



Big Changes Coming to the Dog Park!

By Shaun Howard,
Senior Park Ranger

The Dog Off Leash Area (a.k.a., "the DOLA") is a great place for people to visit with their off-leash dogs. Located at Elk Meadow Park on the south side of Stagecoach Blvd., the DOLA is comprised of 107 acres and provides a unique opportunity for park visitors to hike with their dog off-leash. Divided into two sections, the off-leash area provides a 5-acre fenced area for dogs and their owners to work on improving their training skills. The remainder of the DOLA is unfenced and is ideal for dogs and owners who have mastered the art of voice and sight control. This unfenced part sits in a lovely shaded area scattered with mountain mahogany, ponderosa pines, and Douglas firs. This beautiful setting also provides scenic views of Mount Evans. No wonder the popularity of the dog off-leash park has exploded! With an increase in popularity, Open Space now faces a few visitor management issues.

Currently, dog walkers utilize the multiple social trails that pepper the DOLA. Open Space is working to reduce resource damage by creating a formalized trail network at the park. Construction of new trails will begin this spring. Once completed, a new accessible trail loop will ideally be a "humans stay on trail" area (except to pick up dog excrement). Dogs have occasionally left the Open Space property, sometimes conflicting with neighbors on their private property. Therefore, dog walkers need to keep their dogs within sight and under verbal control.

Lastly, dog excrement continues to be an issue at the park. The average dog defecates two to three times a day. Several hundred visitors visit the dog park every day. That equals thousands of piles of excrement at the park! Unfortunately, not every visitor is responsible in cleaning up after their dog.

Open space is planning several exciting methods to mitigate these issues. The goal is to

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encourage the dog park visitors to take care of their park. This effort will include several special events and some new volunteer opportunities. Also, as part of this campaign, a public forum was held for dog park visitors to discuss plans for the dog park.

To help manage the park, Open Space is seeking dog-friendly Patrollers and Hosts to become a part of a pilot volunteer program to help manage the dog park. We are currently working on formalizing a policy that allows Patrollers and Hosts to be accompanied by their well-socialized dogs while on duty at the dog park. If you are interested in volunteering with your dog at the dog park, please contact Shaun at 303-271-5911. A special training/orientation will be held at the dog park on May 15, 2011 for all of the interested volunteers.

The DOLA is a great place for visitors to enjoy! Open Space looks forward to creating a sustainable park for years to come!



Spring Fling

By Peg Alig, Naturalist,
Lookout Mountain Nature Center

While preparing for a program at Mount Falcon Park one bright sunny February afternoon, I stumbled upon one of my all time favorite winter observations – snow fleas, also called spring tails. *Hypogastrura nivicola* are ancient arthropods and members of the wingless *Collembola* order.

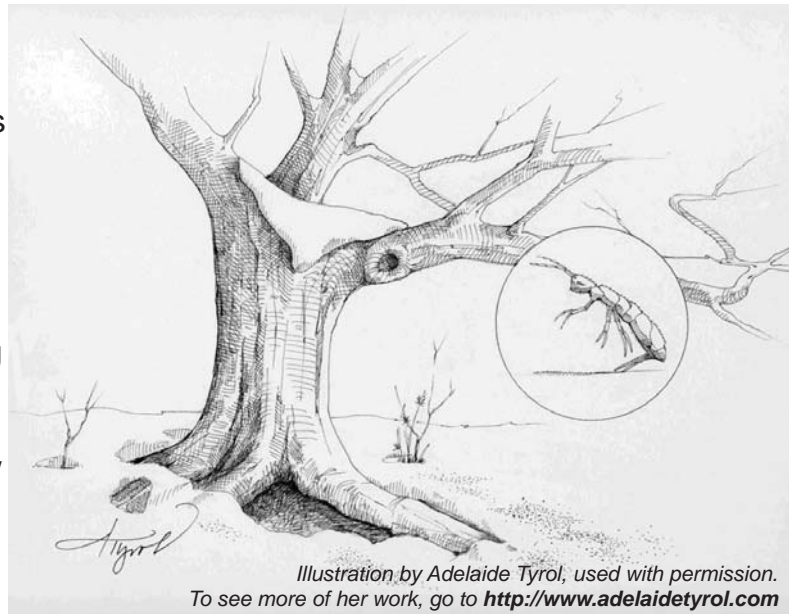
They are one of the most abundant of all land insects, numbering in the hundreds of thousands to one million per acre! The several hundred or so that I observed were catapulting around on top of the snow near the base of a gnarly old ponderosa. Delighted to find them, I grabbed the hand lens out of my pocket and flung my pack on the ground. I quickly squatted

down and scooped up a handful of snow. In less than a heart beat nearly all the snow fleas had vanished – some flinging away, others disappearing into the snow held in my gloved hand. My patience and persistence paid off. In a few moments, several had reemerged and hopped around, while others remained buried.

