



Autumn 2011

What Did You Just Say?!

By Shaun Howard, Lead Ranger

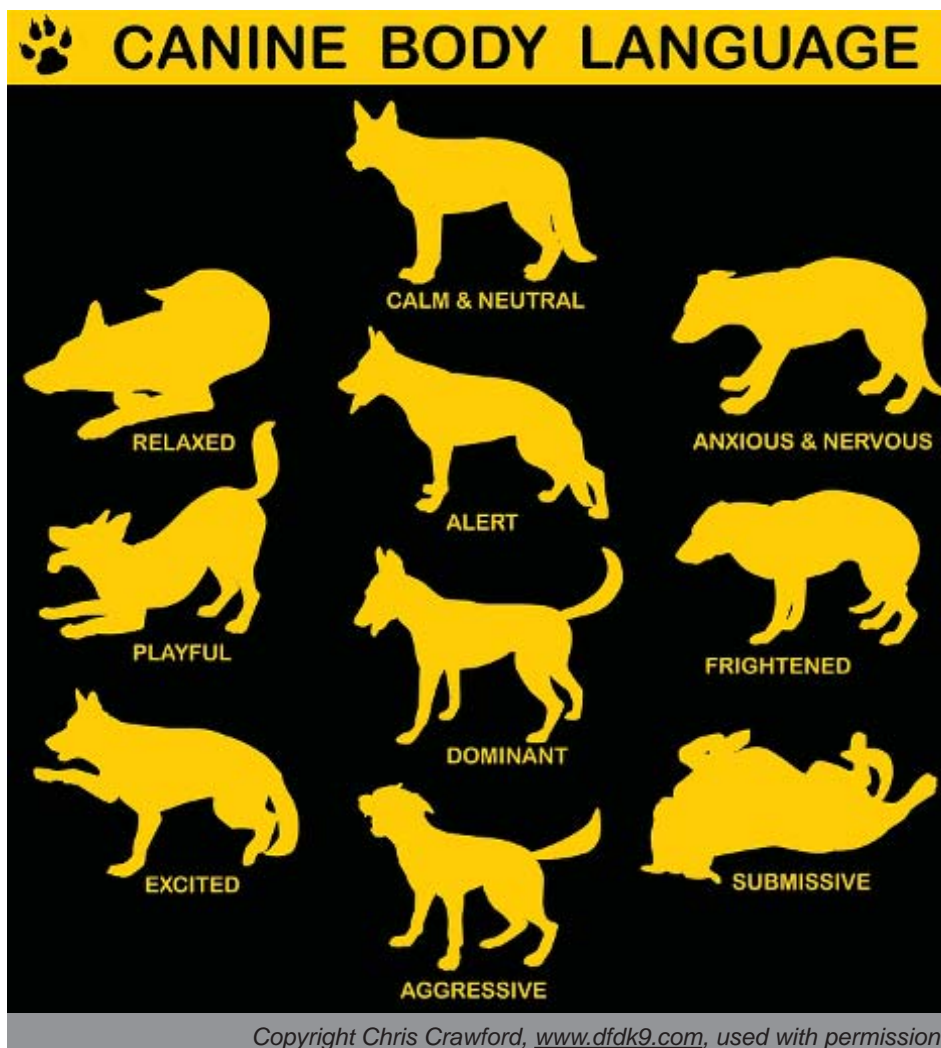
Some researchers claim that human communication consists of 93% non-verbal and only 7% verbal. Body language gives us clues to a person's attitude or state of mind. Non-verbal communication tells us much about another's state of aggression, attentiveness or relaxation. Remember this the next time you meet a dog!

Unlike humans who at least have the ability to use spoken language, dog communication is primarily based on non-verbal clues. Dogs use certain movements, ear positions, facial expressions and postures to communicate their state of mind. Dogs may not use the spoken word, but they will use a myriad of barks, growls, whines, whimpers and howls to express what's on their minds.

A common urban legend is that one can tell how a dog is feeling by looking at its face and its tail. When meeting an unfamiliar dog, remember that it's MOST important to look at the dog's WHOLE body. For example, a growling and barking dog with an erect tail could be communicating excitement instead of aggression (or visa versa).

