

# Mountain Park NEWS

Spring 2017 • Vol. 18 Num. 2

## Be Here Now

It is snowing. It is finally snowing! I stepped out my door an hour ago just as this little storm seemed to be tapering off. Over the course of the couple of miles I have since sauntered, I concluded that the storm is not quite done yet. A few minutes of snowfall interspersed with a handful of snowless minutes repeated itself several times during that hour. Weak sunshine has lingered through most of it, strengthening as the snowfall diminished.

I worked my way along the park roads, some sections covered in a couple inches of fresh wet snow, other sections snow-free. The tread of the Tower Trail is no different. I am searching for a relatively protected place to sit and put some of these thoughts into my journal. Now heading down the Mace Trail, I see a large Douglas fir that looks like it will work just fine as a temporary outdoor office.

I am mesmerized by watching the falling snow, now coming down fast and hard against a backdrop of ponderosa pines, white firs, and one large Rocky Mountain juniper. It is completely silent – no birds, no snow hitting my jacket, no sound at all. Or is there? As my ears adjust, I believe I can hear a barely perceptible *hiss* coming from all around me. Yes, the falling snow is filling the air with this most subtle sound. Snow music!

It may be snowing now, but there has been very little of it this winter. Many times over the past weeks I have thought to myself that this seems to be the winter that isn't. Instead of snow, it's been very warm and very windy – very unwinter-like. Today's inch and a half of new snow brings the season's total to just over 24". It will take another eight feet to bring us to an average winter's snowfall. "I know March and April can be very snowy, and weather patterns do change, so you never know," I keep telling myself. Then I think of last fall's two wildfires, and the *what-ifs* begin.

It is now barely snowing. Just a few small flakes are lazily drifting out of the sky. I take a deep breath and can feel the peace of this place fill me. There is no denying that the what-ifs associated with the drought we are in could be catastrophic. Not to mention the potential flood damage and destruction that will happen if a strong thunderstorm passes over the land that burned last fall. But there is also no denying that right now, at this moment, in this place, these woods are soaking up a wet snowfall, there is no crazy-strong wind, and there is no wildfire.

After many recent conversations and thoughts and concerns about how dry it is and all that



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~ ANTHONY J.  
MCMICHAEL





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MPEC's Mission is to provide  
environmental education for the  
community in order to create  
a citizenry that understands,  
respects, enjoys, and cares for  
themselves, their families, their  
community and the natural world.

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could come out of this dryness, it feels *so* good to let all of that go and simply be here now. To lean into what is at this very moment, in this very spot. To realize that last fall's fires are over, and that those fires are now only thoughts. And all the what-ifs are also only thoughts. Right here, right now, is all that is real for me at this moment in time. There are right times to reflect on what's already done and what might be. Now is not that time.

The snow has stopped. The flutter of a bird's wings nearby and the peep of a distant Townsend's solitaire have replaced the snow music. The birds, the snow-covered trees, the cool moist air -- these are my only reality at this moment. I will leave thinking about all the rest for another time.

~ Dave Van Manen  
February 28, 2017



## Why We Give to MPEC

### By Carol and Mark Rickman

We have been long time supporters of the Mountain Park Environmental Center for many reasons. As a couple who values wildlife and a healthy environment, we are extremely proud of the essential work that MPEC does to provide educational programs to people of all ages. From toddlers to seniors, the opportunity to learn about the importance and conservation of our natural world in such a beautiful setting is such a gift to our community. Many children would not have the opportunity to experience and learn to care about wild places if not for MPEC. The future of our environmental health is in their hands. Their programs offer so many opportunities to enjoy nature on a personal level.

