

Mountain Park NEWS

Summer 2016 • Vol. 17 Num. 3

The Transformation of a Pueblo Mountain Park Icon

The song of a black-headed grosbeak fills the air with its gloriously happy song. Even the occasional loud gust of wind cannot silence the volume of its song. Swallows flit here and there below a mostly cloudy sky on this cool last day of May. When the grosbeak pauses – to catch its breath? – my ears catch the song of another grosbeak up the hill. There's the melancholy song of a hermit thrush. And a dusky flycatcher. And a spotted towhee.

With my back comfortably leaning against a neighboring pine, my eyes are closely examining the current condition of the famous “leaning tree” that has been greeting hikers at the start of the Tower Trail for many years. The former condition of this iconic tree of Pueblo Mountain Park has been a topic of many conversations, questions, and guided hikes. The tree's hefty trunk leaned at about a 45-degree angle for 15 feet or so, before it turned towards the sky for another fifty feet. That it could remain standing at such an angle, supporting so much weight, seemed to defy gravity. It was a true wonder of Nature and a true icon of the park.

Many of us who have spent time in Pueblo Mountain Park are familiar with the “leaning tree.” This tree has meant different things to different people. We've climbed it, taken pictures of it, appreciated its unique beauty, wondered how it got that way, marveled at how it seemed to ignore the laws of physics to remain upright at such an angle...

If there is one constant in Nature, it is that nothing remains the same. Causes include floods, fire, cold, ice, wind, lightning, birth, aging, death – a multitude of causes, but everything changes.





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The list also includes heavy, wet snow, typical of springtime in the Rockies. And it was such a wet snow this past April that brought about a life-ending change to this leaning ponderosa pine that lived its long, interesting life at the trailhead of the Tower Trail.

I scan the yellow wood which is now exposed where the tree split. The tree's position on the ground tells me it rolled to the south as it fell. Above the split trunk is a hodge-podge of the tree's broken branches mixed with branches from a nearby tree it hit as it went down. It must have been quite a sight, and sound, when this tree came crashing down. I think of the silly question, "If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?" Such species arrogance, as if natural phenomena – in this case, the sound of a tree falling – require the presence of a human for it to occur. As far as I am aware, no person was here to witness its fall. Yet I am sure it was a spectacular sound, lasting but a few seconds, only to return the forest to the soft whisper of falling snow.

All living things eventually die. Including iconic trees. It took the additional weight of a heavy spring snow to tip the scales towards just a little too much weight for its angled trunk to support – and to tip the scales towards the tree's death.

The decision has been made to re-route a small section of the trail so the fallen tree can remain just as it is, right where it is. Over the next many decades, this tree that has meant so much to so many will continue to change as natural processes slowly transform the tree back into the earthy soil from which it grew. It may no longer be a living organism, but this tree that has been telling many stories for many years will continue to tell stories. To hear them, all a person has to do is spend an hour, or a morning, or a day here at the Tower Trailhead, sit down with your back against a nearby tree, be quiet and still – and listen.

~ Dave Van Manen, May 31, 2016



**"MAN IS NOT HIMSELF ONLY...HE IS ALL THAT HE SEES; ALL THAT FLOWS TO HIM
FROM A THOUSAND SOURCES... HE IS THE LAND, THE LIFT OF ITS MOUNTAIN LINES,
THE REACH OF ITS VALLEYS." ~ MARY AUSTIN**

Thank you Becky Brown, Ruth Ann Amey, Pam Kubly, Elaine Sartoris, Jan Myers, Anne Whitfield, Anne Moulton, and Carol Kyte for putting the spring newsletter mailing together; Steve Douglas for your continued help with the forest stewardship work; Laura Leyba for volunteering with various park projects; Shawna Shoaf for designing the newsletter, posters and many other printed items; Becky Brown, Pam Kubly, Elaine Sartoris, Jan Myers, Helen Philipsen, Anne Moulton and Trish Neff for putting the scholarship fund-raising letter together; and Dave Overlin for helping out with several projects.

