

Mountain Park NEWS

Fall 2017 • Vol. 18 Num. 4

Reading the Landscape Calendar

I recently learned that a tool to help you interpret the meaning of a dream is to give the dream a title. What would an appropriate title be that would capture the primary theme of the dream, or the feeling the dream leaves you with? If I were to utilize that same technique to capture the essence of a hike, the title of this evening's hike would be *Summer is Slipping Away*.

Earlier, I had originally planned to do an afternoon hike, but late summer is still summer, and this afternoon was just too hot for my tastes to be on the trail. So, with the dinner dishes drying in the dish drainer (I still do the dishes the old-fashioned way, with my hands), and the cooling of this late summer evening already underway, here I am on the Mace Trail, sauntering through a landscape with a multitude of hints that fall is fast approaching.

I read somewhere that Thoreau said that if he were plopped down in his Walden woods with no knowledge of the date, he would be able to tell the date within just a day or two by what was happening on the land. Well, I am no Thoreau, and I already know the date, but if I didn't, I think I could get pretty close, maybe a week or so, to the date.

First, the obvious – the warm temps, the place on the horizon where the sun is setting, no snow or signs of it on the ground, the deciduous plants in full leaf – these provide a good sense of the general season. It is clearly not winter, or early spring, or late fall. The oaks and mountain mahogany leaves are still green – so the shorter days of fall, that slow down and eventually stop the production of chlorophyll and let the earthy yellows, reds, and oranges show through, have not yet arrived. I can see that the leaves lack that new-leaf luster – they are green, but a tired, less vibrant green. That tells me they've been hanging around a while. I did notice some yellow and a bit of red in the poison ivy patches down along the roads. *Toxicodendron rydbergii* has always been the plant to first show fall colors around here, usually well before the autumn equinox, so these are all helpful indicators of where we are on the calendar.



Tansy aster, a late summer / early fall wildflower

"THE DESTINY OF
HUMANS CAN NOT
BE SEPARATED FROM
THE DESTINY OF THE
EARTH."
~ THOMAS BERRY



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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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The wildflowers speak volumes. I see no spring beauty, penstemon, bladderpod, aspen daisy, wild rose, dogbane, or chiming bell in bloom, to name a few spring or early summer flowers. Well, during dry years, these species may not produce blossoms, even if it were May or June. So, their absence can be misleading.

What is in bloom is much more definitive. Around mid-summer, lots of the low-growing hairy golden aster usually start to bring much yellow to the landscape, along with the taller purples of smooth aster. I am seeing lots of both of these. The presence of pale goldenrod, and the prolific showing of sunspots and ragleaf bahia – all in yellow daisy bloom – are strong indicators that it somewhat past mid-summer. I have been seeing some porter aster – white rays around yellow disks – which speaks loudly that summer is certainly winding down and fall cannot be too far off. As does tansy aster, which is similar to smooth aster in color with purple or pink rays around a yellow disk, but the curving phyllaries (the bracts that form the cup-like receptacle that sunflower family flower heads sit in) differentiate it from its taller aster cousin.

I pause along the side of the trail and take in the soundscape. Hardly a sound. No birdsong at all, and nary a bird call either. If this were spring or earlier in the summer, there would be much more bird activity associated with the breeding that takes place then.

Put all of these clues together, and it points rather convincingly that it is late summer. Not yet fall, but it is not far off. The fact that the sun has already slipped below the western ridge, the clouds are peachy pink and quickly becoming bluish grey, and it is not quite 7:30, would further help me narrow down the date if I didn't already know it is August 29.

Summer, and this late summer day, are both slipping away. The cool of an almost-fall evening is sending me down the trail, past the just-starting-to turn poison ivy, back to my home and kitchen where my dishes are now dry and ready to be put away.

~ Dave Van Manen
August 29, 2017



Why We Support MPEC

By Diane Mueller and Glenn Runkewich

We have many reasons for supporting MPEC. As parents and grandparents, we are inspired by MPEC's vision to help people connect with nature. In the modern world, there is truly a "nature deficit". The roots of our ancestors lie in

"rolling the earth beneath our feet". MPEC's historical lodging and educational programs focus on connecting children, and by extension adults, to the natural world and fulfill the need to spend time in a place that is away from the digital world.

