

Colorado's Wildlife Company

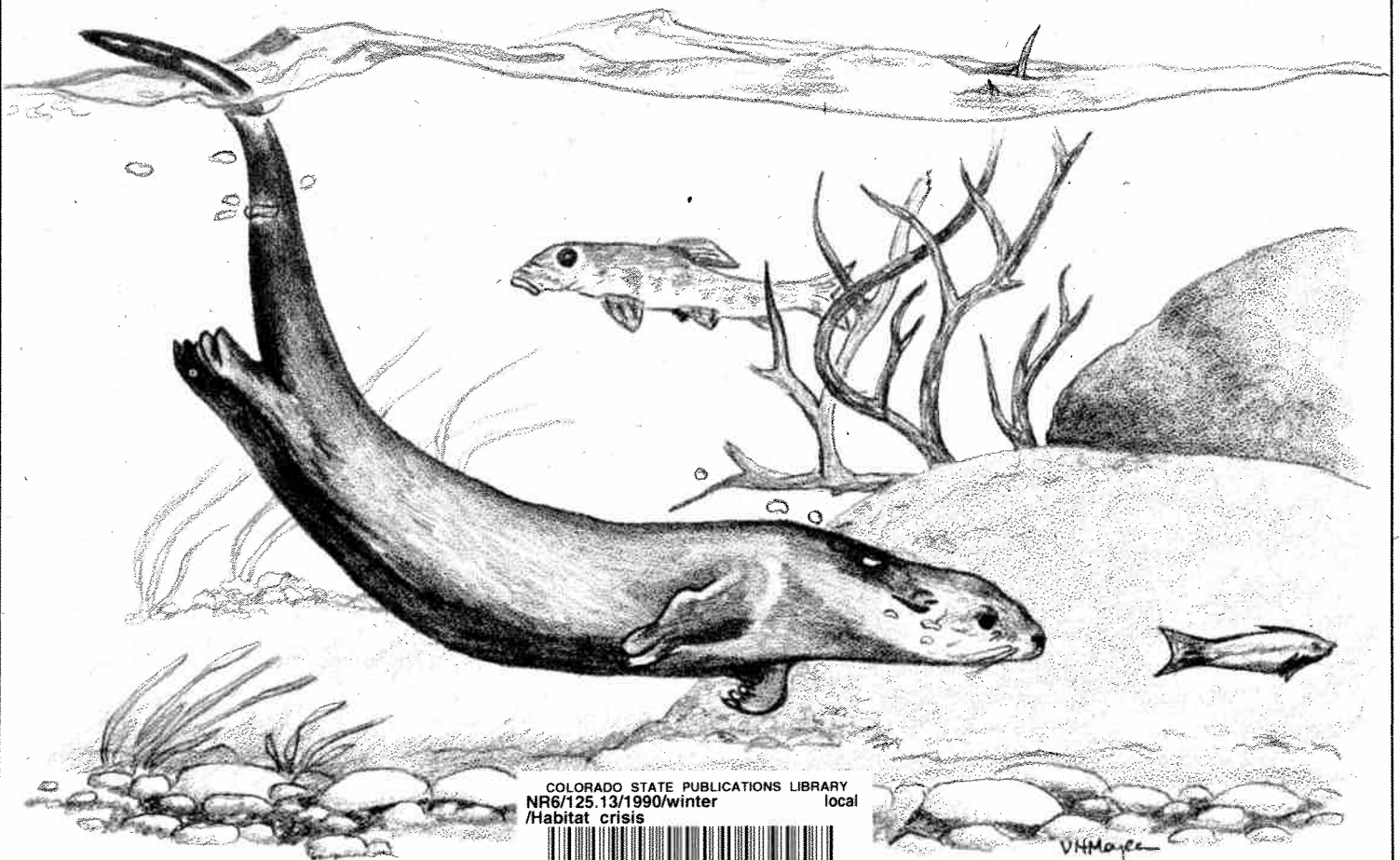
COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

Nongame and Endangered
Wildlife Program

Watchable Wildlife Program

Habitat Crisis

This issue is dedicated to the memory of
Stanley J. Kerr, a long-time nongame
wildlife supporter.



