

Vandal spray-paints bouldering area near Horsetooth Reservoir

Jacy Marmaduke, Fort Collins Coloradoan Published 4:21 p.m. MT Jan. 24, 2019 | Updated 11:18 a.m. MT Jan. 25, 2019



Local climbers discovered graffiti on the rocks at Torture Chamber bouldering area near Horsetooth Reservoir. (Photo11: Courtesy of David Levy)

Volunteers intervened after a vandal spray-painted graffiti at a bouldering and climbing area near Horsetooth Reservoir around Christmas.

The graffiti, written in red spray paint, read "Dre + Grace," "D + G" and "Merry Xmas."

On Dec. 27, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources rangers discovered it on the rocks at the Torture Chamber area on the southeast end of the reservoir, near the intersection of Larimer County Road 38E and Centennial Drive.

A few local volunteers worked to remove most of the graffiti earlier this month. The county plans to cover the rest with paint, which is standard procedure for this type of rock, natural resources department spokesman Teddy Parker-Renga told the Coloradoan. Rangers are waiting for warmer temperatures when the paint will adhere better to the rocks.

Larimer County campsite reservations filling up for summer

Reporter-Herald Staff

Loveland Reporter-Herald

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Anticipating a busy summer season, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources is encouraging people who want to use its campgrounds to reserve their sites soon.

The county offers campsites at Horsetooth, Flatiron and Pinewood reservoirs, Carter Lake and Hermit Park Open Space, as well as camper cabins at Horsetooth Reservoir and Hermit Park and tepees at Flatiron Reservoir.

Reservations can be made up to 180 days in advance, so many of the county's most popular campsites are already full through mid-July.

According to a press release, the campgrounds at Horsetooth Reservoir are almost completely booked from Memorial Day weekend to mid-July, even during weekdays, with other campgrounds filling fast too.

"If you plan to make a reservation, remember that 180-day window," Department Specialist Brad Frye said in the release. "Think ahead when making reservations for later this summer, or plan a mid-week stay when campgrounds are less crowded and more campsite options may be available," he said.

Fees for permits and camping rose as of Jan. 1.

Non-electric campsites are \$20 per night in the October-March off-season and \$20-\$30 in the April-September season; electric campsites are \$20-\$30 off-season and \$32-\$48 in season.

Horsetooth Reservoir sites with full hookups are \$25-\$38 in the off-season and \$40-\$60 in season.

Fees are higher on weekends and holidays.

All fees collected go toward keeping the parks and open spaces clean, beautiful and safe, according to the release.

To make a reservation, visit larimercamping.com or call 800-397-7795.

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Horsetooth Mountain Open Space to remain closed

Rangers have seen more mountain lions in the area after attack on Monday

Reporter-Herald Staff

Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted: Fri Feb 08 16:55:50 MST 2019

Horsetooth Mountain Open Space will remain closed until at least the early part of next week, after Larimer County rangers and Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff determined they need more time to assess whether mountain lions in the area pose a risk to visitors.

A runner was attacked by a juvenile mountain lion on Monday afternoon while running on the West Ridge Trail, prompting a closure that night.

The runner was hospitalized and treated for his injuries. He reported fighting back against the lion and killing it in self-defense.

Rangers found the lion's body within feet of possessions the runner asked them to retrieve for him, and the animal was taken to a Colorado Parks and Wildlife animal health lab for a necropsy.

County staff reopened the open space briefly on Tuesday morning, then closed it again Tuesday afternoon due to public safety concerns after rangers encountered more mountain lions.

According to a press release, rangers and wildlife experts have been working since then to determine when to reopen the area.

"We're continuing to approach the situation with an abundance of caution for the safety of all of our visitors," Steve Gibson, district manager for Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, said in the release. "We are actively assessing mountain lion activity in the area with our partners at Colorado Parks and Wildlife and need more time to complete that assessment before we reopen to the public."

The department recommends alternative trails this weekend, including the Blue Sky Trail just south of Horsetooth Mountain and Eagle's Nest Open Space near Livermore.

"We recognize this is a really popular place to recreate and appreciate everyone's patience," Gibson said.

County staff also cautioned that Horsetooth Mountain supports many wildlife species and there will always be a chance to encounter wildlife there when it reopens to the public.

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Horsetooth Mountain reopens after 2 mountain lions are moved

Open space closed Feb. 5 after mountain lion attack

By Pamela Johnson

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted:Wed Feb 13 12:59:55 MST 2019

The trails at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space reopened Wednesday after wildlife officers captured and moved two juvenile mountain lions believed to be siblings of one that attacked a runner on Feb. 4.