Communication with a dog is complex. Assessing a dog's behavior is more about figuring out the dog's state of mind. In my experience, I interact better with an unfamiliar dog when I behave in a calm, relaxed manner. My goal is to reflect to the dog the behavior I want to see. For example, if I encounter an unleashed dog and act excited, angry, or fearful, I am likely to receive those behaviors in return. However, if I am calm and relaxed, I am more likely to receive the same behaviors from the dog.

That said ... how does one communicate in a non-threatening and calm way to a dog? The most important thing to remember is dogs avoid direct confrontation. The human interacting directly with an unfamiliar dog (whether that's staring at them, trying to pet them, trying to grab them, or talking excitedly at



Copyright Chris Crawford, www.dfdk9.com, used with permission

continued on page 7

In Pursuit of a Porcupine

By Alicia Vermilye,

Lookout Mountain Nature Center

Everyone has their own personal list of animals they would love to see in the wild. Perhaps it's a black bear on the side of a hill, a green heron flying above a lake, or the elusive bobcat.

The one animal that is near the top of my list is the porcupine. I would love to see this comical looking animal in its natural habitat – along the side of a road does not count in my book. Whenever I go for a hike in a ponderosa forest, I scan the upper branches of the trees looking for a light brown spot against the darker color bark.

Porcupines use their sharp, curved claws to climb trees in

search of the younger branches near the top. The porcupine is after the sugar and starch in the cambium layer underneath the bark. The cambium is a great source of energy. Since porcupines do not hibernate, the energy they get from the cambium helps them to stay warm through the cold winter months.

The porcupine teeth, made up of extra-long incisors in the front and flat grinding molars in the back, are the perfect tools for eating this kind of meal. The incisor teeth never stop growing and are kept sharp by continuous wear against each other. If you are thinking that this characteristic is similar to a rodent, you are correct! This is because the porcupine is a rodent. It's the second largest rodent in North America, after the beaver.

Unlike the larger mammals on my Must-See-List, I wouldn't mind happening upon a porcupine when I'm hiking alone. Even though this large rodent seems to be armed and dangerous, as long as

I keep my distance, I won't be harmed by the quills.

Porcupines cannot "throw" their quills, so as long as I don't approach this slow moving animal, I will be safe. Also, it's not the quills that give this animal its punk Mohawk look, it's the guard hairs. Most of their quills are actually located on their muscular tail. The porcupine will swing its tail and slap a victim that comes too close.

With over 30,000 quills, you'd think that the porcupine would be safe from predators. However some animals, like the bobcat, have learned to corner the porcupine and then flip it on its back to attack the unquilled belly.

As with all my previous hikes, I did not even catch a glimpse of a porcupine today. Sometimes it's the pursuit that makes hiking enjoyable.



Jana Johns
Layout and Design

Carolyn Tibbles
Editor

If you'd like to submit an article, please contact:

Jana Johns
Volunteer Program Administrator
Jefferson County Open Space
700 Jefferson County Parkway, Suite 100
Golden, CO 80401

Phone: 303-271-5922
FAX: 303-271-5997
E-Mail: jjohns@jeffco.us

Lookout Mountain Nature Center
Tim Sandsmark, 720-497-7600
Nature Education Supervisor

Hiwan Homestead Museum
John Steinle, 303-674-6262
History Education Supervisor

**INTERESTING
FACT**

Did you know that porcupines float? They have air-filled quills that make them buoyant in the water.



Porcupine, photograph used with permission from the National Park Service

News from

**Lookout Mountain
Nature Center**



Explore the Halloween Tales and Trails

Register now to bring
your child or grandchild

to explore Lookout Mountain Nature Center's
Halloween Tales and Trails!