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river otter and white sucker at home

VHMA, cc

Habitat Loss: The Real Threat To Wildlife

By Mary Taylor Gray

Colorado wildlife have faced many threats over the last century and a half, not always successfully. Wolves and grizzlies were eradicated because of public fears and competition with agriculture and ranching interests. Bison were hunted to extinction in the wild, primarily due to U.S. Army determination to conquer the American Indians. Beaver were nearly wiped out by trapping in order to meet people's demand for felt hats. Peregrine falcons and bald eagles declined because of pesticide poisoning. But today one single enemy looms as the greatest threat to wildlife in our state — loss of habitat.

In simplest terms, habitat is home. It's the place wild animals live and is comprised of four factors necessary for life: food, water, shelter, and space. If a given area can't provide the right combination of food, water, shelter or space for a species, that place becomes uninhabitable for that animal. As land in our state is developed for urban, agricultural, residential, industrial and intensive recreational uses, it is largely lost as diverse wildlife habitat.

Some species can co-exist with humans and their activities, but many cannot. Some animals die as a direct result of habitat degradation; others migrate to new areas or simply fail to reproduce. Bighorn sheep, for example, once occupied many parts of Colorado. Although we think of them as a high altitude species, they once lived at lower altitudes in habitat offering the same kind of steep terrain for escape and security we find them in today. Human activity and development drove the bighorns higher into the mountains to less hospitable habitat. The sheep, in turn, were forced to encroach on the habitat of other animals.

Habitat destruction and degradation, through pollution, erosion and direct development, are proceeding at an alarming rate. An average of 117,000 acres per year were lost to building construction, highways, grassland plowout and ski area development in Colorado from 1982 - 1987. In the ten years from 1975 to 1985, open agricultural land along the Front Range was converted to urban land uses at the rate of over 100 acres every day. We value the "wild" areas of our state, and wildlife are part of our quality of life in Colorado. But where will the animals go when people are using all the land?

As habitat decreases, the cost of wildlife management increases. "When we had lots of habitat, it didn't take sophisticated techniques to manage the state's wildlife," explained Division of Wildlife Director Perry Olson. "But as the amount of habitat goes down and natural resources become finite, management efforts must become more intensive, and costs go up." Even so,

no amount of money can preserve viable, free-ranging wildlife populations once their habitat is gone.

Can we continue to encourage economic growth and urban development in Colorado and preserve our wildlife, too? We must answer this question and seek solutions to the problem of habitat loss. And we must do it soon.

We Can Save Habitat

As a society, we've made many environmental mistakes. Changes wrought upon the land in the past still affect Colorado today. We are all responsible because we have all accepted the benefits of natural resource utilization. But when it comes to sharing these natural resources with all life on Earth, humans need to raise their consciousness from exploitation to stewardship.

When Lakewood resident Susan Hasenjager saw the riparian area next to her home being bulldozed, she questioned it. Discovering the owner didn't have a grading permit, she got the development halted temporarily, long enough to spur her neighbors to action. A community group of more than fifty people showed up at the next city council meeting in support of protecting the site. The city worked out a trade with the landowner, and the riparian area, now city property, was saved from the bulldozers.

In Durango, Betty Feazle has placed a conservation easement on her ranch. Legally established, a conservation easement allows a landowner to identify portions of land that will never be developed. Because the development potential has been

reduced, this kind of win/win arrangement preserves wildlife habitat and lowers the landowners tax burden.

Students at Arvada's Peck Elementary School wrote letters protesting the draining of Hayes Lake and subsequent destruction of a related wetland. These students, determined to make a difference, actually created bird habitat on their school ground. Each month they study a different endangered species, and they have raised money and donated it to Colorado Division of Wildlife's Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program. "Saving habitat is a building process," said Peck teacher Dudley Weiland. "The community has to get involved. It's people wanting to preserve something that should be preserved."