"We have removed additional lions that we believe are siblings of the lion involved in last Monday's attack," Mark Leslie, northeast region manager for Colorado Parks and Wildlife, said in a press release.

"The Front Range of Colorado plays home to many of Colorado's wildlife, and we have an expanding urban interface and increased recreation pressure. The interaction between wildlife and people is going to increase, and we need to find a way to balance the needs of people and the needs of wildlife."

The popular open space west of Fort Collins reopened for less than a full day after the attack before the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, working with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, closed the trail due to additional mountain lion activity. A ranger encountered the two other lions near that same area and officials decided to close the open space for safety reasons.

Wildlife officers also placed cameras near the area on the West Ridge Trail where the mountain lion attacked a trail runner, who was able to fight back and strangle the lion. The runner, who has not been identified, survived and was treated for his injuries at an area hospital.

Rangers and wildlife officers found the deceased lion near where the attack occurred on the West Ridge Trail that same night.

Then, over the weekend Colorado Parks and Wildlife officers captured the other two juvenile mountain lions, and said they would send them to a wildlife rehabilitation facility before releasing them back into the wild in the future, according to a press release. Officials did not say why the animals were sent to a rehab center, but noted that they will offer full details during a press conference on Thursday.

The trail runner, too, is expected to speak about the ordeal at the press conference.

While the open space has reopened, wildlife officials urged people to be cautious when hitting open spaces and mountainous areas that animals call home.

"It's important for people to recreate with wildlife in mind," Ty Petersburg, area wildlife manager with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, said in a press release.

"We want people to enjoy these spaces, but we live close to these animals, and we have to understand that there are times when you may come across something on the trail."

For those who do encounter a mountain lion, Colorado Parks and Wildlife offers the following advice:

- Do not approach the mountain lion and, because most will try to avoid a confrontation, give the animal a way to escape.
- Stay calm, and talk firmly yet calmly to the mountain lion.
- Move slowly and never turn your back on the lion.
- Back away slowly if you can do so safely and do not run away. Running may trigger the animal's instinct to chase and attack.
- Face the lion and stand upright, doing all you can to appear larger. This includes opening your jacket if you are wearing one and raising your arms.
- If you have small children with you, pick them up so they will not panic and run.
- If the lion behaves aggressively, throw stones, branches or whatever you can without crouching down or turning your back. Try to convince the lion that you are not prey and may, in fact, be a danger to the animal. This could cause them to run away.
- If the mountain lion attacks, fight back using rocks, sticks or whatever you have. Remain standing and try to target the animal's eyes and nose.

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Feb. 21 reception to honor Visual Artist of the Year

Reporter-Herald Staff

Loveland Reporter-Herald

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A reception Thursday, Feb. 21, will recognize Larimer County Natural Resource's 2018 Visual Artist of the Year mixed-media painter Amelia Furman of Loveland.

The public is welcome to celebrate the connection between nature and art at the free reception at 3 p.m. at the Larimer County Courthouse, second floor lobby, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins.

Furman will discuss her mixed-media painting "Wild Bones," inspired by her time as the Artist of the Year.

The artist also will have a solo exhibition, "Larimer County Natural Treasures," March 1-31 at Aims Community College's Loveland Campus, 104 E. Fourth St., and a second solo exhibition, "Quest for Power," in April-September at the Loveland Museum, 503 N. Lincoln Ave.

The Larimer County Natural Resources Visual Artist Program, which started in 2006, will be on hiatus starting in 2019. Larimer County is not accepting applications for a 2019 Visual Artist.

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Loveland residents ask Larimer County to reconsider e-bikes on trails

Ban on electric-assist bicycles on soft-surface trails implemented Jan. 1

By Pamela Johnson

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted: Sat Feb 16 21:35:29 MST 2019

A group of Loveland residents has asked Larimer County to reconsider a new rule banning e-bikes from its soft-surface trails at parks and open spaces.

Rick Brent, who has cycled all his life, said his e-bike, which has an electric motor that simply helps him pedal when needed and does not propel the bicycle on its own, has allowed him to keep riding after having both knees replaced.

He says his bike, which doesn't look much different from a traditional mountain bike, is not noisy nor speedy, just helpful as his abilities lessen.

"We'd like to keep riding, and we don't think the research shows that these bikes are any different than regular bikes," added Dennis Andersen, another resident pushing for a rule change.

"We've been riding bikes for 30 or more years. We're getting older, and things happen. You lose your edge a little. The technology has come on at the right time for us."

But recently after a ride at the Devil's Backbone, Brent noticed a new sign posted on the kiosk at the trailhead: E-BIKES NOT PERMITTED.

