



Community Services Department  
Environmental Division

# Biological Resources of El Paso County

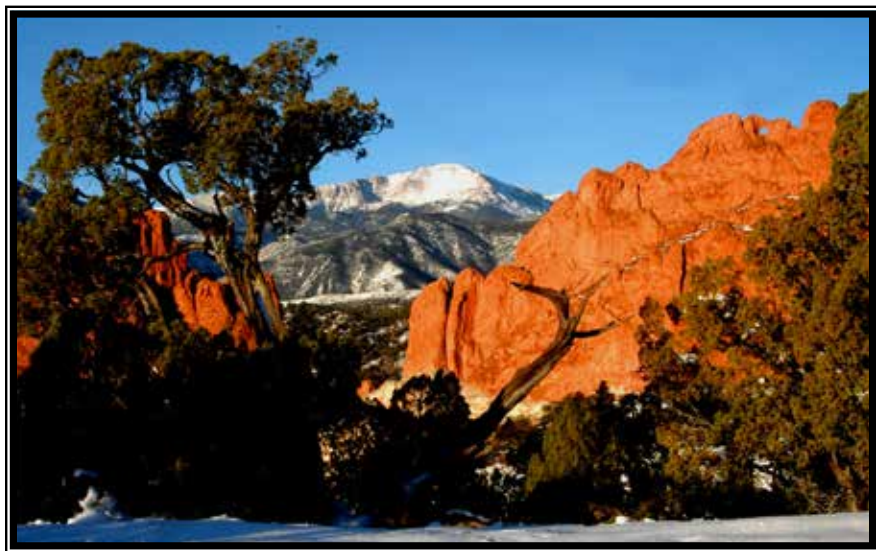


Photo by Mike Bonar/[elkriverphotography.com](http://elkriverphotography.com)

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Updated: 2020

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# Biological Resources of El Paso County

Located in east-central Colorado, El Paso County encompasses more than 2,158 square miles and is located at the interface of the Rocky Mountains and the great plains. Elevation within El Paso County ranges from around 5,100 feet near the southern border at Black Squirrel Creek to 14,115 feet on the summit of Pikes Peak.

This significant elevational variation provides for a wide array of biological diversity within the Pikes Peak region. Habitat within the county ranges from the grassy plains in the east to the alpine tundra found on Pikes Peak, and within these habitats, species range from pronghorn and rattlesnakes, to black bear and mountain lions, to bighorn sheep and pikas. El Paso County's diversity provides its citizens unending opportunities to observe and partake in the natural wonders present at every turn.

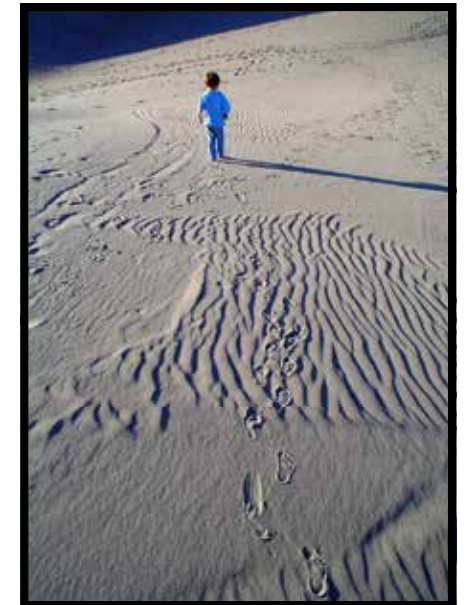


While it is easy to see the need to care for and protect the eagles, deer and Rocky mountain columbine, the value of the smaller, not so easily observed plant and animal species is less prominent. The world is shared with other creatures, and the stewardship of this planet is our responsibility.



Have you ever stood in reverence of the beauty of Pikes Peak, taking in the glory of America's mountain? Marveled at the majesty of a bald eagle soaring high above? Or, enjoyed the fluttering of songbirds delicately balancing on the feeder outside your window? These are examples of our natural heritage.

Citizens of Colorado are extremely lucky in that our natural resources encompass ecosystems ranging from tallgrass prairie to alpine peaks, rugged canyons to sagebrush deserts, and dense forests to open tundra. Within each of these unique ecosystems, we are given the opportunity to glimpse into the lives of the living things that inhabit them.





