

CPW Saves Millions Annually Through Volunteer Program



EFFICIENCY SUCCESS STORY

In FY 2016-17 alone, CPW's volunteers contributed **304,460 hours**, which is equivalent to over **\$7.3 million** in labor costs and **145 full-time employees**.



KELSEY MAZUR/CPW

While these numbers are impressive, there is much more to the story of how volunteers impact Colorado's parks and wildlife. Whether they teach children about our natural resources, restore wildlife habitat, work on trails, teach someone how to hunt or fish, monitor raptors at a local park, or staff the front desk or campground; the work they do makes CPW a more effective and efficient agency.

Camp Host

The Camp Host Program is one of Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)'s most popular volunteer opportunities. Camp hosts do a lot more than keep the campsites clean, they also ensure that the campground is running smoothly and that the visitors have a positive experience at the site and with our agency.

In exchange for a free campsite and a free volunteer parks pass (volunteers qualify after 48 hours of service), camp hosts meet and greet arriving campers, offer check-in assistance, perform minor maintenance tasks and promote educational activities that are happening at the park

in which they stay. Most hosts work for 2 to 3 months during the busy summer season, but CPW also has hosts that work at different sites all throughout the year. In total, 308 hosts gave a total of 119,364 hours at 45 different sites in 2017, which is equivalent to saving over \$2.8 million in labor costs.

Raptor Monitoring

The Statewide Raptor Monitoring Program is active within 21 different state parks, including every park on the Front Range and several areas in the Southeast Region. The goal of the program is to identify and monitor nesting locations and breeding success, as well as determine sensitive species and promote stewardship through citizen science.



CPW



TONY GURZIC/CPW

Raptors, or carnivorous birds of prey such as eagles, hawks, owls, and falcons, are keystone species within the larger ecosystem. By monitoring these birds, biologists are able to develop a better understanding of the health of the ecosystem as a whole. This is especially useful information for land managers when making decisions about balancing conservation and recreation, such as when determining whether to close a trail or climbing route. “Volunteers play a key role in CPW’s ability to manage state parks and public lands, as well as contribute to ongoing research through citizen science,” said Jeff Thompson, Natural Resource Stewardship Coordinator who oversees the Raptor Monitoring program. “Raptor monitoring is a wonderful way for volunteers to get involved with land stewardship in a hands-on, meaningful way.”

In the 2016-2017 fiscal year, 138 volunteers from across the state contributed over 7,160 hours of raptor monitoring, which is equivalent to over \$172,000 in labor costs saved.

In total, 277 active nest sites were monitored and recorded, with over 380 verified offspring of 19 different species. “We couldn’t have been able to grow the program to the level it has without the continued dedication and commitment of our amazing volunteers,” said Thompson.

Staff Training

As part CPW’s Strategic Plan, the Volunteer Program at CPW developed and implemented a training program for staff to share best practices on volunteer management and enhance their ability to maximize the work of volunteers. Over 50 staff have completed this training, enabling them to leverage volunteers to meet more of CPW’s staffing needs. In the future, CPW hopes to increase the amount of volunteer work on state wildlife areas, as well as expand the use of camp hosts to more sites across the state. While the CPW Volunteer Program is already a great success, training programs like these are helping CPW to further maximize the efficiencies gained through volunteerism.



“I believe if you have a skill worth sharing and enjoy the outdoors so much, why not spread the knowledge? Maybe you can light a spark in a young person’s heart and open up new possibilities that we can’t imagine. The same way so many mentors have done for me.” – S. Ghosh, 14 years old, CPW volunteer