In addition to all of the great classes and activities MPEC offers, we love the ability to be a short drive away to the activities we love; hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing with our dogs, as well as watching wildlife. We love bringing out-of-town guests up to the park for a picnic. We truly appreciate every aspect of MPEC and will continue to support its vital place in our community. 🐾

**MPEC sends many thanks to the many folks that have supported us over the past few months through memberships, end-of-year donations, memorials, and other donations:** Tonia & Christopher Allen, Ruth Ann & Lindol Amey, Paulette Arns, Gary & Liz Bacon, Margaret & Dave Barber, Marcia Beachy, Marty & Suzanne Bechina, Brian & Kathryn Bell, Cathy Bentley, Ina Bernard, Ruth Boothe, Fran Brodin, Mark & Brenda Brooks, Mark & Bonnie Bryan, Laurel Buckner, Jim & Maggie Campbell, James Christian, Polly & Pete Conlon, Annabelle Corboy, Kelly Corman, Ann Cott, Sandra Cunningham, Cathy & Dave Dehn, KRD Foundation, Heather Dewey & Josh Wilcoxson, David Dill & Jane Rawlings, Steve Douglas & Pam Kubly, Diana DiMara, Kelly Dodge, Isobel Drysdale, Beth Ehrhardt & Scott Potts, Maura & Richard Edison, Melissa Foster, Carol & Regan Foust, Susan Frostman, David & Charissa Fryberger, Alison Gallensky, Emma Galvin, Patrick & Lucinda Galvin, Jeanne Gardner, Sheila Geere, Marjorie Genova, Rhonda Gerow, Patricia Gonzalez, Milli Goodman, Lorelee Gregory, Deb & Cecil Grymkoski, Ellen Guillen, Emily Guillen, Robert Guillen, Shirley Hadden, Catherine Halcomb, Holly Hanson, Cyndi & Dale Hart, Jan & Mike Hausman, Erin Hazler, Carla Hendrickson, Anne & Patrick Henrikson, Sandra Hickman, Kathryn Higgins, Pricilla Hill, Tim & Kathy Howard, Greg & Anne Johnson, Donna Juergenson, Maureen Kelly, Doris Kester, Kathryn Kettler, Amelia King, Joe Klune, Angela Kowzan, Kerry Kramer, Richard Kreminski, Tony Kreusch, Carol Kronwitter, JoAnn Kuzmiak, Carol & Gary Kyte, Karin Kyte, Gary Kyte & Sharlene Fairbanks-Kyte, Skip Ladd, Judith LaFollette, Elizabeth Lee, Paula & Jim Loseke, Sally Mara, Kathy & Alex Martinez, Maria McAuliffe, Chris & Meo McGrath, Colin McGrath, Neill McGrath, Tristan & Kaitlyn McGrath, Grant McKay, Steve McLaughlin, Linda McMulin, Marian Mead, Mindy & Patrick Meiering, Sonja Melton, Gay Davis Miller & Norm Williams, Mark Montoya, Brandi Moore, Mary Moore, Diane Mueller, & Glenn Runkewich, Shirleen Neu, J. Doug Ohmans, Marjorie Oldfield, Mary Olenik, Orla O'Callaghan, Corky & Linda Outhier, , Helen Philipsen, A.J. & Lynn Pilarski, Jeffrey Pilarski, Jonathan Pilarski, Dominique Pisciotta, Margaret Porter, Jack Potts, Isabel Powell, Mary Quattro, Susan Rapp, Rich Rhoades, Carol & Mark Rickman, Peg Rooney, Marilyn Ruff, Harry & Patricia Rurup, James & Shirley Salvatore, Deanna Sanders, Clifton & Pearl Sandstrom-Smith, Peter Sartoris, Elaine & John Sartoris, Nancy Schriker, Janet Seewald, Donna Seilheimer, Raymond & Kathy Serena, Jean Smith, Mickey & Helen Smith, Scott Smith & Annaliese Watson, Karolyn Snow, Mike & Sandy Spahr, David Spahr, Michael Spahr, John & Carol Stansfield, Judy Staples, Diane Stevenson, Susan Stiller, Anne Stokes-Hochberg, James & Paulette Stuart, Susan Steinway, Bennie Swanson, James Sweeney, Carolyn Temple, Debbie & Doug Tihonovich, Lamar Trant, Kari Traver, Maria Tucker, Mary Twinem, Dave & Helene Van Manen, Bill & Barbara Vidmar, Rosalie Vigna & Warren Nolan, Joseph & Rhonda Violi, Amanda Weidner, Debra Wellen, Joseph & Linda Welte, Michael Wenzl, Elaine & Craig West, Anne & Ruben Whitfield, Brad & Michelle Whitney, Genevieve Willas, Nancy Williams, Georgia Woodworth, Barbara & Mark Yeager, Rebecca Youker, Lori Youngren, and Kim Zikmund.



