

Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses



Photos by Ralph Bradt & Nancy McNab

Mt Evans Welcome Station Opens May 27th
Reservations are required.

Go to: [Mount Evans Reservations](#)



May Newsletter 2022

- Page 1 Mount Evans Welcome Station
- Page 2 Note from the Chair – The Work Begins Again
- Page 3 Welcome April Jones, Volunteer Position, Training Opportunities
- Page 4 From the Weed Patch – Alan Rockwood
- Page 5 Adopt a Trail – Wyatt Stanland
- Page 6 Win an Osprey Pack!
- Page 7-9 How the Presence of Humans Effects Wildlife – Article provided by Gordon Brown (Education)
- Page 9 Member Volunteer Agreements, Wilderness Stewardship Training Program
- Page 10 Board Members and Mission Statement



Note from the Chair

By Peter Vrolijk

The Work Begins Again

Even though late-spring snow seems likely as I write this note, the season's work has begun. Trail patrols are being posted, the first day of trail maintenance on the Abyss Lakes trail is complete, and nature is responding to the longer, warmer days by restarting plant growth, like the wildflowers in this month's photo.

Like the first wildflowers, we welcome a new board member – April Jones – whose management skills, enjoyment of wilderness, and fast hiking skills will reinforce our efforts. While John Kruse has left the board, he will continue to support FOMELC through work projects and other ways that only John can. His contributions as board member are tremendous, not least because they helped keep things moving out of sight of most of us.



Wildflowers are a valuable part of a wilderness experience, and the changing flower colors and species reflect the progression of the seasons: Meridian trail, Mount Evans Wilderness.

And like the wildflowers, each season brings volunteers in different ways than the previous years – when will they appear and in what abundance? Spring is the season for optimism, and we already see people committing to planned work dates. Please consider making a work project part of your summer plans. I guarantee that the satisfaction that comes from working with others may be one of your most memorable days of the summer.

Wilderness education through trailhead host activities is an essential component of our summer's efforts. While this work would benefit from a leader to help coordinate activities, we can still accomplish a lot. One article this month reminds us of the impact of humans on wildlife in wilderness, which is apparent to those of us who spend quiet time in wilderness. But with the vast numbers of visitors to Mount Evans and Lost Creek, conveying this insight to others is essential. Please consider joining us one day this summer to talk with others about how we can support wilderness in our visits there.

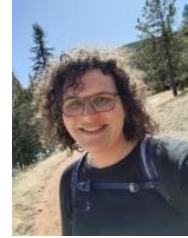
Walks in my neighborhood reveal the return of invasive thistle species, and their re-emergence in wilderness is not far behind. If you consider taking a hike, please turn it into a patrol and watch out for and report any invasive plants you find. Perhaps this experience might motivate you to join a treatment project!

Until then, we probe higher and deeper into wilderness, turning around when the remaining snowpack becomes too arduous to continue. While there are days when we are unable to reach as far into wilderness as we would like, I hope that the spirit of wilderness contained in this month's newsletter brings you peace and comfort.

- Peter

Welcome April Jones – New FOMELC Secretary

April is a hiker, backpacker, and general outside-goer. She's been in Colorado since 1994 and loves how Lost Creek Wilderness will always surprise you with a steep climb, some very interesting rocks, and shoulder season availability. Off-trail, April is a reliability engineering manager who enjoys cooking, reading, and driving her GTI through the mountains.



FOMELC Volunteer Position Opening

Assistant Trail Projects Coordinator

The Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses is looking for a dedicated wilderness steward to become an Assistant Trail Projects Coordinator to build and run a **Trailhead Hosting Program**, which has the potential to be a significant source of public exposure and outreach for FOMELC.

Additional information is in the [March Newsletter](#)

Interested? Please contact Wyatt: wyatt@fomelc.org

Training Opportunities for FOMELC Members

Trail Crew Leader and Invasive Weed Training

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, please contact wyatt@fomelc.org for space availability and reimbursement information.

FOMELC is looking for enthusiastic volunteers who want to grow their wilderness stewardship knowledge and skills in 2022. There are a variety of exciting training programs that FOMELC members can take advantage of. **FOMELC will reimburse the cost of any approved training! Spots are limited and some courses fill up quickly!** We hope to see you all out there this year!