One of most fascinating traits of these insects is how they move. Furcula are modified legs that, when folded, are held close to the abdomen by a tiny clasp or hook. Once the spring-like furcula is released, the snow flea is launched into the air.

While this type of locomotion works well for evading predators, it's not easily controlled. They can propel themselves an extraordinary eight inches into the air, which is quite a feat for a creature that is only 1/16 of an inch long!

As scavengers, snow fleas can easily find a bounty of decaying leaf matter, bacteria and fungi along the forest floor. When perched on the snow surface, they may indulge in a bit of tree sap. Most of their existence is spent on the forest floor under the leaf litter, rocks and downed trees.



Why, then, was I seeing them on the surface of the snow? The answer – migration. Mature snow fleas migrate in large groups on sunny, late winter days – when temperatures and humidity are just right – to find mates. It takes several days for the whopping 82-foot migration!

Groups of up to a million may travel together – some along the forest floor, others springing along the surface. Once mated, females deposit eggs in the leaf litter and the mass congregation disperses. Eggs hatch in the summer, with the nymphs looking like miniature versions of the adults. After several molts over the next few months, snow fleas are fully mature.

The next time you are out enjoying the fabulous trails in your Open Space Parks, don't simply pass by those black flecks on top of the snow as you admire that towering ponderosa. Stop and investigate – you just may be rewarded with a spring fling of snow fleas.



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Measuring the Immeasurable...

By Jana Johns,
Volunteer Services Coordinator

Every year we struggle to measure the immeasurable accomplishments of our incredible Open Space volunteers. It's hard, because every action causes exponential reactions. Have you ever dropped a pebble into a still pool of water and marveled as the gentle ripples spread in concentric circles over the entire surface of the pool? Visualize this: that pebble you drop startles a nearby fish into sudden activity. Its flashing tail sets the silty bottom into swirling motion; nearby water plants start to dip and sway. The chain of reactions continues, causing a flurry of activity that spreads and spreads.

When you're talking about Open Space volunteers, the pebbles never seem to stop dropping!

Everything our volunteers do, each bit of information you share, ripples out across our "pool" to affect our park visitors, our park resources, our community, and the world beyond.

