

Mountain Park NEWS

Summer 2017 • Vol. 18 Num. 3

A Devil of a Trail

The banter of four happy hikers, unaware of my presence in a sunny spot a little ways off the trail, fades into the forest as they disappear up the trail. I am left with only the sounds of the morning woods – a few buzzing insects and a chorus of bird song. Black-headed grosbeak, ovenbird, broad-tailed hummingbird, Stellar's jay, dark-eyed junco, mourning dove, to name a few. The Devil's Canyon Trail is the park's most heavily used trail, and its name is also one of the most commonly used names for American places.

There is Devil's Tower in Wyoming, our nation's first National Monument (designated by Teddy Roosevelt in 1906), which likely got its name due to the misinterpretation of one of its native names. There's Devil's Sinkhole, a bat-infested pit in Texas that has at times been mined for its guano. Then there's the Dirty Devil River in Utah, a place where Burch Cassidy reportedly hid out. Speaking of Utah, I just spent a night at Devil's Canyon Campground near Blanding, named after a nearby canyon that got its devilish name because of the challenges it posed to early settlers. Then there's Devil's Cornfield in Death Valley National Park in California, named after a weed that thrives there; another Devil's Canyon in Utah, this one in the San Rafael Swell; Devil's Peak in Oregon, and the nearby monolith called Devil's Tooth; Devil's Elbow, a bend in Missouri's Big Piney River that easily floods; and the popular Devil's Nose, which, among many others, is a mountain ridge in West Virginia, a small community in Kentucky, and, moving into more distant Americas, part of a hairy train ride in the Andes Mountains in Ecuador. But, I diverge. Back to the Mountain Park's very own Devil's Canyon.

Yes, the Devil's Canyon Trail does see its fair share of hikers. I walked by the trailhead yesterday, a busy, early-summer holiday weekend and counted eleven parked cars. The trail may also be the park's wildest. Does that sound like a contradiction – most heavily used *and* wildest. My definition of *wild* does not necessarily mean a lack of people, at least on the occasional busy weekend. By wild, I mean self-willed, impermanent, self-organizing, creating its own sense of order. Or, as the frenzied power of lots of moving water can create, disorder.

For the forty years I've been hiking this trail, and for half that many that I've been involved in maintaining it, it is clear to me that the Devil's Canyon drainage doesn't give a hoot about the little old trail that winds along its wooded, and occasionally soggy, contours. The seasonal creek that runs through the drainage, known as Devil's Dribble, usually does



"MY HEART
FOUND ITS HOME
LONG AGO IN THE
BEAUTY, MYSTERY,
ORDER, AND
DISORDER OF
THE FLOWERING
EARTH." ~ LADY
BIRD JOHNSON



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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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just as its name implies – it dribbles along, usually hidden beneath rock and soil, occasionally surfacing here and there. It makes its presence more known during the spring runoff, when melting snow increases the flow. But, mostly it just dribbles. Then, every few years, a major rain event serves as a stark reminder that Nature still rules here, and that Devil's Canyon can still be a very wild place.

The big rains of early May were the most recent of these events, sending a raging torrent of wild water through the drainage, once again illustrating that any "improvements" done to keep a walkable trail through it are, indeed, impermanent. Massive boulders, huge logs, enormous amounts of soil, branches, rocks and other debris were all moved and thrown about by the self-willed flood that crashed through the Devil's Canyon drainage a few weeks ago. Talk about disorder – at least, by those of us who maintain the trail.

So, we will soon be back out here, again, trying to impose our own sense of order to make the Devil's Canyon Trail a bit more accommodating to the average hiker. But, the work will be carried out knowing full well that this is, ultimately, a wild place. Devil's Canyon remains a place where humans are still only visitors, a place where Nature still goes about its business with no regard for the little trail that we are constantly trying to keep up. And, do you know what? That is perfectly fine with me!

