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Best dog hikes in Northern Colorado

Roaming with Rover: Fetch the pooch and embark on a wag-nificent adventure

BY MILES BLUMHARDT
milesblumhardt@coloradoan.com • April 25, 2010

What's better than a picture-perfect summer day hiking? For dog owners, it's a bluebird day hiking with their pet. Before you hit the trail, here are tips on how to prepare for the trail, gear you'll need and best hikes for you and your pooch.

Preparing for the trail

> Have your veterinarian check your pet out for any health issues before starting an exercise plan.
> Acclimate your dog to hiking slowly if they have been canine potatoes. Work up to 30 minutes of walking before taking a short, flat one-hour hike.
> Start with lighter loads in the dog's pack, working up to no more than 25 percent of the dog's weight.
> Teach your dog the rules of the trail.
> Consider your dog's age. Most dogs will do whatever you ask them to do even if it is detrimental to their health. > Check regulations to see if dogs are allowed in the area you are going. For example, dogs are allowed on leash in Roosevelt National Forest and most wilderness areas, Larimer County Open Spaces and city of Fort Collins Natural Areas as well as Lory State Park.
Exceptions where dogs are not allowed include Red Mountain Open Space, Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space, Rim Rock Open Space, Soapstone Prairie Natural Area, Coyote Ridge Natural Area, Bobcat Ridge Natural Area, Running Deer Natural Area and Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area. Dogs are not allowed on trails in Rocky
> Check the maps of places you are hiking to see if there are reliable water sources for your dog. If not, load up on water for your dog.
> Throw some treats in your pack to help keep your dog's energy level up.
> When backpacking or hiking away from town, locate the closest veterinarian in case of emergency.

On the trail

> Take breaks in the shade. Hike early or late in the day to avoid mid-day heat. Watch your dog's body language for signs of fatigue. It may be panting unusually hard, slowing down, dragging behind you or stopping altogether.
> Take the time to check your dog for ticks, thorns, burrs and any other unwanted souvenirs from your trip to the wilderness.
> Always be sure to pick up after your dog.
> If your dog is bitten by a rattlesnake, keep it calm and seek medical help as soon as possible. The smaller the dog, the more important this is.

Doggie essentials

> First-aid kits: Colorado State University and the Red Cross offer canine first-aid classes. Check out your local bookstores for canine first-aid books and make a safety kit. Commercial kits are available from www.DogKits.com, www.petfirstaidkits.com, www.bowwowcastle.com and www.first-aid-product.com.
> Booties: Especially helpful in extremely hot weather as well as to protect your dog's feet from abrasions or cuts from rocks on the trail.
> Backpack: Storage for no more than 25 percent of its weight
> Food/treats: Bring more than your dog normally consumes since they are expending a large amount of energy

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> Water bowl: If water from streams and lakes is available, fine. However, dogs, like humans, are susceptible to water-borne parasites such as giardia. Collapsible bowls are most convenient.
> Leash: Most areas that require dogs on leash require leashes not to be more than 10 feet.
> ID tag: Or have a microchip placed under the dog's skin.
> Plastic bags/trowel: Makes cleanup much easier.
> Insect repellent: DEET-based products work best to repel ticks and mosquitoes. However, like some humans, come dogs have a strong reaction to DEET. Before heading out, apply a small amount to your dog to see if it reacts to it. If not, apply only to areas of the body that dog cannot lick.

Where to go

Horsetooth Falls
> Where: Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. Take Larimer County Road 38E west of Fort Collins for 8.7 miles to Horsetooth Mountain Park.
> Open: 24/7, year-round
> Trail: Easy 1.1-mile trail one way with little elevation gain; open only to hiking
> Entrance fee: $7 daily or $65 annual pass to Larimer County parks
> Pets: On leash
> Why go: Dogs on leash can cool off in the pond below the falls. Watch for rattlesnakes along the trail.
> Information: Larimer County Parks, (970) 679-4570 or www.larimer.org/ parks

Pineridge Natural Area
> Where: Main parking lot off Larimer County Road 42C, past Hughes Stadium, around the curve and up the hogback. Entrances also located on the north by parking in the Maxwell Natural areas parking lot along County Road 42C and the east at Spring Canyon Park.
> Open: 24/7, year-round
> Trails: Easy loop trails with little elevation gain
> Entrance fee: Free
> Pets: On leash
> Why go: Close to Fort Collins with array of trail options plus a reservoir for your leashed dog to cool off in.
Information: www.fcgov.com/naturalareas or (970) 416-2815