# It Takes a Community

By Jonathan Pilarski

A year ago, I was writing to all of you for the first time as I introduced myself as the new Executive Director of Mountain Park Environmental Center. As I write to you this time, I can't help but to reflect on all that *we* have accomplished in the past year. And I say "we" because I am including you in our accomplishments.

As a non-profit, very little of our revenue comes from earned income, and in 2016, roughly half of our revenue came as a result of our fundraising efforts. While a large portion of our fundraising dollars come from grants, our members and individual donors account for 40% of our fundraising dollars and more than 20% of our total revenue. This was capped off by an amazing \$10,070 raised on Colorado Gives Day on December 6. The impact you have on our organization cannot be overstated!!

And perhaps more importantly, we spend 100% of your individual donations and membership payments to support our programs and projects. Some of the programs your donations supported in 2016 include:

Raising more than \$8000 for summer camp scholarships. We use these donations to meet our goal of ensuring that financial reasons are never a reason for a child to not attend summer camp. You helped more than 40 kids attend summer camp last year.

Supporting our Earth Studies Program. Earth Studies began its fifteenth year in the fall of 2016. You helped us bring more than 1300 Pueblo City Schools fifth-grade students to Pueblo Mountain Park for outdoor-based nature and science education. Our surveys tell us that 80% of these kids have never been to the mountains before. You are providing these students with an experience they won't soon forget.

Supporting our fire mitigation efforts in Pueblo Mountain Park. October of 2016 was a frightening time for the Beulah Community as two wildfires threatened our valley. MPEC continues fire mitigation and healthy forest projects began by

the City of Pueblo in 2002. These efforts reduce the risks of fires started by picnickers in Pueblo Mountain Park from spreading outside the park. They also provide a fuel break to any fires coming from the south or west of the park and potentially

give firefighters a chance to prevent those kinds of fires from threatening the homes surrounding the park. On a side note: the wood collected from our fire mitigation efforts are used in our biomass heating system for the Horseshoe Lodge. This not only saves us thousands of dollars in propane costs, but ensures that we are using a renewable resource for our heating needs.

Allowing us to offer a new program: Forest School for Little Rangers. Forest School began in October and is being offered to around 400 preschool students from Pueblo, including their parents. Not only are these families being shown how they can safely interact with nature, but the parents are receiving important instruction on topics such as Adverse Childhood Experiences from our partners from Catholic Charities and Health Solutions.

In addition, you give us the ability to offer a variety of programs for the community such as guided hikes, yoga in the park, and writing workshops.

They say it takes a village to raise a child. Similarly, I would argue it takes a community to run a mountain park. An organization like ours could not exist without community support. We would not be able to offer award winning programs without financial contributions from our donors. Thank you for being an important part of our organization and for helping us have the impact that we have on our community. 🌱



**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](http://www.hikeandlearn.org)**

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# MPEC'S 2017 SUMMER CAMPS



Summer may seem like a long way away, but it is not really too early to plan your child's summer camp experiences. Summer camps provides children with days filled with Nature fun and life-long memories. Transportation from Pueblo is included in MPEC camps, and our amazing scholarship program can help those who need financial assistance. Here is our 2017 camp schedule; descriptions, prices, and many other details can be found at our website, [www.hikeandlearn.org](http://www.hikeandlearn.org), including applying for a scholarship and registering. Please do not wait to register, as many camps fill up!

**Cubs Camp (Entering K-1st Grade)** Day Camp, 8am – 1:30pm; Jun 12th-16th OR Jul 17th-21st

**Nature Explorers (Entering 2nd-3rd Grade)** Day Camp, 8am – 3pm; Jun 19th-23rd OR Jul 24th-28th

**Intrepid Adventurers (Entering 4th-5th Grade)** Day Camp, 8am – 3pm; Jun 26th-30th OR Jul 30th-Aug 4th

**Survival Camp (Entering 5th-6th Grade)** 3-day/2-night overnight camp; Jul 5th-7th

**NEW!!! Gear-Up Mountain Bike Adventure Camp (Entering 5th-7th Grade)** 3-day/2-night overnight camp; Jul 11th-13th

**Mission Wolf Camp 1 and 2 (Entering 6th-8th Grade)** 3-day/2-night overnight camp; June 20th-22nd OR July 18th-20th

**Mission Wolf Camp 3 (Entering 8th-10th Grade)** 3-day/2-night overnight camp; Aug 1st-3rd

**NEW!!! Water and Rock (Entering 6th-8th Grade)** 3-day/2-night overnight camp; Jun 27th-29th

**NEW FOR GIRLS ONLY!!! Young Women Inspired by Nature: Art and Yoga Camp (Entering 6th-9th Grade)** 3-day/2-night overnight camp; Jul 17th-19th