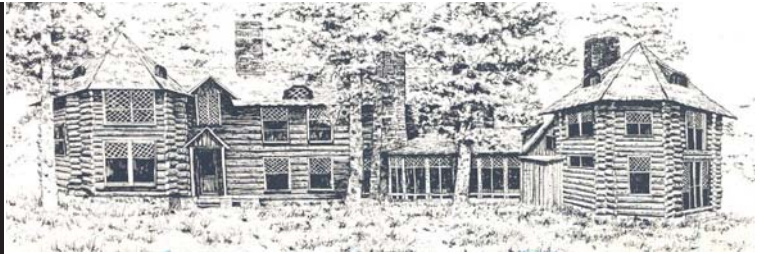
The staff and volunteers at Lookout Mountain Nature Center are gearing up for our fun and educational Halloween Tales and Trails event. Friendly, costumed characters will be lined up along the trail ready to show off their stuff! Gather around the campfire to enjoy a tale from storytellers.

Saturday, October 15

Afternoon Session: Noon – 3 p.m.

Evening Session: 5 – 8 p.m.

Space is limited and this event fills up fast; register today by going online at <http://lmnc.jeffco.us> or call 720-497-7609. A donation of \$10 per family or \$5 per individual is suggested.



HIWAN HOMESTEAD MUSEUM

Movie in the Grove

Our very first "Movie in the Grove" on July 23rd was a rousing success, with about 135 people in attendance. This included our Open Space Volunteer Park Host group. The crowd enjoyed the silent 1925 version of "The Phantom of the Opera," starring Colorado's own Lon Chaney, Sr., accompanied by famed pianist Hank Troy. The event was co-sponsored by Jefferson County Historical Society and Evergreen National Bank. We plan to expand the series next year with two films, perhaps another silent movie and a family-oriented movie. If you have suggestions about which movies we should show, please e-mail John Steinle at jsteinle@jeffco.us

Potluck Perfect!

*By Carolyn Tibbles, Administration and
Education Services*

It seemed as though all of the stars aligned to make the recent All Open Space Volunteers Potluck Social perfect! Everyone agreed – perfect weather; great food; congenial company; lively conversation; and the perfection was rounded off with generous scoops of mouthwatering ice cream. In fact, everyone had such a great time, relaxing and chatting with friends new and old, that the Open Space staff reluctantly left Hiwan's welcoming Historic Grove before the last dozen or so volunteers, the echoes of laughter in their ears as they drove out of the parking lot!



*Volunteers dip into scrumptious ice cream at the All Volunteer Potluck!
Photo by Amanda Peterson*

Flying J Ranch Forestry

By Ryan Skeels,
Natural Resources

Have you been able to find where the Natural Resources crew has been working this year? Have you heard the revving of the chainsaws and the clanking of chains as the “log skidder,” the yellow tree-hauling tractor, pulls logs out of the woods? Or more importantly, have you had to field comments or questions about the forestry work being done this summer at Flying J Ranch? Here’s some information from the Natural Resources staff that you, and the park visitors, may be wondering about.

The 2011 Flying J Ranch Park forest management project is well under way and moving at break-neck speeds towards completion at the southern end of the Park. The project implements a combination of forest management strategies to provide fire mitigation for the Park and surrounding communities and to give a new healthy start to approximately 20 acres of an infected, dead and dying lodgepole-dominated forest.

One of the management goals for the project is the creation of a fuel break to minimize the effects of wildfire on the surrounding communities and the Park itself, should one occur. A fuel break is an area that is cleared of vegetation in a way that a fire will not travel from tree to tree, or shrub to shrub, to surrounding lands.



Fuelbreak before cutting - June, 2011; Photo by Ryan Skeels

Flying J’s new fuel break is an approximately 150-foot wide strip of land managed to conform to the Guidelines for Forested Subdivisions and Communities as prepared by the Colorado State Forest Service. This document includes stipulations such as how close remaining trees can be to each other, how wide to create the fuel break based on terrain, and how to properly mitigate left-over tree debris, or “slash.”

You may wonder: “Why do you have to take so many trees?” “Why not just ‘thin’ the forest like I’ve seen in other fuel breaks?” Lodgepole pine is unique in that it grows together, lives together and dies together. Lodgepole normally grow in tight dense stands, called “dog hair stands,” relying on each other for support from the wind and weather. This makes it difficult to successfully “thin” the forest out as you would

for other species, such as ponderosa pine.