Could a Grizzly be Lurking in Pueblo Mountain Park?

By Dave Van Manen

Let's say you are taking an evening hike along the Devil's Canyon Trail. You hike down to where the trail crosses the seasonal creek drainage, known as Devil's Dribble, and up to the intersection with the Northridge Trail. The sweet, musical song of a hermit thrush fills the cooling air. "Should I take a left and head into Devil's Canyon," you ask yourself, "or go right and make the climb into the more remote western part of the park on the Northridge Trail?" It is early evening and you are up for a longer hike, so Northridge it is.

A diverse assortment of wildflowers adds color to the landscape – the light blue of skullcap, the rich orange of western wallflower, the bright yellow of senecio, the soft pink of wild onion. A black-headed grosbeak and a western wood peewee add their songs to the evening soundtrack.

You work your way up the switchbacks through the dry shrublands filled with Gambel oak and mountain mahogany, come around a bend, and right there in the middle of the trail, no more than 20 yards from you, is a bear. It is facing generally away from you. You stop and slowly walk backwards. With the gentle breeze coming from the bear towards you, the bear has not yet caught your scent and seems unaware of your presence. So you get a good look at the bear as you quietly move back down the trail. It is a good size bear, probably in the neighborhood of 250, maybe even 300 pounds. Its dark brown legs become a lighter brown on the bear's back and rump. As you are noting these features, the bear takes a split second glance in your direction and immediately takes off through the brush and disappears into the woods. Good bear – just as they usually do, it sensed your presence and ran fast – away from you.

As the adrenaline settles and you go through the experience over and over again in your mind, you wonder, "Could this have been a grizzly? It was brown, and black bears are black, aren't they? And if it was brown, then it must be a grizzly, right?" The answer to these questions is no.

Whoever named *Ursus americanus* the black bear wasn't all that accurate, at least

for Colorado. Only 40% of black bears found in Colorado are actually black. They can be various shades of brown and as light as cinnamon or lighter. So, color does not indicate black or grizzly bear. Nor does size, as both species can be big or small, depending on age and types of available food. Among other differences, grizzlies have a hump on their shoulder, a dish-like face profile, and long claws. In contrast, black bears lack the shoulder hump, have a "Roman nose" profile, and have much shorter claws. Of course, during the moments of a bear encounter, these features may not be easily noticed. It is worth noting that even experienced outdoorsy types who have seen a fair share of wild bears can't always readily tell the difference.

It is true that grizzlies used to live in Colorado, but the last definitive confirmation of a Colorado grizzly was 1979, when a hunting outfitter was attacked by an old sow (the outfitter survived, the bear didn't). That took place far from Pueblo Mountain Park in a remote area of the San Juan Mountains in southwest Colorado. Over the next couple of decades, there were efforts to find any elusive grizzlies, and there were some possible sightings, but all of that was in the same San Juan Mountains, and the conclusion is that even if there were a few that survived into the 80s or 90s, it is very doubtful that any grizzlies are now in Colorado.

Saying all that, to answer the question that titles this article, could a grizzly be lurking in Pueblo Mountain Park? Well, yes! But the grizzly is not lurking, and it is not a bear. Had you instead taken the trail to Devil's Canyon on your evening hike, you would have come across an old piece of mining equipment conspicuously sitting at the base of the abandoned rock quarry through which the trail travels on its way to the canyon. That hunk of metal, which was used to screen rocks, is known as a grizzly.



Tooting the Earth Studies Horn

By Taylor Driver

With another school year of Earth Studies coming to a close (its 14th year), and plans well underway for year number 15, I am proud of how this program allows students to connect to the world around them, teaching them about the importance of their natural environment. I thought I'd share some of the outcomes that thousands and thousands of Pueblo children have been receiving through this amazing program.

Learning outside the Classroom Earth Studies offers students opportunities for experiential learning in an outdoor classroom, encouraging them to make connections and apply what they have learned directly to their own

lives. MPEC staff place a large emphasis on helping students see the interconnectedness of issues they are learning about at the park to issues they have experienced in the classroom, on the playground, and in their homes.