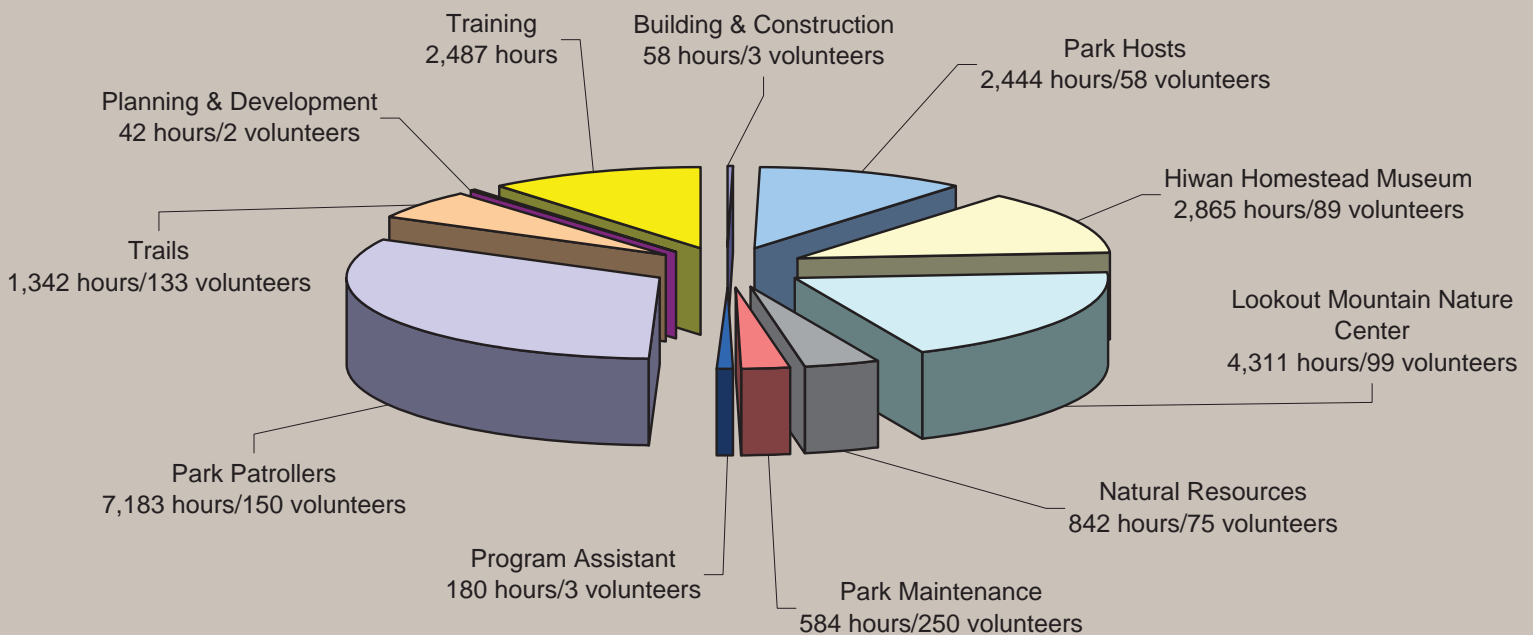
Visualize Open Space volunteer hours as shiny, sparkling pebbles. In 2010 that was over 22,000 pebbles! Just think how many ripples are spreading out across our pool, making our world a better place!

Our key accomplishments for 2010 include: 22,338 total volunteer hours logged (illustrated below); over 100 volunteers working at 3 trail building projects completed new trail alignments at Apex Park and over 2,500 linear feet of remote trail in Reynolds Park; we hosted 400 "casual" volunteers in one-day volunteer trail maintenance projects, park clean up and

natural resources activities; we accepted 67 new Open Space volunteers; Carolyn Tibbles, Shaun Howard and I (along with 6 volunteers who comprised an interview panel) presented a successful Colorado Open Space Alliance workshop about utilizing volunteer leadership to create innovative programs. This workshop highlighted the Mini-Crew Leaders Trail Program, Park Host Mentors, Pony Patrol and Camp Junior Ranger. The pebbles that were dropped during that workshop are helping start new volunteer programs throughout Colorado.

Counting pebbles is a lot easier than measuring our volunteers' accomplishments each year, but the pebbles are dropping every day, in every park, at every Open Space facility, and we couldn't be more excited about the difference you are making in our world. Just remember to keep dropping those pebbles!

2010 Volunteer Hours by Section 22,338 hours/862 Volunteers





The Natural Resource Perspective

By Sean Kluesner, Natural Resources

Some of you may be wondering why we cut down some of the large magnificent ponderosa pines during forestry projects. Despite what some people may claim or believe, we do not cut these trees down for profit. What we aim to gain by cutting a large or small tree down is not money, but rather health. We sacrifice individual trees so that the whole stand can gain a stronger foothold (or maybe I should say roothold). Fewer trees mean more nutrients are available for those remaining, and in the case of ponderosa pines it also means more space to spread out their wonderfully ponderous branches. Stronger, healthier trees are better able to fend off attacks by disease and insects. In addition, weak trees are vectors to attract those same insect and disease attacks, which can then increase their populations to levels that may threaten healthy trees.

So once again you might ask, why cut down large, seemingly healthy trees. There are two main reasons that we might cut down large diameter trees:

- High density of trees leading to a “closed crown”
- Dwarf mistletoe or mountain pine beetle

I think most Coloradans understand why we treat trees infested with mountain pine beetle, so I will concentrate on the other issues.

Some large trees are removed because the stand is too dense resulting in a “closed canopy.” A healthy ponderosa pine forest shouldn’t be the type of dense forest that most of us imagine, but, rather, open woodlands or even savannah. When the tree crowns in a large enough area are touching, sunlight is blocked from the

lower layers of the stand and the distribution of rainwater is also altered. This affects grasses, forbs, shrubs, and even regeneration of new ponderosa trees, which are all important aspects of a healthy ponderosa habitat. Opening up the canopy allows sunlight to reach all layers of the stand to encourage more vigorous and robust growth at all layers, from the grasses to the large trees. It is important to remember that a forest is more than just its trees.

