Wolf Rescue coming to Hermit Park

Hermit Park Open Space will welcome the Ignacio Wolf Rescue and its four wolf ambassadors the weekend of July 18. Hermit Park Open Space is located just southeast of Estes Park off U.S. Highway 36. Camping reservations can be made through www.larimer-camping.com. The programs are free, but there is a $35 per vehicle entrance permit required. Registration is not required for the programs, which are stationary with no hiking involved.

Visitors have four chances to visit with the wolves and learn about rescue operations:
- July 18: 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.
- July 19: 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.

For more information contact Rob at (970) 679-4561 or rmovak@larimer.org.

To learn more about Larimer County’s parks and open spaces, go to www.larimer.org/natural-resources.

-- Reporter-Herald staff

Ignacio Wolf Rescue to visit Hermit Park Open Space

Ignacio Wolf Rescue and its four “wolf ambassadors” will visit Hermit Park Open Space the weekend of July 18.

The group will give presentations about the wolves and its rescue operations at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, July 18-19. Hermit Park Open Space is just southeast of Estes Park off U.S. 36.

The programs are free, but there is a $35 per vehicle entrance permit required.

Registration is not required for the programs, which do not involve hiking.

Camping is available at Hermit Park. Reservations can be booked at www.larimer-camping.com.

For more information contact Rob Novak, 679-4561 or rmovak@larimer.org. or visit www.larimer.org/natural-resources.

-- Reporter-Herald staff

Seats filled on county boards, commissions

Board of Larimer County Commissioners has appointed the following people to county boards and commissions:

Board of Adjustment: Peter Bohlin, Alan Cunlief, Jeffrey Schneider - Fort Collins.


Extension Advisory Committee:
- Martha Dooly, Pam Harfard, Mel Hilgenberg, Sonya Ketting - Fort Collins.

Office on Aging Advisory Council:

Open Lands Advisory Board:
- Patricia Brennan, Peter Kast, Steve Verhey - Fort Collins.

Parks Advisory Board:
- Frank Gillespie, Barry Lewis, Forrest Drewell, Vickie Traylor - Fort Collins.

Planning Commission: Mina Cox - Berthoud, Andrew Byrd, Gerald Hart - Fort Collins.

-- Reporter-Herald staff
IN BRIEF

Guided hikes offered through the county

Larimer County will host a series of guided hikes and events this month. The following is information about the events:

- 8 a.m. today — Life on the Edge: Explore Red Mountain Open Space and learn about the ecology and biodiversity of the area. This is a two-hour, easy hike. Registration is required. For more information, call 679-4561.

- 8 a.m. Sunday — POGO Hike: Join a naturalist at Fossil Creek Reservoir, north of Highway 392, west of the Windsor/Interstate 25 interchange, for an adventurous search for pelicans, osprey, grebes and others. This is a two-hour, easy hike. For more information, call 679-4561.

- 8:15 a.m. Friday — Moon Over my Open Space: Take a walk through Larimer County’s new open space, Red Mountain Open Space, 35 miles north of Fort Collins on County Road 15. Participants will learn about the moon’s myth and legend and nocturnal wildlife. This is an easy hike. Registration is required. For more information, call 679-4561.

For more information, call 679-4561.

- 7 p.m. July 26 — Wiley Coyotes: Learn about coyotes during this presentation at the outdoor classroom at Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space, north of Highway 392, west of the Windsor/Interstate 25 interchange. This is a three-hour, stationary program. For more information, call 679-4561.

Online Poll

From ReporterHerald.com

Should Larimer County Department of Natural Resources contract with Estes Valley Recreation and Parks District to manage two Estes campgrounds?

Yes 53.8 percent

No 46.2 percent

Number of votes: 158


This week’s question: Would it bother you if you saw someone carrying a hardened handgun in public?
Nothing but a blue sky ahead

BY MILES BLUMHARDT
For Loveland Connection

Straddling my mountain bike on the edge of the redrock rim of the hogback and looking out over the valley typically green for this time of year, my helmet chin strap was as saturated as a smoker’s nose and sweat stung my eyes.

Wondering how I let myself get this out of shape and if my legs had it in them to ride the only section of the 22-mile Blue Sky Trail system I hadn’t ridden — the Indian Summer Loop — I waited for the air in my lungs to fill my brain with good sense.

Two hummingbirds came out of nowhere to award a foot of my face in hopes of sucking nectar from my red Giant mountain bike. The winner went away disappointed. Carson wriggled out their throaty buzz among the redrocks. The scent of silver sage carpeted the air.