You, too, can help protect habitat for wildlife. Take an active role by getting involved in local politics, attending land use planning meetings in your community, and writing letters to governmental agencies who review development projects. Get involved with organizations that lobby to protect habitat and the environment or that work directly to preserve, restore or to create habitat.

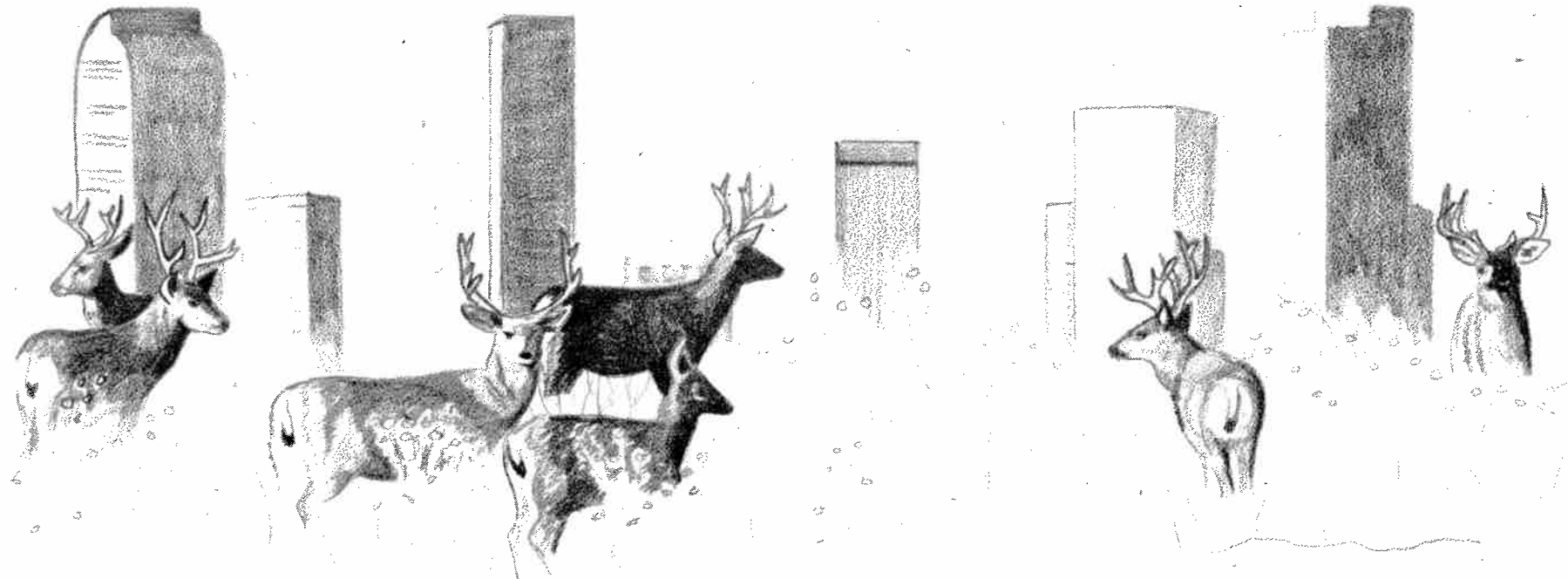
Environmental Organizations that Take Action:

Colorado Wildlife Federation, 429-4500
Ducks Unlimited, 482-3825
Trout Unlimited, 595-0620
The Nature Conservancy, 444-2950
Colorado Environmental Coalition, 837-8701
Sierra Club, 861-8819
The Wilderness Society, 839-1175
Colorado Wildlife Heritage Foundation, 291-7212
Trust for Public Lands, (508) 988-5922
Colorado Open Lands, 443-7347
National Audubon Society, 499-0219

You can create or improve habitat around your own home. These publications, free from the Colorado Division of Wildlife, can show you how:

How to Attract Birds to Your Backyard
Woody Species for Wildlife Plantings
Wildscape: Landscaping for Wildlife and the Homeowner

Send a postcard requesting copies to Dave Weber, Central Region, Colorado Division of Wildlife, 6060 Broadway, Denver CO 80216



mule deer

Based on a photograph by Wendy Shattil and Bob Rozinski

DOW — Working for Wildlife

Report: Bald Eagles

Jerry Craig, Raptor Biologist with the DOW Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program, works hard to protect critical habitat for bald eagles. He has even won the approval of eagles with his manmade, 350-pound bald eagle nests.