If a thinning is performed in a lodgepole pine forest, the remaining standing trees will more often than not simply blow down, as they have a shallow and weak root system and need to be in a group to withstand the wind together. Lodgepole pine also has a relatively short lifespan and begins to deteriorate in health after about 100 to 150 years, which has become apparent as this project has progressed. A large number of the trees have been found to be rotting from the ground up, often containing large ant-filled cavities at the base. This is just another sign that the health of this forest is deteriorating and management is overdue.

Another goal of the project is dwarf mistletoe mitigation. Dwarf mistletoe is a small, leafless, parasitic plant that causes major



Fuelbreak after cutting - August, 2011; Photo by Ryan Skeels

damage to the lodgepole and ponderosa pine forests along the Front Range, including many throughout the Open Space Park system. Dwarf mistletoe spreads through the forest by shooting spores from one tree to the next and putting out “root-like” structures into its branches.

Once a branch is infected with dwarf mistletoe, it redirects the water and nutrients from uninfected branches to itself, resulting in deformation of the tree and a slow deterioration in health. If a very young tree, or “seedling,” is infected by dwarf mistletoe it will be deformed from the start, resulting in a severely stunted and misshapen tree with greatly reduced ability to produce viable, healthy seeds. The most effective treatment for dwarf mistletoe in lodgepole pine is to remove all infected trees to prevent the spread to future

generations.

Some other popular questions about this project are: “What happens with all the wood?,” “What are you going to do with all the branches once the wood is hauled out,” and “What is that big red machine over there for?” As far as the wood goes, it is currently being stacked, or “decked,” next to the house foundations at the end of the service road running south from the main parking lot. There will be firewood sales beginning in September where those who have purchased permits are allowed to bring their own chainsaw and cut a truck and trailer-sized load of firewood for their home.

The other two questions go hand in hand and answer each other. The remaining branches, or “slash,” will be “masticated” by the big red machine, aptly named the “masticator.” It is

a tracked vehicle with a spinning, toothed metal drum attached to the front, which is used to grind up woody material in place, creating a shallow mixture of small wood chucks and soil as a perfect location for the next generation of plants and trees to grow.

As far as the future of the treated areas goes, the Natural Resources staff has high hopes and an excited attitude. As the next generation of trees comes in to fill the shoes of their ancestors, work will be done to ensure the same density problem doesn’t occur and that strong healthy individuals

will grow. The fuel break will be maintained to continue to minimize the effects of a wildfire, and management plans for the surrounding, untreated areas will be created. We’re looking forward to a healthy future!

Don’t hesitate to contact the Natural Resources section with further questions!

Interesting information on dwarf mistletoe management can be found at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r1-r4/spf/fhp/mgt_guide/dwarf_mistletoe/dwarfmistletoe.pdf

The Fuel Break Guidelines can be found at:

http://csfs.colostate.edu/pdfs/fuelbreak_guidelines.pdf

Camp Junior Ranger 2011 in Review

By Amanda Peterson, Lookout Mountain Nature Center

Do you know how to use a knife safely, or build a fire in a pinch? What 10 essentials should every hiker have in their backpack? What meal was a staple for Civil War soldiers? How do you identify an approaching thunderstorm and stay safe when lightning is near? What do the contents of an owl pellet tell you about the owl's diet? What animal made that four-toed track? Which bats are found in Colorado?

Where can you find the answers to all of these questions (and much more)? At Camp Junior Ranger, of course!

This year, the second annual Camp Junior Ranger was held June 25-26 at White Ranch Park's Sawmill Campground. Families were greeted on Saturday morning by Volunteers Nancy Kranzow and Larry White. Campers dropped off their gear at the parking lot, and then hiked a mile up to the campgrounds. The Rangers hauled the participants' gear up to the campsites, and the participants had all morning to set up camp and explore. One family took the "Pack It In Challenge" and carried all of their own gear to the campsites: Ranger Shaun Howard and her son James!