Critical Thinking A key program goal is to encourage students to be inquisitive, to explore, and to make their own

decisions about various environmental topics we cover.

State Education Standards The Earth Studies curriculum is designed to provide students with interdisciplinary learning that incorporates state-standards from a variety of subjects into each lesson.

Healthy Lifestyles Earth Studies illustrates to students through experience that being outside and being physically active promotes good personal health.

Future Earthkeepers Earth Studies helps students understand and feel connected to their natural environment. This in turn allows them to see how their decisions and actions affect the environment, not only in the park, but throughout the community and beyond.

I will close with a short story: All day, during a session on mammals and tracking, one student wouldn't leave my side. Engaged, enthusiastic and actively asking questions that propelled the group into thoughtful discussions, this student was clearly the top of the class. One of these questions was in regards to the topic of the different scales of animal signs (small, medium, and large) that mammals leave behind, and how we categorize those signs when we are tracking them. I saw the cogs turning in his head as he thoughtfully turned to me and asked, "How would we categorize a smell, like if a skunk sprays, or we smell a dead animal?"

Having been around this student all day, and seeing his investment in what we were learning, I was surprised when my group arrived at the bus at the end of the day and the teacher pulled me aside and asked, "How was ____? I hope he didn't cause you too much trouble today." After a short discussion about how the student in question had been the most well behaved, engaged and attentive student that day, I quickly came to find out that that was not often the case in the classroom, as he is frequently quite the challenge to manage.

The point of this story is that this student, with a simple change of environment, lots of movement in the outdoors, the opportunity for hands-on learning, plus a topic that truly interests him, and he excelled. I can't help but feel that there might be a lesson in this story, not for students, but for educators.



Renewed Life for the Mountain Park Environmental Center Nature Shop

By Lamar Trant, MPEC Board of Trustees

If you haven't been to the Nature Shop at MPEC in a while, you are in for a big surprise! Nora McAuliffe and Lamar Trant, the original owners of Exquisite Taste on Union Ave. in Pueblo, have brought Life is Good products and other goodies to the Mountain Park. For those who are less familiar with the Life is Good brand, this is a perfect organization to partner with. The t-shirts, hats, mugs and other products feature clever designs that are often nature themed (lots of dogs also) and share the optimism and humor that have made the Life is Good brand popular for over 20 years.

The Life is Good Company also donates a minimum of 10% of their profits to help kids overcome poverty, violence and severe medical challenges. Their Life is Good Kid's Foundation, in coordination with their many child care partners, positively impacts the lives of more than 100,000 children a day! Getting kids outside to explore and play with the Life is Good Playmakers breaks down barriers and provides

a safe opportunity for children to learn in the natural world.

MPEC's Nature Shop will, of course, continue to sell jewelry, art, music, pottery and books from local artists and authors. In the future, we also plan to add even more affordable items that appeal to children (NO plugs or batteries!) and children's Life is Good clothing. Yummy Gelato, as previously featured at Exquisite Taste, will also be available for special events.

MPEC members continue to receive a 10% discount in the Nature Shop and gift certificates will soon be available. So...make sure your membership is up-to-date and come on in. Usual Nature Shop hours are Monday – Friday, 8am – 4pm, and is open during special events and other programs on weekends. Feel free to give the office a weekday call if you are interested in visiting the Nature Shop at a time other than usual open hours.



OTHER SUMMER PROGRAMS AT MPEC

For all the details, pricing, and to register for these programs, go to MPEC's website at www.hikeandlearn.org and click on PROGRAMS. If you need assistance with registering on-line, or if you do not have access to a computer, please call 719-485-4444.