~ Dave Van Manen,
May 30, 2017

Why I Support MPEC

By Kathy Martinez



away from the classrooms. Both of my daughters did that in 5th Grade years before, in the early 90s. I chaperoned both times. The kids enjoyed themselves and learned lots. The vision included much more extensive use of the buildings in the park, and the creation of an environmental center. I fully and enthusiastically supported the vision.

Then, the vision became a project with a goal. So many people, from Beulah, Pueblo, Denver, and beyond; even the governor jumped on board to help renovate the Horseshoe Lodge. This project needed money, time, materials, a Board of Directors, personnel, and continuous community cooperation. I supported this huge endeavor with monetary donations and some elbow grease. I

did this because I had these to give.

There was the Earth Studies Program. So many young people from Pueblo – thousands and thousands of them through the years – have come to the Mountain Park with their school classes and have learned about ecology, biology, our environment, animals, plants, community, friendship, trees, songs.....it goes on and on as the programs have grown and expanded. THIS is the top reason I donate and support. I have supported the Earth Studies Program since its inception and will continue to do so as long as is possible. What MPEC does for and gives to the kids is immeasurable. All seasons, all weather. Kids learn not to be afraid to be outdoors!!!! Kids learn to love the outdoors!!!!

Summer camps, girls' groups, preschool classes, special activities and an information and resource center in the Horseshoe Lodge that is invaluable to our understanding of our community and world.

COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT, KIDS, ADULTS, BEING OUTDOORS!

All of this is in Pueblo's back yard.

This is why I continue to support MPEC.
This is why I donate money to programs.

Year One of Forest School for Little Rangers

By Dave Van Manen

When MPEC started the Earth Studies program way back in 2002, we always believed it would be a good program, but I suppose we never really considered if it would still be serving 5th graders in 2017, 15 years later. And now, with Forest School for Little Rangers just completing its first year, we once again believe we have a great new program, this one for preschoolers. And we are wondering – will it be going strong in the year 2032, 15 years from now? We sure hope so! Here are a few photos of this wonderful program that connects preschoolers, and their mom/dads/grandparents, to Nature.



Weather Patterns Do Indeed Change

By Dave Van Manen

I just re-read the cover article that I wrote for the spring issue of *Mountain Park News*. In it, I expressed obvious concern over the scarcity of snow and the drought that had been gripping us tight since late summer. Through the end of February, when I wrote the article, the park

had seen only 24" of snow after a fall that brought barely an inch of moisture (all in the form of a few very light rains). "It will take another eight feet to bring us to an average winter's snowfall," I wrote, but then I said, "I know March and April can be very snowy, and weather patterns do change."

Little did I know

just how prophetic those words could be. As March slipped past the spring equinox, any sign that the drought was letting up remained hidden. It was still bone dry. But then, with spring only a couple days old, a switch got flipped. Yes, the weather pattern was about to change.

Between March 23's hit of early spring moisture that fell mostly as rain due to the rather warm temps, and this morning, when I measured 0.29" of moisture (also rain), a whopping 17.21" of precipitation has fallen on Pueblo Mountain Park. Some of those warm temps lingered into April, so a fair share of that moisture fell as rain. But not all of it.

March added only a bit more than seven inches of additional snow, so we were still a long way from an average winter's snow (which is

118"). But April delivered. The month wasn't a week old and two plus feet of new snow had nearly doubled the winter's snow total. By the last day of that wet month, a total of nearly five feet of new snow (57.1" to be precise) had fallen on the park. This brought the snow season's total to 87.6"

Looking at only snow totals, the 2016/2017 snow season still comes in pretty low (although, since 1990, five winters saw less snow). But what was unusual this year was the significant amount of early spring moisture that fell as rain, due to many days when the temps were much warmer than typical early to mid spring temps. Hence, a fair share of the 9.94" of moisture that fell on the park between the last week of March and the end of April was in the form of rain.

