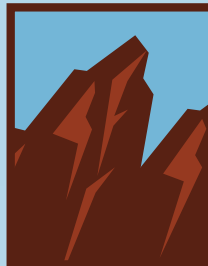


the RED ROCK RAG



FRIENDS OF
**RED ROCK
CANYON**

Avoiding User Conflict on Multi-Use Trails

Volume 23 #1
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It's no secret that our public parks in Colorado Springs (and nationwide) have seen a massive increase in visitors recently, many of whom are relatively new to outdoor recreation. While on the one hand it's wonderful to see so many people taking the opportunity to enjoy all of what our parks have to offer, it's also true that many users - both new and old - aren't fully versed in the rules and etiquette that have been established over the years. Our local trails have a long history of a multi-use ethic - i.e. that unless otherwise explicitly designated, all trails are accessible (in both directions) to hikers, bikers, and equestrians equally. While a few well-signed exceptions exist in City of Colorado Springs parks (e.g. hiker-only trails in the Garden of the Gods, the hiker-only Contemplative Trail in RROS, and the downhill-only, biker-only Chutes trail in Cheyenne Canon), for the most part trails in the city are intentionally bi-directional and multi-use. On multi-use trails, the etiquette is that bikers yield to all other

users (including uphill bikers), and hikers yield to horses. Just like the Leave No Trace principles, these rules of the trail help keep all users safe and allow everyone to enjoy the trails together, and are more critical than ever given the growth in trail users.

That said, we've started to hear anecdotes of some trails users who may not know of or appreciate these ethics, and of ensuing user conflicts that have resulted.

Park visitors who are either new to the area or are more familiar with trail systems where single-use and/or directional trails are more common may be making incorrect assumptions about our local trails. This may be especially true of certain trails that lend themselves particularly well to biking in a downhill direction (e.g. the Lion Trail in RROS) or seem too narrow or technical for anything but a hiker (e.g. the Upper Codell Trail), but that doesn't mean they aren't bi-directional and multi-use, even if they aren't explicitly signed as such.

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www.redrockcanyonopenspace.org

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The Friends of RROS are working with the City to add more explicit signage to some of these trails to remind users to expect bi-directional, multi-use traffic and to encourage all users to stay alert. But until then we'll all have to do our part to (politely) educate our fellow trail users of the rules of the trail.

So remember, in RROS and other city parks, all trails are bi-directional and multi-use unless clearly signed

otherwise. Bikers yield to hikers and horses; hikers yield to horses. Expect traffic in both directions on any trail, and be ready to yield accordingly. Please keep your dogs leashed unless in the designated off-leash area, and, if you enjoy listening to music while on the trails, consider removing one earbud to help stay alert to other trail users. All of these steps will help minimize user conflicts and maximize park enjoyment.

Greenlee Trail

This Spring, the Friends of Red Rock Canyon helped to plant shrubs at the beginning and end of the new Greenlee Trail. The old trail, a dirt road, has now been closed with a new foot and bike trail. If you have not been on the new trail, do so. We feel you will be surprised how nice it is, especially on the lower sections!



Bucking Human Behavior

You may have noticed lots of new buck and rail fencing in Red Rock Canyon. Some people do not like it because it is massive and clunky and its bright wood detracts from the natural beauty of the park. Some say the crisscross timber posts look like barriers on a battle field. The Park and Rec staff have hired Rocky Mountain Field Institute (RMFI) to install a buck and rail fencing in Sand Canyon and Greenlee Canyon.

Buck and rail fencing is used when rocky land will not allow a post to be anchored in the ground. It is also used as a stronger deterrent to people cutting over/through smaller split rail fencing. The expanded use of buck and rail fencing is a response to a human behavior trend. Many people are going off-trail in Red Rock Canyon. Some people break rules and go off-trail because they are in rebellion to authority and government. Some people break rules and go off-trail to get away from people and explore. It is frustrating to the rangers when the public disregards their work to protect the natural environment and wildlife. The Park and Rec staff has

decided to use the stronger buck and rail fencing to more forcefully control people's activities, even if it is ugly. It is sad but understandable.

Happily, the buck and rail fence will blend into the environment after a year or two as the wood weathers and becomes gray. Red Rock Canyon is a prime example of a managed urban-wildland interface. It is estimated that over two million humans will use the park in a year. Controlling people is necessary to protect the natural environment. In the process, trails and fencing are becoming stronger. Humans have to learn to share the outdoors with each other and all the creatures and vegetation who live in this habitat.

