

the urban naturalist

NEWS FROM BLUFF LAKE NATURE CENTER • SPRING 2009



BLUFF
LAKE
NATURE
CENTER

Wildlife Refuge ~ Outdoor Classroom

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BluffLakeNatureCenter.org



Photo by May Chou

*At Bluff Lake Nature Center,
we are fostering lifelong learning
and environmental stewardship of
a unique urban wildlife refuge.*

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www.BluffLakeNatureCenter.org

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Bluff Lake volunteers planting native shrubs.

Executive Director's Note

Another Earth Day will be celebrated on April 22. Earth Day is a time for communities to come together to examine their relationship with the natural world. In the past year, sustainability has become an everyday buzz word, as Americans have begun to more closely consider the impact of the decisions we make. For years, Bluff Lake Nature Center has had a strong presence in Denver as a leader in elementary science education. In 2009, we've continued to expand our educational offerings in an effort to help the Denver community realize the importance of conservation and the role that we play as individuals.

Bluff Lake's 2009 Earth Day activities will focus on local involvement. On April 18, we host our Earth Day Open House, where families can visit Bluff Lake for naturalist led tours and birdhouse making. On Earth Day, we encourage our neighbors to become "locavores" and support Stapleton-area businesses. Many local businesses will donate a portion of their Earth Day proceeds to Bluff Lake Nature Center, and additional businesses have offered gifts to encourage Bluff Lake membership.

On April 25, we invite our supporters to participate in our Spring Restoration Project. Bluff Lake restoration volunteers will lead additional volunteers in grass planting and habitat restoration through the Nature Center. One week later, on May 2 and May 3, Bluff Lake is proud to be a part of the Kid's Zone activities at the Denver Green Festival. The Green Festival will take over the Colorado Convention, and celebrate practical solutions to conservation issues.

Please join us over Earth Day and throughout the year. If Bluff Lake Nature Center is important to you – for the educational programs we offer, the restoration work on our site, or as a refuge in a bustling city – please consider becoming a member.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Glenn Fee".

Glenn Fee, Executive Director

Book Review

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life

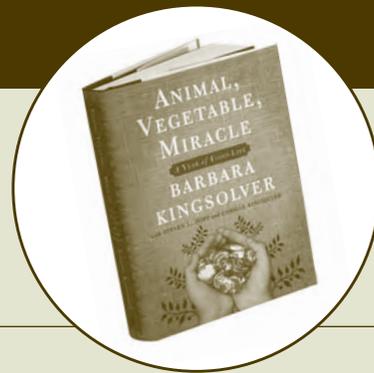
Barbara Kingsolver

By *Christin Ripley*

The phrase Think Globally, Act Locally has been applied widely to advance a host of environmental initiatives. One recent application is in the “locavore” movement, used to describe efforts to consume more locally produced foods, and to generally reduce your impact. Barbara Kingsolver and her family explore the full meaning of what it means to be a locavore with their choice to spend one year on their family farm, consuming only food that is seasonal and grown locally. In *Animal Vegetable Miracle*, Kingsolver discusses the challenges, benefits and joys that her family faced after changing their lifestyle. *Animal Vegetable Miracle* is accessible to both novice gardeners and practiced locavores, as Kingsolver weaves practical application with larger picture issues.

Throughout the book, Kingsolver challenges typically held notions of what it means to be a responsible consumer. It’s long been held that organic produce is the most environmentally-friendly choice a consumer can make. It is true that organic farming is better for soils and health, but Kingsolver encourages her readers to consider the origination of food. If food consumed in Colorado is grown in California or Mexico, for example, the carbon footprint potentially outweighs the net benefit of buying organic. Buying locally, even if not organic, has a dual benefit of supporting local business and reducing the carbon footprint of your food. The optimal scenario, of course, is to buy locally and organic, but it is not always feasible. Kingsolver addresses the flood of genetically modified seeds on the market and the lack of heirloom seeds in circulation.

Six companies control 98% of the world’s seed sale. These companies distribute genetically modified seeds that have



common modifications such as a gene that kills pests and alters the crop’s physiology in order to tolerate herbicides. Genetically modified fruit and vegetables (the majority sold in the average grocery store), according to Kingsolver, ‘have been bred for uniform appearance, mechanized harvest, convenience of packing and a tolerance for hard travel.’ Taste is typically forgotten in the modification process, so the whole purpose of eating a delicious piece of produce gets lost all for the sole purpose of transport. What is the solution? When possible, buy and grow heirloom varieties and share seeds with friends and neighbors.

