Areas are designated either because of rare plants, wildlife, unique geology, fossils or a combination of these features. The Natural Areas Program needs help from volunteers to get out and visit these sites regularly

to ensure the rare and sensitive elements on these sites are preserved for future generations. If you are interested in any of these opportunities, even if you are a current steward looking to take on an additional site or needing a change in scenery, please let us know at dnr_cnap@state.co.us.



SITE NAME	COUNTY	OWNER	ACRES	HIKING	ATTRIBUTES	SKILLS
Chalk Bluffs	Weld	SLB	640	Moderate	Barren outcrops with outlying populations of foothills woody species, rare plants, rocks rich in vertebrate fossils, and nesting raptors.	Birding, Botany, General Observation
Cross Mountain	Moffat	BLM	2,160	Moderate - Difficult	Superimposed river gorge, with Mississippian Madison Limestone cliffs and rare plants, Penstemon yampaensis and Cirsium ownbeyi.	Botany, Birding, 4-wheel Driving
High Creek Fen	Park	TNC/SLB	3,548	Moderate	Calcareous, spring-fed wetland with many rare plants including Primula egaliksensis, Sisyrinchium pallidum, and Ptilagrostis porteri.	Botany, Ecology, Wetland Hydrology
Lower Greasewood Creek	Rio Blanco	BLM	203	Moderate	Pinyon-juniper woodland with populations of Gilia stenothyrsa and Penstemon fremontii var. glabrescens, Green River Shale endemics.	Botany, General Observation
Mishak Lakes	Saguache	TNC	2,040	Moderate	Historically a series of natural playa lakes with rare plant, Peritoma multicaulis; currently dry in all but the wettest years. Important wildlife habitat.	Botany, Wildlife ID, 4-wheel Driving
South Beaver Creek	Gunnison	BLM	4,000	Moderate	Gunnison Basin endemic plant Astragalus microcymbus, and a second rare milkvetch, Astragalus anisus; Gunnison sage grouse habitat.	Botany, Wildlife ID, General Observation,
Treasurevault Mountain	Park/Lake	SLB	320	Difficult	Federally threatened Penland alpine fen mustard (Eutrema penlandii), and a number of state-rare plants and characteristic alpine communities.	Botany, Birding, 4-Wheel Driving
Wacker Ranch and Fairview	Montrose	CPW and BLM	43 and 377	Moderate	High-quality habitat and large populations of the Federally endangered clay-loving wild buckwheat (Eriogonum pelinophilum).	Botany, General Observation
Yanks Gulch/Upper Greasewood Creek	Rio Blanco	BLM	2,687	Difficult	Scenic, high-quality Great Basin plant communities, with a federally-threatened plant, Physaria obcordata. The area may be impacted by pending, adjacent oil and gas development.	Botany, Navigation, Serious 4-Wheel Driving

BLM = Bureau of Land Management; CPW = Colorado Parks and Wildlife; SLB = Colorado State Land Board; TNC = The Nature Conservancy

Natural Area Council News

By Tom Nesler, Council Chair

By way of introduction, I am the current Chair of the Council and now serving the first year of my second term. I am also a volunteer steward responsible for two areas in North Park over the last five years. It has been a busy year for the Natural Areas Council. With the natural progression of turnover of council members and staff, we have been looking at where the Program has been and where it should be headed. To provide that direction, the Council embarked on a review and revision of needed guidance documents. We put this effort in motion with an overnight retreat to Mueller State Park to allow us to focus on the workings of this truly remarkable conservation program. After much discussion by staff and council members old and new, and after many iterations, we have produced a new Vision Statement and Strategic Plan for 2016. We strove to identify program and staff needs and necessary changes to program criteria and processes by which we designate natural areas. We put new emphasis on raising the public profile of the program and how to better manage and appreciate both our volunteer stewards and other conservation partners.

The Council and staff find ourselves at a challenging point in the history of the Natural Areas Program. Lean agency budgets have reduced our program staff to one full-time coordinator and a few seasonal assistants. Despite this,



Natural Areas Council members and CNAP staff at Mueller State Park

we as a Council remain astonished at the quality and dedication of past and present coordinators, and the excellent work done by our part-time assistants that return year after year to keep productivity and administration of the annual workload at a very high level. To recognize the value of our volunteer stewards, we held an event at Roxborough State Park to show our appreciation and listen to our stewards' experiences. As a steward myself, it is abundantly clear how valuable the contributions of our

stewards are in monitoring the health of our natural areas and safeguarding the unique natural features and landowner relationships that are the bedrock of this conservation program.

While volunteer stewards tend to persist over years as a dedicated workforce, council membership has changed with statutory term limits. We said goodbye and thanks to Dorothea Farris, Michelle Bloom, Bruce Schumacher, and Renee Rondeau; and hello to Michelle Zimmerman, Gary Butterworth, Julia Kintsch, Ken Strom, Denise Culver, and Melissa Smeins. The hallmark of the Natural Areas Program is the voluntary protection of Colorado's unique natural features and rare species, but as the reach and impact of humans on Colorado's landscape continues to grow, we as a Council have pushed ourselves to look at conservation priorities for natural areas from the larger ecological perspective of wildlife-plant communities and the functionality of natural, native landscapes. Through this lens we are reviewing existing designated natural areas as well as new candidates. The Council appreciates and seeks input and comments from all our fellow participants and partners as we pursue our goals in 2016.



Natural Areas Council field trip to Corral Bluffs Registered Natural Area