- **Summer Solstice Drum Circle** Drum in the summer season at this fun and informal gathering around the fire circle. Sun, Jun 19, 6:30-8pm
- **Nature Toddlers** A wonderful way to enjoy Nature with your littlest one(s). Music, exploration, discovery, a gentle hike, fun! Fridays at 10am: Jul 15, Aug 19, Sept 9
- **Yoga on the Trail** What better way to enjoy a summer Friday evening than doing yoga among the pines on a gentle hike. Julie Emmons of Pueblo's Open Studio Yoga will guide the trailside yoga, which is appropriate for beginners and experienced alike. Bring along a yoga mat if you have one. Fri, Jul 22, 6:30pm
- **10th Annual Pueblo Mountain Park Butterfly Count** Guided by Mark Yaeger of the Arkansas Valley Audubon Society, this morning saunter should lead us to many species of butterflies. No experience necessary. Sun, July 23, 9am
- **Autumn Equinox Drum Circle** Acknowledge the halfway point between the summer and winter solstices around MPEC's fire circle. Sun, Sept 18, 6:30-8pm



Why I am Here!

By Jonathan Pilarski



MPEC now has an on-line donor page at our website. You can easily and securely renew your membership or make a donation using your credit card at our new web link. Just go to **www.hikeandlearn.org** click on **Help MPEC Grow**. Thanks!



In the last newsletter, I told you how I got here. Now let me tell you what I found once I arrived. The telling requires a little bit of a backstory. May 13 marked the one year anniversary from the first time that I drove into Pueblo as my wife Laura had a job interview. We spent 24 hours and then began our 17 hour drive back to Indiana. During the drive, Laura asked me what I thought. I told her in our short time in Pueblo, I noticed three things: 1) the community is culturally diverse and rich with history, 2) the community is investing in itself and takes pride in itself, and 3) Pueblo was big enough that it had everything you would want, but small enough that someone could come in and truly make a difference.

Today, I am going to focus on how this community invests in itself and takes pride in itself. It is easy to understand what the Mountain Park Environmental Center does. You can read our mission: "...to

provide environmental education programming in order to create a citizenry that understands, respects, enjoys and cares for themselves, their families, their community, and the natural world." You can look at the programming that we offer, from Guided Hikes to Nature Toddlers to our award-winning Earth Studies program. You can look at the way we care for Pueblo Mountain Park and maintain it for the use of generations to come.

While you can see

what we do, the bigger question is *why* do we do it. And to understand why we do it, you need to understand who we are. Our founder, Dave Van Manen, a wilderness advocate, recognized there was a generation of kids that had little to no opportunities to experience wild places. Once he began bringing kids out into nature, it wasn't long before he realized that spending time in wild places had significant impacts on a child's self-esteem, academic performance, physical and emotional health, and a whole host of other areas. Dave founded MPEC because he realized that our community had a need to spend time with and connect to nature. MPEC was formed to provide a community resource so that the community could grow and develop in healthy and diverse ways.

That tradition continues. Today, MPEC employs staff that do not work for us because they need a job. They work for us because they have a calling. It is that calling that defines who we are, and it is that calling that defines what we do. We believe wholeheartedly that the outdoors is a sacred place and that sharing it with others is worthwhile. We recognize the significance spending time in wild places has had on our lives and we want others to be impacted in the same way. We do this because we know we are improving the lives of the people that visit Pueblo Mountain Park and participate in our programs.

Which brings me back to one of the things I noticed about Pueblo in the short time I spent here last May. Pueblo cares about its community. Pueblo has pride in its community. Pueblo is investing in its future. In the ten months that I have had the privilege of calling Pueblo my home, I have been amazed at the lengths this community will go to ensure that others can find success. I have been impressed at the selflessness of this community to give their time, effort, and resources to ensure that others are given opportunity.

That willingness to give to the

"I AM IN LOVE WITH THIS WORLD...
I HAVE CLIMBED ITS MOUNTAINS,
ROAMED ITS FORESTS, SAILED ITS
WATERS, CROSSED ITS DESERTS,
FELT THE STING OF ITS FROSTS, THE
OPPRESSION OF ITS HEATS, THE
DRENCH OF ITS RAINS, THE FURY
OF ITS WINDS, AND ALWAYS HAVE
BEAUTY AND JOY WAITED UPON MY
GOINGS AND COMINGS."