Additional information is in the [March Newsletter](#)

June 18th ALL HANDS DAY BBQ – SEASON KICKOFF

FOMELC member season kickoff! **Bring your camp chairs** and join us in some Abyss Trail work, sitting at the trailhead host booth and boot brush dedication all in one day! **A volunteer appreciation BBQ will be provided.** Meet and greet old and new friends! Sign up and read more: <https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup>



Invasive



From the Weed Patch – Alan Rockwood

Spring has arrived! As I draft this article, we are in the midst of another moisture-giving spring snowstorm. It is an exciting time, as we plan and look forward to the rewards of summer projects. FOMELC's weed eradication program, as in previous years, will be a major focus of our stewardship activities. Through grants and other fund raising, we again will be able to hire contract weed managers to treat the five largest infestations. Our volunteers will treat another 25 infestations. The first treatment projects will begin in late June and continue into early September.

Before the first treatments, we will have an optional training class with weed specialists from the US Forest Service, Boulder Ranger District. It will cover calibration of our equipment, the herbicides used on wilderness lands and how to use them safely. This will be at the Cub Creek Trailhead in mid-June. Check out the schedule in SignUp: <https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup>

This season our weed program will work in partnership with Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC). We are beginning with 3 projects in Mount Evans Wilderness accessed from the Captain Mountain Trailhead. FOMELC has the expertise in weed management and crew leadership. VOC has a great pool of motivated volunteers interested in stewardship projects. We believe this has the potential to be a great partnership.

Remember that nature is the final arbiter of the tentative schedule. Is it a cold wet start to the growing season or is it hot and dry? In order to get the best results, we have to adapt to conditions in the field. As a teaser we will be installing our first "boot-brush" kiosk at the Goose Creek Trailhead, Lost Creek Wilderness, on Saturday, May 21st. These kiosks are a great educational tool and an effective means of reducing the spread of invasive weeds by hikers. Generous gifts in 2021 allowed us to purchase two kiosks to be installed at Goose Creek and Abyss Lake Trailheads. These will be fun events. The Abyss Lake Trailhead installation will be in conjunction with the All Hands Day in June.



Trails Coordinator

Adopt-a-Trail Program

Abyss Lake Trail

Greetings from the trail! FOMELC completed our first Adopt-a-Trail project of the year, May 14th on the Abyss Trail. Six volunteers installed 13 log water bars, check steps, and drain dips, and rehabbed one unsustainable campsite. It was a successful day with gorgeous spring weather! **A huge thank you to James Hess, Bob Hunter, Chris Sill, Greg Angstadt, and Gordon Brown for doing excellent work to keep our trails sustainable!**

The Abyss Trail is a beautiful trail that starts in the southwest corner of the Mt. Evans Wilderness, passing through expansive aspen groves and alpine tundra before ending at the picturesque Abyss Lake. This year, we will host a work day on the Abyss Trail once a month from May through September, so lace up your boots and join us out there!

Check out the full schedule on SignUp.com, where you can easily sign up for all of our exciting projects!

<https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup>

As always, FOMELC and the Forest Service greatly benefit from trail patrol data collected in Survey 123 by our volunteers. We are expecting lots of deadfall after the wet spring snow and high wind events early in the



winter, so trail patrols will be especially vital this year for collecting data on the conditions of the wilderness trails. If you are new to trail patrols, contact: dee@fomelc.org or wyatt@fomelc.org for more information on how to get started!

New for 2022, the Trails Program at FOMELC is looking for a volunteer to lead the Trailhead Hosting Program. Trail use in the wilderness is growing rapidly, which means Trailhead Hosting is an ever more vital source of public outreach, education, and recruiting for FOMELC. If you are passionate about educating wilderness users contact wyatt@fomelc.org or see the position description elsewhere in this newsletter for more information.



As you can see, there are many exciting happenings in the Trails Program in 2022, with many different ways to get involved. We can't wait to see you all out there this year!



Photos provided by Chris Sill and Gordon Brown



Osprey Packs

<https://www.osprey.com/us/en/>

Once again Osprey has granted a request by the FOMELC Wilderness Stewardship Training Coordinator – Dee Lyons and donated packs to be given away to our members. This year they also donated 6 lumbar packs to the Invasive Weed Program. Total donation is \$905!

Thank you to Osprey! Watch for Newsletter details on how you can win a new pack!



Invasive Weed Crew Lumbar Packs



Men's Osprey



Women's Osprey Pack

Don't hike so close to me: How the Presence of Humans Can Disturb Wildlife Up to Half a Mile Away!

