

# Saving Habitat

Estes Valley Land Trust Newsletter



Estes Valley Land Trust

**November 2020**

**Inside:  
Meet New Board Members  
Stewardship Corps Success  
Bringing People to the Land**





Estes Valley Land Trust

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**Our mission is to preserve and protect open space, valleys, wetlands, streams, ranch lands, and wildlife habitat in the Estes Valley and surrounding area.**



Above: Land Trust members hike a conserved property. Photo by Marsha Hobert.

Front Cover: The Lake Pasture is conserved by the Estes Valley Land Trust.

## Getting Members Out on the Land

Finding an open public trail this spring, when the first cases of the coronavirus were confirmed, was difficult. Hermit Park Open Space, Rocky Mountain National Park, and the Homer Rouse trail were all closed earlier this year. Even in a mountain town known for its diverse hiking, it was hard to find local places to enjoy the outdoors.

Luckily for members of the land trust, small-group hikes on conserved lands were just the thing they needed to scratch that itch. We hosted four hikes in groups of 10 people or less, always masked and socially distanced. Our groups

were guided by landowners and monitors who knew the properties well. We packed lunches and learned about local history, flora, and fauna.

**“I thoroughly enjoyed each and every hike, and seeing some gorgeous properties that the Land Trust has helped preserve for future generations.” –Marsha Hobert**

Most of the land that is conserved with EVLT is private property, and we want to thank our landowners for giving a few of our members exclusive access to hike these conserved lands.

# Adapt and Overcome

We adjusted our monitoring program this year to avoid personal contact and the spread of the coronavirus. Although we did not get to see all of our monitors in person, they remained dedicated and monitored all our conservation easements.

The monitors received all their training and materials online, and completed almost 170 site visits while practicing social distancing. Our volunteers adapted in different ways: some monitored with their household family members, some monitored with a hiking partner that was part of their “pandemic pod”, and some wore masks and practiced social distancing together. The most important thing was that all our monitors stayed safe.

Our volunteers documented a few minor violations on conserved lands. For example, a small area of land, about the size of a small shed, was excavated, where changes in the topography are prohibited. On another conserved property, a neighbor drove across it multiple times, where off-road motorized use is prohibited.

In both cases, our volunteers notified the land trust immediately, staff contacted the landowners, the prohibited activities were stopped, and both sites will be restored. This is how to enforce and defend each conservation easement and the land trust couldn't do it with our army of volunteers. Thank you to our conservation easement monitors!



Lisa Fulton and David Van Wert monitor safely together.

## New Board Member Q&A

In August, the EVLT membership elected three new board members: Geoff Elliot, Alice Reuman, and Jan Swaney. With their unique expertise and connections throughout the community, they will help lead the land trust forward in the next year.



New Board members are excited to help preserve native habitat. *Potentilla rupincola* photo by Marlene Borneman.

### Tell me a little about yourself.

**Geoff:** I have lived in the Estes Valley since 2013. I moved here to support environmental education programming and am continuing my career in the conservation field.

**Jan:** My husband Jim and I moved to Estes Park in 2008 from Ohio, where I'd worked as an RN, manager of a backpacking shop, and in an adult literacy program. I enjoy hiking and snowshoeing, reading, trying my luck at New York Times crossword puzzles, and tutoring my ESL student.

**Alice:** Like many other Estes residents, I visited here all my life, and retired to Estes Park with my husband nine years ago. I served on the EVLT board from 2014-2017.

### Why do you want to serve on the EVLT Board?

**Geoff:** I have worked with EVLT through my previous employer and am excited to join the Board and support their collaborative approach to land conservation..

**Jan:** I was fortunate to work for EVLT for seven years before retiring in 2017. EVLT has an excellent reputation locally and throughout the land trust community nationwide. I am honored to join the board of this well-respected organization and to help preserve this place I love.

**Alice:** I have a background in urban and regional planning with an emphasis on conservation, so I found volunteering for EVLT a natural fit. And, as with hiking in the National Park, you meet good people!



# Diverse Landscapes Protect Flora and Fauna

One of the most conspicuous benefits of conserving land is healthy wildlife. Of course, wildlife cannot advocate for themselves and supporting conservation organizations, like the Estes Valley Land Trust, is the best way to ensure wildlife thrive. Without protected lands such as parks, open spaces, or private land protected with a conservation easement, wildlife would not have the refuge areas needed to survive.

The Estes Valley is blessed with a mosaic of high quality wildlife habitat, which has been documented by Colorado's scientific community. Not only does the Estes Valley boast high quality habitat, some of the habitat is rare and supports wildlife that may not be found elsewhere.

## **Land Trust Protects Habitat for Globally Imperiled Plant**

The Colorado Natural Heritage Program completes biological surveys to document areas of high biodiversity across the State. Many of the land trust's conservation easements protect areas of high biodiversity, including Hermit Park Open Space.

Hermit Park, protected through a partnership between the land trust, Larimer County, the Town of Estes Park, Great Outdoors Colorado and others, protects critical habitat recognized as having "very high biodiversity significance." The habitats range from a montane grassland, forested hills and large rock outcrops.