**Greenhorn Wilderness Survival Camp (Entering 7th-9th Grade)** 3-day/2-night overnight camp; Jul 25th-27th





# Why Summer Camp?

By Taylor Driver

Summer camp can be one of the most rewarding and unforgettable experiences in a child's life. If you've ever attended camp, you're not surprised to hear that. Experiencing camp yourself, you know the profound positive effects that still matter to you as an adult, and you also know that you want the same thing for your own kids. But, if you didn't go to camp during your youth, you may not realize just how good the experience is for children. You may not know why so many people are committed to sending their kids to camp. Here are ten benefits of sending your child to summer camp:

**Adventure:** Camp is the perfect place for kids to get to experience new, exciting activities while exploring their surroundings in a safe, supported, fun environment. Children welcome this as a freedom to blossom in new directions.

**Friendship:** Camp is the place where kids make some of their best friends. Free from the social expectations pressuring them at school, camp encourages kids to relax and make friends easily.

**Character development:** On top of making new friends, campers also develop an appreciation for the qualities required to cultivate and strengthen these relationships. Camp provides children with the core values of a strong, moral individual by teaching them about ethics, honesty, caring, respect and responsibility, for themselves and others.

**Self-confidence:** Camp helps children build self-confidence and self-esteem by removing the kind of competition that shapes their lives at school. With its non-competitive activities and opportunities to succeed, campers are set-up to feel confident and accomplished.

**Connectedness with Nature:** Camp is a wonderful antidote to "Nature deficit disorder," to the narrow experience of modern indoor life. Outdoor experiences enrich camper's perception of the world and supports healthy child development.

**Positive risk-taking:** Camp promotes "challenge by choice", encouraging campers to take the lead in deciding what to try, providing plenty of support along the way. **Camp makes sure your kids have the skills they need to face the challenge at hand** and encouraging

them to push their boundaries, but ultimately letting them decide how far to stretch.

**Increased physical activity:** As children spend so much time these days inside and mostly sitting down, camp provides a wonderful opportunity to move their bodies.

**Unplug from Technology:** When kids take a break from technology, they rediscover their creative powers and engage the real world—real people, real activities, and real emotions. Unplugging helps them realize that with a little imagination, there's always plenty to do.

**Develop social skills:** Camp teaches children to communicate, to work together as part of a team and to be a leader. Leadership is developed by asking campers to fulfill responsibilities that may not be expected of them elsewhere, while sharing resources and attention helps foster teamwork and the desire to participate

**Gain resiliency:** The kind of encouragement and nurture kids receive at camp makes it a great environment to endure setbacks, try new things, and see that improvement comes when you give something another try.

MPEC camps aim to provide children with a community of caring mentors who facilitate experiential education that leads to self-respect and appreciation for themselves, their families, and their community. All of the outcomes—friendships, overcoming challenges, staying healthy and building character—prepare them for bigger, brighter lives down the road. So take a look at our summer camp listing, and see if there is a camp that would be the right fit for the child or children in your life. And don't let limited finances get in the way – we have a scholarship program so all kids can attend camp. 🌻

**MPEC sends a springtime thank you** to Carol Kyte, Jan Myers, Helen Philipsen, Maggie Campbell, Elaine Sartoris, Anne Whitfield, and Anne Moulton for putting the winter newsletter mailing together; Shawna Shoaf for continually helping out with various graphics design and layout; special thanks to Steve Douglas for his expert contributions to establishing MPEC's first state certified burn plan; Dave Overlin for his continuous support of the professional development of MPEC maintenance staff; Dave & Helene Van Manen for donating materials for improving the trail maps; and Youth Offender Services for all their help in the advancement of MPEC's ongoing forest stewardship projects.







