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1996 SUMMER COMPENDIUM OF WILDLIFE APPRECIATION



Colorado's Wildlife Company

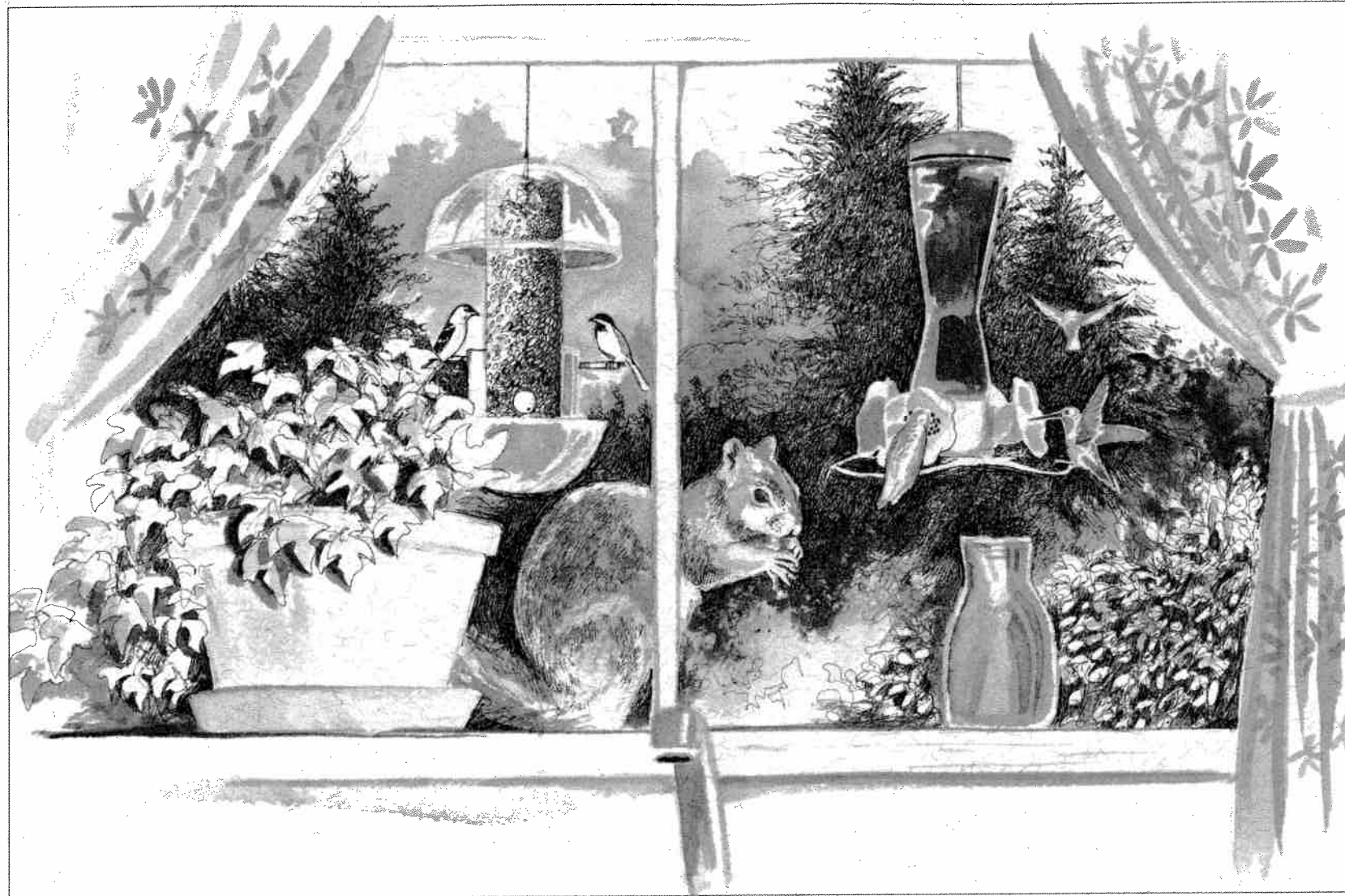


**WATCHING
WILDLIFE**

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Wildlife Watching Is Fun!

Bighorn sheep clinging to a steep slope, elk gracing a high mountain meadow, collared lizards basking in the sun or golden eagles soaring in the open sky...wherever you look in Colorado, you're likely to see wildlife. In this issue of *Colorado's Wildlife Company* we want to help you get out and have fun watching wildlife. We've included some how-to's, where-to's and when-to's to help you enjoy Colorado wildlife wherever your outings take you this summer. So carry this issue along as you head out to our state's mountains and meadows, lakes and forests, and enjoy Colorado's Watchable Wildlife!