There are numerous practical reasons why the protection of species and their habitats is important to humankind. The natural world exists within a complex network of delicately balanced plants and animals. It is unknown to what extent the removal of just one species will affect that balance. An example is a car engine. It may go for a long time with various parts leaking and faltering, but at some point, the failure of one part, even a seemingly inconsequential one, may leave you stranded.



A diverse natural world is important to agriculture. Worldwide, the consumption of mass quantities of insects by bats minimizes the need for chemical insecticides and undiscovered plants may exist which could hold future solutions to food shortages.



Healthy natural diversity lends itself to advances in medicine. For example, cancer-fighting drugs have been developed from wild plants, the venom of gila monsters has been studied and synthesized into treatments for type 2 diabetes, and bat saliva has been studied for its anti-coagulation properties for use in the treatment of stroke victims. A cure for cancer or Alzheimer's may lie in the compounds present in that nondescript plant on the hillside.



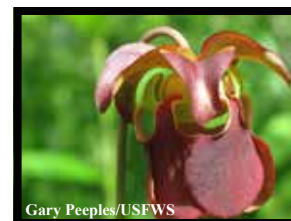
The health of plants and animals provide indicators of the health of the world in which we, too, live. If species are extinguished, no matter how insignificant they may seem, we will never know what opportunities may have been lost.

## Federally Threatened and Endangered Species



The United States Congress passed the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (16 U.S.C.A §§1531-1543) in 1973 in order to protect various species of plants, invertebrates, fish and other wildlife from extinction. Protections under the ESA extend to the habitats on which these species depend, as well.

The ESA is administered at the federal level by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (terrestrial and freshwater species) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (marine species).



Under the ESA, a species may be listed as either

endangered if it is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range or threatened if it is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future.

The ESA makes it unlawful for anyone to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect a listed animal or significantly modify its habitat. Following are the three listed species having the greatest potential to be encountered within El Paso County.



## Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse (Threatened)

The Preble's meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius preblei*) (Preble's mouse) is a small rodent approximately nine inches long with very long hind feet designed for jumping. The Preble's mouse is nocturnal with a diet of insects, seeds, fungi and fruit.

Habitat for the species consists of well-vegetated riparian corridors and adjacent upland habitats. Riparian corridors within the Air Force Academy are examples of good quality Preble's mouse habitat. The species is found in the foothills along the eastern edge of the Front Range from southeastern Wyoming to Colorado Springs.



The Preble's mouse was listed as a threatened species under the ESA in May 1998 due to habitat loss and degradation caused by agricultural, residential, commercial and industrial development.

Currently, any ground-disturbing activities within El Paso County that occur within 300 feet of a stream or the edge of the 100-year floodplain, whichever is greater, must address the Preble's mouse. Project proponents planning work within these areas should contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's office in Denver with details regarding the proposed project.



## Mexican Spotted Owl (Threatened)

The Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*) (Spotted owl) is a large bird ranging in size from 16-19 inches long. As in many owl species, females tend to be larger than males. The Spotted owl is mottled with irregular brown and white spots on its head, back and abdomen. This is the only species of large owl with dark eyes.



Spotted owl habitat consists of rocky canyons and old-growth forested mountains. The species ranges in scattered areas from southern Utah and Colorado to central Mexico. Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas historical records indicate possible breeding populations occurring in the southern base of Pikes Peak.

The Spotted owl was listed as a threatened species under the ESA in 1993 due to low population numbers and habitat loss. Proposed projects in the southwestern portion of El Paso County that may disturb forested mountains or rocky canyons should be assessed for the presence of Spotted owls.





## Greenback Cutthroat Trout (Threatened)

The greenback cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*) (Greenback trout) was named as Colorado's state fish in 1994. The species has dark, round spots on its sides and tail and gets its name from the blood-red stripes on each side of the throat.



Due to the introduction of non-native trout species, over-harvest and habitat alternation, the Greenback trout was listed as an endangered species in 1973. Successful breeding projects led to the downlisting of the species from endangered to threatened in 1978.

Currently, Bear Creek in El Paso County contains the only known naturally reproducing population of genetically pure Greenback trout. Efforts are underway to repopulate this species in its historical range in the South Platte river system. El Paso County's Bear Creek greenbacks are integral to the success of these efforts.



## Other Federally Listed Species in El Paso County



As well as the previous three species, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lists several additional threatened species for El Paso County. Although these are uncommon species occupying very specialized environments and the likelihood of encountering them is minimal, all protections afforded under the ESA are still extended to them. These species include the Pawnee montane mountain skipper (*Hesperia leonardus montana*), Ute-ladies' tresses orchid (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) and western prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*).