And then April became May. Was I talking about rain? Over 40% of those 17.21 inches of water that the park has experienced since that nice rain on March 23 has fallen since we changed our calendars to May. Just over seven and a quarter inches of May rain (with a trace of wet snow), and today is only the 23rd. Most of that rain fell in one long, potent storm that sent torrents of water down all the drainages that come through the town of Beulah. Washed out and damaged roads and bridges, flooded basements, stranded residents, and helicopter evacuations were but some of the stories that floated out of Beulah thanks to that mid-May storm.

The park was not immune – the main pond suffered extensive damage from the massive amount of water and debris that roared down South Creek, and we experienced another taste of the wholly inadequate storm drainage pipes that were installed in front of the Horseshoe Lodge back in the 1930s.

In my newsletter article, I also wrote about "leaning into what is." Well, my recent leaning into what is has had me quite soggy. I'm also leaning into a landscape that is showing off a very healthy coat of green. And lots of wildflowers punctuating that green with yellows, oranges, and blues. Will the weather pattern change again? Sure it will, at some point. In the meantime, I will keep leaning into what is – which is wet!



The trail to the pond, morning of April 30, 2017

Five Big Kitty Cats

By Dave Van Manen

Beulah has been in the news a bit more than usual lately. Two wildfires in October brought much attention to our area, as did the recent flooding in May. And then there was the video footage of five mountain lions wandering through a Beulah property in the middle of the night. The image of those five big cats nonchalantly walking by a security video camera on a quiet late March night has gained the interest of many people near and far.

Over the past several decades, with more and more people moving into Colorado and more and more development taking place in previously undeveloped land, lion sightings – and camera images of lions – are becoming much more common. What stands out about this video footage is seeing five mountain lions – or cougars, or pumas, or panthers, or painters, or catamounts (*Felis concolor* has many names due to its enormous historic range covering most of both American continents) – together.

Cougars are solitary animals. So the image of five lions all together is quite unusual, and it does beg the question: Why would these normally solitary animals be in a group of five? Although one can spot some size variations if looking at the footage closely, all five appear to be full-size. But full-size does not mean all grown up. Four of those lions are likely adolescents – roughly the same size as the fifth one, Mom!

A dive into my trusty *Mammals of Colorado* text (James Fitzgerald, Carron Meaney, David Armstrong) reveals that *Felis concolor* litters range from one to six, and they stay with her for somewhere between 12 and 22 months. Considering the Beulah area's very ample supply of mule deer, local mountain lions' primary food, and the generally mild and easy winter, this female was successful in raising four youngsters. As one commenter wrote on a local news channel's Facebook page, "Wow. Mom raised four cubs last year! What a champ she is!"

It will probably not be long before all four of those young lions will be sent out into the wilds – or not-so-wilds – to find their own territories and fend for themselves. I may be anthropomorphizing here, but once they are off on their own, I can't

help but think that Mom will be ready for a nice lazy summer without four youngsters underpaw!

It is worth noting that mountain lions have always been around the Beulah area. I recall seeing lion tracks on a late fall hike in 1977 in the Mountain Park. And the time I saw a lion walk across the road and melt into the trees a hundred feet in front of me on an after-dinner walk in the park with my old German shepherd sometime in the early 90s. Both experiences were thrilling, and I consider myself quite lucky to have had them.

Cougars are quiet and elusive, and are almost never interested in interacting with people. According the Colorado Parks and Wildlife, "People rarely get more than a brief glimpse of a mountain lion in the wild. Lion attacks on people are rare, with fewer than a dozen fatalities in North America in more than 100 years." Go to <http://cpw.state.co.us/lions> for lots of good information about living with mountain lions from Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

If you haven't seen the video of the five lions, simply type in "Beulah mountain lions" on your internet browser and it will take you to many options to see the video. Enjoy!



MPEC sends a heartfelt thank you to Becky Brown, Trish Neff, Jan Myers, Helen Philipsen, Elaine Sartoris, Linda Overlin, and Carol Kyte for so ably processing the spring newsletter mailing; Shawna Shoaf for continually helping out with various graphics design and layout; Dave Overlin for helping out with various park maintenance and equipment projects; and Steve Douglas for his continued involvement in our forest stewardship efforts.



