

# the **RED ROCK RAG**

Friends  
of Red  
Rock Canyon



## THE FRIENDS OF RED ROCK CANYON MOURN THE PASSING OF DON ELLIS

Volume 21, #1  
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 <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofredrockcanyon>

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Don Ellis died from cancer on November 8, 2018 at the age of 78. Don is survived by his wife Meryl Ellis.

All who enjoy the outdoor pleasures of Red Rock Canyon owe a debt of gratitude to Don Ellis. Don grew up across the street from what is now White Acres and Red Rock Canyon Open Space. He spent his childhood exploring the canyons and hogbacks of this mysterious land.

Don was one of the early pioneers who had a vision that Red Rock Canyon could be a jewel in Colorado Springs' park system. He led the effort to save the land from development and helped convince the City to use TOPS funds to purchase it. Don was also one of the leaders in the community fundraising drive to buy White Acres and make it part of the greater Red Rock Canyon Open Space.

As part of these early efforts Don started the Red Rock Rag to educate and inform the public

of the land's potential. Initially, Don paid for the early editions with his own funds. The Rag was a successful newsletter and is still published today.

Don later teamed up with Sharon Milito and Ken Weissenburger to research, write and publish the *Geologic Folio, Red Rock Canyon Open Space, Colorado Springs, Colorado*, an encyclopedia of history and geology of Red Rock Canyon. The first edition is out-of-print but efforts are underway to publish a second edition in Don's honor.

Simply put, no one knew more about the human and geologic history of Red Rock Canyon than Don Ellis. Don was a wonderful resource and friend to past and present members of the Board of the Friends of Red Rock Canyon. He will be missed.

A more detailed review of Don's history and accomplishments can be found at:

<http://westsidepioneer.com/Articles/111218/DonEllis.html>

[www.redrockcanyonopenspace.org](http://www.redrockcanyonopenspace.org)

## Heart of the Canyon

In the middle of our public open space there is a (secret) opening, between the majestic red rock fins, which connects Gypsum Canyon to Red Rock Canyon. We call it the Heart of the Canyon because water from the two canyons flows together and continues down to the ponds. This natural connection between the canyons is one of the most beautiful parts of our open space. It is a natural place for a beautiful trail.



Sadly, no one is permitted to enjoy it because **the area is marked as permanently closed. Why?**

A trail through this area is designated on the 2013 Master Plan with a recommendation to rehabilitate the area. However, the City is opposed. The City is not even willing to do the engineering and trail planning that is needed to consider the pros and cons of conforming to the Master Plan. If the City overrides the recommendations of the Master Plan, the problems will get worse and cost more to fix later. Friends of Red Rock Canyon say:

*“Let’s heal the Heart of the Canyon area now for ourselves, the land, the wildlife and for future generations.*

*Let’s restore the natural habitat.*

*Let’s rebuild the eroded trail for all to enjoy.”*

Most visitors spend 1 to 2.5 hours in the park.



The Heart of the Canyon trail would be one of the prettiest short loops in the park. Families, the

elderly, and physically limited people need beautiful, safe, short trail loops. Instead of a short beautiful trail, visitors must walk twice as far and walk across the dump road. Why force people onto the dusty wire-fenced landfill when better options are possible? Fifty years from now the Heart of the Canyon can be one of the most picturesque walks in the park.

**GOOD NEWS** – There are trail design options to build a multi-use trail which is sustainable and beautiful. Friends of Red Rock Canyon is willing to make it happen with the City’s cooperation. The Friends group is willing to fund some of the cost for the trail design and construction and is willing to contribute thousands of dollars worth of volunteer work to rehabilitate the land and plant new trees.

**CALL TO ACTION** – For this to happen, Friends of Red Rock Canyon needs your help to persuade the City that building this trail and rehabilitating the area is important and should be a priority.

**Here is what you can do:**

- 1) Watch our Heart of the Canyon slide show [https://youtu.be/q4UxDru\\_wew](https://youtu.be/q4UxDru_wew)
- 2) Write a letter of support and send it to [friends@redrockcanyonopenspace.org](mailto:friends@redrockcanyonopenspace.org) or to PO Box 6754, Colorado Springs 80904;
- 3) Create a social media campaign to save the Heart of the Canyon;
- 4) When the time comes, show up at Park Board and City Council meetings to urge them to support building the trail and healing the land.

## Trail Building With FoRRC

The FoRRC will have monthly trail maintenance workdays on the **2nd Thursday of the month starting in April**. We will be working clearing the corridor, repairing water diversion trail features, and more along all the trails in Red Rock Canyon. Afterwards we often go out for a beer.



This is a very enjoyable way to give back to our park and we invite you and your friends to come along.

