

Carlos Lerma, Thorne Nature Experience, Community Programs Coordinator

I am a native Coloradan with family roots in Mexico. I was born and raised in the outdoor mecca of Boulder, CO, but fell in love with nature and the outdoors in rural Mexico on my grandfather's swaths of ranching land where I spent my summers well into my teen years. I would help him herd cattle, sometimes on horseback or feed the pigs and play in the "jungle" that was my grandmother's backyard garden with my siblings and cousins. I further cultivated my love for nature and the outdoors when I moved to Flagstaff, Arizona to pursue my undergraduate degree. I spent a lot of time wandering the ponderosa pine forests and visiting with the rock formations of the Grand Canyon.

I graduated in May of 2013 and after completing my research in functional morphology at NAU, was back in Boulder that fall. I accepted an internship with Environment for the Americas (EFTA), a non-profit dedicated to bird conservation and increasing environmental awareness around the Americas and the Caribbean and home to International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD). Here I was able to merge my passion for biology, nature and the outdoors with my ability to connect with people of different backgrounds. Through my internship, I worked to connect diverse audiences to our conservation efforts and help lead the way for a new generation of environmental stewards. I worked closely with fellow Latino interns to create events all across the west, celebrating a mixture between culture and the environment.

My work with EFTA and the Latino community in Boulder led me to Thorne Nature Experience and the Nature Kids/Jóvenes de la Naturaleza (NKJN) Program. I was brought on in an effort to mobilize a community around nature connection, with the intent of creating a program for the people by the people. For the NKJN program, we went through an extensive one year planning process and I was diligent in representing members from our community whose voice is rarely heard at the table every step of the way. Throughout the planning process I was able to connect in a way unlike before with students, parents, teachers and community leaders from my community. We proposed, with the help of some of the best EE providers in the country, a one-of-a-kind program that provides youth and their families in my community a connection to nature and the outdoors.