Blue Lake
> Where: Located 53 miles up the Poudre Canyon along Colorado Highway 14
> Open: 24/7 year-round
> Trail: 9 miles roundtrip with 1,500-foot elevation gain
> Entrance fee: Free
> Pets: On leash
> Why go: Beautiful trail with lots of wildflowers June through August and spectacular Blue Lake for the leashed dog to splash around in.
> Information: Roosevelt National Forest, (970) 295-6700 or www.fs.fed.us/r2/arnf

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Q&A with CJ Cullins

April 25, 2010

Age

34

Family

Unmarried, one biological son, John, significant other, Clay, and his daughter, Hannah, as well as dogs Trout and Cody

Occupation

Volunteer program coordinator, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources

Born/raised

Born in Brownwood, Texas, and raised in Greeley

Current residence/why did you move here

I moved with my family to Northern Colorado when I was six and have lived in NoCo for most of my life, with short stays in Texas and Germany, and currently live in Wellington.

Outdoor passions/adventures

I have had a lot. Passions include racing bicycles for 12 years for Trek and Mongoose, on the cycling team at Fort Lewis College, climbing mountains, kayaking, racing triathlons and marathons. I love everything about the outdoors, including fishing, hunting, hiking, camping, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, snowshoeing, archery, cross-country skiing. Current adventures now include archery, fishing and shooting sports and working with the Colorado Division of Wildlife to create Single Moms fishing days, helping to teach about outdoor safety and making sure that the kiddos in my life can track animals, identify scat and appreciate all aspects of the outdoors.

Wildest outdoors experience

When I was 18 and pre-riding the race course at the mountain bike worlds in Vail, I was chased by two porcupines. They are really a lot bigger than you might think!

Most memorable outdoors experience

The first time I climbed Longs Peak and stood at the summit, the clouds swirled around with such intensity that I could barely stand because the wind was blowing so hard. Then a massive gust came and cleared the air for a moment and we could see such a long distance. I climbed Longs Peak eight more times after that and never quite felt the same as that first day.

Favorite place to be outdoors

Right now, I love Red Mountain Open Space. Living in Wellington, it is literally only minutes away and the trails are some of the finest built trails in any system. Every time I go, I see something new - the geology, wildlife, weather. Everything has an intensity and beauty out there. What a gift to have access to that property.

What does being in the outdoors do for

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you

Having wide open spaces, mountains, trees and rivers are awesome experiences and none of that should be taken for granted. Being in the outdoors is cleansing and therapeutic like nothing else. I am a firm believer that your age does not define how you play or which activities you are a part of. At 34, I still actively seek out opportunities to play in the mud, swim in rivers and climb trees. Sometimes, we end up so plugged into the word through computers, cell phones, television, etc that being in the outdoors affords me an opportunity to stay true to myself and get lost in grand silence.

Worst job

Overnight shift at Dunkin Donuts when I was 16.

Childhood ambition

To be a park ranger or a housewife with three kids and a white picket fence.

Something about you that most people don't know

I raced mountain bikes for 12 years and was ranked 11th overall in the world as a junior.

Top thing left on your bucket list

To climb all the 14ers again, but this time with my son, and to compete in archery competitions.

If you know of an adventurous type we should feature in Xplorer Q&A, send the person's name, a little about their adventures and contact information to milesblumhardt@coloradoan.com

CJ Cullins (Courtesy of CJ Cullins)

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Parks, natural areas to see changes

BY BOBBY MAGILL • BobbyMagill@coloradoan.com • April 25, 2010

The dandelions are blooming in Edora Park, just in time to be an indicator of the financial stability in local government.

"We've reduced the weed control budget," said Marty Heffernan, Fort Collins city parks director. "There will be additional dandelions."

As state and local governments grapple with the effects of slashed budgets and other effects of the economic downturn, changes will be seen in local parks and natural areas, but they aren't likely to be dramatic.

There will be fewer people to point you in the right direction at Lory State Park and fewer cosmetic changes to facilities in need of maintenance in city parks and natural areas. Trash cans might be emptied less often, many restrooms will be closed during the winter and weeds might sprout where there once was neatly manicured grass.