**We meet at 3:30 pm** at the gate near the picnic area parking lot and then travel to wherever we are working. Bring with you the normal supplies for outdoor working (gloves, hiking shoes, water, sunscreen, snack and ...). Please register as a volunteer with the City, which you can do by going to our website [www.RedRockCanyonOpenSpace.org](http://www.RedRockCanyonOpenSpace.org). **We will see you on the trail!**

**P.S.** We have a special workday on **Sunday, July 14th (8 am to 1 pm)** to work with Manitou Trail CATS to do a major trail repair and hopefully build a creative people diversion structure. That trail will be on the map even though the trail will not be built until late summer.

## Trail Building With Manitou Trail CATS

This summer CATS is taking on two important projects. The first is in the new El Paso County Rainbow Falls Park, building a new trail to the lookout. The second project will happen in the autumn on the Intemann Trail. We are building 700 feet of new trail to go around the wicked FEMA steps west of Pawnee Ave.

To find out more about these projects go to [www.ManitouCATS.com](http://www.ManitouCATS.com).



## Lose Something at RRC?

Lost items that are found or turned into our ranger are brought back to the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department administrative offices at 1401 Recreation Way and kept for 30 days. A person seeking a lost item can call our front desk at **385-6504**.



## National Public Lands Day in Red Rock Canyon

Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services sponsored National Public Lands Day in Red Rock Canyon on Saturday, September 22nd. National Public Lands Days has many events across the country with volunteers picking up shovels and rakes to make public parks better.



At Red Rock Canyon Open Space, volunteers addressed a common problem throughout the city's parks, that is rogue trails. The volunteers who participated Saturday tackled a rogue trail off the Rim Trail, which is a particular safety hazard since it leads to a cliff. Lunch and environmental activities were shared after a morning of work. **Thank you to those who came and helped out.**

## Dam Fill at RRC

This summer watch for more trucks hauling fill material into Red Rock Canyon Open Space at 26th Street. City Engineering has a construction project at the Garden of the Gods Park to build a flood mitigation and water detention facility on Camp Creek. They will be excavating approximately 17,000 cubic yards of material. Red Rock Canyon Open Space is in need of large amounts of fill material to respond to the State of Colorado's Dam Inspector requirement that we fill in an illegal dam created by the prior property owner. We will provide an update as soon as we know more about City Engineering's selection of a contractor and plans for work on this project. In addition, we will be completing landfill repairs this summer to take care of damage that was done during the rainfall in 2015.

## Karma Hour

Plan to come and join the Friends of Red Rock Canyon at Bristol Brewery, Ivywild, on **Tuesday evening, April 9th**. The Friends will get \$1 for every pint sold from **5 to 9pm**, courtesy of Bristol Brewery. We are happy to have this event early in the Spring, which not only gives us time to socialize with all involved in Red Rock Canyon, but a great time to plan out work activities for the upcoming season. Our Board will be there along with Red Rock Canyon stickers to give out.

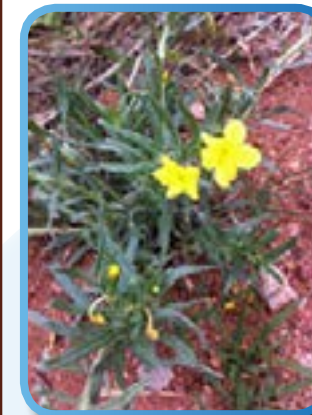
We do hope you can make it!!!  
**Thank you for your support!**



## RRC to Host a BioBlitz

Red Rock Canyon is set to have a BioBlitz from **July 19th through the 21st**. Everyone involved will be looking at the diverse organisms found in Red Rock Canyon. What do we have now and what does it mean? This BioBlitz should offer community awareness and appreciation for Red Rock Canyon as well as provide an opportunity for public interaction with nature. As we know more about when, where, and what activities will take place, we will not only pass on this information but hope many of you can join in.

A BioBlitz, as defined by the National Geographic Society, is an event that focuses on finding and identifying as many species as possible in a specific area over a short period of time.



At a BioBlitz, scientists, families, students, teachers, and other community members work together to get a snapshot of an area's biodiversity. These events can happen in most any geography—urban, rural, or suburban—in areas as small as a backyard or as large as a country.

BioBlitzes have been happening the last 2 years at several Parks and Open Spaces in our area. Some have simply been the recruitment of scientists and community members to document as many living species as they can find in 24 hours. Other activities are offered to involve and educate people about the area. Past BioBlitzes have happened at Blodgett Peak, Jimmy Camp Creek, Bluestem Prairie (by Big Johnson Reservoir), Ute Valley Park and last fall at Corral Bluffs. Corral Bluffs is tentatively set to go again in June, a different season this year, with hopes to establish a baseline on species before opening to the public.