## State-Listed Threatened and Endangered Species

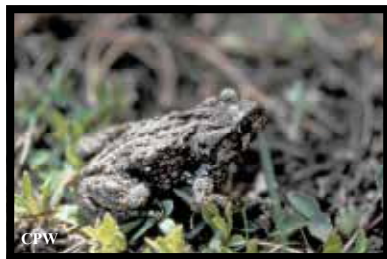


In addition to federal listings for species, the state of Colorado also maintains a list of threatened, endangered and species of concern. This list identifies individual species in need of conservation and helps focus resources on priority species. Conserving species prior to the imposition of a federal listing results in easier management of the species, lower costs and helps avoid the cumbersome requirements associated with listing at the federal level. While state-listed species do not impose restrictions on land use or other activities, the possession or sale of state-listed species is subject to criminal penalties.



The state's list currently contains 31 threatened or endangered species and 43 species of concern and includes such species as the kit fox, Townsend's big-eared bat, American peregrine falcon, burrowing owl and boreal toad.

This list can be found on the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife website.



## Critical Biological Resources

In addition to identifying individual species in need of conservation measures, it is also useful to identify areas/locations in need of protection. In 2000 and 2001, the Colorado Natural Heritage Program completed survey work in order to identify areas of high biological significance within El Paso County.

Through this survey, forty Potential Conservation Areas were identified within the county which further aids in the prioritization of conservation efforts and allocation of the limited resources available within El Paso County. These sites have been identified for a variety of reasons including the presence of rare or imperiled plant and animal species, utilization of the site by imperiled species and the presence of rare plant communities.

The following is a list of El Paso County's Potential Conservation Areas identified in the Colorado Natural Heritage survey as well as areas identified in the El Paso County Parks Master Plan. These areas are identified based on their unique biological characteristics. Most exist on private land, and their inclusion on this list does not imply public access.





# Potential Conservation Areas within El Paso County

## Creeks

Cascade Creek  
Monument Creek  
Severy Creek  
Big Sandy Creek at Calhan  
Boehmer Creek  
Chico Creek  
West Kiowa Creek at Elbert  
Fountain and Jimmy Camp Creeks  
West Bijou Creek  
Black Squirrel Creek



## Playas

Buffalograss Playas  
Schriever Playas  
Bohart Playas  
Rasner Ranch Playas

## Mountains

Pikes Peak  
Blue Mountain  
Cheyenne Mountain  
Ben Lomand Mountain



## Roads

\*Potential conservation area  
identified by the road that  
traverses it

Judge Orr Road\*  
Edison Road\*  
Hanover Road\*  
Marksheffel Road\*



## Canyons

Aiken Canyon  
Cheyenne Canyon



## Locations

Identified by  
geologic features

Signal Rock Sandhills  
Chico Basin Dunes  
Fremont Fort  
Riser at Calhan  
Table Rock  
Sand Creek Ridge  
Elephant Rock  
Corral Bluffs  
Spruce Hill





## Areas

Squirrel Creek School  
Truckton-Edison  
East Chico Basin Ranch  
Farish Recreation Area  
Olney Prairie  
Black Forest  
Pinerias at Black Forest  
Monument Southeast  
Fox Run Grasslands  
Manitou South



## Other

Big Johnson Reservoir  
Cave of the Winds  
(aka Manitou North)  
Drake Lake  
Front Range Foothills  
Forest Lakes  
(aka Monument Creek Tributaries)



## Wetlands



Wetlands come in many shapes and sizes, and although wetlands are often wet, they are not always wet year-round. In Colorado, wetlands can be found in the form of marshes, wet meadows, seeps, springs, rivers, lakes, ponds, swamps, fens, bogs and playas, and can range in size from a few square feet surrounding a spring, to acres of wet meadows, to miles alongside a creek. Wetlands within Colorado comprise less than two percent of the landscape, yet are utilized by over three-quarters of the state's species.



## Types of Wetlands

**Marshes** are periodically saturated, flooded, or ponded with water and characterized by soft-stemmed vegetation adapted to wet soil conditions. Marshes are further broken down into tidal or non-tidal designations. Non-tidal marshes are the most common wetlands in North America. Within Colorado, playas and wet meadows are good examples of marsh-type wetlands.



**Swamps** are wetlands fed primarily by surface water and are dominated by trees and shrubs. Swamps are further classified as forested or shrub.