"What we've had to do is scale back some of our anticipated improvements to the property we own and flatline the services we're providing," said John Stokes, Fort Collins director of natural resources.

"We're going to continue to provide most of the services we provide today, but if you look over the long term, unless things improve in the economy, we don't plan to add any staff."

The city natural areas budget will be flat for the next decade, during which time there will be little investment in new natural areas or improvements in the areas that exist today, he said.

Infrastructure in the natural areas is in generally good shape, he said, and it will be easy to maintain it during the next 10 years.

That's not the case for Fort Collins city parks, which have seen their maintenance budget slashed in half since 2006, giving the city only $300,000 to fix what's broken across 800 acres of city parks, Heffernan said.

"Trash doesn't get picked up as fast – there's just this general degrading of the maintenance of the parks," he said. "We don't open restrooms in the winter in community parks anymore."

Sitting near a patch of bright yellow dandelions and a closed-for-the-winter restroom in Edora Park in F ort Collins on Tuesday, Laura Rody, a nanny, said it's important for the kids she looks after to have a restroom or a Porta-Potty nearby when they're playing in the park.

"It's not for me," she said. "As long as there's something there near their play area for the kids."

Fort Collins parks are not in danger of becoming like those in Colorado Springs, where park maintenance was abandoned altogether.

"It's not to the point where it's highly noticeable," Heffernan said of the degradation in park maintenance.

Declining sales tax revenue has forced Larimer County to look for donations to help pay for open space maintenance, said Kerri Rollins, the county's

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interim open lands manager.

The county has been able to raise $1.13 for every dollar it receives in sales tax revenue, which is expected to keep rolling in until 2018 when the tax expires, she said.

"We hope to maintain the level of service we've been providing and not necessarily cut anything at this point," she said. "The economy is definitely affecting us. We're trying to do more with less, more efficiently."

Colorado state parks are trying to get by with much less, which will mean fewer staff, fewer resources and, at Boyd Lake State Park, a slightly scaled-back summer concert series.

Boyd Lake event planner Dan Vogl said the tighter budget will force the park to sign up fewer bands to play at the series this summer. That means only two bands will play on most days instead of the four or more that played during each day of the event during previous summers.

The series this summer will include six one-day events with a two-day concert series July 3 and 4.

At other state parks in the region, visitor center hours are being scaled back and at the sprawling Colorado State Forest State Park north of Rocky M ountain National Park, there will be fewer ranger patrols, state parks spokeswoman Deb Frazier said.

Statewide, Colorado State Parks has reduced its full-time staff from 294 employees to 260, and seasonal employees this summer will drop to 742 from a peak of 900 in recent years, Frazier said.

"Truth is, there may not be as many trash pickups as there have been in the past," she said. "Some of the c ampgrounds will be closed during part of the summer."

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Larimer County offers funds for projects

By Jackie Hutchins
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Three projects in Loveland, as well as 10 elsewhere in the county, got a boost Thursday when Larimer County officials awarded them Small Grants for Community Partnering.

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources Open Lands Program and the Larimer County commissioners made the awards at a presentation at the Loveland Public Library.

The Loveland Historical Society got a $2,000 grant for the Gardens at Milner-Schwarz House.

Trudy Manuel, representing the Historical Society, said her group will use the money to help create gardens at the historic house at Fairgrounds Park, said to be the oldest brick house in Larimer County.

The first phase of the project is creation of a community garden. Nearly all of its 12 plots have been claimed, and it will open May 1.

Manuel said the next two phases will include creation of a perennial garden, a kitchen garden, an outdoor seating area and historic heritage plantings.

High Plains Environmental Center got a $2,000 grant to expand its Nourishing Children through Nature program.

Representing that group, Joe Knopinski said the center hopes to expand the program, which helps children learn about gardening, from 1 acre to 3.

"We're very concerned about children. We want to pull them away from the computers and TVs and get them outdoors again," he said.

Big Thompson Elementary School got a grant of $1,842 for its Outdoor Education Center revitalization.

Karen Fournier, representing the school's "cultivation committee," said the school has an outdoor education center that children and teachers use for music, art, nature, science and math lessons.