## City Nature Challenge

The City Nature Challenge is a BioBlitz that we will be participating in from **April 26-29**. Over 100 other cities on six continents will also be participating in this. This program invites citizens to get outside, find wildlife, plants and insects across the city, take photos of as many species as they can find and upload them to a website so we can categorize all that we discover. Visit the following web sites for more information



<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2019-colorado-springs>  
<http://citynaturechallenge.org/>



## Upcoming Climbing Improvements at RRC

While the winter has been quiet for climbers at Red Rock Canyon, this spring the Pikes Peak Climber's Alliance is going to assess all of the climber access trails to the cliff sectors and determine which ones need work. Some of the trail segments that were damaged by flooding in previous years are still not repaired or reconstructed.



Brian Shelton and Stewart Green with the PPCA are also going to assess the top anchor bolts on all of the climbing routes on the east side of the canyon. Most of those anchors were placed in the summer of 2004 before the park opened to the public, so we feel that it's appropriate now to replace all of them if possible. The existing bolts and sleeves will be removed from the rock and the existing holes will be redrilled to place new glue-in bolt anchors. Right now the PPCA has enough funds to purchase stainless steel WAVE bolts, which are glued into the rock with an industrial-strength epoxy. The bolts and epoxy have a longer life than the conventional sleeve anchor bolts that were placed in 2004. All anchors that currently do not have stainless steel chains for lowering and rappelling will have to be added to lessen long-term wear on the anchors.



The climber staging areas below the Westbay Wall, Sayers Wall, Ripple Wall, and Solar Slab will also be assessed to see what can be done to create more sustainable areas below routes. Trees and vegetation at some of the heavily used staging areas exhibit visitor damage. It might be best to create platforms of railroad ties, either one or two ties high, and backfilling them with soil to create new staging areas. Whatever work is done on the staging areas will be approved by the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department.

A couple of work days for the climbing trails are in the works but dates are still to be determined. The PPCA plans for one day during the summer and one in autumn to complete the work.



## Urban Wilderness and Diverse Users

The Pikes Peak region thrives on urban wilderness. These special parks give users the feeling they are miles away from the hustle and bustle of civilization; but in reality, they can see their neighborhoods from the highest points in the park. Red Rock Canyon Open Space is a unique urban wilderness. A twelve-minute drive from the interstate gives thousands upon thousands of urbanites and travelers the opportunity to disconnect and recharge. When we think of Red Rock Canyon, we think of world class mountain bike trails and challenging rock climbing. We all tend to forget about the other park users who move at a slower pace or wish to find trails that are more contemplative than strenuous. Our urban wilderness parks are where toddlers

will go on their first hikes or where seniors go to stay active, but still have access to benches. Because of the location to other attractions, Red Rocks Canyon draws in the tourists who want more photographs than steps at the end of their adventure. From birders to artists to forest-bathers, Red Rocks pulls in a diverse crowd that extends well beyond the extreme outdoor recreation due to the park's centralized location. As a community, we need to consider all the different park users when considering master plans and new trail construction. The fastest, steepest, and long trails with regional connectivity are celebrated and extremely vital; however, our community needs the simple loops too.



### Membership Form for Friends of Red Rock Canyon

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Newsletter Delivery Preference: Via email (full-color, recommended)  Via postal mail   
 Yes, I want to join Friends of Red Rock Canyon for the coming year  
      Individual/Family membership (\$15)  Organization / Business membership (\$30)  
 I would like to help even more with a contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.  
 I would like to be involved in volunteer efforts Please describe your interest:

Please mail this membership for  
 with your check to:  
**Friends of Red Rock Canyon**  
 PO Box 6754  
 Colorado Springs, CO 80904-6754

Board Meetings are held at the Westside Community Center, at 1628 West Bijou Street, on the second Monday of each month beginning at 6:30pm.

## The Red Rock Rag

Friends of Red Rock Canyon  
P.O. Box 6754  
Colorado Springs, CO 80904-6754

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**MEMBERSHIP  
RENEWAL DATE**

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Vice President/City Liaison: Shanti Toll  
Treasurer/Education Director: David Valier  
Secretary: Glenn Pressman  
Facebook Editor: Sean McKeown  
Members at Large: Anthony Maltese



### Board Alternates

Deana Patrick, Dan Downs,  
Stewart Green, Jenny Montague  
Newsletter Editor: Jenny Montague  
Webmaster: Dan Downs

## AmazonSmile

Many people do not realize that the shopping they do on Amazon can also be used to support many of their favorite non-profits. Simply by using AmazonSmile, you can purchase the same products you get through Amazon with a certain percent going to the charity or charities you choose. If you would like to support the Friends of Red Rock Canyon using AmazonSmile, simply go to [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) and add us by our founding name: **Red Rock Canyon Foundation** (not the Friends).

**We appreciate your support!**



[friends@RedRockCanyonOpenSpace.org](mailto:friends@RedRockCanyonOpenSpace.org)



[www.RedRockCanyonOpenSpace.org](http://www.RedRockCanyonOpenSpace.org)



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