Guided Hikes – Summer

WE CANNOT STOP
THE WINTER OR
THE SUMMER FROM
COMING. WE CANNOT
STOP THE SPRING OR
THE FALL OR MAKE
THEM OTHER THAN
THEY ARE. THEY ARE
GIFTS FROM THE
UNIVERSE THAT WE
CANNOT REFUSE.
BUT WE CAN CHOOSE
WHAT WE WILL
CONTRIBUTE TO LIFE
WHEN EACH ARRIVES.
~ GARY ZUKAV

Enjoy summer by choosing to participate in 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.

- **Sat, June 24, 9am, Welcome Summer Hike** Summer officially began a few days ago – acknowledge the arrival of summer on a guided hike along the flowery trails of Pueblo Mountain Park.
- **Fri, Jul 7, 7pm, 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.
- **Sun, July 9, 9am, Summer 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.

- **Sat, July 22, 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 11th 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).
- **Sun, Aug 6, 7pm, Full Moon Hike** Summer 2017 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!
- **Sat, Aug 26, 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.
- **Tues, Sept 5, 6:30pm, Full Moon Hike** This will be our last summer full moon hike of 2017, and these evening excursions are always a wonderful experience.
- **Sat, Sept 23, 1pm, Autumn Equinox Hike** Acknowledge the arrival of fall on this hike in Colorado's lovely southern foothills.



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!



ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE ON PAGE 9

Across: 2 pistil; 3 petal; 6 eye ring (no space); 7 stamen; 9 down; 11 bill shape (no space); 14 whorled; 15 ovary; 16 birdsong; 18 ornithologist; 22 tail shape (no space).

Down: 1 migration; 4 eye stripe (no space); 5 wing bars (no space); 8 molt; 10 alternate; 12 preen; 13 leaf arrangement (no space); 16 bird calls (no space); 17 botanist; 19 opposite; 20 sepal; 21 basal

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** 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**
- **Summer 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, July 9, 9am**
- **11th 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. **Sat, July 22, 9am**
- **Nature Toddlers** A wonderful way to enjoy Nature with your littlest one(s). Music, exploration, discovery, a gentle hike, fun! **Note that we are switching the program to Mondays! Mondays at 10am: Jul 17, Aug 21, Sept 18**
- **Autumn Equinox Drum Circle** Acknowledge the halfway point between the summer and winter solstices around MPEC's fire circle. **Thurs, Sept 21, 6:30-8pm**



"YELLOW BUTTERFLIES LOOK LIKE
FLOWERS FLYING THROUGH THE
WARM SUMMER AIR." ~ ANDREA
WILLIS

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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| <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Low-income | \$20/year | <input type="checkbox"/> Bear | \$600 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Squirrel (Basic Individual) | \$35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Basic Business | \$240 |
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 Can we tell a friend about the MPEC?

Name _____ e-mail _____
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ENVIRONMENTAL
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HORSESHOE LODGE & RETREAT CENTER

Looking for a Place to Hold a Meeting, Reunion, Workshop, or Other Event?

The Horseshoe Lodge and Retreat Center, which was fully renovated a few years ago, is the perfect place for groups, businesses, families, couples, or individuals to retreat into the beauty and simplicity of Nature. We have meeting spaces, bed & breakfast style rooms as well as dormitory accommodations, a porch of rocking chairs, and a full-service commercial kitchen. There's a low-elements challenge course just up the hill, ideal for team building activities. Right outside the doors are hiking trails, walking paths, picnic sites, wildlife watching, mountain biking, the bluebird labyrinth, and about a billion stars once the sun sets.

Through the years, the Horseshoe Lodge and Retreat Center has been used for all sorts of events, including business meetings, annual board retreats, family reunions, cancer survivor support groups, yoga retreats, artists' and writers' groups, residential camps, meditation retreats, and educational workshops.

Here's a sampling of some of the comments we've recently received by those who have used our facilities:

"Thank you for making our retreat great."

"Thank you for an amazing weekend of fabulous meals."