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle contains a plethora of knowledge about growing and canning your own food, recipe suggestions, benefits for supporting local farmers and growers, and a compelling story of a green journey that one family takes to reduce their footprint on the earth. Buying in season produce, local produce and growing your own food are some simple ways to help create a greener, cleaner world. If you find yourself with a lack of time or space to grow your own food, Denver has experienced a dramatic growth in the locavore movement. Some of the Bluff Lake Nature Center’s favorite partners and resources include.....

Revision International - www.revisioninternational.org
A Sense of Colorado – www.senseofcolorado.com
Denver Urban Gardens - www.dug.org
Colorado Farmer’s Markets - www.coloradofarmers.org

Bluff Lake Nature Center is proud to have many strong corporate partners, including AOR, Inc. a Denver-based advertising, design and interactive marketing firm. AOR has been a good friend to Bluff Lake, helping us with our Capital Campaign and donating the design and production of this newsletter. You can learn more about AOR at www.thinkaor.com.

AOR



2009 Fireside Chats

Bluff Lake Nature Center's Fireside Chats provide the perfect opportunity to learn more about your natural neighbor, and hear from an array of community members. Fireside Chats are held on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month between May and September, and begin at 6:00 p.m. In 2009, Bluff Lake will offer family-friendly Chats, with two specific chats geared to older audiences*. For full descriptions and updates, visit www.BluffLakeNatureCenter.org.

May 14 – Bluff Lake en Español

Bluff Lake's Bilingual Educator will address our Spanish-speaking neighbors about the wildlife and habitat at Bluff Lake Nature Center.

May 28 – Living with Urban Wildlife

Denver Parks and Recreation Naturalist Ashley DeLaup will discuss the critters that call the city their home, and how we can best live with them.

June 11 – Creek Tour

Bring your sandals and enjoy a splash in the creek, as we learn about all of the critters that call Sand Creek their home.

June 25 – Eating Your Way through the Prairie*

Naturalist Paul Reimer will lead a walk through the prairie and talk about the variety of edible plants that can be found.

July 9 – Clever Canines

Coyotes are smart, adaptable and beneficial to our ecosystem. Join Naturalist Sue Schafer to learn more about coyotes and their canine relatives.

July 23 – History Comes Alive

The Four Mile House staff visits Bluff Lake to talk about the lives of early settlers along Sand Creek in Denver and Aurora.

August 13 – Ode to Owls

Ranger Jody, from Bear Creek Lake Park, discusses the natural history of our nocturnal friends.

August 27 – The Nature Conservancy*

Our friends from The Nature Conservancy of Colorado return to Bluff Lake to talk about their conservation efforts throughout the state.

September 10 – Recycled Crafts

Join the Bluff Lake staff for an interactive evening of learning how to turn your trash into a fun toy, art project or game.

September 24 – Native American Stories

Bluff Lake welcomes Native American flutist and storyteller Bailey Phelps for an autumn evening around the campfire.

» Fireside Chats are free for members, and we ask for a \$1 donation from each non-member.



» All presentations begin at 6pm.

» These programs are fun for the whole family. Children of all ages are invited, but required to bring an adult.

» For full descriptions, visit our website: www.BluffLakeNatureCenter.org.

Volunteer Profile

John Nelson

John “Beaver Dog” Nelson doesn’t like Russian Olive trees. Russian Olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) forms dense stands that clog riparian areas, consume enormous amounts of water and offer little in the way of habitat for native wildlife. Thanks largely to John’s dedication to removing these destructive trees, the remaining Russian Olives at Bluff Lake are few and far between, and will soon fall to the saw. When Bluff Lake was established 15 years ago, the wetland and riparian areas were choked by impenetrable stands of Russian Olives. Today we estimate that Bluff Lake will be completely free of Russian Olives in the next two years. John’s dedication has allowed us to turn our focus to efforts in the City of Aurora Open Space that borders Bluff Lake to the east.