WATCHING WILDLIFE IN YOUR BACKYARD

Heading to the mountains or prairies to watch wildlife is fun, but you really don't have to leave your home to be delighted and entertained by wildlife. Just take a peek in your backyard.

Of course, where you live will determine what creatures are your neighbors. In the city, you can expect fox squirrels and songbirds, including chickadees, house finches, house sparrows, mourning doves, flickers, blue jays, grackles and downy woodpeckers. You may see waxwings and warblers, and the occasional hummingbird, if you

offer tubular flowers or a nectar feeder to attract them. If you live near a park or open space you may see bats, owls, Canada geese, red foxes, raccoons and deer. If you're close to a waterway, beavers, great blue herons, black-crowned night-herons, kingfishers and a variety of ducks, coots and other waterfowl are a high possibility. If your home is in the foothills and mountains, you may find elk in your yard in the morning, and be kept company by gray and Steller's jays, nutcrackers, hummingbirds and ravens. Sapsuckers may rap out a tattoo in the pine trees, while

Abert's squirrels and chickarees scold passersby.

Stands of deciduous trees—along water, in parks and urban landscaping—often attract migratory birds in spring and fall; some will stay to nest and rear their young, treating you to a peek at bird "home life."

A tremendous variety of books and resources offer help discovering the wildlife around your home. Here's a sampling: *Colorado's Backyard Wildlife*, *Watchable Birds of the Rocky Mountains*, *Birdscaping Your Garden*, *A Field Guide to Mammal Tracking*.

DOW WORKING FOR WILDLIFE

Watchable Wildlife Program To help Coloradans and visitors learn about and enjoy watching wildlife, the Colorado Division of Wildlife's Watchable Wildlife Program develops wildlife viewing sites and provides information on where and how to see wildlife. The Watchable Wildlife In Parks program is building kiosks offering wildlife watching information in state parks (see Summer 1995 *Colorado's Wildlife Company*). Face-to-Face, a series of workshops teaching wildlife viewing skills to families, tour-industry employees and other groups, is under development but not yet available. Watchable Wildlife has produced two books—*Colorado Wildlife* and the *Colorado Wildlife Viewing Guide*—as well as a variety of brochures and videos about wildlife watching. And the program brings you this publication—*Colorado's Wildlife Company*—which now reaches more than 25,000 subscribers free-of-charge.

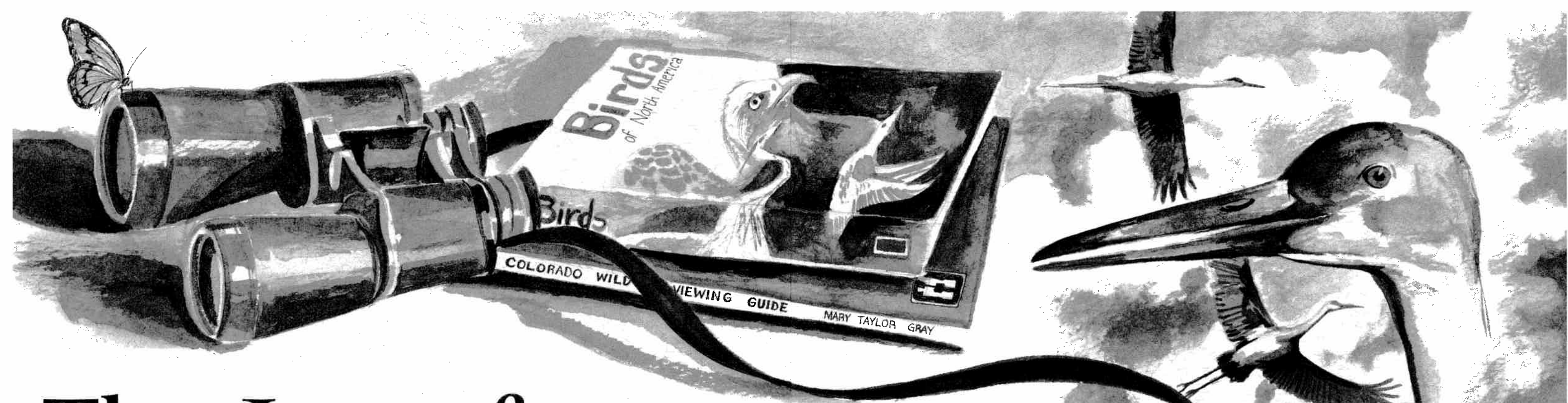
Who's Watching Our Watchable Wildlife?

