

FRIENDS OF RIDGWAY STATE PARK

2021 NEWSLETTER

The State of the Park By Kirstin Copland – Park Manager

Constant Evolution of Ridgway State Park

There is a constantly evolving nature to how folks recreate. For instance, in the last decade paddle boarding, and tear-drop campers took off. More recent trends include e- bikes, roof-top tents on vehicles, and sprinter vans.

All of these trends were going strong before COVID. In addition to new trends in how people recreate, there are more doing it since COVID. 2021 was not quite as high for visitation as 2020, but still beyond anything pre-COVID. And since COVID, many families no longer have to be based in a specific place so they travel around the country and work remotely while home schooling kids on the way.

We have also had changes in the team that is assembled each summer to support the park. Just like above, more professionals are fulltime RV'ers. They come to volunteer with us, while still working remotely, or taking voluntary sabbaticals. The young professionals (usually seasonal rangers) are more diverse in their backgrounds, and career goals than we used to see. And, we have added more 'citizen scientists' to our volunteer team (thanks Carrie). These include raptor and butterfly monitors who joined our blue bird box and River Watch monitors. All of these folks help report data on our valuable natural resources (soon to be joined by bat monitors...).

Good News for Ridgway State Park

While all of this evolution of recreation and our team occurs, our underlying mission doesn't change. That mission is to provide safe, enjoyable recreation and protect the natural resources in the park. This helps guide our operational decisions, and where to focus resources on the ever-changing landscape. The park is well positioned to respond to these changes (although sometimes I feel we are still taken by surprise). Ridgway State Park has great support from our agency from the top down. We have a mission-focused team who are talented, positive, and collaborate on any challenges that come down the pike. As well we have fantastic support from the Friends of Ridgway for environmental education, natural resource scholarships, staff support, as well as outreach to our community. I will make the pitch that we always welcome more volunteers, particularly if you would be interested in helping in an entrance gate, or with weeds/irrigation system, and education programs for kids in the spring and fall!

Keep Colorado Wild

In the big picture, funding is always a looming limitation to our efforts. Minimum wage, fleet costs, utility costs have affected Ridgway State Park and Colorado Parks and Wildlife in general. However, the *Keep Colorado Wild* (KCW) bill which passed in the 2021 Legislative cycle will create significant changes in our funding picture. This bill will allow the inclusion of a parks pass with Colorado vehicle registration for a much lower cost than current Park passes are priced right now. This option will only be open to Colorado Residents.

It is expected to be priced at a level at which many more Coloradoans will participate to bring in significant revenue. Of course with more participation that means more people will be in Colorado State Parks, including Ridgway. We have had discussions at the statewide and park level about capacity in parks so that we can maintain the great experience for everyone and not negatively impact the natural resources.

Take Away

We are excited to meet the new trends, as well as continue to welcome our more traditional recreationists into the future. We also always welcome the input of the public to help us be open and ready to serve our mission in the most beautiful park in the state.

MEET, EAT, AND BEAT THE HEAT

By Jeff Riddle – Board Member

Spend enough time exploring Ridgway State Park and you'll likely discover a feature or location that you never imagined existed in the park: the wooden bridge that crosses Dallas Creek, the Secret Spot Trail near the boat ramp, or the Group Eating Area (GEA) at the north end of G-Loop in the Pa-Co-Chu-Puk campground.

Tucked-away in a quiet corner of the park, this peaceful gem offers a pleasant gathering spot for family groups from the nearby campsites. A large concrete patio, fire rings, picnic tables, and

No shelter. Well, an old, dilapidated canvas awning is in much need of repair, or better yet, replacement! An updated, sturdy shade and weather shelter was identified as a critical need by park staff. The Friends of Ridgway State Park (FRSP) became involved in the discussions and considered several options for the site. FRSP had previously funded the purchase and installation of a large shade shelter in the Dakota Terraces Campground in the spring of 2016. This shelter proved to be an attractive addition, much appreciated by camping and education groups.

In our ongoing effort to enhance visitor's enjoyment of the park and partner with park staff, FRSP has agreed to purchase the new shade shelter. FRSP will pay \$7,700 to buy the shelter frame and cover, while the park's fulltime maintenance staff has agreed to complete the installation. The project should be completed by the end of 2021. We are delighted to provide this wonderful improvement to park visitors. Plan to stop-by and take a look during your next visit!

Bird Banding Program

By Kathy See – Board President

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We were glad to welcome the students back to the Park this Fall for the bird banding program, which is held at the Dallas Creek bridge area. This program teams the Audubon Society, students from local elementary schools, and volunteers for the collection of migratory songbird data.

Dallas Creek is a good site for this program because of the bird habitat. There are many different trees and shrubs growing on the stream banks which provide a variety of food sources as well as good protection in the leafy canopies. The Friends cover 50% of the cost of busing to get the students to the Park, making this program accessible to more students.

During this program, students rotate between stations which teach about birds- their habitat, survival requirements, and body shape adaptations for different types of birds. One station that is particularly fun has the students observing an Audubon-trained scientist handle and collect data on small birds that have been captured

in a net. The birds get a tiny ankle bracelet, the bird band, which has information that is used to track the birds during their lives and migrations.



Bird Banding Tent at Dallas Creek



Wilson Warbler in Student's Hand

The final step at this station is the bird's release. The scientist puts the birds gently into the outstretched hands of the students. Some birds are slightly disoriented and remain on the hands for several seconds. Others take off right away. No matter how the bird reacts, the students get to see a bird up close before it flies to freedom.

FRSP SCHOLARSHIPS 2021 ***By Glenda Young- Scholarship Coordinator***

Three completed scholarship applications were received before the due date of April 30th. Our annual scholarship consists of two \$2,000 awards or one \$4,000 award.

Each completed application was read aloud to the FRSP Board. Two of the three applicants did not meet our criteria. A unanimous vote of the board approved that only one of the applicants should receive \$4,000 as a scholarship award.

Royanna Crawford graduated from Grand Junction High School. She is currently in her third year at Colorado Mesa University studying Biological Sciences. She is planning to begin graduate studies after graduating from Colorado Mesa University and enter the field of wildlife research and management.

2020 BLUEBIRD REPORT ***By Joan Moyer – FRSP Board Treasurer***

We again had a hot, dry June and July which affects nesting and eggs produced due to the lack of insects and water. I had two houses destroyed or removed, thus I am down to 55 Bluebird houses to monitor. The first nesting of Bluebirds was moderate, the second nesting was much fewer. Total birds fledged this year was 191 – of this count I noted 29 Western Bluebirds, 102 Mountain Bluebirds, 56 Tree Swallows, and 4 Flycatchers. I am hoping for a snowy winter and a wet spring for a more productive 2022 year. So far as I look at my feeders in the yard during November, I see much fewer birds than I have had in the previous years. This may be due to our warm November – I hope for an increase in bird population. We hope you had Happy Holidays!

Join the Friends of Ridgway State Park

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

Annual Memberships

- ◇ Individual \$25.00
- ◇ Family \$40.00
- ◇ Supporting \$60.00
- ◇ Contributing \$100.00
(including schools, churches and civic organizations)

Business and Corporate

- ◇ up to 5 employes \$50.00
- ◇ 6-25 employees \$100.00
- ◇ 26 or more employees \$250.00

Lifetime Membership

- ◇ Lifetime \$1000.00

Make check payable to:
Friends of Ridgway State Park
PO Box 149
Ridgway, CO 81432
friendsofrsp@yahoo.com



Friends of Ridgway State Park

2855 Hwy. 550

PO Box 149

Ridgway, CO 81432

See you at the Park!