So we ask you to enjoy this treasure that is Red Rock Canyon, but do it with respect and sensitivity to the needs of others (human, animal, plant and future generations). Buck and rail fencing is just the cost of protecting nature. We will all get used to it.

(PS: BUT - Please City Rangers, use the more attractive split rail fencing when possible!)

TRAIL AMBASSADORS *By Aaron Rogers, TOSC*

When was the last time you visited a new park for the first time? When you arrived at the park, did you have questions about what you were about to experience? Did you have a hard time finding a good map at the trailhead or any information on how to safely recreate in the area? The Trails and Open Space Coalition is managing a new volunteer Trail Ambassador program that aims to solve these problems and more. The main goal of the program is to enhance the park user experience and proactively protect our natural resources. In order to make the program successful, TOSC is looking for volunteers who want to share their passion for the outdoors with open space users and be the eyes and ears for what is going on in these lovely spaces. While out on the trails, here are what Trail Ambassadors do:

- Provide environmental education to trail users - The spaces identified for this program are some of the most at-risk ecosystems in the Pikes Peak Region. They contain geological treasures, are habitats for threatened flora and fauna and most contain frangible soils

that don't stand up well to regular use. One of the most critical components of the Trail Ambassador program is educating trail users of the importance of staying on designated trails and respecting signs and barriers.

- Monitor and report trail conditions and issues - In many cases, one park staff is responsible for monitoring and managing several larger open spaces. TOSC Trail Ambassadors serve as additional "eyes and ears" for the trails, monitoring and reporting trail conditions, usage concerns, or other pertinent information.

- Promoting trail courtesy, safety and awareness- Trail courtesy, safety and awareness have always been important, but now that we are seeing an unprecedented amount of new trail users, it's more important than ever. Trail Ambassadors promote trail etiquette, such as who has the right of way, how to announce oneself when approaching another user, picking up after pets, greeting other users in a friendly manner. Trail Ambassadors can also promote safety on the trails by alerting users to poor trail conditions and unusual hazards or being able to

advise new users of trail difficulty.

- Serve as a cheerleader for the outdoor spaces - Trail Ambassadors engage users more deeply in our open spaces by sharing the location's rich history, geology and points of interest. Trail Ambassadors can recommend similar spaces for users to visit. TOSC believes the more people feel connected to their outdoor spaces the more committed they will be to preserving and protecting their trails, parks and open spaces.

TOSC makes sure that all Trail Ambassadors are ready to be on the trails and are confident in their skills. All Ambassadors go through an hour-long training that includes time to practice and learn communication skills and handle any scenario that pops up. During training, there is a big focus on how to positively relay information on Leave No Trace and trail etiquette to the public. Trail Ambassadors do not enforce rules; however, Trail Ambassadors can mold the future by inspiring everyone to care for our open spaces.



If you are interested in being a Trail Ambassador in Red Rock Canyon (or in any other open space), please visit

https://www.trailsandopenspaces.org/tosc_programs/trail-ambassadors

If you have any other question, please email TOSC Program Coordinator, Aaron Rogers at aaron@trailsandopenspaces.org

Just Wait 70 Years

This year Friends of Red Rock Canyon (FoRRC) paid for and arranged planting of 12 trees near the picnic tables in Red Rock Canyon. The Friends of Red Rock Canyon worked with the city forester to select the twelve trees (3 Bur Oak, 3 Kentucky Coffeetree, 3 Shumard Oak, 3 Ohio Buckeye). It is interesting that the micro-climate at the picnic area has changed over the last 50 years. It has gotten dryer and the soil has become compacted. Hopefully these new trees are best suited for this environment. Nine and a half of them survived. We will replace the trees that did not survive in the fall. Hopefully, in seventy years, they should be providing good shade (just wait and see). The City will be watering the trees every three weeks for the next three years. But if you have any water at the end of your hike/bike excursion, I am sure the trees would love a water donation.



The 'Biodegradable Trash' Myth *By Wesley Hermann, Park Ranger*

It has been said that cigarettes are the last socially accepted form of litter. To many of us, the idea that a cigarette butt is, in fact, litter seems obvious, yet the problem persists. Yet another socially accepted type of litter is all too common in our parks, trails and open spaces: food waste and other "biodegradable" litter. Banana peels, orange peels, leftovers from picnics, and more are left behind. "But, those are all natural and biodegradable!" is a common justification.

So what's the big deal?