**Bogs** are freshwater wetlands characterized by spongy peat deposits, evergreen trees and shrubs with a sphagnum moss-covered floor. Bogs receive all or most of their water from precipitation. In Colorado bogs are uncommon, generally occurring at the higher subalpine elevations.



**Fens** are groundwater-fed peat-forming wetlands covered by grasses, sedges, reeds and wildflowers. Willows are also commonly found in fens. Fens differ from bogs in that they receive moisture from groundwater.

## Value of Wetlands

For many decades, wetlands were thought of as wastelands. Great effort went into draining or filling these “wasteland” areas to create what was thought of as more functional land to be used for agriculture, residential or industrial uses. It is estimated that fifty percent of the world’s wetlands have been lost. However, as we have learned more about the world in which we live, the true value and functions of wetlands have begun to be realized.



### Flood control

The vegetation and soil present in wetlands act as sponges slowing the momentum of surging water, thus reducing erosion and flood levels and protecting adjacent and downstream properties from flood damage. Wetlands are particularly valuable in urban areas where impermeable surfaces present stormwater control issues. Wetlands provide an area where water from these surfaces can slow and soak into the ground.

### Improve water quality

As water slows upon entering a wetland, suspended sediments drop down onto the wetland floor. Chemicals present in the water get absorbed by plant roots and microorganisms. A healthy wetland, therefore, acts as a filter, removing sediment and pollutants from the water, ultimately making the water safer for drinking, swimming and supporting plants and animals. In some areas, artificial wetlands have been constructed to utilize this filtering quality in the treatment of stormwater and wastewater.



## Erosion control

The location of wetlands along shorelines and stream banks helps to minimize the erosive effects of water during storm events. Healthy wetland vegetation typically has strong root systems that hold soil in place, absorb the water's energy and slow the current.



## Groundwater recharge

When water enters a wetland it is slowed, thus allowing for groundwater recharge. As water shortages continue to threaten the west, this replenishment ability of wetlands has become increasingly appreciated.



## Recreation

Wetlands are important locations for many recreational activities including hiking, fishing, hunting, bird watching and photography. Billions of dollars are spent annually in the U.S. in pursuit of these pastimes.



## Commercial benefits

A wide range of products are commercially harvested from wetlands including fish, shellfish, cranberries, timber and wild rice, as well as some medicines. Wetlands provide important food supplies, shelter and breeding grounds for both marine and freshwater fish species.



## Fish and wildlife habitat

Wetlands provide for an incredible diversity of animal and plant species that depend on these areas for food, habitat and shelter. While wetlands comprise only about five percent of the land area in the lower 48 states, more than a third of the threatened and endangered species live only within wetlands, and twenty percent more utilize wetlands at some point in their lives.



In Colorado, it is estimated that wetlands comprise less than two percent of Colorado's land area but provide benefits to over three-quarters of the state's species, including waterfowl and several declining species.



## Migratory Bird Treaty Act

In the United States, wetlands are protected under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. According to the Clean Water Act, “wetlands are areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.” In broader terms, three elements must be present to have a wetland: (1) water must be present for at least part of the growing season, (2) hydric (wetland) soils must be present, (3) hydrophytic vegetation must be present.



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is the lead federal agency responsible for the administration of the Clean Water Act as it pertains to wetland permitting. It is illegal under the Clean Water Act to fill wetlands without proper permitting. If a proposed project may impact a wetland, the project proponent must contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prior to conducting any activities that disturb the wetland. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will work with the landowner on a project design that will avoid and minimize wetland impacts, as well as give direction on any permitting or mitigation that may be required for unavoidable wetland impacts.



The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) was passed in 1918. This Act, in conjunction with several international Conventions, provides for the global protection of migratory birds. Under the MBTA, it is illegal to hunt, pursue, take, capture, wound, kill, possess, sell, purchase or transport any migratory bird or any part, nest or egg of any such bird unless granted by a permit issued through the Department of the Interior. Over 1,000 species are protected under the MBTA, including 58 species that are legally hunted as game birds. The MBTA is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

## Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) was passed in 1940. This Act prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from pursuing, shooting, shooting at, poisoning, wounding, killing, capturing, trapping, collecting, molesting or disturbing bald or golden eagles including their parts, nests or eggs.





# Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement between a landowner and a government agency or land protection agency that limits the amount of development that can occur on a property. Under this agreement, the landowner maintains ownership of the property.