(Article from The Conversation 2021)

Jeremy Dertien, Clemson University, Courtney Larson, University of Wyoming,
Sarah Reed, Colorado State University
July 14, 2021

(Reprinted with permission from Joel Abrams, Marketing Communications – The Conversation)

Millions of Americans are traveling this summer as pandemic restrictions wind down. Rental bookings and crowds in national parks show that many people are headed for the great outdoors.

Seeing animals and birds is one of the main draws of spending time in nature. But as researchers who study conservation, wildlife and human impacts on wild places, we believe it's important to know that you can have major effects on wildlife just by being nearby.

In a recent review of hundreds of studies covering many species, we found that the presence of humans can alter wild animal and bird behavior patterns at much greater distances than most people may think. Small mammals and birds may change their behavior when hikers or birders come within 300 feet (100 meters) – the length of a football field. Large birds like eagles and hawks can be affected when humans are over 1,300 feet (400 meters) away – roughly a quarter of a mile. And large mammals like elk and moose can be affected by humans up to 3,300 feet (1,000 meters) away – more than half a mile.

A hiker is about 75 feet from a bull elk in Yellowstone National Park, photo on right. Many recent studies and reports have shown that the world is facing a biodiversity crisis. Over the past 50 years, Earth has lost so many species that many scientists believe the planet is experiencing its sixth mass extinction – due mainly to human activities.

Protected areas, from local open spaces to national parks, are vital for conserving plants and animals. They also are places where people like to spend time in nature. We believe that everyone who uses the outdoors should understand and respect this balance between outdoor recreation, sustainable use and conservation.

How human presence affects wildlife

Pandemic lockdowns in 2020 confined many people indoors – and wildlife responded. In Istanbul, dolphins ventured much closer to shore than usual. Penguins explored quiet South African Streets. Nubian ibex grazed on Israeli playgrounds. The fact that animals moved so freely without people present shows how wild species changes their behavior in response to human activities.

Decades of research have shown that outdoor recreation, whether it's hiking, cross-country skiing or riding all-terrain vehicles, has negative effects on wildlife. The most obvious signs are behavioral changes: Animals may flee from nearby people, decrease the time they feed and abandon nests or dens.

Other effects are harder to see, but can have serious consequences for animals' health and survival. Wild animals that detect humans can experience physiological changes, such as increased heart rates and elevated levels of stress hormones.



Photo by Jacob W. Frank, NPS

And humans' outdoor activities can degrade habitat that wild species depend on for food, shelter and reproduction. Human voices, off-leash dogs and campsite overuse all have harmful effects that make habitat unusable for many wild species.



Effects of human presence vary for different species

For our study we examined 330 peer-reviewed articles spanning 38 years to locate thresholds at which recreation activities negatively affected wild animals and birds. The main thresholds we found were related to distances between wildlife and people or trails. But we also found other important factors, including the number of daily park visitors and the decibel levels of people's conversations.

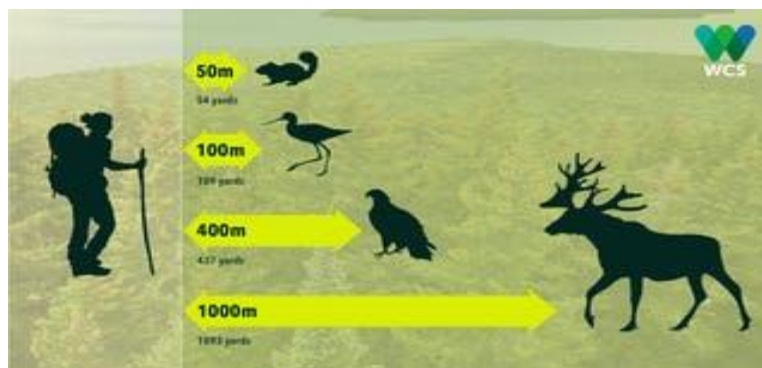
The studies that we reviewed covered over a dozen different types of motorized and nonmotorized recreation. While it might seem that motorized activities would have a bigger impact, some studies have found that dispersed "quiet" activities, such as day hiking, biking and wildlife viewing, can also affect which wild species will use a protected area.

Put another way, many species may be disturbed by humans nearby, even if those people are not using motorboats or all-terrain vehicles. It's harder for animals to detect quiet humans, so there's a better chance that they'll be surprised by a cross-country skier than a snowmobile, for instance. In addition, some species that have been historically hunted are more likely to recognize – and flee from – a person walking than a person in a motorized vehicle.