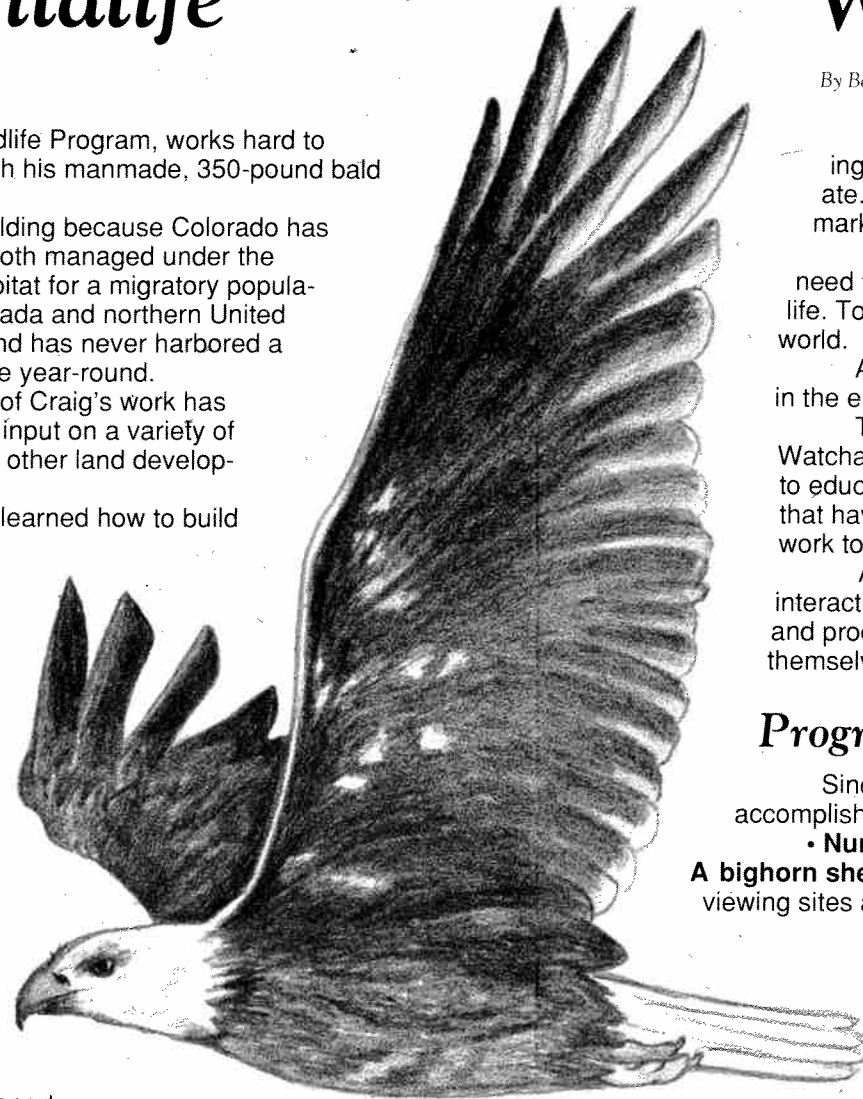
Craig's bald eagle work ranges from winter habitat improvement to nest building because Colorado has two distinct bald eagle populations — both listed as endangered since 1976 and both managed under the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program. Our state provides crucial winter habitat for a migratory population of between 460 and 560 bald eagles who spend their breeding season in Canada and northern United States. And, although Colorado is on the edge of the bald eagle breeding range and has never harbored a large resident population, today at least 10 pairs of bald eagles call Colorado home year-round.