Reporter-Herald/Steve Stoner

Big Thompson Elementary School students examine leaves before writing down a description of them Thursday during a nature walk at the Outdoor Education Center as part of the school's Green Day activities. From left are Brandon Lobue, 9, Jackie Smith, 8, Kent Long, 8, and McKenna Olsen, 8. On Thursday, the school got a grant of $1,842 for its Outdoor Education Center revitalization.

Other Grants

In addition to the Loveland projects that got funding, 2010 grants went to:

- Aspen Brook River Walk, Estes Park.
- Estes Park Museum Xeriscape Project.
- Crescent Lake — Phase II, Pinewood Springs.
- Front Range Community College's Communities, Cameras and Conservation program, Fort Collins.
- Dean Acres Natural Area enhancements, Fort Collins.
- Baker Lake Ecosystem enhancement, Fort Collins.
- Wetland and Riparian Demonstration Site, Fort Collins.
- Buckeye School Handicapped Access Ramp, Buckeye.
- Colorado Youth Outdoors mulching project at the group's Educational Facilities at Swift Ponds.

The group plans to use the grant to help clean up the area and install signs and new picnic tables, she said.

- Poudre Wilderness Volunteers weed crew operations for 2010.

"It's just been amazing how the community has pulled together to support our school," she added. "This is the start of a new journey and adventure for us."

In all, $20,000 worth of grants were given out this year, according to Sue Burke, coordinator of the small grants program.

The Small Grants for Community Partnering helps disperse a portion of the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax dollars throughout the county for community projects.

Since 1998, 101 projects have received approximately $133,000 in funding.

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Hermit Park doubles revenue in '09

Area generates nearly $200K; expansion plans in the works

By Jackie Hutchins
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Hermit Park Open Space saw 18,000 campers and took in revenue of $196,500 in 2009, nearly double the revenue from its first year of operation in 2008.

Chris Fleming, park manager for the Blue Mountain District of the county's park system, told the Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board on Thursday about how the area's second year of operation went.

She said campground reservations accounted for $98,300 of the revenue, and she projects the county may take in an additional $65,000 in the coming year, now that more campsites are available.

"Hopefully it will continue to go up and up," she said.

Last year, the area saw more than 18,000 reservation nights, including 4,935 camper cabin nights and 13,327 campsite nights, she said.

Gary Buffington, director of the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, said Hermit Park revenues are covering about 40 to 50 percent of costs. "We hope to get 60 percent," he said. "Who knows what this could do over time?"

The area also has proven popular for special events, hosting 11 events last year, up from five, and generating $5,000 in revenue.

Fleming said already 12 weddings have been booked for 2010, and the Boy Scouts will celebrate their 100th anniversary with an event at Hermit Park in September.

She expects special events to generate $18,000 in 2010.

Campground programs also proved popular in 2009.

Fleming said the 19 programs attracted 900 attendees, three times the attendance that similar programs get at other county sites.

Six guided hikes drew another 75 people.

The cabins have posed a challenge to park managers in the past year, as they installed state-mandated carbon monoxide detectors.

At first they went off continuously, Fleming said.

After the addition of venting to provide a continuous air flow in the cabins, the alarms have been silent.

"We were really lucky, and Hewlett-Packard was lucky there was never a fatality," Fleming added.

Snows this winter also posed a challenge.

"It seemed to continuously snow through winter for us," except when snowshoe outings were planned, Fleming said.

The park manager is now considering closing the park's campsites and not plowing in January and February, something Advisory Board members said they might support.

Fleming said the site got much volunteer help in 2009, including two campground host couples who put in 2,400 hours, as well as 1,156 additional hours of volunteer service.

In all, the free help had an estimated value of $73,000.

Fleming said Hewlett-Packard employees have been among the volunteers.

Larimer County bought the property from Hewlett-Packard in 2006.

"Last year we made them take out the horseshoe pits that they put in so many years ago," she said, because they were in a wetlands area.

This year HP volunteers will reinstall the horseshoe pits in an acceptable area.

Other future plans include going after a grant to expand the outdoor education center near Hermit's Cabin, expand the Hermit's Hollow Campground from 29 to 42 sites, create an equestrian trailhead and parking and expand parking for the Kruger Rock trailhead.

"Kruger Rock is becoming ever more popular," Fleming said.