In order to be accepted as a conservation easement, a property must possess at least one of the conservation values identified by the Internal Revenue Service.



Landowners typically enter into conservation easements because they want to protect their property from unwanted future development while maintaining ownership of their property.



These include (1) the preservation of land areas for the general public's outdoor recreation and education, (2) the protection of a relatively natural habitat for fish, wildlife, or plants or a similar ecosystem, (3) the preservation of open space (including farmland and forest land) where such enjoyment is for the scenic enjoyment of the general public, and (4) the preservation of an historically important land area or certified historic structure.

In addition to the protection of their land, landowners may receive state and federal tax benefits for the donation. Properties placed under conservation easement are protected in perpetuity.



The presence of a conservation easement does not make the land public and does not, unless authorized by the landowner, allow public access. El Paso County currently holds over 30 conservation easements, providing permanent protection to nearly 2,500 acres.



## Local Wildlife



El Paso County's unique location at the interface between the great plains and the Rocky Mountains provides viewing opportunities for our abundant natural resources while resulting in the occasional conflict with those same resources. In dealing with wildlife, remember that the wild creatures trying to live their lives are not cuddly playthings nor monsters bent on our destruction. A healthy respect is integral in making interaction with our wild neighbors an enjoyable and safe experience for all species involved.

## Black Bears



### **Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) Facts**

- Color can range from black to pale brown to blond
- Typically weigh between 100 to 450 pounds
- Diet of berries, nuts, grasses, forbs, insect larvae, small mammals and carrion
- Usually give birth to two or three cubs every other year
- Cubs stay with their mother for the first year
- Can go without food for up to seven months during hibernation
- Can run up to 35 mph
- There are no known grizzly bears living in Colorado





Black bears are commonly encountered in the foothills of the Pikes Peak region. If you encounter a black bear, try to stay calm. Do not attempt to feed or approach the bear in any manner. Instead, slowly back away speaking calmly so that you do not surprise or startle the bear.

A black bear will typically avoid humans if allowed a proper escape route. Problems with bears are generally a result of humans acting inappropriately, which results in bears that have lost their fear of humans. While people think that they are helping the bear by providing it with food and enjoying watching it raid the garbage can, they are actually contributing to its demise, as these habituated bears often become problem bears and must be destroyed.



To avoid contributing to the death of these wonderful creatures:



- (1) Do not feed bears. This includes allowing them access to birdseed and hummingbird feeders.
- (2) Store garbage where bears cannot get to it.
- (3) Bring in pet food at night.
- (4) Clean off outdoor grills.

More information related to black bears in Colorado can be found on the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife website.

## Mountain Lions



### Mountain Lion (*Felis concolor*) Facts

- Other names include puma, cougar, catamount and panther
- The largest cat north of Mexico
- Can be up to six feet long and weigh 130 pounds
- Deer are the major source of prey
- Will hide large carcasses and feed on them for several days
- Usually have litters of two to three kittens
- Solitary animals
- Occasionally reported on the eastern plains



Mountain lions, while typically shy and elusive around humans, can pose a potential threat to people and pets. These large felines are increasingly encountered along the Front Range as we move further into their territory.

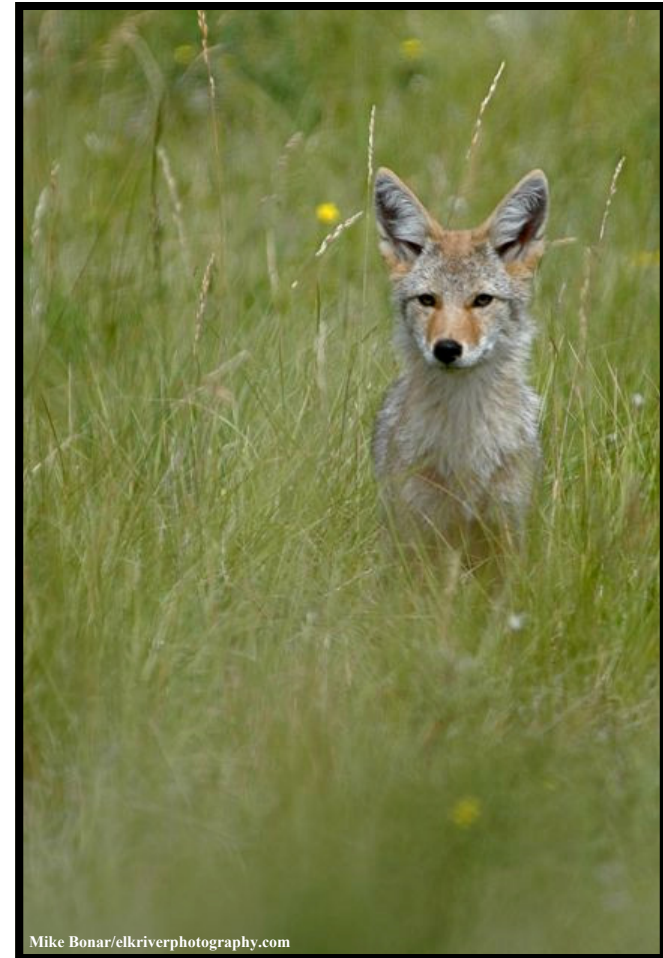
If you encounter a mountain lion, do not run as this will make you appear as prey. Instead, stand your ground, talk calmly yet firmly and make yourself look bigger by waving your arms in the air while backing slowly away. If a mountain lion attacks, fight back.