In addition to providing a variety of high quality habitats, Hermit Park is home to a globally imperiled plant species, the Rocky Mountain Cinquefoil. The details of this rare plant occurrence are confidential in order to protect the plant, but needless to say, without the partnership between the land trust and others, this rare plant would be locally endangered.

## **Wet Meadows Are Rare, but Protected Forever**

Wet meadows are rare plant communities found in the land trust's service area. These areas are shallow wet depressions with rooted aquatic vegetation. The Lake Pasture, a conserved area east of the Twin Sisters, is also recognized by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program for its biodiversity significance.

In fact, these wet meadows protected by the Estes Valley Land Trust, include an excellent example of a rare state plant community. Our conservation easement here includes additional restrictions on the wet meadows, to protect them and the sensitive habitat they provide.



Grace's Warbler by Matt VanWallene.

## **Birds Find High Quality Habitat**

Migratory birds are some of the most mobile species that inhabit our conserved lands. One of the land trust's conservation easements in the Tahosa Valley has provided a stopover for the Grace's Warbler.

The Cornell Lab describes the Grace's Warbler as a tiny, restless bird that inhabits only mature pine forests in the southwestern U.S. and points south. The only known occurrence of Grace's Warbler in the land trust's service area is on State land and the neighboring private land, protected with a land trust conservation easement.

Of course the warbler does not distinguish between State and private lands; thank goodness both are preserved forever.

## **Land Protection Fund Advances Wildlife Conservation**

The Estes Valley Land Trust is finalizing our Strategic Land Conservation Plan, with the ambitious goal of protecting another 5,000 acres of land in the next 10 years. These conserved acres will protect additional wildlife habitat.

A contribution to our Land Protection Fund helps cover transaction fees and other costs and will increase the pace of conservation. A donation towards this fund, during Colorado Gives Day, will help unlock a \$10,000 gift and advance wildlife conservation in the Estes Valley.

See the back page for more details on how to make a donation during Colorado Gives Day. Supporting this fund is a great way to protect more wildlife habitat in the Estes Valley and surrounding areas.

# Endowment over \$570,000

The Perpetuity Fund, EVLT's operating endowment, received numerous contributions in 2020 and now exceeds \$570,000. Once the fund reaches \$1 million, it can be used to help cover annual operating expenses.

In 2020, Don Smith, Board Director, made a gift to the Perpetuity Fund.

**"I made a restricted donation to the Perpetuity Fund because I like building a solid foundation for the future. It makes me feel as if I am part of something much bigger than myself." - Don Smith**

Restricted gifts to the Perpetuity Fund ensure the Estes Valley Land Trust will:

- Remain your local, independent land trust
- Monitor and defend each conservation easement
- Forever preserve the spectacular Estes Valley



## Interested in making a planned gift?

Once your loved ones are provided for, giving a planned gift to the land trust is a powerful way to help preserve land forever. Go to [evlandtrust.org/donate](https://evlandtrust.org/donate) for details, or contact the land trust for sample bequest language.

## Stewardship Corps Restoring Land



Stewardship Corps members celebrate cleaning up some particularly stubborn old barbed wire. Photo by Kenzie Hartt.

In June we announced our Stewardship Corps, a program designed to help locals who were affected by the economic fallout following the COVID-19 crisis. We gave \$500 each to 27 individuals in the Estes Valley who lost their jobs or were furloughed. In exchange, each member pledged to work 20 hours improving land protected with a conservation easement.

Through the summer and fall, Stewardship Corps members stacked slash to mitigate fire danger, pulled noxious weeds, and removed barbed wire fencing that posed a threat to passing elk and deer.

Next summer the Corps will continue the weeding and forest health work, and will work on making the existing trails and recreation areas on some of our easements more sustainable.

If your property is protected with an EVLT conservation easement, our Corps is here to serve you! Contact Kenzie at the land trust for details.



# Thank you to our donors!

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**To learn more, visit [evlandtrust.org/donate](http://evlandtrust.org/donate)**

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**Join us in remembering  
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 passed away this year:**

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## Happy Holidays from EVLT

Due to the novel coronavirus, the Estes Valley Land Trust will not host a holiday party this year. However, our Board is creating a holiday jingle, with the help of a local musician, and will share the video with our members in December.

We hope you have a warm and loving holiday season, and that our jingle brings a bit of extra joy to you at the end of a tough year.



## Unlock a Matching \$10,000 Gift



An anonymous donor has generously pledged a **\$10,000** gift to the land trust if another **\$15,000** is donated on CO Gives Day. This year, all donations made on CO Gives Day will be restricted to our Land Protection Fund, to accelerate land conservation throughout the valley.

Please help us unlock this pledge and dedicate at least \$25,000 to purchase development rights, land, or to help a conservation easement donor with their transaction costs!

To donate, search Estes Valley Land Trust on [ColoradoGives.org](http://ColoradoGives.org)