John is a master gardener and has oodles of experience with native plants and xeroscaping. An avid outdoorsman, John spends much of his free time skiing and hiking. Also a history buff, John has also spent hours at the Denver and Aurora Public Libraries and Colorado History Museum doing research on the history of the Bluff Lake area. Thanks to his sleuthing, we now have an almost complete timeline for the site dating back to the late 1800’s. John’s hard work at Bluff Lake is an obvious testimony to his love of the site and his commitment to helping us keep Bluff Lake wild.



green festival™

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125 speakers alan weisman hunter lovins gunter pauli amy goodman john perkins belvie rooks paul stamets mike farrell johnny 5	300 exhibitors community networking organic food beer wine natural home+garden fair trade live music green products kids' zone
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Volunteer Appreciation Party

We all know how critical volunteers are to Bluff Lake’s efforts. In 2008, our volunteers contributed 5,150 hours of service in support of our conservation and environmental education programs. In late February, we were able to thank our volunteers at the home of board member Billy Brown and his wonderful wife, Krista. Thank you to all of our volunteers, as well as our friends at Mayfair Liquors (1385 Krameria St.) for donating wine and beer, and Ling & Louie’s (8354 Northfield Blvd.) for donating appetizers.



Thank you!

Bluff Lake Nature Center would like to thank the many agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals that made donations last year.

Corporate & Foundation Donors:

- AOR, Inc.
- Citizens of the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD)
- The Denver Foundation
- Charles R. Jelm Charitable Foundation
- Charles T. Beaird Family Foundation
- JPMorgan Chase & Co.
- James J. and Joan A. Gardner Family Foundation
- Town Center Dentistry & Orthodontics
- Denver Active 20-30/CW2 Gives
- REI
- Xcel Energy Foundation
- Lauren Townsend Memorial Wildlife Fund of The Denver Foundation
- FirstBank of Denver
- Colorado Garden Show, Inc.
- Valassis
- Forest City
- Kenneth King Foundation
- Harvard Communities
- ERO Resources Corporation
- South High School EPYCS
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- Trask Family Foundation
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- Barrett Studio Architects
- Crestmoor Park Garden Club
- Deneuve Construction Services
- Hilb Rogal & Hobbs of Colorado
- Kaplan Kirsch & Rockwell
- Isaacson Rosenbaum P.C.
- Cork House Wine Restaurant

Conservators:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
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| Penny Jackson & Fritz Trask | |
| Lara Jakubowski | |
| Catherine Jarvis & John Burris | |
| Dennis Johnson | |
| Michael & Diana Kearns | |
| Barry & Donna Levene | |

Keeping Bluff Lake Native

As one of the largest natural areas in the metro Denver area, Bluff Lake Nature Center plays a vital role in native area conservation. Bluff Lake's unique blend of prairie, wetland and riparian areas creates an array of challenging restoration work, and great opportunity to model habitat restoration along the Front Range. Bluff Lake volunteers follow a comprehensive revegetation plan, created by volunteers and community experts through years of research. Public education is a cornerstone of our mission, and we offer a variety of interpretive programs focusing on native plants and urban weed eradication.

In order to accomplish our restoration objectives, Bluff Lake relies upon partnerships with local entities involved in similar land management and community building activities. These groups share a common dedication to the preservation of the natural environment. Some of Bluff Lake's restoration partners include the Denver Botanic Gardens, Sand Creek Regional Greenway, and The Nature Conservancy of Colorado. Our restoration plan is accomplished through the relentless dedication of our restoration volunteers, and one-time projects with community and corporate partners.

Restoration and learning intersect through partnerships with local education institutions. Our service learning program allows middle school and high school students to gain experience in science, while applying their classroom skills to restoration efforts at Bluff Lake. An internship program through Metropolitan State has added to our store of knowledge with plant and wildlife mapping. A partnership with the University of Denver's School of Natural Sciences has allowed us the opportunity to set up permanent water, soil and air monitoring stations at Bluff Lake.

Restoring native ecosystems creates better wildlife habitat and enhances the communities that share these valuable and vulnerable resources. It is the goal of Bluff Lake staff and volunteers to preserve the diversity of native habitats, not only for the wildlife, but for the visitors who also take refuge at Bluff Lake. For our society, increasingly separated from direct contact with nature, urban wildlife preserves like Bluff Lake represent a vital connection to the environment.

Finding Balance in Management

Bluff Lake uses a comprehensive, integrated weed management program. Our goal is to restore our land through natural means. However, with a piece of land so large, natural control is nearly impossible. Through consultation with Foothills Vegetation Management, Bluff Lake Nature Center engages in select and targeted chemical eradication. Since 2003, Foothills has assisted Bluff Lake in eradicating *Tithymus esula* (Leafy Spurge), *Acroptilon repens* (Russian Knapweed), *Bromus tectorum* (Cheat Grass), and *Bassia scoparia* (Kochia).

