

New edition of Larimer County wildflower guide lets residents discover what's blooming

Guide provides identifying information about more than 100 native plant species

By Paul Albani-Burgio

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted:Wed May 02 20:43:12 MDT 2018

From the delicate pink petals of the woods rose to the flaming orange globes of the blanket flower, Larimer County's highly varied collection of flora make it a veritable paradise for plant enthusiasts. In fact, the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources says the county is home to more than 1,000 native plant species and now wants to make it easier than ever for residents to enjoy and learn about all that floral beauty that surrounds them.

To that end, the department recently released a new edition of its wildflower guide that is designed to provide those exploring the county's myriad trails and nature areas with some insight into many of the most common and interesting species surrounding them.

The second edition of "Wildflowers and Other Plants of the Larimer County Foothills Region" is available for \$15 now at the Larimer County Natural Resources Administrative Office at 1800 S. County Road 31 in Loveland.

Billed as "perfect for novice wildflower enthusiasts, teachers and naturalists" the guide contains information about 100 species of local native wildflowers, grasses and woody plants that are found in Larimer County in the county's foothills region, which lies between 5,000 and 8,000 feet.

"The project itself was driven by the fact that a lot of our volunteers noticed that there were a lot of very technical wildflower guides out there that used a lot of those technical botany terms," said Larimer County Natural Resources Education Coordinator Heather Young. "But most of those guides cover a larger area so we noticed there was nothing local and that was easy to use to the point where a novice could open it and start identifying flowers out on the trail."

The guide, which includes photos of each plant, is organized into sections for wildflowers, grasses and woody plants with the wildflower section further divided into six colors to help users identify the flowers they come across. The flowers, grasses and plants within each section are then organized alphabetically by scientific family and then genus and species within the family.

"The scientific families are a little more scientific and something people might not be as familiar with, but by doing it that way people can narrow down what they are looking at, say a sunflower with mini petals, and all of those types of flowers will be grouped together in the guide that way so it should make them easier to find," Young said.

For each species, the guide provides information about the general appearance, flowers or fruit, leaves and habitat of the species. There is also an ID hints section for each species and a "Did You Know?" section which provides unusual and intriguing facts about the species. For example, the "Did You Know?" section about the white evening primrose notes that the white evening primrose is fragrant at night to attract moth pollinators and has flowers that turn pink after pollination.

Also included in the guide are comparison pages to prevent misidentification of similar-looking species and an explanation of the various habitats that make up Larimer County and the types of conditions and flora that can be found in each one. The guide also makes note of each species "bloom time" and contains references to specific Larimer County parks and open spaces to help guide enthusiasts as they look for specific species.

Young also noted that the guide is focused on the most dramatic and showy flowers that explorers will be likely to come across. However, the county also has other resources and information available about less distinctive flowers as well as non-native species, she said.

The department's website also notes that the guides 4-by-6 inch size makes it convenient to carry on hikes and bike trips. A preview of the guide can be viewed online at larimer.org/naturalresources/education/wildflower-guide.

Guides can also be purchased in Fort Collins at Fort Collins Nursery and the Horsetooth Area Information Center and at the Hermit Park Open Space in Estes Park.

Young also said now is a good time to begin looking for flowers as there are not too many flowers out. Her recommendation is to start visiting the same trail once a week or so to start noticing the various changes in the flowers as more and more start to bloom.

"I love wildflowers because they don't move and you don't really even have to step off the trail to enjoy them," she said. "And they have so many similarities and differences and can really tell you a lot about the area you find them."

Carter, Horsetooth boat ramps to be locked at night to protect water from mussels

Pinewood closed to motorized, sailboats

By Pamela Johnson

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted: Wed May 09 22:27:12 MDT 2018

Larimer County will be locking the boat ramp gates at Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir after hours, and the ramp at Pinewood will remain locked all season, to protect the waters from invasive mussels that cling to boats.

The tightened measures are designed to close loopholes in the inspection system found by the Bureau of Reclamation after veligers, or larvae of the nuisance mussels, were found in a reservoir in Summit County last year.