Seeking change

He and a group of friends who have e-bikes decided to seek a change, and on Tuesday they went before the Larimer County commissioners and asked them to reconsider the ban that took effect Jan. 1.

Todd Blomstrom, the county's community planning and infrastructure director, agreed to take another look at possibly addressing e-bikes by classification, which includes speed, rather than an overall ban.

"We would welcome the chance to go back and look at this and break it down by class as opposed to having uniform policy classifications," said Blomstrom.

"A lot of agencies are struggling with this issue, mainly because of the advancements in technology," he said.

There are three classes of e-bikes. Class 1 offers just pedal assist to a maximum of 20 mph, Class 2 offers both assist and throttle with a maximum speed of 20 and Class 3 offers pedal assist up to 28 mph.

Brent and his friends are asking the county to allow Class 1 e-bikes.

"We're just trying to enjoy our mountain bikes, extend our mountain biking careers a little longer," said Andersen.

A legislative push

Though e-bikes have been around for years, the trend is growing, and public land agencies are now facing decisions on whether to allow them on their trails.

The Colorado Legislature addressed the issue in 2017, passing a bill allowing e-bikes on trails but also allowing local governments to ban them if they so choose. Larimer County added that ban on its soft-surface trails in its updated rules that took effect Jan. 1.

A lot of work and thought went into that decision, said Ken Brink Jr., the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources' visitor services manager.

The county looked at potential trail impacts, public opinion and public safety, talking with people who use the trails, with horseback riders, with mountain bikers, with trail crews and with rangers.

The issue, too, was discussed by both the parks and open lands advisory boards before proposing a ban on e-bikes on the soft-surface trails. The ban was included with a list of changes to parks and open lands regulations for 2019, passed by the county commissioners in late 2018.

"There's a lot of diverse opinions about who wants to see what out there, and we tried to get a pulse on that," said Brink. "You lay it out — public safety, public opinion and resource impact. ... At the end of the day, the decision that carried the day was to be somewhat conservative with this because we hadn't addressed this before. Our regs were silent on this before."

A new conversation

Brent, Andersen and fellow e-biker Todd Singiser want to reopen that conversation.

They have talked with Mary Ann Bonnell, visitor services manager of Jefferson County Open Spaces, who conducted a study on the perceptions of e-bikes as well as the reality after a yearlong pilot project allowing Class 1 e-bikes on all types of trails at their open spaces.

Bonnell, who has received inquiries from around the country on her data, said the biggest concerns uncovered in her study were from people worried about congestion on the trails in general, worried about noise (which e-bikes do not make) affecting horses and from elite mountain bikers who consider pedal assist a cheat.

And after allowing e-bikes on its trails for a year, Jefferson County Open Spaces had very few complaints. Out of the 7 million visitors to their open lands every year, rangers received feedback on e-bikes from 59 people. Ten of those comments were negative, 17 were neutral and 32 positive.

"A lot of people don't even notice," Bonnell said, noting that Class 1 e-bikes have a maximum speed of 20 mph, offer only pedal assist — not an on-demand throttle — and make no noise.

"The response I've seen shows our e-bikes have the same wear and tear on trails as a regular mountain bike," she continued, adding that the regulations have not caused a spike in e-bike use.

"It's not like, since we approved them, we've been crawling with e-bikes."

So her department recently made the policy allowing e-bikes permanent.

Not a unanimous view

Brink said his department was aware of the Jefferson County study before deciding to ban all e-bikes on soft-surface trails at county parks and open spaces, including at the Devil's Backbone and Horsetooth Mountain.

He said the majority of open lands agencies in the state, like Larimer County, have not allowed these bikes on their single-track trails.

"(Bonnell's) opinion and Jefferson County's opinion have not carried the day with anyone else in the open space community," said Brink, noting that the demand for e-bikes, which are very new and expensive, is small.

He knows of a small but vocal number of riders in Larimer County.

"There is a much larger group of people that hike, walk dogs and mountain bike at the Devil's Backbone," added Brink. "Many of them have told us they don't support those. What we're trying to do is protect the needs of those people."

So, the county decided to allow e-bikes on paved trails but not soft-surface trails and see how that goes locally, though in the end, any decision to change will come from the county commissioners, Brink noted.

Brent, Andersen and Singiser hope the commissioners do decide to change. They believe that people's perceptions of e-bikes — speed and noise — are just that, perceptions and not reality, and that most people would not even notice e-bikes, which look similar to traditional bikes.

"I've had both knees replaced, and what this allows me to do is to utilize that bicycle instead of getting in the car," Brent said. "The mountain bike trail at the Devil's Backbone is phenomenal. I've never had people pass me on an e-bike. I've had people pass me on a regular bike."

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