Generally, larger animals need more distance, though the relationship is clearer for birds than mammals. We found that for birds, as bird size increased, so did the threshold distance. The smallest birds could tolerate humans within 65 feet (20 meters), while the largest birds had thresholds of roughly 2,000 feet (600 meters). Previous research has found a similar relationship. We did not find that this relationship existed as clearly for mammals.

We found little research on impact thresholds for amphibians and reptiles, such as lizards, frogs, turtles and snakes. A growing body of evidence shows that amphibians and reptiles are disturbed and negatively affected by recreation. So far, however, it's unclear whether those effects reflect mainly the distance to people, the number of visitors or other factors.

Human recreation starts to affect wild creatures' behavior and physical state at different distances. Small mammals and birds tolerate closer recreation than do larger birds of prey and large mammals.



How to reduce your impact on wildlife

While there's much still to learn, we know enough to identify some simple actions people can take to minimize their impacts on wildlife. First, keep your distance. Although some species or individual animals will become used to human presence at close range, many others won't. And it can be hard to tell when you are stressing an animal and potentially endangering both it and yourself.

Second, respect closed areas and stay on trails. For example, in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, wildlife managers seasonally close some backcountry ski areas to protect critical habitat for bighorn sheep and reduce stress on other species like moose, elk and mule deer. And rangers in Maine's Acadia National Park close several trails annually near peregrine falcon nests. This reduces stress to nesting birds and has helped this formerly endangered species recover.

Getting involved with educational or volunteer programs is a great way to learn about wildlife and help maintain undisturbed areas. As our research shows, balancing recreation with conservation means opening some areas to human use and keeping others entirely or mostly undisturbed.

As development fragments wild habitat and climate change forces many species to shift their ranges, movement corridors between protected areas become even more important. Our research suggests that creating recreation-free wildlife corridors of at least 3,300 feet (1,000 meters) wide can enable most species to move between protected areas without disturbance. Seeing wildlife can be part of a fun outdoor experience – but for the animals' sake, you may need binoculars or a zoom lens for your camera.

2022 MEMBERSHIP VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

Attention Potential 2022 FOMELC Volunteers!

You must sign a new Master Volunteer Agreement each year.

Before your first volunteer event this season, please go here to sign up:

<https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup>

Volunteers are our lifeblood. Thank you so much for volunteering!

Questions? Contact Joe O'Leary joe@fomelc.org

2022 Wilderness Stewardship Online Training Program

New or interested in becoming a member with the Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wilderness Organization? A great way to begin is with an online training program beginning now. Be ready to jump into projects to protect these two wildernesses this summer.

We offer this training to help make the volunteer experience more enjoyable and rewarding, both when working in teams and individually. The training modules consist of three basic components:

- Modules 1-3: Discussion on wilderness protection and how the federal law came into being
- Modules 4-6: There are many ways volunteers can contribute
- Modules 7-9: How to collect data for the forest service and patrol training hike

Register now for this self-paced training. Contact Dee dee@fomelc.org

FOMELC Board Members

Chairman: Peter Vrolijk
peter@fomelc.org

Trail Projects Coordinator: Wyatt Stanland
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Secretary: April Jones
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Membership Coordinator: Joe O'Leary
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Noxious Weed Projects Coordinator: Alan Rockwood
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Marketing/Education Team Lead: Gordon Brown
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Newsletter/Wilderness Training Program:
Dee Lyons dee@fomelc.org

Treasurer: Matt Komos
matt@fomelc.org

Forest Service Liaison: Ralph Bradt
ralph.bradt@usda.gov

FOMELC WEBSITE: <https://fomelc.org/>

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS:

The safety of our community is our top priority, and we are committed to doing our part to limit the spread of COVID-19 (aka coronavirus). We are closely monitoring guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE), and how these might affect our programs. We are also coordinating with our US Forest Service partners to remain in compliance with their COVID-19 response guidelines. Stay Safe and Healthy!

FOMELC Mission Statement:

The Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses encompass 194,400 acres with over 170 miles of trails in Colorado's Pike and Arapaho National Forests.

We work in partnership with the US Forest Service, engaging in education, outreach and stewardship activities to preserve the wilderness character of these lands for current and future generations.

*Friends of Mt Evans & Lost Creek Wildernesses
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Evergreen, CO 80439*

<https://fomelc.org/>



**Of all the paths you take in life,
make sure a few of them are dirt.**

- John Muir