The process for organic material to break down is not always a short one, and in a dry climate like ours this is especially true. Left out in a parking lot or a trail, it can take up to two years for something like a banana or orange peel to break down. Items like nut shells can take even longer. In the meantime there they sit, until someone — or something — picks them up. If even a small percentage of the many visitors to our natural areas left these items behind, they can add up quickly.

"Aha! So animals can eat our leftovers!" one might reply. This is true, unfortunately. You may notice a distinct lack of banana and orange trees (along with pistachio trees, Goldfish cracker trees, cookie trees and sandwich crust trees) here in the Pikes Peak region. As these are not natural food sources for

wildlife, they often cause more harm than good, including long-term health issues.

Fruit peels, in particular, don't make very appetizing morsels. Even when animals do scavenge our trash, it can lead to a host of problems. Food or food waste can attract wildlife to areas where people and their cars are more frequent. This increases the likelihood of conflict between wildlife and people, and food waste left near parking lots or roads can significantly increase wildlife's risk of being hit by a vehicle. If a small rodent is attracted to food scraps near a road, it can also increase the odds that a predator like an owl or hawk could be struck as it hunts.

Habituation is another issue. Animals can grow dependent on humans for food, or even aggressive. Animals will learn that they can find "easy" meals near areas with people and may even develop behaviors where they will steal food, or worse. When an animal becomes aggressive, it may need to be relocated, which they may or may not survive. Wildlife may begin to congregate in an area with easy access to food, which, in turn, can increase the chance for the transmission of diseases between animals.

The saying that "a fed animal is a dead animal," is often all too true. The best way to help wildlife is to let them do their thing, keeping them wild.

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In Honor of Don Ellis

The Board of the Friends of Red Rock Canyon has proposed renaming the White Acres Trail the Don Ellis Trail to honor Don, who died in November 2018. 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 community effort to save the land from development.

As part of these early efforts, Don started and authored the Red Rock Rag to educate and inform the public of the land's potential. He 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 Geological Folio, Red Rock Canyon Open Space, Colorado Springs, Colorado, an encyclopedia of history and geology of Red Rock Canyon. Don grew up across the street from White Acres

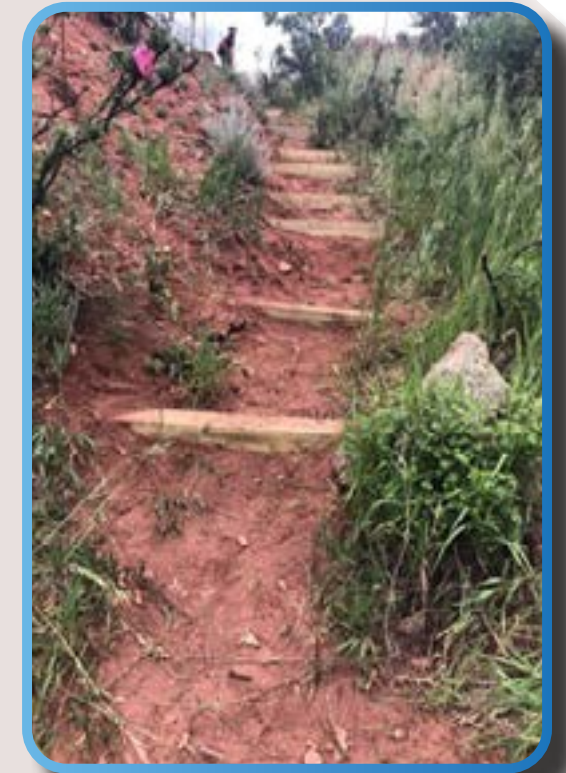
and spent his childhood exploring the valleys and hogbacks of this mysterious land. Don was also a leader in the community fundraising drive to buy White Acres and make it part of the greater Red Rock Canyon Open Space.

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 the Board of the Friends of Red Rock Canyon and all stakeholders who have a connection to Red Rock Canyon.

It is for these reasons that our Board believes that renaming the trail on White Acres in Don's honor is most appropriate and will provide a way for future generations to learn about Don's efforts to make Red Rock Canyon a jewel for the City of Colorado Springs. The Parks Department staff supports this proposal. We are awaiting final approval from the Parks Advisory Board.