The majority of large diameter ponderosa pines that we cut down are infested with dwarf mistletoe. Dwarf mistletoe is a native (but out of control) parasitic plant that infects pine trees in our area. Dwarf mistletoe isn’t necessarily a capital sentence. With lighter infestations, infected limbs can be trimmed out to save the tree. We try to trim as many mistletoe trees as we can. A lightly infested, but otherwise healthy, tree can live 60 or more years, but even a light infestation, left alone, will eventually kill the host tree as the infestation grows, while producing tens of thousands or sometimes millions of spores to potentially infest any nearby trees.

However, many mistletoe infested trees within the Front Range cannot reasonably be saved, because the infestations are too heavy. The large trees we cut down would likely not have survived more than 20 years, but could have spread the mistletoe to many more trees. In addition a large tree with mistletoe will spread the mistletoe to any smaller nearby trees within up to 60 feet, meaning that every new generation could also be affected.

We wouldn’t be in our chosen field if we didn’t love trees, but our education and experiences force us look beyond the beauty of a single tree to see the wonder of the whole forest, of the ecosystem at large, and to maintain the equilibrium that allows all life to thrive.

Forestry Project Updates

Last summer we told you about a forestry project at Alderfer/Three Sisters Park. We've finished the project on the Evergreen Mountain portion of the Park that focused on forest health and created a fuel break. Rehabilitation efforts were wrapped up on the 200-acre project last fall after the fuel wood sales were finished. We will continue to monitor the rehabilitation efforts and treat any dwarf mistletoe that may have been missed, but Alderfer/Three Sisters Park should be fairly quiet for a while.

In addition, two smaller forestry projects were started in 2010. A 45-acre project, focused on mistletoe mitigation and creating a fuel break, was started and finished last year at Elk Meadow off of the Sleepy "S" trail. A project was also started at White Ranch, north of Sourdough Springs campground. This project encompassed a 40-acre area, where half of the work focused on improving forest health, and the other half focused on mistletoe mitigation. In this area on White Ranch, the majority of the trees are ponderosa pines; with ponderosas, staff can sometimes trim the mistletoe out of the tree, but when the mistletoe is too prolific the entire tree must be removed.

This summer you should expect to once again hear chainsaws at White Ranch, as we finish up the project we began last year for mistletoe mitigation and forest health. At Flying J Ranch this summer we will begin another small project focused on creating a fuel break and mistletoe mitigation. The majority of the trees at Flying J are lodgepole pines; when mistletoe infestations occur in lodgepoles, the entire tree must be removed to protect the remaining healthy trees. This removal is generally done using our masticator; nearby trails may be temporarily closed during the work for park visitor safety. Several Open Space volunteers help Natural Resources staff with these closures.

585 Thank You Chirps!

The Jefferson County Open Space (JCOS) nest box program continues to flourish and now includes 96 boxes, representing 9 trails in 6 parks. In addition to the JCOS boxes, another 60 boxes are maintained by the Evergreen Naturalists Audubon Society (ENAS) on JCOS property. ENAS has been monitoring these boxes for many years. Their data is not included in this update, but they had an occupancy rate of about 75% last year.

During 2010 we added a new species, White-breasted Nuthatch, to our list of tenants, bringing our total up to 8, including: House Wren; Tree Swallow; Mountain Bluebird; Western Bluebird; Mountain Chickadee; Pygmy Nuthatch; and Violet-green Swallow.

Last year was an especially good year for Tree Swallows, as they had the most nest attempts, nestlings, and fledglings and became the number one nester after being number two for two years straight.

Over the 4 years of the nest box program we have now had 208 nest attempts, with 144 successes, giving us a nearly 70% success rate. Our boxes have produced 1025 eggs, 687 nestlings, and at least 585 fledglings. Five-hundred-eighty-five thank you chirps to all of the volunteers who have participated and continue to participate in the nest box program!