As both hiking and special events increase, the park manager is seeing some conflict between them, she said, such as people hiking through a wedding to get to the trail.

There currently are just two designated parking spaces for horse trailers, which are full every weekend, Fleming said.

She also told the Advisory Board about the completion of capital construction projects last year, amounting to $257,266.

They included improvements at the Bobcat Campground, expanding from 26 to 39 campsites, the addition of two campsites accessible for people with disabilities, the addition of five vault toilets, installation of a second well, improved drainage at the pavilion, and work to control mountain pine beetles.

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Front Range briefs

Loveland Reporter-Herald

Correction

Friday's hours for the seventh-annual Northern Colorado Home and Garden Show were incorrect in Saturday's edition. The show will be open noon-5 p.m. The Reporter-Herald received incorrect information.

Grants awarded to projects

LOVELAND — The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources Open Lands Program and the Larimer County commissioners will award 13 Small Grants for Community Partnering to projects throughout Larimer County, including three in Loveland.

The awards will go to the Loveland Historical Society for the Gardens at Milner-Schwarz House, High Plains Environmental Center for "Nourishing Children through Nature" and Big Thompson Elementary School for its Outdoor Education Center revitalization.

Ten other grants will be given to organizations in Estes Park, Fort Collins and elsewhere in the county.

The grants will be awarded at the Open Lands Advisory Board meeting Thursday at the Loveland Public Library multipurpose room, 300 N. Adams Ave.

The meeting begins at 5 p.m. with public comment and discussion of information items. The awards presentation will begin at 6 p.m.

Following the awards, the advisory board will discuss the Hermit Park Open Space 2009 performance review and future development possibilities, an entry sign for the Devil's Backbone Open Space, and the finances of the county's Natural Resources Department.

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Wildlife, adventure await at Soapstone

BY DAWN WILSON • For the Coloradoan • April 18, 2010

Fort Collins residents are blessed with dozens of beautiful natural areas, national forests and even a national park within a short driving distance of their homes. This fact encourages editors of national magazines to consistently rank Fort Collins as one of the best places to live in the United States.

Soapstone Prairie Natural Area reminds us why we are ranked so highly with its beautiful vistas, dramatic bluffs and never ending panoramas.

Soapstone, the newest and largest in the city's Natural Areas Program, encompasses about 30 square miles.

Opened in June, the property is adjacent to the Larimer County-managed Red Mountain Open Space to the west and the Wyoming border to the north. The area is about 25 miles north of Fort Collins, making it an ideal location for a fun family afternoon.

In addition to sweeping views, Soapstone boasts the world-renowned Lindenmeier Archeological Site, a National Historic Landmark and one of the most extensive representations of prehistoric Folsom society. This site, which was first excavated in the 1930s, shows an amazing historical story that dates back more than 10,000 years.

Archeologists have discovered artifacts on this site that record the story from Paleo-Indians of the Ice Age to more recent American Indian populations and homesteaders who grazed cattle on this land in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

For visitors who enjoy seeing Northern Colorado wildlife, Soapstone has a lot to offer. This land boasts a large population of pronghorn antelope as well as elk, swift fox, mule deer and coyotes. A lucky few might even spot a black bear, mountain lion or bobcat. Bird watchers will be presented with opportunities to see golden eagles, burrowing owls, hawks, mountain plover, meadowlarks and more than 100 other avian species.

Fifty miles of trails meander through Soapstone with trails dedicated or shared for mountain biking, horseback riding and hiking. Towhee Loop is an easy to moderate 3-mile trail dedicated to hikers that will take you through canyons, bluffs and wide open views of the pristine grasslands. The Pronghorn Loop trail stretches a little more than 8 miles and traverses through open prairie, providing a great outdoor experience for equestrians, hikers and mountain bikers.

For the die-hard cyclist, try the 22-mile Mahogany/ Canyon/Cheyenne Rim/ Pronghorn trails over gradually rolling terrain.

When visiting Soapstone Prairie Natural Area, bring plenty of water; as there is no water source and little shade. Wear hiking boots; cacti and rattlesnakes are common. Dogs are not permitted in Soapstone and equestrians must use the south parking lot.