Every man, woman, and child throughout time has had only one possession: Mother Earth. Everything we have comes from the Earth and it is imperative we care for our great Mother. MPEC is a place where all of us can learn the importance of conservation, earth science, and enjoyment of the outdoors. We ask you to join us in our passion for environmental education through your generous donation of time and money.....or just "hike and learn". 🌱

MPEC sends many thanks to those who have supported us over the past few months through memberships and membership renewals, grants, and other donations: J. Miller Adam, Andrea Alfonso, Steve & Becky Brown, Mark Brunson, Mark & Bonnie Bryan, Maria Westy Bush, Jim Campbell, Ray Catalano, Laura Clemens, Anne Courtright, Steve Douglas & Pam Kubly, Maura Edison, Carol Fortino, Marjorie Genova, Donna J. Hinders & Roy Hipp, Dorothy Holloran, Greg & Anne Johnson, Donna & Duncan Juergenson, Randy Kalish, Andrea Keane, Doris Kester, Kathryn Kettler, Douglas Knepper, Kandy Learned, Linda Lopez, Sally Mara, Tedd Mathis, Mother Love Herbal Company, Diane Mueller & Glenn Runkewich, Carol Nance, Naomi O'Neill, David & Linda Overlin, Packard Foundation Fund for Pueblo, Rawlings Foundation, Virginia Rupp, Harry & Patricia Rurup, Dr. Jarvis & Mary Jo Ryals, Michelle Salazar, Deanna Sanders, Elaine & John Sartoris, Beth Ehrhardt & Scott Potts, Katherine Singer, Nancy Spence, Michael & Sandy Spahr, Judy Staples, Donna Stinchcomb & Robert Doyle, Anne Stokes-Hochberg, James Sweeney, Teresa Theriault, Lamar Trant, Helene & Dave Van Manen, Michael Wenzl, Heather and Joshua Wilcoxson and Carol Wright (plus a few anonymous donors). **THANK YOU – WE COULD NOT DO WHAT WE DO AT MPEC WITHOUT YOU!**

Gardening with Youth

Keri Powers aka Ranger Squirrel

With the recent completion of our Earth Studies greenhouse, we have added a new element of weather/climate science to our Earth Studies program (see article on page 4). Although we have yet to incorporate gardening / food production lessons into the program, I want to touch on this possible future addition to the program, or possibly a new MPEC program. I love the idea of getting today's youth back into gardening and getting their hands dirty.

In today's world that involves electronic and social media, we are seeing a decrease in getting our youth into the outdoors. Today's youth are connected to a different cyber-world that many of us did not grow up in. Many of them have never seen or been in a greenhouse, or even seen a garden. By teaching our youth about gardening, we can instill in them the value of learning where food comes from, as well as basic life skills that will help prepare them for their future. Gardening teaches skills such as goal setting, planning, caring for, and bringing new things to life, with a great sense of achievement in the end. It also teaches responsibility – to care for something so that it will grow and learning life-lessons and accepting consequences if it doesn't grow. And, gardening teaches self sufficiency – why not grow it instead of buying it.

Bringing today's youth into a garden setting can be a great way to connect them with Nature.



Gardening teaches them the life cycle and the rhythms of the natural world. They become physically active and are experiencing Nature in some of its finest moments. They see first-hand that food doesn't just show up on the shelf at the local market.

Lastly, gardening allows children to view Nature up close and personal. What better way to promote a sense of real accomplishment than for a child to plant a seed and nurture it all the way to the end of the growing process and get to see the actual fruits of their labor.

I will close with this quote by Robert Brault that sums this all up well, "Why try to explain miracles to your kids when you can just have them plant a garden." 🌱



MPEC's NATURE SHOP is open Monday – Friday, 8am – 4pm. Lots of great unique holiday gifts, including many **LIFE IS GOOD** t-shirts. Please stop by – your purchases are a great way to support our non-profit!

FALL 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.