# Spring Guided Hikes

We will do all we can to dirty your feet, mess up your hair and put a sparkle in your eye on a Guided Hike in the Mountain Park. Many folks think these spring months are the best months to hike in the park – birds are melodically carrying out their breeding activities, wildflowers are at their peak, and the winter skies are behind us. MPEC has another great line-up of hikes during these lovely months. It is best to dress in layers 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. MPEC members free, non-members \$5.

**Registration required: [www.hikeandlearn.org](http://www.hikeandlearn.org)**

☼ **Sun, Mar 19, 1pm, Spring Equinox Saunter** The sun is halfway on its sky-climbing journey between its December low point on the winter solstice and its June high point on the summer solstice. We'll be searching for signs of spring as we acknowledge the equinox on this hike.

☼ **Sun, Apr 2, 1pm, "Zuke's" April Walk Your Dog**

**Hike** Enjoy a guided hike with your pooch, with the added bonus of healthy treats for your dog provided by Zuke's Dog Treats! This hike is for all you dog lovers out there. Dogs must be leashed.

- ☼ **Sat, Apr 22, 10am, Celebrate the Earth Hike** Join us as we saunter along the trails of the park, enjoy the emerging spring, and celebrate the earth on this Earth Day hike.
- ☼ **Sat, May 6, 10am, "Zuke's" May Walk Your Dog Hike** MPEC's guided hikes for folks and their dogs have been very popular, so we're doing one each month this spring. Your dog friends will also be treated with healthy snacks provided by Zuke's Dog Treats! Dogs must be leashed.
- ☼ **Saturday, May 20, 1:30, Yoga in Nature Saunter** A perfect combination: yoga and the natural world. Join Julie Emmons from Open Studio Yoga as she leads us through some trailside yoga poses while on a gentle hike surrounded by the wonders of Nature. Appropriate for all levels of yoga experience.
- ☼ **Sunday, May 21, 10am, Spring Wildflower / Intro to Watercolor Hike** Enjoy learning about the wildflowers in bloom and the basics of how to paint them with watercolors on this guided hike. You will be guided through flower identification as well as watercolor basics, suitable for all levels of artists. All painting materials provided.
- ☼ **Sun, Jun 4, 9am, "Zuke's" June Walk Your Dog Hike** One more time this spring, 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.
- ☼ **Fri, Jun 9, 7pm, Full Moon Music Hike** MPEC's first full moon hike of the year will include a mini trailside folk concert. Ranger Dave will bring along his guitar as day becomes night and June's Strawberry Moon rises over the hogback.
- ☼ **Sat, Jun 10, 8:00am, Birding Hike** Pueblo Mountain Park is breeding habitat for many birds, and we will be up early with the birds, looking – and listening – for them. Bring along your binoculars, and your field guides and you have them. A perfect way to welcome the approaching summer season!
- ☼ **Sat, June 17, 9am, Summer Solstice Hike** Enjoy a Mountain Park morning saunter a few days before the official solstice, when spring gently slips into summer.

"AND AT THE  
END OF THE  
DAY, YOUR FEET  
SHOULD BE  
DIRTY, YOUR  
HAIR MESSY,  
AND YOUR EYES  
SPARKLING."  
~ SHANTI



# Four Strong Winds

By Taylor Driver

There is a Scandinavian saying, "There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing." As firm believers in this notion, we run our two comprehensive environmental education programs year-round. Through sun, snow, and rain, our Rangers will gear our students up to go explore the park, using the weather as another teaching tool. We have snow-boots, hats, gloves, coats, and rain ponchos for whatever the weather throws at us. If a student comes wearing the wrong gear, we are equipped with the tools needed to make their day enjoyable.

However, there is one form of weather that does not fall into that saying, and for us it is high winds. High winds have the potential to lead to serious injuries. Most people tend to think of windy conditions as being an annoyance, such as when it blows dust into one's eyes or throws objects around a yard. But in certain outdoor settings, it can be much more than annoying. While we wouldn't trade our beautiful forested classroom for anything, high winds can pose a serious hazard: knocking down small branches from the canopy, uprooting dead trees, and snapping otherwise healthy ponderosa pines in half.