"Awesome! I could not have asked for a better day. The location is perfect, the building, everything!"

"You guys are the best. Thank you."

"What a beautiful facility. Thank you for hosting us."

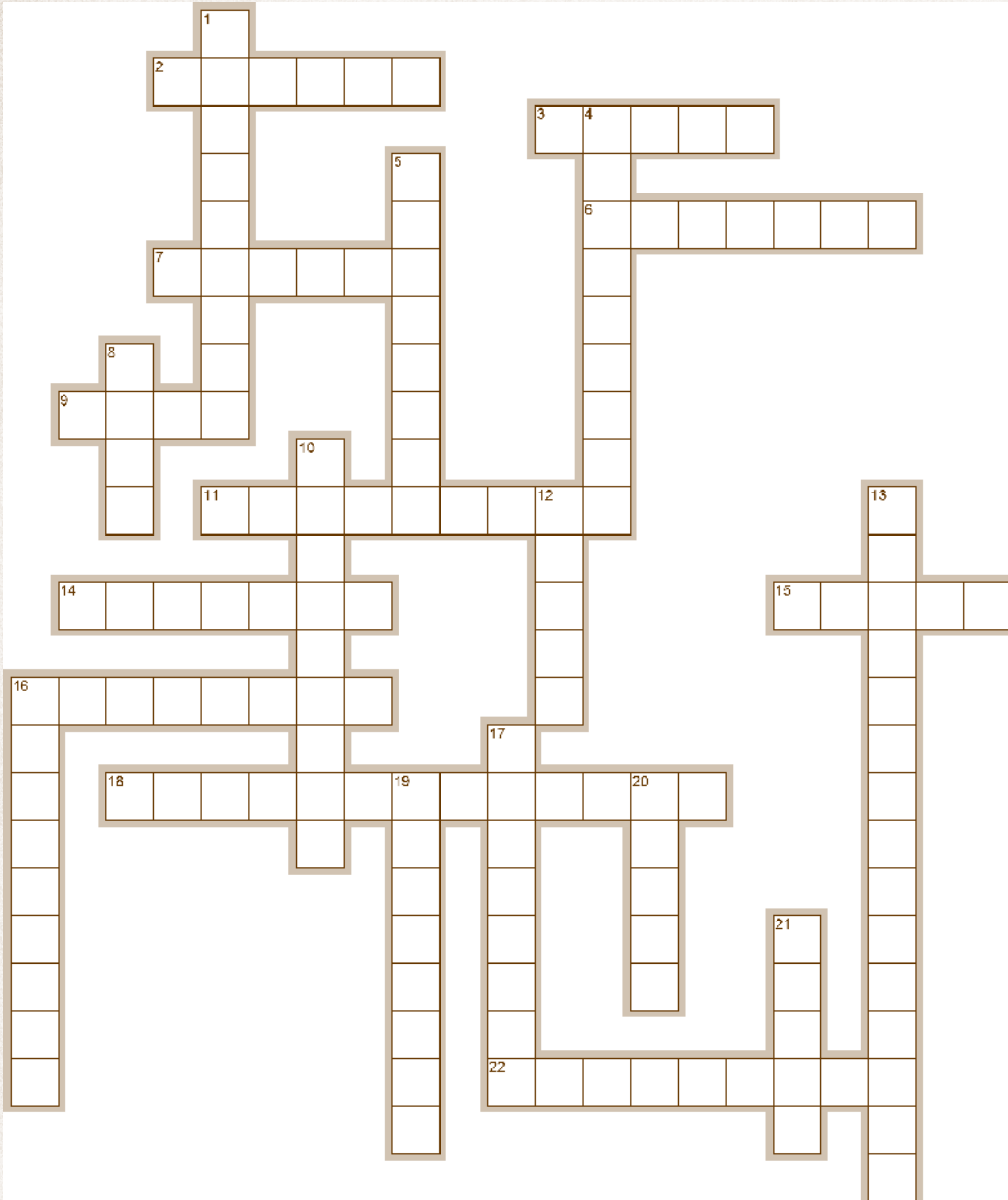
The Horseshoe Lodge and Retreat Center now has its own website. This will make it much easier for those interested in booking a room, exploring our facilities for an upcoming event, or just needing basic info on the Lodge. The new web address is www.horseshoelodge.org.