~ JOHN BURROUGHS

community was readily evident the past couple of months at MPEC. We strongly believe that every child should have the opportunity to come to summer camp. We have committed that no child should be turned away from summer camp because their family isn't able to afford the cost. We reached out to our members and donors and asked them help us achieve our goal of sending every child to camp, and our community responded to the tune of \$8,315.

As of this writing, you have donated \$8,315 to our scholarship fund. You have

given children the opportunity to come to our camps and experience nature first hand. Without your generosity, some of these kids would not have the opportunity to participate in hikes and nature games, meet a wolf up close at our Mission Wolf camp, or backpack to the top of Greenhorn Mountain. You have proven to me once again that Pueblo is a community that is willing to invest in itself and to give others the opportunity to improve the quality of their lives. I have found a special place to call my home, and it is special because of people like you.



"...NO MATTER HOW COMPLEX OR AFFLUENT, HUMAN SOCIETIES ARE NOTHING BUT SUBSYSTEMS OF THE BIOSPHERE, THE EARTH'S THIN VENEER OF LIFE, WHICH IS ULTIMATELY RUN BY BACTERIA, FUNGI AND GREEN PLANTS." ~ VACLAV SMIL

MPEC sends a huge and heartfelt THANK YOU to all who have donated to MPEC through new memberships, membership renewals, grants, memorials, scholarships, and other donations: Bernie & Mary Jean Abrahams, Bud Allen, Tonia & Christopher Allen, Betty Alt, Marcia Beachy, Brian & Kathryn Bell, Cathy Bentley, Sue Blattner, Debbie Borchers, Leon Bright, Steve & Becky Brown, Maria Westy Bush, Cori & Jim Cameron, Jim & Maggie Campbell, James Christian, Dan & Brenda Clements, Polly & Pete Conlon, Anne Courtright, Sheila Cover, Carole & James Crawford, Sandra Cunningham, Jeff Holm & David Chandler, Helga Dingman, Nancy Doyle, Maura Edison, Beth Ehrhardt & Scott Potts, Edith & Jim Edson, Julie & Matt Emmons, Susan Frostman, Marjorie Genova, Rhonda Gerow, Patricia Gonzalez, Milli Goodman, Ellen Guillen, Catherine Halcomb, Cyndi & Dale Hart, Linda Heiser, Kathryn Higgins/Motherlove, Tim Howard, Hank Humphreys, Lana Woodruff & Jack Hunter, Star Jorgensen, Maureen Kelly, Doris Kester, Kathryn Kettler, Douglas Knepper, Richard Kreminski, Carol Kronwitter, Carol & Gary Kyte, Karin Kyte, Jean & Tom Latka, Raymond Lay, Sally & Pat Mara, Kathy & Alex Martinez, Sandra Marvin & David Hoskins, Maria McAuliffe, Bill & Mollie McCanless, Steve McLaughlin, Sonja Melton, Lee Miller, Del & Jane Milne, Jill Moring & Howard Hayden, Anne & Bill Moulton, Diane Mueller & Glenn Runkewich, Lori Mugasis, Shirleen Neu, David & Linda Overlin, Steve Douglas & Pam Kubly, Dominique Pisciotta, Rosa Pratt, Victor Reyes & Amy King, James Richerson, Carol & Mark Rickman, Rosalie Vigna & Warren Nolan, Virginia Rupp, Harry & Patricia Rurup, Dr. Jarvis & Mary Jo Ryals, Deanna Sanders, Nancy Schricker, Fred & Clareann (Suzy) Smith, Michael & Joan Smith, Karolyn Snow, Mike & Sandy Spahr, Nancy Spence, Judy Staples, Barbara Stevens, Susan Stiller, Anne Stokes-Hochberg, James & Paulette Stuart, Beverly Sullivan, Teresa Theriault, Lamar Trant, United Way of Pueblo County, Dave & Helene Van Manen, Rich Van Manen, Joseph & Rhonda Violi, Virginia Waldron, Arlene & Buck Weimer, and Nancy Williams.