Soapstone Prairie Natural Area

> **Admission:** Free
> **Hours:** Dawn to dusk March 1 to December 1. Closed December, January and February.
> **Directions:** Take Colorado Highway 1/Terry Lake Road north. Make a left on Larimer County Road 15 toward Waverly. Continue traveling north and turn right onto Rawhide Flats Road. Follow this dirt road

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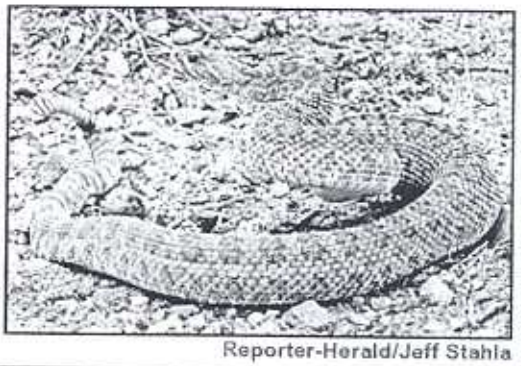
Respect the rattle: But no reason to be scared once you know the facts about snakes

By Pamela Dickman
Loveland Reporter-Herald



Reporter-Herald/Jeff Stahla

They are equipped with natural night vision.

They are born with the chemical equivalent of a homing device.

They could be the key to a breakthrough in breast cancer research.

No, we're not talking about super-scientists, but the prairie rattlesnake.

The poisonous snake with its menacing coil and diabolical-sounding rattle is actually an integral part of the ecosystem and a possible medical breakthrough.

These snakes live throughout Colorado including in open spaces in Larimer County.

Once the snakes come out of hibernation this month or next, hikers may spot them at the Devil's Backbone or Red Mountain Open Space.

But contrary to what many people think, the rattlesnake is not itching to bite people.

It will strike if it feels threatened, but if people back away and show the snake they are no danger, it will likely slither on its way.

Rattlesnakes are cold-blooded carnivores that need their venom to hunt and to eat, explained Rob Novak, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources education specialist.

The venom immobilizes their prey and helps them digest their food, he said.

"Venom is kind of like their shopping cart," said Novak.

"It's the way they collect their food. ... The snake really has no interest in wasting its venom on us. It takes a huge amount of energy

What is so cool about rattlesnakes?

Researcher and professor Steve Mackessy offers some tidbits.

Two pits on the front of their face are actually infrared imaging devices "like night viewing glasses or binoculars" that allow them to see their prey in complete darkness.

The venom of poisonous snakes, including prairie rattlesnakes, is broken down into proteins and peptides used in medical research. Some is used in medication to control blood pressure and prevent blood clots. Mackessy's research is looking at — and showing great promise in — battling breast cancer.

Rattlesnakes feed beautiful birds of prey including owls and other raptors.

Rattlesnakes hibernate together deep enough below ground to stay warm. These hibernaculums can have as many as 100 snakes in the winter, although ones of that scale are becoming more rare as people kill off the snakes.

The majority of rattle-snake bite victims are white men ages 18 to 30 who are most often handling the snake and under the influence of alcohol.

A rattlesnake's forked tongue will detect chemical smells and tastes, allowing them to know where prey is with a great deal of precision.

Male rattlesnakes will engage in "a glorified shoving match" for the attention of a female. During mating season, the males will crawl belly to belly straight up, to at least half their height, and

to produce more."

try to push the other down. The winner gets the girl, and the loser slinks away.

Added Steve Mackessy, a professor and researcher who specializes in snakes: "In Colorado the risk of being struck by lightning, in matters of magnitude, is a hundred times greater than being bitten by a rattlesnake. For that matter, being stung by a bee and having complications is more common."

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Grant aids Poudre trail expansion

BY KEVIN DUGGAN • KevinDuggan@coloradoan.com • April 2, 2010

The Poudre River Trail is expected to move closer to completion with the help of a $1 million grant from Great Outdoors Colorado.

The Larimer County open lands program is on tap to receive the GOCO grant for the 160-acre Three Bells I project, which would include an easement for the trail north of River Bluffs Open Space near Colorado Highway 392 and west Windsor.

As part of the project, a conservation easement would protect about 0.6 miles of the Poudre River corridor, including critical wildlife habitat, officials said.

When combined with a conservation easement proposed for the adjacent Three Bells II project, more than 330 acres between Windsor and Timnath will be preserved, including 1.3 miles of river corridor.