Because bald eagles prey primarily upon waterfowl during the winter, most of Craig's work has centered around preservation and improvement of wetlands. He has provided key input on a variety of land use issues around the state where gravel extraction, bridge construction, and other land development threatened critical wetlands and nesting sites:

In helping the resident, breeding population of bald eagles, Jerry Craig has learned how to build nests approved and used by the eagles. According to Craig, "bald eagles usually build their nests in big, old cottonwoods. Unfortunately, both nests and trees are vulnerable to wind throw." Craig constructs a sturdy artificial base or nest basket, and then builds the nest on the base with sticks just as the eagles would. Most of his eagle nests are 3 to 4 feet in diameter, 2 feet deep, and weigh about 350 pounds. "We have found nests that weigh between 500 and 600 pounds. The resident eagles add sticks to their nests all year long, so they get pretty big."

Annual, nationwide bald eagle counts—orchestrated by the National Wildlife Federation since 1980—are showing that the bald eagle population has rebounded from the devastating effects of DDT. "The overall population is so secure and reproductively stable that bald eagles may be downlisted from endangered to threatened on the national level. However," adds Craig, "Colorado's resident population is still too small to downlist. If a population is downlisted before it is truly stabilized and self-sufficient, money and program support can be pulled away too soon and the population declines." Craig is quick to add that downlisting is a positive move when the population is stable.

Colorado's Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program is doing its part to help the bald eagle nationwide by providing critical winter habitat. The real key to population recovery, according to Craig, is increasing the breeding population. This is primarily out of Colorado's hands, but as individuals, we can support preservation and improvement of wetland habitat in northern states and Canada. ❧



bald eagle

Why Watchable Wildlife?

By Bob Hembrode, Program Director

For over a century, the Colorado Division of Wildlife has concentrated on creating and maintaining opportunities for hunting and fishing. Until the last two decades, this focus was eminently appropriate. During the early years, when the Division worked to protect wildlife, it was to prevent exploitive market hunting or to manage and regulate sport hunting and fishing.

In recent years, the Colorado public has gained an increasing awareness of the link between the need for a healthy environment and a quality of life for humans. Wildlife is a barometer of that quality of life. Today when the Division works for wildlife, we include all those wild animals with whom we share our world.

At the same time, a smaller percentage of Colorado's human population hunts and fishes today than in the entire history of the Division, and an increasing number of people are wildlife viewers.

These changes in public values and activities gave rise to the Colorado Division of Wildlife's Watchable Wildlife Program. Increasing interest in wildlife watching gives the Division excellent opportunity to educate people about the needs of wildlife. We can also forge coalitions between various interest groups that have been on opposite sides in the past. Both hunters and nonhunters, for example, can and should work together to protect wildlife habitat in our state.

Although public interest and concern for wildlife is high, most people have never learned how to interact with animals in the wild. The goal of the Watchable Wildlife Program is to provide quality activities and products that will enable people to enjoy and learn about wildlife without jeopardizing the animals or themselves.

Program Accomplishments

Since its inception in July of 1987, the Colorado Division of Wildlife's Watchable Wildlife Program has accomplished a great deal with the cooperation and energy of DOW people in every region of the state:

- **Numerous photography and animal-watching field trips** have been offered throughout the state. **A bighorn sheep viewing site** has been constructed near Georgetown, and additional, sign-marked wildlife viewing sites are being developed statewide.
- **New publications, videotapes, and displays** are now available to the public. *Colorado's Wildlife Company* informs approximately 18,000 Colorado residents about wildlife and wildlife appreciation opportunities. *Colorado Wildlife*, a comprehensive book about the state's wildlife, contains outstanding color photos and natural history information. **New brochures include:** "Colorado's Watchable Wildlife," "Wildlife Watch 1990," "Bighorn Sheep," "Wildlife Watching Close to Home," and "Lesser Prairie Chicken." **A videotape**, "Life at the Top," was broadcast on public television and is available for home viewing. This thirty minute video describes the alpine ecosystem of Mount Evans. *Wildlife Watch 1990* is a **photo/essay** display featuring a different animal every month of the year. It is on view at the Colorado Tourism Board main office in Denver, at Tourist Information Centers in Burlington, Trinidad and Fruita, and in the Division of Wildlife regional offices statewide.

