Bird-watchers look to the sky as two American kestrels are released into the air during the 2006 Northern Colorado Birding Fair.

**Gone to the birds**

This week holds potential for culture and helping the community.

From art exhibits to band benefits, to job fairs and fairs celebrating birds and the Stone Age, there's something for everyone going on this week.

**TUESDAY**

**Farmers Market at its peak**

As we officially begin autumn, the Loveland Farmers Market is at its peak.

Many varieties of seasonal Colorado-grown produce are available at the market, including tomatoes, corn, okra, peaches, pears, apples, plums and roasted chili peppers.

The market is open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday in the Hobby Lobby parking lot, 3133 N. Garfield Ave. Call 495-6888 or visit www.farmert.org/market for more information.

**THURSDAY**

**Artist to shine at talk**

A gallery talk will focus on artist Laurie Zackerman's exhibit, "Memoria Mort: The Decomposition of the Nuclear Family," 7-8:30 p.m. at the Loveland Museum/Gallery, 503 N. Lincoln Ave. The exhibit, which includes home altars, memory jugs and shrines, runs through Nov. 1. For details, call the Loveland Museum/Gallery at 962-2410.

**Job Fair planned**

Crossroads Church will hold a Job Fair 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Thursday at the church at 5420 N. Taft Ave. For details, call 223-8201 or visit www.crossroadsofcolorado.com.

**Partners needs volunteers**

Partners Mentoring Youth is looking for volunteers to take on one-to-one mentoring relationships with youths facing challenges in their personal, social and academic lives.

There are currently 50 youths waiting for mentors. Partners is also seeking people to serve on its advisory committee.

An informational meeting will be held from 3 to 6 p.m. Thursday at 350 E. 29th St., suite 256.

For details, call Eric Sauter at 667-0811.

**FRIDAY**

**Habitat to hold hoedown**

The Berthoud Habitat for Humanity will hold its annual fundraiser hoedown from 5:30 to 10:30 p.m. Friday at Brookside Gardens, 619 E. Colorado 56.

Tickets are $30. For details, call 532-4751.

**SATURDAY**

**Fair celebrates birding**

The annual Northern Colorado Birding Fair will take place 7 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday at Rosal Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space on Carpenter Road, one mile west of Interstate 25.

Guided bird walks begin at 7 a.m., raptor releases will take place at 9:15, 10:15 and 11:15 a.m., and interactive clinics will take place at 9 and 10 a.m. and noon.

For details, call Rob Novak at 679-4561 or visit www.larimer.org/naturalresources.

**SUNDAY**

**Stone Age Fair returns**

The Loveland Stone Age Fair will take place 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday at the Pallium Building, 545 N. Cleveland Ave.

The free educational event features displays of prehistoric artifacts and demonstrations of flint knapping and beadwork.

The 2009 event celebrates the 75th anniversary of the original Stone Age Fair held at the Cornish School.

For details, visit www.stoneagefair.com.

**Bands and great food**

A "Band Aid" dinner and concert to benefit the Loveland High School marching band, the Crimson Regiment, will be held 3-8 p.m. Sunday at Hammond Amphitheater at North Lake Park, 29th Street and Taft Avenue. The dinner will feature food by Cambia's and music by Battle Creek, Montgomery Jazz Group, Modern Rhythm Project and the LHS Crimson Regiment.

Cost is $20 a ticket.

For details, call 593-1920.
SCARLET'S HAWKEYE

My husband and I attended the Northern Colorado Birding Fair on Saturday at Fossil Creek Reservoir. We especially enjoyed the falconry demonstration presented by falconer Tim Kroer and his beautiful red-tailed hawk Scarlet.

Sponsored by the Reporter
Photo by DEBRA SWAIN

LARIMER COUNTY

Annual birding fair slated at open space

Are you crazy about birds? The fifth annual Northern Colorado Birding Fair at Larimer County's Fossil Creek Reservoir open space will feature a variety of family friendly activities Sept. 26.

Events include:
> 7 to 7:15 a.m. — Guided bird walks
> 8 to 11 a.m. — Hands-on activities
> 9:15 a.m., 10:15 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. — Hourly presentations
> 8 a.m., 10 a.m., noon — Interactive clinics

For more information, visit www.larimer.org.

Birding Fair

Crazy about birds or just curious? Enjoy a free day of fun and learning for the entire family at the 5th annual Northern Colorado Birding Fair at Larimer County's Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space on Sept. 26.

