

Genetically pure bison to return to NoCo prairie



Jacy Marmaduke, jmarmaduke@coloradoan.com 2:10 p.m. MDT October 13, 2015



A herd of bison will be released to roam the Northern Colorado plains next month in the culmination of a [six-year effort](#) to return home a species once hunted to the brink of extinction.

The 10 genetically pure bison, born with the help of assistive reproductive technology, will move to their new home in Fort Collins' [Soapstone Prairie Natural Area](#) and Larimer County's Red Mountain Open Space near the Colorado-Wyoming border on Nov. 1 – National Bison Day.

The bison are currently bunking at Colorado State University's Foothills Campus, which will host a free celebration with family-friendly activities, remarks and project presentations 10 a.m. to noon on the release day. Visitors can get a close look at bison during the celebration, although they won't be the bison being released that day.

It's a historic day in part because it took so much to get here. Centuries ago, North America was home to at least 30 million bison, but by the 1880s, poaching and pioneering reduced the once mighty species to about 325 in the United States. Conservation efforts led to recovery, with about 500,000 bison roaming the U.S. and Canada today, according to the National Bison Association.

But many bison have been interbred with cattle, so genetically pure bison are rare. The largest genetically pure herd is in Yellowstone National Park with 3,500 bison.

These bison, though, carry brucellosis, a contagious disease that causes bison to abort calves and cattle to abort if it spreads to them and can impact humans. So CSU researchers teamed up with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to use genes from quarantined Yellowstone bison to create disease-free, genetically pure bison.

The team, led by bison reproduction program director Jennifer Barfield, employed tactics such as embryo transfer and artificial insemination to create what's now called the Laramie Foothills Conservation Herd.

It will serve as a seed herd for future species conservation efforts. A few of the bison are mature females and will give birth to calves in late spring or early summer, said Daylan Figgs, senior environmental planner with the city of Fort Collins.

The herd will be free to wander 800 acres of their species' native shortgrass prairie, surrounded by a fence specifically constructed to keep the large animals from roaming too far. The prairie where the bison will roam is visible from Soapstone's entrance road and the recently realigned Cheyenne Rim Trail.

Registration is full for a Nov. 1 afternoon field trip to view the prairie, but you can join the waiting list at naturetracker.fcgov.com. Pateros Creek Brewing Company is also hosting a celebration at 5:30 p.m. Nov. 1, with proceeds from Prairie Thunder Imperial Brown Ale sales supporting the project.

Friday class to focus on night sky photography

By Reporter-Herald Staff

POSTED: 10/14/2015 07:59:34 PM MDT

The Larimer County Natural Resources Department will offer a Night Sky Photography Workshop at 6-9 p.m. Friday at Devil's Backbone Open Space, west of Loveland off U.S. 34.

A naturalist who is also an astro-photographer will teach techniques for photographing constellations, the Milky Way, night landscapes, star trails and more.

A DSLR camera is needed. Participants also should bring their fastest wide-angle lens and a tripod if possible. A limited number of tripods will be available to borrow for the workshop.

The program involves walking on the trails, so dress for the weather, wear appropriate footwear and bring water.

The class is free, but registration is required at larimer.org/NRregistration. Call Zach at 619-4565 or zschiehl@larimer.org for details.

Foothills Trail reopens

By Reporter-Herald Staff

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The Foothills Trail on the east side of Horsetooth Reservoir has reopened.

The popular section of trail was rerouted further upslope from the reservoir, according to a press release.

A section of the trail between Rotary Park and Sunrise day use areas had eroded away due to high water in the reservoir and had been closed since spring.

Volunteers helped Larimer County staff build about 2,000 feet of new trail on the slope above where the old section of trail had existed.

The volunteers included members of the Larimer County Horseman's Association, Team B.O.B., In-Situ and Overland Mountain Bike Club.

A map of trails at Horsetooth Reservoir, is available at www.larimer.org/naturalresources/horsetooth.cfm.

New sections of Poudre Trail to open Friday

[Katie de la Rosa](#), Kdelarosa@coloradoan.com 8:20 a.m. MDT September 29, 2015



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Two new sections of the Poudre Trail are opening Friday.

The first project, a paved 3.1-mile loop west of Interstate 25, stretches from the Harmony Park-N-Ride through Arapaho Bend Natural Area and around Rigden Reservoir northeast of the intersection of Horsetooth and Ziegler roads.

The second project included picnic tables and drainage upgrades along a .6-mile stretch east of 1-25 from Gateway Trailhead Park to Stonefly Court in Timnath. This underpasses at Harmony Road and Larimer County Road 5 and provides views of the Swetsville Zoo and access to the Poudre River.

These are a result of partnerships between Great Outdoors Colorado and the city of Fort Collins, Larimer County and the town of Timnath. Connell Resources, of Windsor, and NORAA Concrete Construction, of Brighton, completed the work.

The goal for a Poudre Trail that extends from Laporte to Greeley is nearly complete. All that remains is about four miles of trail and an I-25 underpass. But no timetable was given for the completion of this project.

Great Outdoors Colorado has invested more than \$47 million into outdoor projects and has helped to preserve more than 60,000 acres in Larimer County since 1994, according to a press release.