- **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**
- **Autumn Wildflower / Watercolor Hike** Enjoy learning about and painting the late-season wildflowers still blooming as the fall takes hold. Ranger Henry Pounds will lead you through the basics of painting flowers with watercolors on this gentle guided hike. Suitable for all levels of artists. All painting materials provided. **Sat, Oct 7, 9 - 11am**
- **Nature Toddlers** A wonderful way to experience the wonders of Nature with your little one(s). **Mondays at 10am, Oct 9 and Nov 13**
- **MPEC Winter Open House** Stop by MPEC for some holiday festiveness, hot cocoa and other treats before heading over to the Pavilion for the Yule Log Celebration. The Nature Shop will also be open for some unique holiday gift shopping. **Sun, Dec 11, 11am-1pm**
- **Winter Solstice Drum Circle** Bundle up and enjoy a drumming circle around a warm campfire! **Wed, Dec 20, 6:30-8pm**



An Earth Studies Greenhouse

By Dave Van Manen



Here we go again – year number sixteen of the Earth Studies program is underway. Begun in 2002, the award-winning, multi-day program provides fifth graders with a multitude of educational

experiences, spread over the school year, in the outdoor classroom of Pueblo Mountain Park. In the early years, limited resources and infrastructure allowed us to reach a handful of Pueblo City School classes, the remaining receiving a one-day outdoor-based learning experience. Since 2008, with the completion of the Horseshoe Lodge classrooms (the program is outdoor-based, but we do need

indoor classroom space at times), every 5th grader from School District 60 (around 1300 each year) has participated in the program.

The program's extensive curriculum is built on district and state education standards. As these standards have evolved, so has the program's curriculum.

One update to this year's curriculum is an exploration of how the "Earth's geosphere, atmosphere, hydrosphere, and biosphere interact as a complex system," as stated in the Colorado Academic Standards, so students "understand the processes and interactions of Earth's systems."

Such an exploration involves several topics, including weather; renewable and non-renewable energy sources; how the Sun can be used as an energy source; the carbon cycle; gathering and analyzing weather data; and reading and understanding graphs. As we researched and developed lessons and activities to support

these educational objectives, the idea of having a greenhouse came up. "Wouldn't it be great," we thought, "if the students could actually see and experience a real greenhouse, if they could physically feel the greenhouse effect, as a way of illustrating how the atmosphere does the same for the Earth as the walls of the greenhouse do for the greenhouse?"

Well, the idea soon became a project, and the project has now become a reality. MPEC member Michael Wenzl, who in the past had expressed interest in helping with such a project, worked closely with us in exploring potential designs, raising the funds to pay for the project, and helping see the idea become an actual, on-the-ground greenhouse. Randy Kalish was a huge help in preparing and delivering some of the construction materials. We were well into the summer before the final decision to move forward with the project was made, and so there was quite the push to get it done before the first Earth Studies class, which was scheduled for August 22. In fact, MPEC's maintenance crew, Travis Weiser and Steve Juergenson, were still actively working to finish the greenhouse that morning of August 22 – but enough of it was built that the students could effectively experience the actual greenhouse effect.

Along with being a tool to help teach some Earth Studies lessons on solar energy, the greenhouse effect, and related lessons, we see other possibilities for this Quonset, or hoop-house, style greenhouse. Growing greens and herbs for Arthur's Kitchen at the Horseshoe Lodge, being used as a tool for teaching about food production, and expanding it to be a part of some sort of community garden project are all possible uses for our new Earth Studies greenhouse.

The next time you are in the park, please stop by and we will be happy to show you our new greenhouse. We send a sun-warmed greenhouse thank you to all who donated to this project to help it become a reality. As always, we know we could not do the work that we do without the support of our community of donors and supporters. Randy Kalish, Michael Wenzl, Lamar Trant, Heather and Joshua Wilcoxson, J. Miller Adam, Dave & Helene Van Manen, Donna and Duncan Juergenson, and anonymous donors provided the dollars to make the project a reality. So, thank you! 🌻



What Happened to the Park's Pond?

By Dave Van Manen

If you have been in the park lately and happened to come by the park's main pond, located a short walk from the Horseshoe Lodge, you may be wondering just what happened to it. Well, remember when Beulah was hit with some major rains last May, when roads were washed out, bridges were damaged or destroyed, people had to be evacuated from the North Creek area by helicopter, and parts of the valley were declared a disaster area? All that water also made a real mess of the park's ponds (not too far upstream of the main pond is a less noticeable smaller pond).

The main pond used to be around ten feet deep in places. All of that rain brought tons and tons of silt, road base, and other debris roaring down South Creek. Much of it settled in the pond, which is now only a foot or two deep in most places. All of that water and debris was also too much for the pond's stone and cement spillway to handle, so it created several new channels below and around the spillway. This resulted in a badly damaged spillway with a huge hole underneath it.