Guided bird walks at 7 a.m. and 7:15 a.m., ongoing hands-on activities 8 to 11 a.m., hourly presentations from 9:15 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 11:15 a.m., interactive clinics from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and noon.

Directions and more information: Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space is located on Carpenter Road, 1 mile west of the I-25/Hwy. 392 Windsor exit. Contact Rob Novak at Larimer County Department of Natural Resources for more information, 970-679-4861 or novak@larimer.org.

For a full schedule of the day's events visit www.larimer.org/natural-resources/birding-fair.htm.

To learn more about Larimer County's parks and open spaces, go to www.Larimer.org/natural-resources.
Annual bird fair set for Sept. 26

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For more information, visit www.larimer.org.

Bird Fair flocks into reservoir Sept. 26

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For more information, visit www.larimer.org.

Loud Sports, Visit WV

Volunteers wanted for open space work

Horticulture volunteers known as Dirt Devils are needed to support the gardens at Larimer County's Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space, between Loveland and Fort Collins, and at the Bilon Visitor Center near Carter Lake. Volunteers should love to garden.
For more information, call 679-4562.

Volunteers wanted to capture images

Larimer County Department of Natural Resources is recruiting people interested in photography. People are needed to be in the field to capture pictures of visitors recreating in the county's parks and open spaces. If you have an interest in photography, contact J Collins at 679-4552. For more information, visit www.larimer.org/naturalresources.
OUR VIEW

Small grants can have big impact on public lands

Programs aimed at protecting, enhancing open space

Larimer County's Small Grants for Community Partnering program can have a big impact when it comes to protecting public lands.

The county program is a part of the Open Lands Program; it allows individuals and groups to apply for grants up to $2,000 for projects that protect or enhance open space, trails, natural areas, wildlife habitat, river areas and wetlands on private or public land. Three new grant categories also have been added: agriculture, increased access to open spaces, and research on open spaces.

The program is a positive effort in uniting residents for a common purpose. The use of public funds in the grant program is wise because it leverages local efforts and ensures that long-needed projects are completed.

The Small Grants for Community Partnering also offers a reminder that protection of open spaces and land enhancement is not just the responsibility of a government program but also of individuals. While the Open Lands program is often characterized by its land purchases and large projects, smaller projects such as these can have a significant impact on educational opportunities, connecting neighbors to open space and preserving habitat.

Even planting trees can make a difference when it comes to attracting birds and expanding connections with open space.

Applications are due to the county by Oct. 14 with awards announced in mid-November. For more information, visit Larimer County's website or contact the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

Participate

Applications for the 2010 Small Grants for Community Partnering program are due by 3 p.m. Oct. 14.

- Larimer County Department of Natural Resources
- Application packets may be picked up at the Snowshoe Visitor Center at 1800 S. County Road 31, Loveland
- By mail: Contact Sue Burke at the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources at 970-579-4596 or sue.burke@larimer.org to request an application by mail.

To learn more about Larimer County's parks and open spaces, go to www.larimer.org/naturalresources.

Lyons-Boulder trail plans withdrawn

BY TONY KINDSELLER
LONGMONT TIMES-CALL

LONGMONT — The Boulder County commissioners announced Thursday that they've put the brakes on a long-planned multimile recreational trail between Lyons and Boulder.

Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District officials had expressed willingness to partner with the county when the idea for the 13-mile trail was first proposed last winter, Boulder County transportation director George Gersle said.

Boulder County's plans for the trail included three possible scenarios — all would have involved using substantial stretches of land running along the Boulder Watershed Canal, a residential and irrigation ditch owned and managed by the district.

The water district's support for partnering on the trail changed over the summer, Commissioner Ben Feltman said Thursday.

"The clear sign was they suspended their trail guidelines that had been in place for a long time and that we had thought would guide this process," Feltman said.

Earlier this month, the county commissioners and county staffers met with the full Northern Water board, which collectively indicated its reluctance to support the project, Gersle said.

"Each individual board member expressed some specific concern," Gersle said, including security, safety, liability and water quality.

"It's huge news to all our neighbors around here," said Richard Carlson, who lives on Nwot Road and whose property line abuts the feeder canal.

Carlson and others founded the No Trail Alliance after details of the proposed trail came out earlier this year. He said the group has about 160 members.

The commissioners wanted to use stretches of the feeder canal because the ground is generally flat and mostly cleared of anything but grass. The commissioners also cited the sweeping views of the plains and mountains, and a continuous path from north to south, in a letter released Friday.