After lunch, the official activities kicked off with a lively game of "Ranger Says" led by Ranger Rachel Murray. Then campers dispersed to enjoy a wildlife

tracking hike led by Naturalists Peg Alig and Ashley Mott; a trip back in time to a Civil War camp hosted by Hiwan Homestead History Education Supervisor John Steinle; a fire and knife safety activity with Ranger Mike Morin; a search and rescue scenario with Rangers Mark Oline, Martin Barwick, and Rachel Murray; and a geocache treasure hunt led by volunteer Park Patroller Becky Bussey. Campers also had the opportunity to give back to the campgrounds by working with Ranger Dave Binkley to build new benches to replace old weathered benches at each campsite.

After a break for dinner, and time to relax and play with new friends, the campers regrouped for campfire stories by John Steinle and roasting marshmallows and s'mores. As the skies darkened, Volunteer Astronomy Team member Jim Dove gave campers a peek at Saturn and other celestial objects through a telescope. After a very busy day, campers went quickly to their sleeping bags to rest up for the next morning's activities.

Sunday's activities included a bugs and wildflowers hike led by Ranger Shaun Howard; owl pellet dissection with Ranger Erik Collette; a weather safety station with Ranger Jason Hamburg; a fun obstacle course with Volunteer Park Patroller Heather Taylor; and a chance to learn about beautiful bats with Colorado Division of Wildlife representative Tabbi Kinion.

After all of these activities,

campers were a bit worn out, but all said that they had enjoyed the weekend and would like to come back again. Several families said that they would be more likely to participate in outdoor activities as a result of Camp Junior Ranger. Our goal is that Camp Junior Ranger instills both a love of nature-based activities and the knowledge to do them safely. Camp Junior Ranger families are definitely appreciative for the opportunity to expose their kids to many outdoor activities and skills in a safe, fun environment. Stay tuned for more about Camp Junior Ranger 2012!



them) can all be interpreted by the dog as a human who is either unstable or who wants to confront them. Dogs do better when THEY choose how to get close to the human.

A tip I learned from the Jefferson County Animal Control is the “**Stop, Drop and Roll**” technique.

This technique mimics greeting behavior often displayed between dogs. When encountering an unfamiliar dog, the first step is to **stop**. This allows an opportunity to assess the situation. The next step is to **drop** your eyes. In the dog world, an unfamiliar dog making eye con-

tact with another dog is often the beginning of a fight. The last step is to **roll** your face to the side.

To master this technique, visualize yourself showing your ear to the dog. Stop, Drop and Roll communicates that you are not interested in fighting the dog.

If you are a fan of the Dog Whisperer, you are probably familiar with the “No Touch, No Talk, No Eye Contact” technique. Touching, talking to, and making eye contact with an unfamiliar dog can give it a heightened sense of anxiety. Your paying attention to the dog can be interpreted, by the dog, as meaning that you are either invading its space or that you are excited and/or unstable.

When meeting a new dog, let it take in your scent while you leave it alone. After a while, the dog, or the dog’s owner, will give you the okay as to when it’s time to interact with the dog.

Remember, your non-verbal communication conveys mountains to dogs! As a volunteer, be sure to pay attention to what you are ACTUALLY saying to a dog on the trail. Your volunteer experience will be much more rewarding.



Come to the Table!

**Volunteer Trails Day at
North Table Mountain Park
Saturday, October 8th
8:00am - 1:30pm**

We’re furnishing boxed lunches and cool-mesh t-shirts for all volunteers on this project.

Pre-registration required:
ONLINE: through VicNet
EMAIL: ctibbles@jeffco.us
PHONE: (303) 271-5992



help build a trail...



At left, top: Ranger Dave Binkley and campers put the finishing touches on a new bench; left, bottom: campers having a little fun while learning important safety skills; below: Ranger Jason Hamburg uses musical instruments to teach about the weather. All photographs by Amanda Peterson.





JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE

700 Jefferson County Pkwy., Suite 100

Golden, Colorado 80401-6018

<http://openspace.jeffco.us>