As you may or may not be aware of, the City of Pueblo owns the 611-acre Pueblo Mountain Park. Since 2008, the non-profit Mountain Park Environmental Center has an agreement with the City to manage the park for the City. This agreement calls for MPEC to have responsibility

for all the routine management and maintenance of the park, like hauling trash, maintaining trails, and stewarding the forests. But it does

not include major repairs, since we do not have the equipment or resources to do these. The City is responsible for these.

The damage to the pond certainly fits into the latter category of responsibilities. So, shortly after the flooding, we had several folks from the City of Pueblo up to the park to assess the damage (along with the pond, several other components of the park's infrastructure were damaged). The plan is for the City to repair the spillway and dredge the pond sometime this fall. Hopefully, these repairs to the pond will move forward as planned, and the park's pond will once again be the magical little place it has been for many years. 🐾



"IF YOU STAND
STILL OUTSIDE
YOU CAN HEAR
IT... WINTER'S
FOOTSTEPS,
THE SOUND OF
FALLING LEAVES."
~ TAKAYUKI
IKKAKU

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!

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Guided Hikes – Fall

"I DON'T WANT
TO END UP SIMPLY
HAVING VISITED THIS
WORLD."
~ MARY OLIVER

A guided hike in Pueblo Mountain Park is a great place to go beyond simply visiting a place to fully immersing yourself in the natural world. 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. Note that if snow conditions warrant, a hike may

become a snowshoe hike – and MPEC has lots of snowshoes.

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

- **Autumn Equinox Hike** Acknowledge the arrival of fall on this hike in Colorado's lovely southern foothills. **Sat, Sept 23, 1pm**
- **Full Moon Hike** Break away from your routine and take a weekday evening break for MPEC's last scheduled full moon hike of 2017. **Tues, Oct 3, 6:30pm**
- **Autumn Wildflower / Watercolor Hike** Enjoy learning about and painting the late-season wildflowers still blooming as the fall takes hold. Ranger Henry Pounds will lead you through the basics of painting flowers with watercolors on this gentle guided hike. Suitable for all levels of artists. All painting materials provided. **Sat, Oct 7, 9 - 11am**
- **Nature Awareness Hike** Join volunteer hike guide Chris Weidner for a short Thoreau-inspired hike! We will be talking about Nature, observation techniques, and anything else we may saunter past along the way! **Sun, Oct 8, 1pm**
- **Autumn Color Hike** Enjoy the autumn colors that are so richly on display by the area's cottonwoods and oaks and the fall wildflowers that may still be hanging on a month into fall on this hike into the parks' western reaches on the Northridge Trail. **Sun, Oct 22, 10am**
- **Park History Hike** Learn about the park's amazing cultural history while walking the park's historic trails. **Sat, Nov 4, 1pm**
- **Post-Thanksgiving Hike** Sticking with our annual tradition, we'll be hiking off the holiday calories with a hike along the late autumn trails of the Mountain Park. **Sun, Nov 26, 1pm**
- **Snowshoe Hike** We don't really know if there will be enough snow on the ground, but if there is, we'll enjoy a snowshoe in the park. If not, then we'll take a hike before MPEC's Open House at the Horseshoe Lodge and Beulah's Annual Yule Log Celebration at the Pavilion. **Sun, Dec 10, 10am**

may the



be with you

"[T]HAT OLD SEPTEMBER FEELING... OF SUMMER PASSING,
VACATION NEARLY DONE, OBLIGATIONS GATHERING, BOOKS
AND FOOTBALL IN THE AIR.... ANOTHER FALL, ANOTHER
TURNED PAGE: THERE WAS SOMETHING OF JUBILEE IN THAT
ANNUAL AUTUMNAL BEGINNING, AS IF LAST YEAR'S MISTAKES
AND FAILURES HAD BEEN WIPED CLEAN BY SUMMER."
~ WALLACE STEGNER

Meet Me at the Turquoise Table

By Dave Van Manen

It is not hard to notice that there seems to be an awful lot of things that want a piece of us these days. Beyond the time spent at work and work-related tasks, and taking care of our homes, bodies and families, it seems that much of any remaining time is becoming more and more filled up. Advertising for everything from cars to vacations to the latest improved electronic gadget is coming at us from so many directions, in so many forms. Succumbing to this advertising often leads to more time spent getting the dollars to pay for all that stuff. Speaking of stuff, electronic stuff in particular – laptop or desktop computers, I-phones, smartphones, I-pads, Gameboys, Nintendo, theatre-size televisions...the list goes on and on – most folks are well aware that so much of any remaining time seems to be spent with these gadgets. Sadly, such busy, filled-up lives leave little time for community.