For information on these and other Watchable Wildlife activities and products, call 291-7518. ❧

Game or Nongame

By Mary Taylor Gray

Game animals — those legally hunted and fished for — comprise only 20% of all animal species in the state. The majority of wildlife we enjoy in Colorado are nongame; that is, humans do not hunt or fish for them. The gray jays that join us on mountain picnics; the least shrew, weighing only a few ounces yet a fierce predator of insects and other invertebrates; the chorus frogs that fill spring evenings with amphibian song. These creatures, many of which, like snakes and rodents, are "unpopular," are also wildlife and as important to the ecosystem as the higher profile animals.

Where do nongame animals fit into the management structure of the Division of Wildlife? They are part of the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program, responsible for managing nearly 800 species in the state.

What kind of work does this program cover? At a remote high country lake, ten miles inside the rugged terrain of Rocky Mountain National Park, researchers seek to return threatened greenback cutthroat trout (a fish



pika

Based on a photograph by Jeff Foott



bighorn sheep

Park, researchers seek to return threatened greenback cutthroat trout (a fish found only in Colorado) to its native habitat. On the eastern plains, where the leks or courtship grounds for sharp-tailed grouse and prairie chickens are so important, efforts are underway to protect vanishing grassland habitat for these ground-dwelling birds. And along selected waterways of the western slope, the river otter, an important predator missing from Colorado riparian ecosystems since the turn of the century, is being reintroduced.

Is acid rain causing us to lose populations of high altitude frogs and toads? Do lynx and wolverine persist in the state and in what numbers? Do Mexican spotted owls, the sub-species found in Colorado, need old-growth forest to survive like their cousins in the northwest? Though the Nongame Program currently has forty-two different projects underway, lots more work needs to be done. "We don't know enough about many species in Colorado to determine if they are rare or declining," said DOW nongame specialist Judy Sheppard. "First we must find them, identify what habitats they live in, and determine if they need protection; then we can figure out how to protect them."

How is the program funded? Unfortunately this vital work relies on a variety of somewhat unpredictable funding sources, including the Nongame Income Tax Check-off and federal matching funds. That's why Governor Romer's Great Outdoors Colorado! initiative is seeking to establish a permanent funding source for protection and management of our nongame and endangered wildlife.

GO Colorado!

Realistic Funding Ideas for Wildlife Habitat Preservation

The Final Report of the Great Outdoors Colorado! Citizens Committee is out, and what they say is worth reading. The committee has compiled some interesting facts regarding public priorities and understandings regarding wildlife habitat in Colorado. More importantly, they identify several realistic routes to establish a funding base for the preservation of our wildlife heritage.

The report does not mince words and is strong on implementation. As an example, the report states: "The Committee shares a concern emphatically voiced by citizens statewide **that more than half of the net proceeds from the Colorado Lottery are earmarked by the Legislature for capital construction projects such as prisons and other public buildings.** Many Coloradans feel that they voted for funding of parks and open space when they approved the public referendum creating the Lottery in 1980."

The following GO Colorado! recommendations need your support for immediate implementation if we are to have a chance to preserve wildlife habitat in Colorado:

1. Establish a nine-point Great Outdoors program to invest in the future of Colorado's outdoor recreation, wildlife and open space resources.
2. Establish a perpetual and irrevocable Great Outdoors Trust that will generate enough income each year to fully fund the nine-point program. Design the trust to ensure that it will be used only for the program elements specified. Neither interest nor principal from trust may be diverted to uses other than Great Outdoors Colorado!
3. Establish a Board of Trustees to administer the Great Outdoors Trust and to make sure that there is public accountability for expenditures on each of the nine program elements.
4. Dedicate a specific funding mechanism to quickly build the Great Outdoors Trust to a level that

can sustain each of the nine program elements on a permanent basis. This recommended level is approximately \$30 million per year in 1990 dollars.