If you enjoy watching wildlife, you're not alone. In fact, 76 million Americans enjoy it too. Most watchers do so while participating in another activity, such as hiking, biking, sightseeing or fishing. Unlike participants in hunting and fishing recreation, approximately half of wildlife watchers are women. Wildlife watchers are a burgeoning economic force. Americans spend more than \$18 billion annually to watch, photograph and feed birds and wildlife. This includes expenditures for equipment, books and magazines, and travel to observe wildlife.

Coloradans surveyed about wildlife viewing reported they did so to enjoy nature, relax and escape the sights and sounds of civilization. But a majority of respondents said not having enough time limited their participation, not an unfamiliar complaint about many things these days.

Who To Watch?

All wildlife is potentially "watchable," that is, interesting to see and observe. However, Coloradans have indicated they are particularly interested in seeing certain high-profile species. Deer lead the list as the number one animal of interest. Next is bald eagles, golden eagles and elk, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goats and mountain lions.



The Joys of Watching Wildlife

by Mary Taylor Gray

We can watch nature shows on television, or marvel at spectacular photos of wildlife in magazines, but none of it holds a candle to actually seeing wildlife ourselves. Whether standing at the edge of a mountain meadow as a 900-pound bull elk bellows his eerie bugle; watching a mountain goat kid bounding up a slope like a white hobby horse; or laughing at the gyrations of gray jays and Clark's nutcrackers at a summer picnic, seeing wildlife up close and firsthand is a thrill and a joy. It reminds us that we share our world with other creatures which are beautiful, entertaining and deserving of our admiration. It helps us get away from the hubbub and stresses of modern life, relax and learn more not just about nature, but about ourselves.

Watching wildlife can be a goal in itself, or it can be a nice addition to fishing, bicycling, hiking or any outing. Taking a stroll to see the local wildlife is a great way to wrap up a family picnic. Everyone can watch wildlife, regardless of age or physical ability. It doesn't require a 10-mile backpack into the wilderness, in fact some of the best viewing experiences are from the car. A vehicle acts as a blind and animals often draw nearer and act more naturally than they would if they saw the form of a human.

object of interest with the naked eye, then, without moving your eyes, bring the binoculars into your line of vision and focus.

Field guides: Birders swear by them, but even if you're not into deciding which species of brown sparrow you're looking at, a field guide opens up a world of information to enrich your experience. Tracks guides are very fun for figuring out whose footprints you're seeing in the mud and a way to discover evidence of more elusive animals you may rarely actually see. How-to books such as *Watching Wildlife* and *The Handbook for Butterfly Watchers* offer skills rather than identification information.

Clothing: Wear drab, earthy colors to avoid looking like a huge white flag moving through the woods. Birds see color well, so avoid wearing the rainbow. A hat with a brim not only shades your eyes but obscures them so you don't look to wildlife like a huge pair of staring, predatory eyes. Wear layers so you can adjust to changing weather—a cold Colorado morning soon turns hot when the sun gets well up.

Sun protection: Protect your eyes with good sunglasses and your skin with sun block. Polarizing lenses can help you see creatures in the water.

Go out when wildlife is active: Animals are most active

viewing of waterfowl, shore and marsh birds, large mammals in upland areas. Six-mile self-guided auto tour. Off Highway 125 in North Park near Walden.

Pueblo Greenway and Nature Center - A three-mile paved biking and walking path begins at the Pueblo Nature Center, passing through cottonwood riparian areas along the Arkansas River.

Ft. Collins Greenbelt - Excellent cottonwood/willow riparian corridor through an urban area. Paved trail parallels the Poudre River through Ft. Collins. Red foxes, beavers, deer, more than 200 bird species.

Roxborough State Park - A transition zone between plains and foothills characterized by fascinating red rock formations. Mammals, 140 bird species, variety of reptiles and amphibians.

Castlewood Canyon State Park - A steep-walled "prairie canyon" with dramatic terrain and habitat for cliff-dwelling raptors and other birds, variety of mammals and reptiles.

Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge - A complex of ponds and marshes, excellent for waterfowl, shore and wading birds and numerous songbirds; spring and fall staging area for sandhill cranes. In the San Luis Valley outside Monte Vista.



form of a human.