The Horseshoe Lodge and Retreat Center just might be the place you've been looking for to hold your next event. Please check out our new website and come on up for a personal tour. Everyone who takes a tour says the same thing: "This place is amazing – I had no idea!" Give us a call (719-485-4444) or send an email (guestrelations@hikeandlearn.org) to have your questions answered or to schedule a tour.

"MY FAVORITE WEATHER IS
BIRD-CHIRPING WEATHER."
~ TERRI GUILLEMETS

Are You Smarter than an Earth Studies 5th Grader?

As this newsletter is being put together, the last few days of the school year's Earth Studies program is finishing up its last few sessions (and will finish with an overnighter for South Park Elementary). This was the program's 15th year serving the 5th graders from Pueblo City Schools. We are already gearing up for year number sixteen of this award-winning program, busy with fund-raising, planning, and refining the program. Below is a crossword puzzle, one of the bus-riding activities we use to support the vocabulary of the **Birds and Wildflowers** lessons that comprise a part of the program's final session.



DOWN

1. Seasonal movement from one region to another. For example, turkey vultures fly from Colorado to southern Texas or Mexico for the winter, and then fly back up to Colorado in the spring
4. A line that is found above or through the eye of a bird
5. Light colored stripes seen on the wings of a bird when it is not in flight
8. To shed and replace old feathers
10. When leaves grow on either side of the stem and are not opposite each other
12. To clean, straighten, and fluff the feathers
13. The way leaves grow out of a plant (alternate, opposite, whorled, or basal)
16. Bird vocalizations used to communicate during feeding and migration, or to warn other birds about a possible danger
17. A scientist who specializes in the study of plants
19. When two leaves grow from the same place on the stem directly across from each other
20. One of the parts of a flower that usually surrounds the petals; are usually, but not always, green
21. A leaf arrangement where the leaves grow from the base of the plant (near the ground), not from up on the stem

ACROSS

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 2. The female or seed-bearing part of a flower. | 11. A characteristic used to identify birds. Usually short & stout, long & narrow, or hooked | 16. The notes repeated by a bird over and over in a regular pattern. Birds use this to help attract mates and sometimes defend territories. Usually more musical sounding than calls. |
| 3. One of the most colorful parts of a flower that usually surround the stamens and pistil | 14. A leaf arrangement where 3 or more leaves grow from the same place on a plant's stem | 18. A scientist who studies birds |
| 6. An obvious circle around the eye of a bird | 15. The part of a flower at the base of the pistil where the seeds are formed | 22. A characteristic used to identify birds. Usually rounded, square, or notched |
| 7. The pollen producing part of a flower | | |
| 9. Soft feathers next to a bird's body that | | |

Poetree

By Dory Dugal

(4th grader, Beulah School of Natural Sciences)

Tall and silent tree
Green and pointy tree
Calming and warm tree
Pine.
Big and warm tree
Green, red, and yellow tree
Leaves with 5 tree
Oak.
Tall and calming are trees
Why do we cut them?
They are good and still
Silent are trees
Tall are trees
Green are trees
No trees means
No habitat for the birds
Black, blue, yellow, red
Don't cut trees.



Tree art by Scarlett Stulb, 5th grader, Gold Camp Elementary

Printed on recycled paper

"FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I SAW THE HORIZON AS A CURVED LINE. IT WAS
ACCENTUATED BY A THIN SEAM OF DARK BLUE LIGHT – OUR ATMOSPHERE. OBVIOUSLY
THIS WAS NOT THE OCEAN OF AIR I HAD BEEN TOLD IT WAS SO MANY TIMES IN MY LIFE
I WAS TERRIFIED BY ITS FRAGILE APPEARANCE." ~ ULF MERBOLD, ASTRONAUT

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