Yes!!! I want to join the Mountain Park Environmental Center and be a part of an organization that helps folks of all ages connect with Nature! Members receive the *Mountain Park News*, a discount on bookshop items and program fees, and the satisfaction of supporting an organization dedicated to the promotion of ecological literacy. Your Support is tax-deductible!

Make secure online donations using your credit card at our website: www.hikeandlearn.org

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R: Nature

By Dave Van Manen

I am sure it is not news to you that the simple act of taking a walk can make you feel better. The combination of fresh air, increased heart-rate, natural light, movement, and just being outdoors often brings about an increased feeling of well-being. For the Mountain Park Environmental Center, an organization that is all about providing opportunities for people to be outside, this is fundamental to why we exist. Being outside is good for people; hence, it is good for the community.

Since the early days of MPEC's existence, many of our grant proposals have emphasized this belief that being outside in the natural world is good for people. Yet there was little real science that supported this belief. We had plenty of personal and anecdotal arguments to support this premise, but little scientific study to back it up. That is increasingly no longer the case. As the person who has been writing most of MPEC's grant proposals all these years, I am happy to now have a growing body of science to include in our grant proposals that supports what we've been saying – being outside in Nature is good for us.

Fortunately, much of this information is also finding its way into mainstream media. A recent issue of National Geographic that focused on the value of parks included an article entitled "This is Your Brain on Nature" (<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2016/01/call-to-wild-text>). From the article: "A 15-minute walk in the woods causes measurable changes in physiology. Japanese researchers led by Yoshifumi Miyazaki at Chiba University sent 84 subjects to stroll in seven different forests, while the same number of volunteers walked around city centers. The forest walkers hit a relaxation jackpot: Overall they showed a 16 percent decrease in the stress hormone cortisol, a 2 percent drop in blood pressure, and a 4 percent drop in heart rate. Miyazaki believes our bodies relax in pleasant, natural surroundings because they evolved there. Our senses are adapted to interpret information about plants and streams, he says, not traffic and high-rises."

Much of the recent research is focused on the myriad of benefits that being out in natural environments has on children. This is of particular interest to MPEC, as so many of our grant proposals seek support for our programs

that bring young people to Nature. Studies are indicating how time spent in Nature is positively impacting children's academic performance, creativity, cooperation with peers, building resilience, managing stress and adversity, cognitive function, and physical health.

Stephen Kellert, social ecologist and senior research scholar at Yale University's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, has spent a career researching the connection between Nature and humanity. Recognizing the indisputable link between healthy childhood development and spending time in Nature, coupled with the understanding that children are, indeed, our future, Kellert believes that the importance of nurturing this connection has implications far beyond the health of children. "Because children's experience of nature remains a vital and irreplaceable source of healthy development, nothing less than the future of our species is at stake in maintaining and, when compromised, restoring this relationship."

Kellert goes on to say, "Our progress and civilization cannot be measured by the delusional assumption that we somehow escaped our biology and related dependence on nature. Much of what makes us fully and functionally human continues to be contingent on a rich tapestry of experiential ties to the natural world, whether we choose to live off the land or become urban investment bankers. Despite our remarkable capacity for learning, individuality, culture and creativity, we remain bound like all creatures by the constraints of our biology. And, like any species, even one uniquely capable of life-long learning, the greatest maturational development of these basic biological dependencies is during the childhood years."

Through the years, I have heard it said that school subjects other than reading, writing and math (and, increasingly, technology) are considered less important, and sometimes referred to as "fluff." And this includes outdoor-based education. Although it is probably redundant for me to say it, we at MPEC strongly disagree. And so does an increasing body of research. So, go take that walk; take your kids or grandkids to a park; go fishing, camping, hiking, birdwatching. Get outside – it is good for you, it is good for children, it is good for all of us!