Because animals are individual creatures reacting to influences around them, you never know what you may witness. Hiking a trail in Rocky Mountain National Park one summer, I noticed a pine siskin flying to my right—nothing remarkable. Suddenly a sharp-shinned hawk (a woodland hawk about the size of a gray jay) darted out of a shrub and grabbed the siskin in mid-air. This happened in an eye blink, not 10 feet from me, and the unfortunate siskin couldn't have been more surprised than I was (it just paid a dearer price for its unwariness).

Wildlife watchers have countless stories like this, happenings from the whimsical to the intriguing to the dramatic which they have witnessed simply by being out in the right place at the right time. There is always something to see and learn, and perhaps those of greatest value are the simplest. Few of us will ever witness a mountain lion pouncing on a deer, but watching a coyote hunting mice in a meadow, listening to the hooting duet of a pair of great horned owls or seeing young birds which have left the nest continue to beg food from their harassed parents are equally fascinating. Appreciating these events which wouldn't make the 10 o'clock news helps us re-connect with the natural world, which is, after all, where we come from, too.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Binoculars are probably the single most helpful tool in the wildlife watcher's repertoire, so get the best pair you can afford. The nuances of binocular selection are complicated so learn all you can from your retailer before buying. The best binoculars for all-purpose wildlife viewing are those with power and dimensions of 7 x 35. They gather a lot of light, allowing you to use them in morning and evening, and will focus on objects as close as 12 feet away. To use binoculars, spot the

Go out when wildlife is active: Animals are most active in early morning and evening, so for the best viewing experiences, tailor the time of day of your outing. A trip down a particular country highway at dawn may yield views of the Big Four of Colorado wildlife—deer, elk, bighorn sheep and pronghorn. The same trip at noon may offer no wildlife at all.

The "searching for lost keys" technique: Animals are naturally wary, so instead of marching straight towards them, amble along in other than a straight line, looking down instead of at the animal, as if you are searching for lost keys. Don't try to sneak up on wildlife; if you act like a predator, they will consider you such and depart. Stop occasionally and evaluate whether the animals you are watching accept your presence—do they get up and move, stop their activities or otherwise appear nervous? If so, back off. Not only is it unethical to approach wildlife too closely, it will end the experience abruptly if they fly off or run away.

Sharpen your senses: One of the joys of being outdoors is the abundance of sensory experience, so focus on what is around you. Watch for movement and shapes; look above and behind you. Pay attention to sounds and even smells. If, like wildlife, you tune in to senses other than just vision, you will discover a world of information and experience.

SITES

To get you started we've listed a selection of wildlife viewing sites in Colorado. This is only the tip of the iceberg of possibilities. For a more detailed guide to these and other sites, consult the *Colorado Wildlife Viewing Guide* (see inset). A state map or Colorado Atlas and Gazetteer (available at bookstores) will be helpful in locating sites.

Hanging Lake - A steep 1.5 mile hike through spruce/fir forest to colorful lake fed by waterfalls. Good for mountain songbirds and small mammals. Off I-70 east of Glenwood Springs.

Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge - Outstanding

Valley outside Monte Vista.

Dolores River Canyon - Excellent wildlife and scenery along 55 miles of steep-walled river canyon. Portions accessible by foot, horseback or boat only. Raptors, aquatic mammals, woodland birds. Between Dolores and Slick Rock.

Tamarack Ranch State Wildlife Area - Twenty miles of wooded bottomlands, farmed plots and sagebrush sandhills along the South Platte River. Eastern and western races of many songbirds; prairie-chickens, sharp-tailed grouse; prairie mammals. Near Crook.