So we play it safe, paying very close attention to the National Weather Service's wind advisories and rescheduling programs when needed. Due to the windy start this year has had, over the past two months, we have had to reschedule six Forest School for Little Rangers days and nine Earth Studies days.

Despite the reschedules, on the days that the winds have given us a reprieve, our students are out in full force throughout the park, learning, moving, and enjoying their days. In spite of all the wind cancellations, during the first two months of 2017 our programs have had nearly 120 preschoolers and their parents in the park, and almost 900 fifth graders. So, no matter the challenges we face, MPEC is so proud that for the first time in our history we are offering two, year-long compressive environmental education programs to the students of Pueblo's District 60, and reaching more young minds than ever



before. Along with Earth Studies, which is currently in its 15<sup>th</sup> year serving 5<sup>th</sup> graders, this school year we added Forest School for Little Rangers, designed specifically for preschoolers and their parents/guardians.

If you are planning a hike in the Mountain Park or other forested areas, know before you go: Pay attention to high wind advisories and high wind warnings issued by the National Weather Service. Stay indoors or choose an open, un-forested area to hike in if a high wind advisory or warning is in effect. If you get caught in a situation where you are outside with high winds, take the following precautions:

**Take shelter immediately** if there are high winds in the area you are visiting.

**Watch out** for falling limbs, trees, and flying debris.

**Be careful when driving.** Strong winds can make driving difficult, especially high profile vehicles such as motorhomes, campers and trucks. Be careful on bridges and overpasses.



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!



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# The Sounds of Spring

By Dave Van Manen

Yesterday I heard the first squawk of a flicker, a breeding behavior of this large woodpecker. A week ago, I found the season's first blooming wildflowers, a few spring beauties under a stand of oaks along the Tower Trail. Even though it seems as if winter has hardly arrived, considering how little snow we've received so far, the bird and the flowers say that spring is still on its way.

Unless the heavens start delivering some significant moisture (which, of course, could be underway by the time you are reading this, since I'm writing this during the last week of February), my hunch is this will not be a banner spring for wildflowers. But, as I do every spring, I look forward to the return of the migratory birds that left the area last fall to points south. These feathered visitors will return to add their songs to the resident birdsong that will soon fill the air with the music of the spring.

Before any of the migrants return, the woods will already be alive with the songs of our year-round residents. It's the males that do the singing, either to attract a mate or to let others know that a certain neck of the woods is already taken, telling intruders to go find somewhere else to nest.

The descending two-note song of the black-headed chickadee; the mountain chickadee's somewhat less musical two to three-note song, as all notes are essentially the same pitch; the buzzy trill of the spotted towhee; these and others are the songs that the year-round residents will be singing as we first hear the whistle of the returning broad-tailed hummingbird in mid April. Incidentally, the whistle created by the wingtips of this tiny bird is only made by the males in flight – the female broad-tailed hummingbird's flight lacks the whistle.

Before April becomes May, one of the most musical singers, the black-headed grosbeak, returns to set up nest – a loosely constructed cup of needles, thin twigs and stems placed on the outer branches of a tree. The song of this pretty



large-beaked, mostly orange and black finch is as lovely as the bird is showy – similar to a robin's song, only sweeter and more musical, as if a robin took singing lessons.

By late April, the park will also see the return of the dazzling western tanager; its orange-red head, bright yellow body and coal black wings make this bird one of the showiest to call the area's conifer forests home for the warm season. Its song can also be compared to the robin, although raspier and shorter in length. Unlike the black-headed grosbeak's "robin with voice lessons" song, the western tanager's song is sometimes likened to a robin's, only with a sore throat.

Speaking of the American Robin, this very familiar bird is often overlooked because of its familiarity. Found throughout the continent, in parks like New York's Central Park, Rocky Mountain forests, and Alaska's deep wilderness, the American robin, like most members of the thrush family, is a fine singer. Unlike the grosbeak, tanager, and hummingbird, the robin is a year-round resident of the area, and does not venture far, if at all, during the winter. The spring bird ensemble heard in Pueblo Mountain Park will certainly include a generous share of the cheery song of this iconic American bird. 🐦

"IN THE SPRING I  
HAVE COUNTED  
ONE HUNDRED  
AND THIRTY-  
SIX DIFFERENT  
KINDS OF  
WEATHER  
INSIDE OF FOUR  
AND TWENTY  
HOURS."  
~ MARK TWAIN