The proposed path would have allowed hikers, mountain bikers and horseback riders — would have been built just on the other side of Carlson's backyard fence, which was one of the reasons he opposed it.

Gersle said the county isn't giving up on the idea of the so-called Byers trail — which has been on the county's wish list since the early 1970s. But unless Northern Water changes its mind again, it's unlikely to happen anytime soon.
HIKING INTO THE FUTURE

Visitors taking a sneak peek at the Red Mountain Open Space walk over Sand Creek on May 28 as they hike through the Bent Rock Trail in northern Larimer County. The area opened to the public June 7.

GOCO makes 5-year plans

BY KEVIN DUBGAN
kevin@denverpost.com

Like many teenagers, Great Outdoors Colorado is wondering what its future may hold.

The 16-year-old program, commonly known as GOCO, is developing a five-year strategic plan to help guide it in deciding the types of conservation and recreation programs to support, said Lisa Aungenstein, the agency's executive director.

So far, during a series of meetings around the state, the messages from officials and the public have been consistent, Aungenstein said.

Communities are interested in protecting additional land and exploring what GOCO can do regarding water resources.

GOCO awards grants for open space, trails, parks and recreation projects across the state.

Its funding from Colorado Lottery proceeds has remained steady even during the economic slowdown and a drop in lottery sales.

The amendment to the state Constitution that created GOCO caps its funding at $36 million in 1992 dollars. For this year, that translated to $31.8 million, Aungenstein said.

Larimer County is a good example of how GOCO funds can be put to use, she said.

Open space and recreational programs in the county have received about $36 million in GOCO funding over the years. It also has been involved in more than 82 projects in grants for programs that cross county boundaries, including programs with the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

"Not all counties have been as successful in terms of leveraging partnerships and receiving grants from all of our categories," she said.

"That's really been the hallmark of Larimer County."

Major grants include $71.6 million toward the Laramie Foothills Mountains to Plains project, which includes the county-owned Red Mountain Open Space and Seapstone Prairie Natural Area owned by the city of Fort Collins.

The program also has helped with the purchase of the county's Hornet Park Open Space near Estes Park and provided more than $65 million to preserve land along the Poudre and Big Thompson rivers.

Aungenstein and some members of the GOCO board of directors were in Fort Collins on Thursday to meet with local officials and the public to get their views on the agency's priorities.

Reduced land values offer opportunities to acquire more property, officials said, but local funding sources for that purpose are growing increasingly thin.

Local governments also need help with maintaining the open lands and parks they already have, they said, and more money is needed for building trails.

Bob Hewson, executive director of Colorado Youth Outdoors, a local nonprofit that works with schools along the Front Range, said encouraging partnerships between government agencies and nonprofits would be a good way to increase programming.

More needs to be done to connect young people to the land, said Kerri Rolls, a fund development and outreach specialist with the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

"Kids are playing inside because that's where their outlets are, and not ever going to change their values unless we can find out ways to get them out on the land," she said.
The final phase of Poudre River Trail construction begins

Highway underpass to move along project

BY KEVIN DUGGAN
kevinduggan@coloradoan.com

A major milestone in the long-sought completion of Poudre River Trail is about to be placed near Windsor.

Crews will close Colorado Highway 392 beginning Monday for the installation of a 52-foot-long concrete underpass that will connect the trail from where it ends, west of the Poudre River to River Bluffs Open Space.

Construction of the trail through the Larimer County-owned open space, which is north of Colorado 392, is expected to happen next year, said Jeffery Boring, a resources specialist with the county's natural resources department.

"We hope to have River Bluffs open to the public by next fall," he said.

The open space is expected to have a 1.5-mile length of trail plus trailhead and parking. The trailhead is planned for the north end of the property near County Road 32E, Boring said.

A pedestrian bridge would be built across the Poudre. Eventually, the trail will run along the east side of the river up to Harmony Road. The trail facilities are expected to cost about $700,000.

The regional trail runs through LaPorte and Fort Collins as well as from Greeley to Windsor. The final segment of the trail would connect southeast Fort Collins to Windsor via Timnath.

Fort Collins expects to finish its portion of the trail in 2023, Boring said. The segment would run from the Environmental Learning Center under Interstate 25 to a site near the new Walmart Supercenter in Timnath.