Guided Hikes – Summer

"GO OUT, GO OUT
I BEG OF YOU
AND TASTE THE
BEAUTY OF THE
WILD.
BEHOLD THE
MIRACLE OF THE
EARTH
WITH ALL THE
WONDER OF A
CHILD."
~ EDNA JAKUES

Come taste the beauty of the wild at MPEC's popular Guided Hikes in the amazing Pueblo Mountain Park, a short drive from Pueblo. It is best to dress for varying weather, wear a sunhat and sunscreen, and wear good hiking shoes. Also bring along a water bottle and snacks on these moderately strenuous hikes that are educational and fun. Unless otherwise stated, most hikes last from two to three hours and are appropriate for adults and children over 12. Group size usually limited to 15; members free, non-members \$5.

Registration required: www.hikeandlearn.org or (719) 485-4444.

- **Mon, June 20, 6:30pm, Full Moon Music and Summer Solstice Hike** Enjoy a magical evening excursion as day becomes night and spring becomes summer hiking under the "Strawberry Moon" with a mini folk concert along the trail...truly a delightful experience.
- **Sat, Jul 9, 9am, "Zuke's" July Walk Your Dog Hike** MPEC's guided hikes for folks and their dogs have been very popular, so we're doing one each month. Your dog friends will also be treated with healthy snacks provided by Zuke's Dog Treats! Dogs must be leashed.
- **Sun, Jul 17, 6:30pm, Full Moon Music Hike** Be out among the pines as July's "Thunder" Moon rises over the ridge that separates the Beulah Valley from the eastern plains – a magical experience. As an added bonus, enjoy a trailside mini-concert with Ranger Dave Van Manen.
- **Fri, Jul 22, 6:30pm, Yoga in Nature Hike** What better way to enjoy a summer Friday evening than a guided hike among the pines sprinkled with some trailside yoga. Julie Emmons of Pueblo's Open Studio Yoga will guide the trailside yoga, which is appropriate for beginners and experienced alike. Bring along a yoga mat if you have one.
- **Sat, July 23, 9am, Butterfly Count** This excursion is less of a hike and more of a saunter that stays pretty much to the park's roads, in search of butterflies. This is the 9th Annual Butterfly Count in Pueblo Mountain Park, guided by Mark Yaeger of the Arkansas Valley Audubon Society. No experience is necessary. Bring close-focus binoculars and/or a digital camera if you have them (although they are not necessary).
- **Tues, Aug 16, 7pm, Full Moon Hike** Summer 2016 is slipping by, so if you want to enjoy a summer evening hiking underneath August's "Green Corn Moon" on a MPEC Guided Hike, don't miss out!
- **Sun, Aug 28, 9am, "Zuke's" August Walk Your Dog Hike** We offer our Walk Your Dog Hike for all you hikers who want to bring your dog along, with the added bonus of healthy treats for your pooch. Dogs must be leashed.
- **Wed, Sept 14, 6:30 Full Moon Hike** This will be our last summer full moon hike of 2016, and these evening excursions are always a wonderful experience.
- **Sun, Sept 18, 1pm, Autumn Equinox Hike** Acknowledge the arrival of fall on this hike in Colorado's lovely southern foothills.



A Not-Quite-Average Winter of Snow



I am typing these words on May 26, so I am pretty confident that I will not need to include any additional inches to the official winter snowfall totals (although you never know – I heard some talk of western El Paso and Teller Counties possibly getting some snow the next couple of days).

After November’s 18.5” of snow, December’s 2.4” and January’s 6.7” had a lot of us a bit concerned that winter 2016 was going to end up with some rather pitiful snowfall totals. But February’s 28.8” eased those concerns some, only to be followed by less than a foot in March (11.6” to be exact). Thankfully, April’s showers turned out to be mostly in the form of heavy wet snow (as expected around these parts), bringing another 31.5”. Another inch and a half of wet snow at the start of May and this past winter goes into the books at 101” of snow. That is a little shy of the average of around 118”, but considering how wet April was (those 31.5”, plus some decent rain, delivered over 6” of April moisture), and a rather cool spring overall, we are going into June with lots of green grass and happy wildflowers.

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“SHALL I NOT HAVE INTELLIGENCE WITH THE EARTH? AM I NOT PARTLY LEAVES
AND VEGETABLE Mould MYSELF?” ~ HENRY DAVID THOREAU

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Mountain-Park-Environmental-Center>

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