# sitting zazen, morning of your passing

## A Memento Mori

“When you find your place,  
where you are, practice occurs.”  
~ Dōgen

gentle morning rain  
a baby cricket on the wall  
I can see my breath

the hummingbird  
sips at the sugar then flies away  
disappearing into the green  
from whence it came

the morning of your passing  
I sit in silence

a small yellow locust leaf  
falling,  
wakes me  
                    then another

and I know  
eventually  
all will follow in this manner

so for now  
I sit in silence  
once more  
as we have done together before  
and  
now I pet the dog  
who has come to sit with me  
and my silence rests  
near the hummingbird feeder  
and so,  
my silence sits with the hum  
of each  
coming to sip the sweetness  
and then going  
and  
my silence is suddenly a crow  
calling from the wilderness  
                    unseen, before flying through  
                                    just beyond me  
on silent wings  
and  
the pat of drops from eaves



continues to make slow music  
some time after  
                    the cloud has passed  
and suddenly  
I am aware  
of the ubiquitous susurrus of the creek  
always there in the wings  
so much so, that it goes unheard, unseen  
always moving through the thickets of life  
on it's way to the sea  
from whence it came  
and  
dipping briefly into *The Practice of the Wild*,  
I misread a line about the region  
reading instead, religion  
                    the line rendered in mind as:  
Every religion has its wilderness.

Wilderness is the parts less traveled  
home with its hearth is one pole,  
and the parts less visited  
                    ... out there “where the bears are”  
is another,  
knowing

every religion has its wilderness  
and this one is mine.

---

August 19, 2015, David Anthony Martin

In mindful memory of and honor to Louanna Littlecheeks with composted “wreading” (a la Rasula) to include Gary Snyder’s *The Practice of the Wild* giving fertility to its ecology of mind.



# OTHER SPRING PROGRAMS AT MPEC

For all the details, pricing, and to register for these programs, go to MPEC's website at [www.hikeandlearn.org](http://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.

- 🐾 **Spring Equinox Drum Circle** Drum in the spring around the fire circle! **Sun, Mar 19, 6:30 – 8pm**
- 🐾 **A Walk through Three Seasons: Nature Writing Workshops for Budding Writers** Join Ranger Pine (Dave Martin) for one or both of these morning workshops as he walks you to some of the park's most remote and inspiring locations where you will observe and write with like- minded individuals to help fuel the creative process. Hot Lunch option available. **Saturdays, Mar 25, May 20, 10am – noon.**
- 🐾 **Nature Toddlers** Little ones get to experience the wonders of Nature and the emerging spring season with music, exploration, fun! Dress to be outside! **Fridays at 10am: Apr 14, May 5, Jun 9**
- 🐾 **Yoga in Nature Saunter** A perfect combination: yoga and the natural world. Join Julie Emmons from Open Studio Yoga as she leads us through some trailside yoga poses while on a gentle hike surrounded by the wonders of Nature. Appropriate for all levels of yoga experience. **Saturday, May 20, 1:30**
- 🐾 **Spring Wildflower / Intro to Watercolor Hike** Enjoy learning about the wildflowers in bloom and the basics of how to paint them with watercolors on this guided hike. You will be guided through flower identification as well as watercolor basics, suitable for all levels of artists. All painting materials provided. **Sunday, May 21, 10am**
- 🐾 **Weed I.D. Presentation and Hike** Beulah resident Sarah Parks will facilitate an hour of classroom instruction followed by a short hike through the park to look at some of the area's most common weeds. Learn basic identifying features of each weed and the best way to manage them. Sarah has worked for the U.S. Forest Service as both a Botany Technician and Range Technician performing plant surveys. She is an avid hiker and often finds herself pulling weeds along the trail while hiking at the Mountain Park. **Sat, June 3, 9-11am**
- 🐾 **Summer Solstice Drum Circle** Join us for a circle of drumming in and celebrating the summer solstice and the sun's highest point in the sky. **Wed, Jun 21, 6:30-8pm**

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"SPRING HAS RETURNED. THE EARTH IS LIKE A CHILD THAT KNOWS POEMS."  
~ RAINER MARIA RILKE

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

MPEC FACEBOOK

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