As part of this recommendation, the Committee proposes that proceeds should be shifted from the Colorado State Lottery, now dedicated by the Legislature to the State Capital Construction Fund, to the Great Outdoors Trust. These proceeds are currently committed to prison construction and other projects through Fiscal Year 1997-98.

5. Change Colorado property tax laws to encourage the use of permanent conservation easements and land acquisition to protect outdoor resources on private land.

6. Complete an evaluation of state-owned lands for compatibility with Great Outdoors program goals and maintain a perpetual registry of public lands in Colorado.

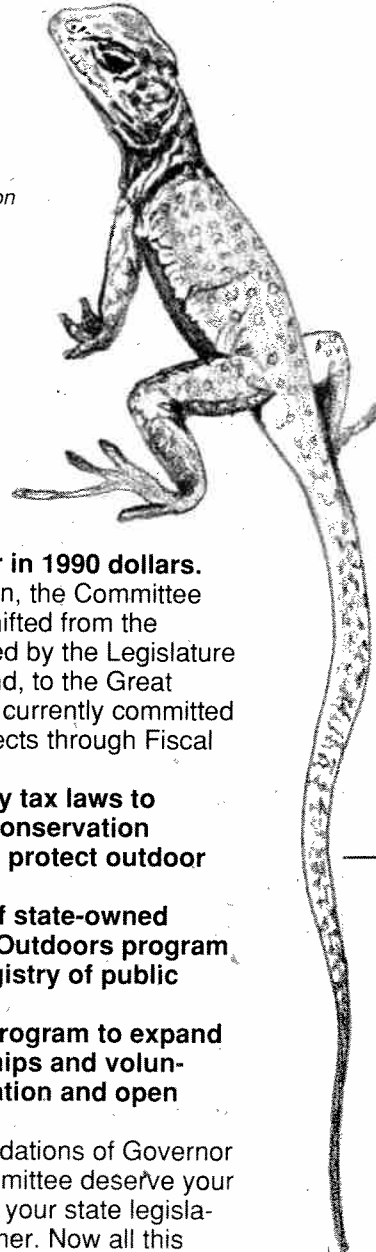
7. Use the Great Outdoors program to expand the role of public/private partnerships and volunteers in sponsoring wildlife, recreation and open space projects.

The hard work and recommendations of Governor Romer's GO Colorado! Citizens Committee deserve your accolades and your support. Write to your state legislator and send a copy to Governor Romer. Now all this hard work needs to be implemented!

For more information, call 866-3311.

collared lizard

Based on a photograph by Geoff Hammerson



Reader Questions

Game/Nongame Imbalance

(Due to space limitations, only portions of Mr. Bangert's letter could be published.)

David Harrison
Great Outdoors Colorado

Dear Mr. Harrison,

Regarding the letter from Diane J. Brown in the Fall 1990 issue of *Colorado's Wildlife Company*; you people finally admitted that yours is an organization "for, by, and of hunters, trappers, and fishermen." It is good that you have admitted to this imbalance, but it is very disturbing that the DOW takes this stand in light of the fact that non-consumptive users actually pay more into the fee structure and donations than their destructive counterparts. . . . Even at a park such as Chatfield, there is hunting allowed very close to public accessed areas. Where are we supposed to go? You give us our token parks to crowd into. Big deal! Please institute some balance into your programs. Even though we are non-consumptive, I am willing to pay more, as are most other people that I talk to on this matter.

I sure hope in the future that you people will honor your mandate to manage and protect the people's wildlife for the people and not the sportsman. Then maybe the wildlife of this state will prosper, not just the so-called game species.

Colorado's Wildlife Company directed me to send correspondence to David Harrison. I am also sending a copy to the DOW to make sure that they are aware that the hunting system is very unbalanced and that some of the citizenry is dissatisfied with this imbalance.

Randy K. Bangert.

By stating that "non-consumptive users actually pay more into the fee structure and donations" than hunters, you seem to be referring to fees used to enter state parks, yet such fees are paid by nonhunters and hunters alike. Most importantly, why try to divide wildlife supporters based on the reason for their support? The desire to preserve Colorado's wildlife heritage brings hunters and nonhunters onto common ground. This alliance is essential for preservation of wildlife habitat into the future.