Rogue Trails

A group of almost 50 volunteers organized by Volunteers Outdoor Colorado (VOC) from all over the state came to Red Rock Canyon Open Space on June 26 and 27 to close and restore "rogue trails." A rogue trail is one created by users and not one built for the area to be sustainable for fifty to one hundred years. These rogue trails harm the land by causing erosion and other issues and the damage spreads very rapidly throughout the park. A check dam is an erosion control structure to help nature restore a rogue trail. Fifty five timber check dams were installed over the weekend. An eight foot section of post and rail fence was added to an existing fence to deter visitors from continuing to use a rogue trail that was restored. Restoration of unauthorized trails is accomplished by loosening existing soil two to four inches deep, planting native grass seed and transplanting native plants to the affected area. 1.3 miles of trails were restored in this fashion on the west side of the park, adjacent to and west of Contemplative and Sand Canyon trails. A hearty thank you to these VOC volunteers from the Friends of Red Rock Canyon Open Space.



Wildlife Viewing *By Aaron Rogers, TOSC*

Wildlife viewing is one of the hottest trends in outdoor recreation. During the stay-at-home orders and guidelines encouraging people to stay home during the worst days of the pandemic, many people looked for new hobbies to pass by time while being at home. One of those hobbies was backyard wildlife watching. People who are not normally home and outdoors during the workday started taking notice what was landing on bird feeders or passing through flowerbeds. Now that restrictions have passed, these people who are new to wildlife viewing have graduated from watching backyard habitats and are now taking their hobbies to neighborhood parks and open spaces. The 1,475 acres of Red Rock Canyon Open Space is the perfect place to look for wildlife.

Here is a crash course into wildlife viewing in Red Rock Canyon Open Space:

- How does a person go wildlife viewing? Wildlife viewers do not hike, they saunter. They slowly navigate the trails with the purpose of not being detected by the ears of a mule deer or eyes of a red fox. Many watchers will pick a certain habitat they are interested in and stand still in a location for a half an hour or more. Standing in one location is good because it allows the person to blend into the landscape and also allows the person to become familiar with the sounds and movement in the area so that when wildlife moves through, it is easier to spot it.

- When is the best time to go wildlife viewing? In Red Rock Canyon Open Space, the best time to watch for wildlife is around dusk and dawn. During the middle of the day, visitation increases in the park and wildlife will retreat to their hiding places to stay safe.

- Where should wildlife viewing be done? Wildlife viewing has the most success in areas that have water. In RRCOS, any pond is a great spot to find birds and insects. Outside of the riparian areas along water, the meadows and grass fields are the best spots to view mammals as they hunt or try to avoid being another species' dinner. On the dry sunnier trails along the east side of the park, it is possible to find lizards and other heat loving species.

- How does a wildlife watcher stay safe? The common rule is that if your presence alters the movements or behavior of an animal, you are too close. It is best to use the "rule of thumb" method which is when you hold your thumb out in front of you, the entire animal should be hidden by your thumb. If you are close enough for a selfie, then you probably need to move further away so the animal does not feel stress. With dangerous wildlife, like black bears, it is best to be 500 feet away. In addition to keeping a safe distance from wildlife, it is also important to stay on designated trails and follow any other park rule.

- How can my wildlife viewing benefit science? Scientists can use the data from your trips to the park to help with their research. Consider downloading iNaturalist or ebird to your phone so that you can submit lists of the creatures you see. According to iNaturalist, there are over 700 different species of plants and animals that live in Red Rock Canyon Open Space.

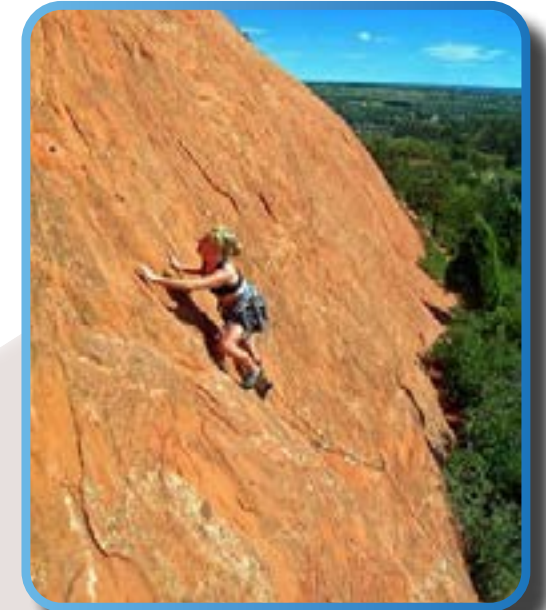
Wildlife viewing is a great hobby to have because it can be done anywhere at any time. While hiking for exercise is great for the body, wildlife watching stimulates the brain and is great for mental health. For more tips on wildlife viewing, visit: <https://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/Viewing/Wildlife-ViewingTips.pdf>.