Timnath would build the trail around the store to Harmony Road. The 1-mile length of trail would be funded by a $392,000 federal grant matched by a $92,000 contribution from the town, said Kyle Ford, public information officer for Timnath.

Construction is expected to start in spring, Ford said.

The county hopes to acquire a right-of-way from local property owners and finish its portion in 2022, Boring said.

"It all depends on the availability of funding and willing landowners," he said. "But this trail is our top priority."

Finding a way across Colorado 392 has been an issue for years, officials say. The underpass project was expected to be done next year, but the availability of federal economic stimulus dollars moved up the construction, Boring said.

Projects had to be "shovel ready" and meet tight deadlines to be eligible for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money, he said.

The underpass project is expected to cost $421,000, said Rusty McDaniel, assistant county engineer.

Installing the underpass will require cutting the highway and digging out an area for the structure, McDaniel said. The concrete trail through the tunnel will be poured as part of the project, but the underpass will be barricaded on both ends until the trail through River Bluffs is built, he said.
Colo. 392 to close for underpass work
Project will connect Poudre work

BY PAMELA DICKMAN
REPORTER-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Construction of an underpass beneath Colorado 392 means jobs for local contractors, another piece in an effort to connect a regional trail and a weekend detour for thousands of drivers.

Schmidt Earth Builders of Windsor will start digging up a piece of the highway into Windsor on Monday, closing the mile-long stretch from Larimer County Road 3 east to County Line Road.

The highway, which sees 15,000 vehicles per day, will reopen no later than Sept. 20.

"The stipulation in the contract is that all the work has to be done in that week," said Rusty McDaniel with the Larimer County Engineering Department.

The entire $121,000 project will be paid for with federal stimulus dollars. All of the contractors involved are from Northern Colorado.

SST UNDERPASS: Poudre River Trail work paid for with stimulus funds, using local contractors

FROM PAGE A1

Colorado, said Charlie Beeler, project manager from Schmidt.

Two small contractors are from Colorado Springs, but the rest are from Northern Colorado, including Loveland.

While he wasn't sure how many jobs the stimulus project created or saved, Beeler said it was "absolutely helping in a tough economy. It is still for real," Beeler said.

"The majority of it is local work," his crew and subcontractors will dig up a 30-foot section of the road to place 60,000-pound concrete boxes with a 200-ton crane.

They will then fill the concrete pieces together, replace the dirt around them and rebuild the road.

The underpass will eventually connect the Poudre River Trail from Greeley to Bellvue north of Fort Collins.

Sections of the trail to the east and west are already complete and will be connected by Larimer County, Timnath and Fort Collins.

The paved trail from Greeley currently ends a few feet from Velentino 392, where the sidewalk abruptly turns to grass.

Next year, that piece will be into Larimer County's River Bluffs Open Space just on the other side of Colorado 392. The underpass will provide safe access.

"It's a huge step," said Jeffery Borin, resource specialist for the county's Department of Natural Resources.

"These roads are major barriers to extending the trail, to the fact that we're going across the highway is huge.

The next step for the county is building a parking lot, trailhead and paved trail at River Bluffs with a $84,000 grant from Great Outdoors Colorado.

Hoping the work will be complete and River Bluffs open to the public by fall 2010.

From here to the existing trail at the Colorado State University Service Center on East Prospect Road, Larimer County, Fort Collins and Timnath will each build a section of the trail.

Officials are negotiating with landowners for the exact route.

Borin said, "It'll be another three to four years before it's complete."
Noxious weeds can be stopped early

Invasive plants are a threat to the economy and environment of Larimer County. These invaders, also known as noxious weeds, originated in other parts of the world and when introduced into this country have flourished. Invasive stands of noxious weeds threaten our native plant communities reducing species diversity and wildlife habitat.

Noxious weeds on rangeland and farmland are extremely costly to agricultural producers through reduced yields or expensive management. Many examples of weeds gone wild can be found in Larimer County, such as cheatgrass and Canada thistle. But the worst example of a noxious weed left uncontrolled is leaf spot. This deep-rooted perennial has become established on many pastures from LaPorte to Wellington and on steep hillside washes along Rist Canyon.

Eradication of these invaders is not possible now, but it is hoped the infestations can be reduced to a more tolerable level and their spread prevented. If noxius weeds hadn't been greatly yeas ago, maybe these invaders would have been controlled before becoming the problems we see today.