This reality has not been lost on a handful of Beulah residents. Concerned about the lack of face-to-face dialogue that is at the foundation of a healthy, vibrant community life, these people have decided to do something about it.

Have you noticed a bit more of the color turquoise around these parts lately? Well, the color turquoise is associated with a movement that is all about bringing people together – to share a meal, discuss a book or article, meet a neighbor, make a new friend – to simply have a conversation. The turquoise table movement can trace its beginning to an Austin, Texas neighborhood. “No one seems to have time anymore... we are losing the art of communication and are always in a rush,” was the sentiment of Austinite Kristen Schell. So she painted a table the color turquoise, placed it in her front yard, and simply made the time to sit at the table. Soon she was meeting, and getting to know, many of her neighbors. The idea has caught on – turquoise tables, and the conversations they are meant to lead to, are popping up all around the US, and beyond.

Recognizing the importance of promoting opportunities to bring people together for simple conversation and the mutual trust and community-building that can come from these face-to-face conversations, this local group thought that the turquoise table idea would be a



great way to promote those people-to-people connections. Community starts with conversations, with simply talking to one another – hence, the turquoise table.

To date, there are a handful of these brightly colored tables in the Beulah Valley, including one that now sits in the front yard of the Horseshoe Lodge here in Pueblo Mountain Park. It is right next to the Bluebird Labyrinth, where bluebirds are often seen flitting about beneath the ponderosa pines. Perfect for having a conversation – about bluebirds, labyrinths, getting kids outside, your favorite National Park or Monument, what kind of winter we might be heading towards... It's a great place to talk, discuss, meet some new people... surrounded by the peace of the natural world. So, let's meet there sometime. What do you think?

For more information on the Beulah Valley's turquoise table project, feel free to contact Sandy Taylor (485-5920) or Anne Whitfield (485-3314). ❖

MPEC sends a warm thank you to Elaine Sartoris, Maggie Campbell, Linda Overlin, Anne Whitfield, Ann Moulton, Pam Kubly, Katherine Singer, Jan Myers, and Ruth Ann Amey for processing the summer newsletter mailing; Shawna Shoaf for all the professional help with various graphics design and layout projects; regular volunteers Dave Overlin and Steve Douglas for their ongoing efforts for the improvement of the park; Randy Kalish and Michael Wenzl for all the help on the greenhouse project.



An Introduction from the Newest Member of the MPEC Family



Hi, my name is Hollyn Stephens, and I am the new Lodge Sales Manager for the Horseshoe Lodge and Retreat Center. I am so excited to be a part of such a wonderful organization and consider myself very lucky to be able to drive into this beautiful park every day of the week. I often think to myself, "I must be dreaming". I recently moved to Colorado from South Louisiana, and I must say, the "wow" factor is still in effect. My goal is to ensure that all of our guests experience that feeling of amazement, whether you are a native to Colorado or seeing it through fresh eyes like me.

Imagine spending the day exploring this amazing park and staying in a charming bed and breakfast style room where you wake up to the symphony of the forest at

your window. Sounds lovely, doesn't it? We have eleven delightful lodge rooms, each with their own personality, and a hospitality staff that goes above and beyond to ensure our guests are happy.

The Horseshoe Lodge and Retreat Center also offers unique and affordable venues and meeting space that can accommodate all types of events. Whether you are looking to hold a company meeting, have a relaxing retreat, facilitate an educational workshop, or plan a family reunion, we have the space for you. If holding your event in a beautiful and comfortable setting surrounded by Nature appeals to you, then I am here to assist in crafting that perfect event. Please contact me to discuss all that we offer, or check out our website at horseshoelodge.org. The mountains are waiting. 🐾



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AND DISORDER OF THE FLOWERING EARTH." ~ LADY BIRD JOHNSON

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