Kerri Rollins, interim open lands manager, declined to discuss the exact location of the easements, citing the sensitivity of ongoing negotiations with a landowner.

Fort Collins and Windsor are financial partners in the deal, Rollins said.

The grants were announced Thursday by Gov. Bill Ritter and the GOCO board of directors.

Fort Collins received a $500,000 grant to extend the western portion of the Fossil Creek Trail to connect it to Spring Canyon Community Park. The trail extension will include an underpass of County Road 38E.

The total project is expected to cost about $1.2 million, said Craig Foreman, park planning manager for the city.

"It's a great project and great to have the help of Great Outdoors Colorado," he said.

The Poudre River Trail runs through LaPorte and Fort Collins as well as from Greeley to Windsor.

The final segment of the trail would connect Fort Collins to Windsor via Timnath, which is working on its portion of the trail.

If the Three Bells easements come through, the trail would be extended 1.2 miles by the county.

Fort Collins eventually will extend its portion of the trail from the Environmental Learning Center under Interstate 25 to a site near the Walmart store in Timnath.

This round of GOCO grants totaled $24.5 million and will fund 23 projects in 16 counties. Larimer County entities received four grants totaling more than $2.45 million.

The other Larimer County grants were:

> Berthoud - $469,030 for the Pioneer Park project in the southeast part of town.

The park will include an acre of open space for various sports as well as two playgrounds, a basketball court, a roller/ice hockey area and a

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picnic pavilion.

> Estes Park - $450,000 for the Fish Creek Trail sponsored by the Estes Valley Recreation and Park District.

The 2.43-mile trail project will result in a 9-mile contiguous trail running from downtown Estes Park to Lily Lake in Rocky Mountain National Park.

GOCO is funded through state lottery proceeds to support recreation and conservation projects statewide.

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Front Range briefs

Loveland Reporter-Herald

Weld Co. may challenge emissions testing decision

GREELEY — Weld County commissioners are considering filing a lawsuit challenging last month's decision to expand vehicle emissions testing to part of Northern Colorado.

Commissioner Sean Conway told a Greeley newspaper that a hearing last month wasn't administered fairly and the hearing officer was a dairy farmer from Wellington who may have a conflict of interest.

Dairy farmer and hearing officer Jon Slutsky says there is no conflict and the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission takes steps to make fair and well-reasoned decisions.

Conway says Slutsky's dairy farm is excluded from testing, giving the appearance of a conflict.

Larimer County officials said Monday that they would not take part in such a suit if one is filed.

They also said Larimer County will not initiate its own legal proceedings.

Pair of Loveland schools eligible for stimulus help

DENVER — Two Loveland schools are among those statewide that are eligible for a share of $40 million to help overhaul Colorado's lowest-achieving schools.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan made the announcement Monday. He said the money is part of $3.5 billion set aside for schools nationally in last year's budget and the federal stimulus package.

Colorado school districts with schools that have failed to meet minimum progress standards for two years can compete for a share of the money.

The two local schools are Winona and Monroe elementary schools.

Moore is Larimer County Visual Artist of Year

FORT COLLINS — Barbara Moore has been named the 2010 Visual Artist of the Year by the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

She is internationally recognized for her watercolor images, done in a realistic and exact style that has captured many familiar landmarks in Fort Collins and the Rocky Mountains.

As Visual Artist of the Year, Moore will act as ambassador and teacher, and will create a piece of art inspired by one of Larimer County's open spaces that will hang prominently at the county courthouse.

she mentions that real wisdom is not determined by majority vote. She spends an entire column praising Judge Alito because he abstained from the voting in the animal cruelty case. Such a brave vote that he didn't vote against it, he abstained. And yet this is the same brilliant man who voted that corporations have the same rights as American citizens and virtually gave away the voting power of the entire United States."

Hermit Park

"The article in Friday's paper on A3 about Hermit Park mentions that the county bought that park from Hewlett Packard. They did not buy it from Hewlett Packard; they bought it from Agilent Technologies. When Hewlett Packard split, Agilent got the park. Also I hate to see that they're expanding the campsites. I hope they don't add too many because that's what made Hermit Park so wonderful was the fact that you had your campsite, and you can't see any others. You had some privacy, and it was really nice."