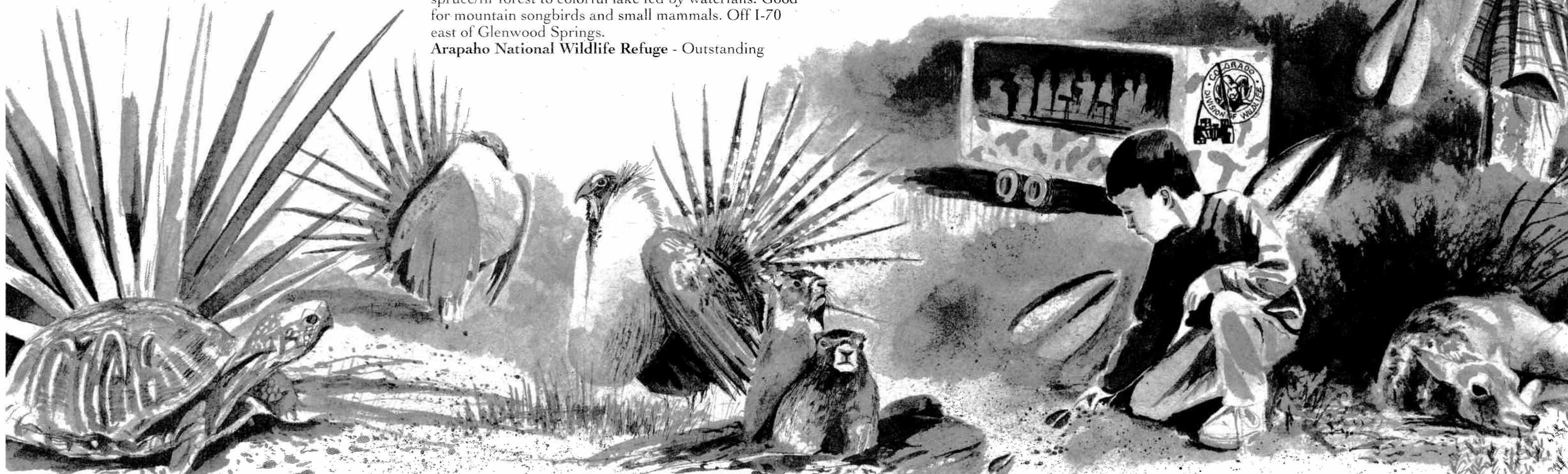
Silver Thread Scenic Byway - Seventy-five mile scenic drive from South Fork to Lake City, through mountain meadows, subalpine forest and along the Rio Grande River. Moose, elk, bald eagles and other raptors, songbirds.

Mueller State Park - 90 miles of trails through meadows, subalpine forest and canyons. Elk, bighorn sheep, mountain-nesting songbirds, small mammals. South of Divide.

Great Sand Dunes National Monument - Dramatic 700-foot high sand dunes. Deer, elk, pronghorn, small mammals and songbirds in surrounding wooded habitats. San Luis Valley near Mosca.

Yeoman Park - Glacial valley with wet meadows, surrounded by subalpine forest. Beaver colony, elk, raptors, trout viewing. Handicapped-accessible trails and Braille nature trail. South of Eagle along Brush Creek Rd.

The Colorado Wildlife Viewing Guide by Mary Taylor Gray is a field guide to 110 wildlife viewing sites throughout the state. It offers a brief site description, wildlife you're likely to see, best season to visit and directions. The guide is available for \$6.95 plus \$2 shipping & handling from the Colorado Wildlife Heritage Foundation, P.O. Box 211512, Denver, CO 80221; 303-291-7212.



THE WILDLIFE WATCHER'S CODE OF ETHICS

We, as wildlife watchers, will put the needs and safety of wildlife first, conserve wildlife and habitats, and respect the rights of others. We will seek wildlife watching experiences that reward us with the gift of seeing animals behaving naturally in their own environments. Recognizing the importance of learning specific codes of ethics for observing birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians, and insects in the wild, we will adhere to these guiding principles:

1. Observe animals from a safe distance, for us and for them.

- Use binoculars, spotting scopes and viewing blinds for a close view.
- Move slowly and quietly.
- Avoid nests and dens, leaving baby birds and other young animals where we find them.
- Learn to recognize and respect wildlife alarm signals.
- Understand that when an animal changes behavior as a result of our presence, we are too close.

2. Reserve feeding of wildlife for backyard birds.

- Put the safety and health of wildlife first by resisting the impulse to offer a handout.

3. Film and photograph wildlife responsibly.

- Use a telephoto lens from a

viewing blind or a vehicle.

- Never chase, herd, flush or make deliberate noise that stresses wildlife.
- Leave plants, trees and other natural features as we found them.
- Encourage photo and film editors to adopt ethical standards that include lens size of published photos, depict wildlife as part of a natural environment, and identify photos of captive wildlife.

4. Always be considerate.

- Ask permission to watch or photograph wildlife on private land.
- Observe all rules and regulations.
- Wait our turn to view or photograph animals when sharing a viewing area.
- Leave pets at home or in the car.
- Tread lightly, staying on trails and roads.

5. Return a gift to nature in all our actions.

- Consult our local wildlife agency for specific guidelines on ethical wildlife watching, filming and photography.
- Participate in wildlife and habitat conservation.
- Help others to become responsible wildlife watchers.

Endorsed by the National Partners in Watchable Wildlife

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STATE OF COLORADO
Roy Romer, Governor
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
James S. Lochhead, Executive Director



COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE
John Mumma, Director
6060 Broadway
Denver, CO 80216

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