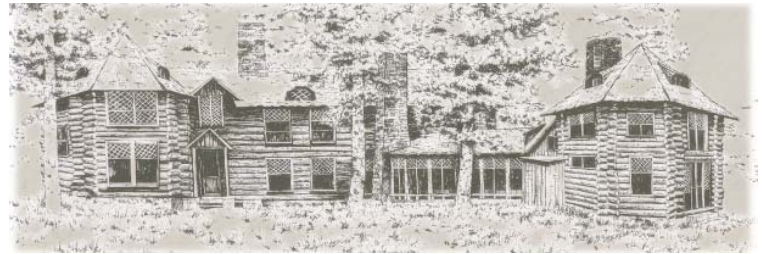
Tree Swallow eggs in the nest; photo by volunteer Debbie Jones.

“Fateful Lightning” at Hiwan

From John Steinle, Museum Administrator

This April 12th marks the 150th anniversary of the firing on Fort Sumter and the beginning of the Civil War. Join us as Hiwan Homestead Museum commemorates this historic occasion by opening a new exhibit—“Fateful Lightning: Colorado in the Civil War, 1861-1865”.

This exhibit will feature photos, weapons, documents and artifacts illustrating Colorado’s role in the Civil War through its soldiers, civilian officials, and citizens. The exhibit will feature Colorado’s contribution to victory at the battles of Glorietta



HIWAN HOMESTEAD MUSEUM

Pass in New Mexico and the Big Blue in Missouri, as well as in the infamous Sand Creek Massacre. Information on the Reynolds Gang, Confederate guerrillas who robbed and plundered as close as modern-day Conifer, will also be presented.



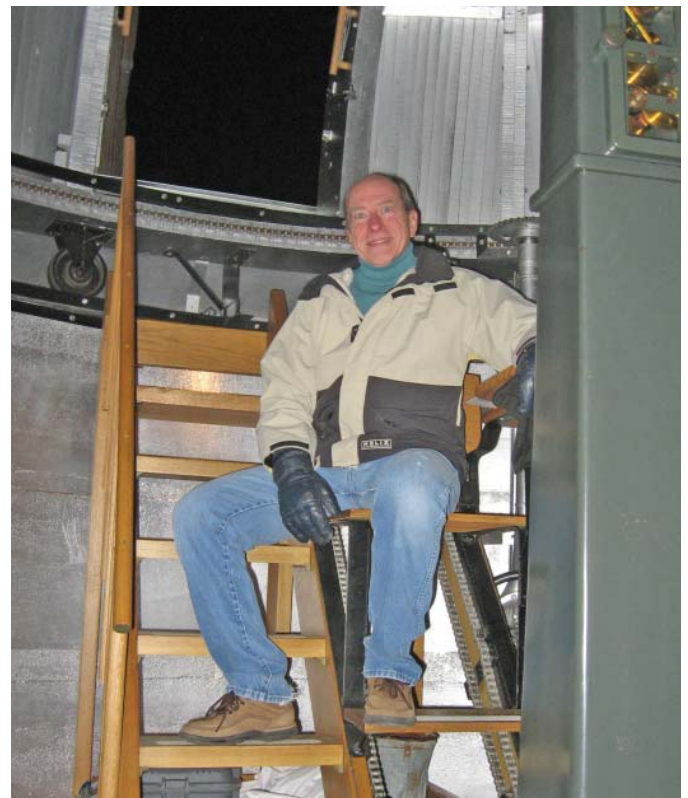
Speaking for the Stars

*From Alicia Vermilye,
Program Coordinator*

Rick Rieder (*pictured at right*) joined Lookout Mountain Nature Center’s Volunteer Astronomy Team last year. Rick has nurtured his passion for astronomy

and curiosity about the night sky by leading and assisting with nine astronomy programs. Learning about the night sky never stops and that’s why we are very proud of Rick for being selected to participate in the Sky Rangers online workshop. Sky Rangers is a program sponsored by the Astronomical Society of the Pacific and the National Park Service, and is funded by NASA. This workshop is designed for educators, like Rick, who teach others about the night sky. During this week-long workshop, he will learn how to locate stars, constellations, planets and deep sky objects while learning about them in depth.

In addition to studying the night sky, Rick will also learn how to better interpret the night sky to program participants. Interpretation goes beyond providing facts. Interpretation is taking complicated



information and translating it to an audience in an inspiring way. Rick already teaches with great style, humor, enthusiasm and passion. We can’t imagine him getting much better; it’s his drive to continually improve that makes us very fortunate and proud to say that Rick Rieder is part of our Astronomy Team!