"We'd like to maintain recreation on our reservoirs and at the same time protect the waters from invasive aquatic nuisance species," said Tony Curtis, resources chief with the Eastern Colorado Area office of the Bureau of Reclamation. "This is the best we can do at this point in time."

Invasive mussels, primarily zebra and quagga mussels that are native to Eastern Europe, are basically aquatic hitchhikers that travel from water to water via boats, clamping onto the vessels and engines. Once they arrive in a water, they quickly multiply, damage infrastructure and devastate the aquatic ecosystem for native species. These pests have caused billions of dollars in damage in states across the country where they have taken hold.

So far, Colorado waters have remained clean of adult mussels, though last year, veligers were detected at Green Mountain Reservoir. There, inspectors found 26 unofficial and illegal boat ramps, leading them to inspect all of the Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs, including those in Larimer County that are part of the Colorado-Big Thompson Water Project.

Curtis said officials found loopholes that his agency is working to close. At Carter and Horsetooth, that means locking the gates after hours when an inspector is not on duty to prevent people from illegally launching trailered watercraft. And at Pinewood, where there is no inspector, the boat ramp will be locked permanently and the waters closed to motorboats and sailboats.

These measures are key to protect the infrastructure of the Colorado-Big Thompson system, which provides power through hydroelectric plants and delivers water to about 1 million people in seven counties, according to Curtis and Traci Robb, natural resources specialists with the bureau.

To protect Colorado waters, state legislators passed the Aquatic Nuisance Species Act, which went into effect in 2009 and requires inspections of all trailered watercraft on lakes and reservoirs. Since then, many infested boats have been identified, and diverted, before the mussels reached Colorado waters. During the first two weeks of boating season this year, inspectors stopped four infested boats from hitting the waters.

However, more and more boats are hitting Colorado waters and increasing that risk, and officials worry about people launching their boats illegally without first going through an inspection.

So this year, when the boat ramps at Carter, west of Loveland, and Horsetooth, west of Fort Collins, close at 10 p.m., the gates will be locked until 6 a.m. the next day when the aquatic nuisance species inspectors return to duty, according to information released by Northern Water, the Bureau of Reclamation and Larimer County, all who have a stake in the reservoirs.

At Pinewood Reservoir, which is above Carter Lake, the boat ramp will be locked all season because no inspectors work at Pinewood, which is more popular for kayaks and canoes than motorized trailered boats. Non-motorized vessels such as rafts, stand-up paddleboards and single-chambered rafts will be allowed if they can be launched and powered by hand. But motorboats and sailboats will not be allowed on the waters.

This is a change from last season when Larimer County allowed boaters to have their trailered watercraft inspected at nearby Carter and then place a seal in a lock box and launch on their own on Pinewood. That practice is no longer allowed.

Larimer County officials urge boaters — including those who are camping at boat-only access sites at Horsetooth — to be aware of the ramp hours because of this change, and ask all boaters to clean, drain and dry their boats before launching on a body of water. A list of boat ramp hours is available at larimer.org/naturalresources/parks/boating.

Pamela Johnson: 970-699-5405, johnsonp@reporter-herald.com

Report details Larimer County open space use

Reporter-Herald Staff

Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted: Fri May 11 06:30:02 MDT 2018

LOVELAND — Larimer County Department of Natural Resources has released its 2017 Annual Report.

According to a press release, the report tells Larimer County citizens how the county has used monies received through the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax.

The 12-page report notes the department achieved the 50,000-acre milestone for land conservation in Larimer County.

It also details highlights in conservation, recreation, education, volunteers and collaboration. Among them are the opening of the first paved trail connecting Loveland and Fort Collins. More than 5,700 people participated in 140 activities on open spaces, including guided hikes and school field trips.

Citizens can view the 2017 Annual Report at www.larimer.org/naturalresources/plans-reports-advisory-boards, or get a copy at the department's Administrative Offices, 1800 S. County Road 31 in Loveland, or the Horsetooth Area Information Center in the South Bay area of Horsetooth Reservoir in Fort Collins.

Close Window

Send To Printer