I needed my mountain bike downhill, pedaling my way through the loose rock and winding around sharp turns lined with the frizzy alder mountain mahogany seed heads shining in the morning light toward the valley floor. Leveling off, then slowing, and it wasn’t sweat. I hopped off my bike in a goblin forest of spiky mulebane, sprawling bee balm and stickicky musk thistle to determine what stung me.

The place was buzzing with bumble bees, honey bees, hummingbirds, butterflies, all sucking sweet nectar from the forest. It was obvious as I sat among the buzzing that I had accidentally been stung. I begrudgingly got back on my bike to pedal up the Indian Summer Trail, a 2.1-mile loop that takes riders as far west of the Blue Sky Trail as you can go. The trail was a nice conditioning addition to the ride, with some views back to the valley from which I came.

From my Indian Summer Trail overlook, I had every intention of riding nonstop back to the parking lot. It’s only about 43 miles. I rode back through the buzzing goblin forest, sat up, stopped my way down the redrock and laboring back up the various hogbacks (OK, there was plenty of bike-a-hike involved) to the top of the ridge where Coyote Ridge Natural Area meets the Devil’s Backbone Rimrock Trail.

From here, it was a matter of carefully descending the 10-mile back to the parking lot.

Photos by Miles Blumhardt for Loveland Connection

Tim Schultz of Loveland bikes his bike down stairs on the Rimrock Trail. Inset: a bumble bee buzzes a Rocky Mountain wildflower.
Poor planning gates off areas for riders

I have to admit that I was excited to have Red Mountain Open Space and Soapstone Prairie Natural Areas open to the public in June.

Since Red Mountain and Soapstone are in my backyard — literally — I knew I had some good riding ahead of me. Years before the city bought Soapstone and Larimer County bought Red Mountain, I would ride my horses for miles out there.

The city and county spent a lot of time and money planning for these two wonderful new parks. A very nice dirt road and several bridges replaced the old washed-out Larimer County North County Road 16, now called Townsite Plate. The bathrooms at the parks are new and clean and there's even a rider's mounting block that is wheelchair-accessible at Soapstone. Everything is very neat, tidy and organized.

Then why am I not happy?

Well, for one thing, you can't bring your dog to either park. Doesn't matter if they are well-trained and better behaved than most children — no dogs.

OK, I'll let that one go. Rattlesnakes, heat stroke, pronghorn deer, maybe it's better that the dogs stay home.

But I'm still not happy. The reason is because although the city made a lot of effort to make Soapstone a horse-friendly park, it seems that the county's open space staff who put in the gates on the trail that crosses Soapstone did everything possible to make it downright dangerous to ride your horse there.

There are a gazillion (hey, I counted) gates all through the park that are decidedly unhorse-friendly. Not only are they too narrow to open on horseback, but they're even too narrow for a rider to get through on horseback if someone is holding the gate open.

Now, I'm assuming that most people are like me and have legs that come down on each side of the horse while riding. Open space planners seemed to have forgotten about the little things — legs, saddles, saddle bags — that have to go through the gate at the same time that the horse does. My group tried but the only person able to ride through some of those gates with their legs up over the horse's neck still got their saddle bags ripped in the process by barbed wire that was used on the posts.

I guess having your saddle bags ripped is better than having your horse ripped and the accompanying rodeo that would ensue. But suffice it to say, the narrow gates, barbed-wire hardware and spring-loaded closers don't just make for an unpleasant on-off, on-off experience, it makes it dangerous as well.

The solution? I'm hoping that the people in charge will change things to make them safer. Meanwhile, I'll be riding at horse-friendly and much safer Red Mountain.

Terry Jester is a nationally recognized companion animal behaviorist. To learn more about companion animal training visit www.redmountain resourceName.com. For questions about your own pet, call Jester at 964-7355 or send an email to armchair@tco.com.
Open space grants available; applications due by Oct. 14

The Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board has expanded the county's Small Grants Program.

Applications for grants will be accepted through Oct. 14.

The program disperses Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax dollars for projects that protect and enhance open space on public and private lands.

Three new grant categories have been added: "agriculture," "increased access to open spaces" and "research on open spaces."

The original category — "protection or enhancement of open space, trails, natural areas, wildlife habitat, river areas, and wetlands on private or public land" — remains.

A total of $20,000 is available through the Small Grants for Community-Prioritizing, for individual awards of up to $2,000 per project.

Applications are due by 3 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14, with awards announced by February.

To learn about grant selection criteria or to apply, visit www.larimer.org/parks/openlands/smallgrants.htm.

Application packets also can be obtained at the Elson Visitor Center at 1800 S. County Road 31, Loveland, or by contacting Sue Burke, coordinator, for Small Grants for Community-Prioritizing, at the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources at 679-4566 or sburke@larimer.org.