When walking in mountain lion country, keep children close and pets on leash as small children and pets may appear as prey to mountain lions. Keep pets indoors at night. More information on mountain lions in Colorado can be found on the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife website.



## Coyotes



### Coyote (*Canis latrans*) Facts

- Members of the dog family
- About four feet long and weigh 30 to 40 pounds
- Will eat almost anything
- Usually have litters of three to twelve pups
- Both parents feed and protect their young
- Can run up to 40 mph





As with bears, problems with coyotes generally result from the animal having lost its fear of humans. Coyotes are extremely adaptable, adjusting well to urban settings. The availability of food, water and shelter make city life desirable to coyotes.

Removing potential food sources such as trash, pet food and pets themselves can aid in minimizing coyote problems. Coyotes will typically shy away from humans unless they are overly habituated to people.

Cats should be kept indoors and dogs leashed when walking or penned/supervised when in the yard. If approached by a coyote, make yourself larger by waving your arms and shout in a loud voice while backing away slowly. Do not turn and run as this may initiate a predatory chase instinct in the coyote.



It is important to remember that, while these animals can present a danger, many other things in our daily lives pose a far greater threat. Many more people die annually in the United States from domestic dog attacks than from black bears, mountain lions or coyotes combined. With a little common sense and responsibility, we can peacefully co-exist and enjoy the amazing creatures that occasionally wander into our lives.



More information on coyotes in Colorado can be found on the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife website.

## Mule Deer



### Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) Facts

- Colorado is home to the largest subspecies of mule deer
- Occupy all ecosystems in Colorado from grasslands to alpine tundra
- Yearlings typically produce one fawn while healthy older females produce twins
- White-tailed deer can also be found in El Paso County

### White-tailed Deer

White-tailed deer differ from mule deer in that they have smaller ears, antlers with a single main beam bearing smaller tines, and broad, white tails.



While observing mule deer is usually a positive experience, they can become a problem when feeding in urban areas. For those attempting to grow ornamental plants or gardens, deer can become a problem as those plants are often desirable food sources. If you live in areas frequented by deer, there are numerous species of plants that are beautiful as well as undesirable to deer.



Mike Bonar/elkriverphotography.com

The Colorado State Extension office provides management strategies and maintains a list of common ornamental species and their desirability to deer.

Fencing is another option for addressing deer problems. Please be aware that fencing can pose an incredible threat to wildlife. Deer and other animals that get hung up on improper fencing die terrible deaths. The Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife has prepared a brochure with descriptions of effective, yet wildlife-friendly fencing.

Be aware that it is illegal to distribute feed or salt blocks to big game animals.



Mike Bonar/elkriverphotography.com

## Raccoons/Foxes/Skunks

Raccoons, foxes and skunks are also species that have adapted well to urban settings and human presence. While they can be fun to watch wandering around the yard, it is important to remember they are not cuddly pets and should be given the respect of any wild animal. These species can also pose very real threats to domestic pets. Common sense should be exercised in limiting attractants to these species such as trash and pet food. Wild animals should not be fed as a means of attracting them to your yard, as this activity places both pets and the wild animals themselves into dangerous situations.

### Raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) Facts



Bill Haggerty/CPW

- Black face masks
- Bushy, ringed tails
- 2-3 feet long including the tail
- Weigh 8-22 pounds
- Will eat almost anything
- Typically rinse/manipulate their food before eating it
- Litters consist of 3-4 young



Nancy Prieve



## Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) Facts



- Four species of fox are found in Colorado: red, gray, swift and kit
- Red foxes are the species most commonly found in urban areas
- Red foxes eat rodents, rabbits and birds
- Red fox litters typically consist of four pups

## Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) Facts

- Four species of skunk are found in Colorado: striped, eastern spotted, western spotted and hog-nosed
- Striped skunks typically have seven young per litter
- Striped skunks are the species most commonly found in urban areas
- Skunks eat mice, carrion, fruit, insects, larvae, birds and eggs



## Bats



## Bat Facts

- More than two-thirds of all bat species hunt insects
- A single little brown bat can eat up to 1,000 mosquito-sized insects in a single hour
- Other bat species feed on the fruit or nectar of plants, playing a vital role in pollination and seed dispersal
- Bananas, avocados, dates, figs, peaches, mangoes, durian, cloves, cashews, carob and balsa wood all depend on bats for seed dispersal
- A small percentage of bats eat fish, mice, frogs or other small vertebrates
- Only three species, all in Latin America, feed on blood, lapping rather than sucking from small cuts made on their prey
- The anti-coagulant in vampire bat saliva is a very potent blood-clot dissolver utilized in the treatment of human stroke victims
- Mother bats typically raise only one pup per year

Bats are amazing, unique animals. They are the only true flying mammals and, contrary to popular belief, actually have good eyesight. Their ability to fly at night depends on echolocation, a type of “radar” that allows them to “see” through the emission and analysis of reflected sound. Bats worldwide provide an invaluable service to humankind by eating literally tons of insects every night.



Joe Lewandowski/CPW

Numbering over 1,000 species, bats range from the tiny bumblebee bat weighing less than a penny to the giant flying foxes with wing spans of over six feet. Eighteen species of bats are known to inhabit Colorado, all of which are insectivorous. More information related to these species can be found on the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife website.



CPW



Craig Stihler/USFWS

Bats can occasionally become a problem if they begin roosting in a building. In order to address this issue, locate and seal off the access point or points. This should be done in the fall or winter in order to avoid needlessly killing any babies that may be present in the building. Despite many unfounded fears, bats are good animals to have in your neighborhood as they consume large quantities of insects. However, remember that bats do have the potential to carry rabies and should not be handled.

## Northern Flickers



Image Courtesy [www.naturespicsonline.com](http://www.naturespicsonline.com)

Female



Image Courtesy [www.naturespicsonline.com](http://www.naturespicsonline.com)

Male

### Flicker (*Colpates auratus*) Facts

- Flickers are woodpeckers
- Often seen on the ground eating ants and beetles
- Clutch size is typically 5-8 eggs
- Very colorful with red moustaches (on males), black bibs on the upper breast, black spots on the lower breast, horizontal black bars on the back, red shafts on the flight feathers, bright white rumps visible in flight



## Contacts

We know that springtime is coming when we start hearing the familiar drumming on the gutter at five in the morning. The culprit is usually a northern flicker. Many think that this bird is confused by banging on metal instead of wood but, in actuality, it is maximizing the qualities of its surroundings.

When a flicker pecks on the metal on our houses, he is staking out his territory or attempting to attract a mate. This is called drumming and generally occurs from March to June. While annoying, this activity does not typically cause damage to homes.



Geoff Tischbein/CPW



Dave Menke/USFWS

Flickers can also use our homes and surrounding trees to excavate a cavity for nesting. According to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, if a nest is found, it is illegal to destroy that nest, harm any eggs or young, or chase away the adults.

Watch until the young birds have left the nest and then seal up the hole. If you continue to have issues with flickers insistent upon nesting in your house, consider putting up a flicker nesting box. If the flicker moves into the box, it will stop pecking on your house. Additionally, as flickers are territorial, if you have one nesting pair, they will tend to keep others away.

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

National Customer Service Center 1-800-344-WILD

Colorado Field Office (303) 236-4773

[www.fws.gov/coloradoes](http://www.fws.gov/coloradoes)

### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

National Headquarters General Questions (202) 761-0011

Southern Colorado Regulatory Office (719) 744-9119

[www.spa.usace.army.mil](http://www.spa.usace.army.mil)

### **Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife**

Main Customer Service (303) 297-1192

Southeast Region Service Center (719) 227-5200

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