However, you raise an interesting point: While park fees do not go to the Division of Wildlife, they may be used in part to preserve wildlife habitat by the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. Although these are two separate agencies, from the public's viewpoint — park fees do support wildlife habitat. See coupon below for an opportunity to directly support wildlife.

Editor

Colorado's Wildlife Company WILDLIFE HERITAGE COUPON

Yes _____. I want to help preserve Colorado's wildlife heritage. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____.
(Please make your check payable to Colorado's Wildlife Company/DOW. This is a tax deductible contribution and will directly support the Watchable Wildlife and Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Programs.)

Yes _____. I want to keep receiving *Colorado's Wildlife Company* free of charge through 1991.

Name _____
Street Address _____
City, State, Zip _____

Please add the following friends of wildlife to your mailing list:

Name _____	Name _____
Street Address _____	Street Address _____
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Mail to: COLORADO'S WILDLIFE COMPANY, Colorado Division of Wildlife, 6060 Broadway, Denver, CO 80216

Keep Your Eyes Peeled

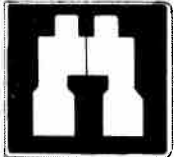
NE Region: Volunteers are needed for Operation Osprey 1991. Call Bud Smith at DOW, 484-2836.

A Birds of Prey class, focusing on eagles, will be offered by DOW and the Rocky Mountain Raptor Center in late January or February. Call Bud Smith at DOW, 484-2836.

Volunteers are needed to help with the bald eagle blind and feeding station at Lory State Park. Call Beth Dillon, 484-2836.

SW Region: Make plans now! A great chance to see greater sandhill cranes and whooping cranes at the Monte Vista Crane Festival, March 15-17 and 22-24, in the San Luis Valley. Call (719) 852-4382 for tour reservations.

The largest bald eagle concentration in Colorado can be viewed along the Uncompahgre River riparian areas south of Montrose. Call Glen Hinshaw at DOW, (303)249-3431.

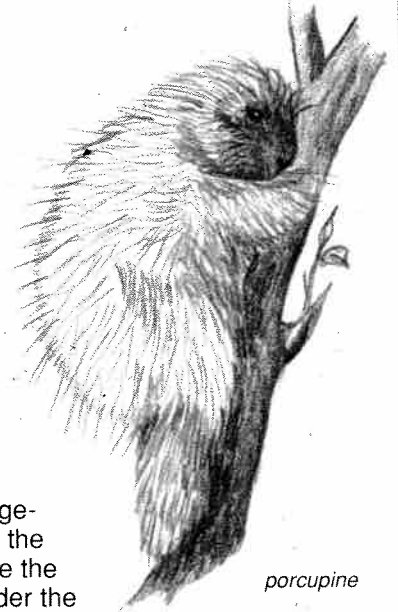


Wildlife Viewing
Area

It's also a good time of year to see bighorn sheep, elk, deer, and antelope as you drive through the southwest part of the state.

Central Region: The new bighorn sheep viewing site near Georgetown is open and ready for business. Built in the shape of a ram's horn, the structure contains observation scopes and interpretive information. Take the Georgetown exit from I-70. Take a left at the stop sign, and go back under the highway.

Take another left at the four-way stop onto Alvarado Blvd. Go east 1 mile; the viewing site will be on your right. Do not approach the hillside where the sheep are gathered.



porcupine

Based on a photograph
by Jeffrey Hogan

Take Action For Habitat

Over the past two years, *Colorado's Wildlife Company* has received lots of checks and requests for information from readers who want to financially support wildlife in Colorado. You have asked for an easy, year-round way to contribute directly to preservation of Colorado's wildlife heritage.

SO WE CREATED THE WILDLIFE HERITAGE COUPON. Now you can send us the coupon printed on the back of the mailing information below and enclose your check. Your donation will be deposited in a fund used only for the Watchable Wildlife and Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Programs. Also, of course, your name will be added to the mailing list for *Colorado's Wildlife Company* 1991. 🐾 🐾

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