Red Rock Climbing Update

After the COVID restrictions of 2020, climbers are visiting Red Rock Canyon in larger numbers this past spring and early summer. Most climbers seem respectful of the rock resource and follow a Leave No Trace ethic, although some are still bad apples who run their ropes through anchor bolts and top rope routes, wearing out the anchors. Hopefully, this issue can be further addressed through climber education by the Pikes Peak Climber's Alliance.

Local climbers Brian Shelton and Stewart Green have been checking bolts and bolt anchors on the cliffs on the east side of the canyon and inventorying those that need to be replaced by stainless steel glue-in anchors. These routes see a lot of action due to easy access so there is generally more wear and tear on fixed anchors. The routes are also used for top roping by groups and beginner climbers, who use a climb-anywhere attitude rather than following the established lines past bolt anchors.



removing bolts and filling in the holes, and placing new anchors where people are now climbing. This should lessen some of the impact of climbers on popular routes.

Otherwise, no work on climber access trails is scheduled this summer, although that will be revisited in the fall if trail damage occurs from summer thunderstorms and runoff.



This has led to more cliff impact with broken holds, loose rock trundled off the cliffs, and damage to vegetation.

Because of this, Brian and Stewart have been looking at "reimagining" some of the popular routes, and



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Finally, consider this. Imagine you had a neighbor who regularly threw their banana peels in your front yard. Would you be OK with this behavior? Probably not, because it's unsightly and negatively impacts your enjoyment of your yard. Similarly, leaving waste along a trail, even if it's biodegradable, negatively impacts the experience of others who wish to be outside without seeing someone else's litter.

Many of us are taught to Leave No Trace when outdoors, and when it comes to biodegradable or "natural" waste, the same principles apply. Plan ahead and prepare, including planning how

and where to dispose of trash. Dispose of waste properly. Leave what you find. Respect wildlife. Be considerate of other visitors.

Doing so will help keep our wildlife happy and healthy, and our parks and open spaces clean and beautiful. It also shows respect for the experience of other people. At the end of the day, biodegradable or natural litter is still littering. For more information about the Leave No Trace Seven Principles and how they're promoted in Colorado Springs, visit ColoradoSprings.gov/RegionalParks.

Recent Trail Work On West Side of Park & Contemplative Trail

A group of about a dozen volunteers from the Board of Directors of Friends of Red Rock Canyon and Colorado Addicted Trail builders Society (CATS) came together to give the Contemplative Trail some needed maintenance and love. The wooden bench was dug up and moved about 15 feet to improve the view of Pikes Peak. This involved some extensive work as one of the bench supports

was severely rotted. The support was modified to restore its strength before re-setting the bench in concrete. The drains beside the wooden staircase were cleaned out and fortified with rocks to direct and allow proper water flow. The group had a fun time (as always) taking care of the land in Red Rock Canyon Open Space.



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 Red Rock Canyon
Pavilion on the second Monday of each month beginning
at 6:00pm, weather permitting.

Trail Notes from Ranger Wes Hermann

We have had a number of volunteer and restoration projects:

- On May 1 MWTA repaired the switchback just West of the landfill on the Scenic Overlook Trail
- On May 15 volunteers with Keep Colorado beautiful worked to remove numerous painted graffiti panels in one of the historic quarries- techniques were used which did not damage the rock.
- On May 19 volunteers restored ~800 linear feet of rogue trails along Greenlee near the lower pond.
- On June 23 Eagle scouts restored ~950 linear feet of rogue trail near the intersection of Quarry Pass and Greenlee.
- On June 27/28 VOC hosted a large project, where 30+ volunteers spent two days closing rogue trails and installing erosion control structures in Sand Canyon, which is identified as sensitive Riparian habitat. VOC partnered with the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind, with non-hearing groups working alongside hearing groups. Overall, this project resulted in 6,835 feet of rogue trail being restored and 55 check dams built.

RMFI has wrapped up their Spring season and will be returning to the Contemplative/Sand Canyon corridor in Fall Revegetation efforts undertaken by rangers/staff are showing lots of new growth- we ask that people try their best to avoid walking on trail edges ("shoulders") to continue letting vegetation grow in.

The Red Rock Rag

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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 and add us by our founding name: **Red Rock Canyon Foundation** (not the Friends).

We appreciate your support!



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