The introduction of invasive plants is still occurring. Yelow starthistle, which infests many millions of acres across California, Washington and Idaho, can be found on just a few acres in Larimer County. The infestation was recently discovered and it is hoped eradication will occur in the next couple of years.

Other noxious weeds that have a foothold but not yet a foothold in Larimer County include Mediterranean grass, spotted knapweed, purple loosestrife and lambsquarters.

The Larimer County Weed District is the agency working to minimize existing weed problems in the county and eliminate new invaders before they take hold. The district assists residents with site visits, plant identification, management recommendations and educational information on invasive species and works with residents so they are complaint with the Colorado State Noxious Weed Act.

The district is funded through a mill levy paid by residents within the district boundary, which includes approximately the eastern one-third of Larimer County. The mill levy is approximately $1 per year per $100,000 property value, or an average cost of $2 to $3 per year for most residents.

Activities conducted outside the boundary are funded through a contract with the Larimer County Weed District through contracted work with local and state agencies and programs. The goal of the district is to only expand to include all of Larimer County. Such an expansion would be more equitable to all county residents and provide greater services for areas distant from Fort Collins.

An expansion would require voter approval and will hopefully occur in the near future. For more information on the weed district and its services offered, call (970) 498-5768 or visit www.larimercounty.com/weeds.

Tim D'Amato is the land stewardship manager for Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. Contact him at (970) 498-5768 or send e-mail to tdamato@larimer.org.

Inspired art, naturally

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources invites the public to see the work by 2009 Open Lands Visual Artist of the Year, Diane Findley, who was chosen in March, will unveil several paintings inspired by Larimer County Open Spaces at a show entitled "Open Landscape Paintings" on Saturday, Oct. 2 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Cache Bank & Trust at 100 S. College Ave. in Fort Collins. Held in conjunction with that city's monthly art walk, the exhibit of a dozen paintings will wrap up at Cache through the month of October.

Findley has been diligently working on her painting since spring, and this event showcases the pieces created from the partnership between Findley and Open Lands Vehicles Program. There will be twelve paintings displaying different scenes in Larimer County-managed open spaces. The public will be able to vote for their favorite painting at www.larimer.org/openlands/artists.htm and the winning piece will be permanently displayed in the county justice center.

A long-time Fort Collins resident, Findley works in the mediums of painting and pottery, and has been immersed in the local arts community for over 30 years. She is a member of the Trinophile Artisans Cooperative and has been involved with the Larimer County Food Bank's Empty Bowls program, the City of Fort Collins Art in Public Places campaign, and the Fort Collins Symphony Orchestra "Color of Sound" event.

"The best part of this experience," said Findley, "is just waking up to all the glorious scenery at our fingertips." Her enthusiasm is as bold as the colors and strokes on the canvas. This artist isn't afraid to paint a sky green and obviously takes the moniker "Colorful Colorado" very seriously.

Findley is the third artist to receive this honor since the inception of the program in 2005. For more information on participating, visit the Larimer County Open Lands Vehicles Program website or contact the Larimer County Open Lands Vehicles Program at (970) 498-4489. Please stop by to celebrate Findley's art and Larimer County's continued commitment to protect important landscapes in Larimer County.
Preservation plan gets money

County votes to spend $354,112 on conservation easements

BY PAMELA DICKMAN
REPORTER-Herald STAFF WRITER

FORT COLLINS — The Larimer County commissioners agreed to spend $354,112 of county money and $264,112 of grant money to protect 471 acres from development.

Dion Diamond and Steve Johnson approved three new conservation easements north of Fort Collins during their Tuesday meeting.

The third commissioner, Kathy Brenner, was not at the meeting.

The easements are on private property in an area of Larimer County that land preservationists are trying to protect from development.

County officials are working with land trust and nature nonprofits as well as other government agencies to save more than 55 acres known as the Larimer Foot hills Mountains to Plains project.

The new easements are in that target area. "They fit nicely with the other properties," said Johnson.

The diverse habitat, like its name, literally stretches from the plains just west of Interstate 25 to the foothills and from north Larimer County to Wyoming.

The three new conservation easements are on a total of 471 acres with a collective value of $350,000, according to Jerry White, senior land agent.

Larimer County will pay $264,112, Larimer County will pitch in $42,112 from its open space tax revenue, and the rest of the value will be donated by the landowners.

Larimer County also will spend as much as $47,000 total for transaction costs, including surveys and appraisals.

Pamela Dickman can be reached at 669-9060, ext. 326 or pdickman@reporter-herald.com.