To learn about the Sky Ranger program and other workshops go to:
<http://www.afguonline.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=1856>

Reader's Corner

The Things That Last When Gold Is Gone

By Barbara Sternberg of Evergreen, Jennifer Boone and Evelyn Waldron
From John Steinle, Hiwan Homestead Museum Administrator

A new book dealing with Jefferson County and Colorado history is hot off the presses! ***The Things That Last When Gold Is Gone*** was co-written by Barbara Sternberg of Evergreen, Jennifer Boone and Evelyn Waldron. The book tells the story of Anne Evans, Governor John Evans' daughter. Anne Evans had a beautiful mountain home on the old Evans Ranch property west of Evergreen, which became a center for fun summer activities for scores of the Evans family and friends. Beyond that, Anne Evans was instrumental in starting the Denver Artists' Club, and through that in developing the Denver Art Museum. She also helped create the Denver Library system and its many branches, and was influential in designing Civic Center Park, revitalizing the Central City Opera House, and guiding development of the University of Denver. She became interested in restoring many of the old mission churches in New Mexico and helped fund and guide that project as well. Anne Evans was a fascinating and incredibly influential individual who became interested in Native American arts through the influence of Father Charles Douglas of Camp Neosho, now the Hiwan Homestead Museum. This book is the first biography of Anne Evans ever published, and it is available at Hiwan Homestead Museum and other area bookstores.



Kitty and the Midnight Hour

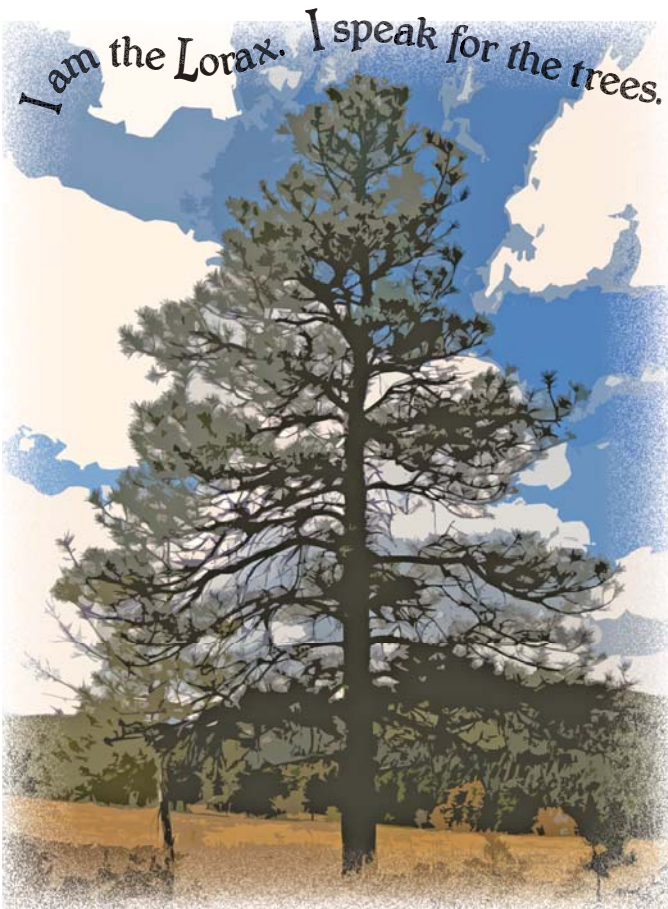
By Carrie Vaughn
From Carolyn Tibbles, Administrative and Education Services

If you're a science fiction/fantasy reader, you may have some fun with a series of books (seven so far) by Carrie Vaughn, centered around Kitty Norville, a twenty-something werewolf who hosts "The Midnight Hour," a talk radio advice show for the "supernaturally disadvantaged." The show airs every Friday night on "KNOB" – a Public Broadcasting Station in, get this, Denver, Colorado; the show closes with a recording of Kitty's very own werewolf howl! Coincidentally, Kitty and her pack of wolves celebrate the new moon each month on some open space land in the foothills west of Highway 93, near the Park-n-Ride. Ralston Buttes? Coal Creek Canyon properties? The descriptions sound like Jeffco Open Space, for sure. The "Kitty" books are well written and entertaining, and give a different perspective on the importance of preserving open space lands!



JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE

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I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees. I speak for the trees for the trees have no tongues.

*-- Dr. Seuss, **The Lorax***