The services provided by Foothills are critical to our ability to control these invasive plants, and allow our staff and volunteers to best utilize their time to continue restoring our beautiful piece of land. We thank Foothills Vegetation Management and Paul McLellan for their time and materials in support of our weed management program.

2009 Restoration Projects

Join other Bluff Lake Nature Center volunteers as they work to improve wildlife habitat, accessibility, and native species in our Nature Center. To register for any of our projects, visit www.BluffLakeNatureCenter.org/projects08.htm.



April 25 – Native Grass Planting

8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Volunteers – 50

Each winter, Denver Botanic Gardens propagates hundreds of native grass plugs for planting at Bluff Lake. Join our Bluff Lake volunteer crew leaders as we plant these plugs throughout the Nature Center in our continued effort to restore the native shortgrass prairie at Bluff Lake.

September 19 - Fall Planting

8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Volunteers – 50

Bluff Lake Nature Center has worked for years to eliminate invasive Russian Olive and Tamarisk trees along Sand Creek, while establishing native cottonwood trees and willows. Volunteers will work in small groups along Sand Creek, removing the final stands of Russian Olives and planting native trees and shrubs.

Wednesday Mornings – 9:00 a.m. to Noon

Each Wednesday between April and October, Bluff Lake's Site Restoration Volunteers meet in the parking lot before heading out for project work on the preserve. Contact Site Manager Chris Story – cstory@blufflake.org – for additional details.

Corporate Projects – On Demand

In managing a 123 acre site, Bluff Lake staff is consistently challenged with keeping our Nature Center native. We're available for week day projects with corporate groups looking to get outdoors and make a difference in the community. Contact Executive Director Glenn Fee at gfee@blufflake.org.

Celebrate The Earth With Bluff Lake

Bluff Lake Nature Center wants our members to become locavores for Earth Day in 2009. By consuming locally – supporting local business and nonprofits – and considering how our local actions have a greater impact, we can make a real difference.

Earth Day is April 22, but Bluff Lake Nature Center is planning an array of activities in the weeks around Earth Day. We hope that you'll join us for one or more of our events!

April 18 – 9:00 a.m. to Noon

Birdhouses on the Bluff

Join Bluff Lake Nature Center staff and volunteers as we build and paint birdhouses and bird feeders that you can take home to your own backyard. Bluff Lake Naturalists will lead short tours of the Nature Center at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., focusing on areas to view wildlife.

April 22 – 6:00 p.m.

Earth Day Bird Walk

Birder Carl Wells and Bluff Lake Education Director Susan Beckett will lead a bird identification walk around Bluff Lake. Carl and Susan will point out commonly seen birds, and perhaps you'll get a glimpse at some of our migrating friends.

May 2 and May 3

Denver Green Festival

Bluff Lake is proud to be a part of the Kid's Zone at the inaugural Denver Green Festival at the Colorado Convention Center. Find out how you can make your life just a little more green..... www.greenfestivals.org



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How do you celebrate Earth Day?

Earth Day Is April 22

Consider celebrating Earth Day by becoming a locavore - shop locally and reduce your carbon footprint, get outdoors for some fresh air, attend the Denver Green Festival, and support Bluff Lake Nature Center, a place that brings much of this together.

Stores in Stapleton and Northfield are donating a portion of their proceeds to Bluff Lake on Earth Day, and many have donated gift items to encourage Bluff Lake membership.

Bluff Lake is open, with free access to fresh air, every day from sunrise to sunset, plus we have a variety of Fireside Chats scheduled for the summer.

BLNC needs your support in return. Could you make a donation of money, corporate sponsorship, time or goods?

Become a member...

A Bluff Lake Nature Center membership is an investment in your local wildlife refuge and outdoor classroom. You'll help ensure that there's a wild place right in your backyard. Use the enclosed envelope to send in your new or renewing membership donation.

Sponsor an event...

BLNC has an extensive menu of corporate sponsorship levels for our events and activities.

Please visit www.BluffLakeNatureCenter.com/menu.pdf or call Mendy on 303-344-1836 for more information.

Become a volunteer...

BLNC has many volunteer opportunities available and you don't have to be a natural resources or wildlife expert to get started. We'll train you to be a Site Steward, Naturalist, or Ambassador. Visit www.BluffLakeNatureCenter.org/volunteer08.htm for more information.

Help with our wish list...

By donating stuff, you can help BLNC save money. Here are a few items we need, but more are listed on our website at www.BluffLakeNatureCenter.org/inkind08.htm.

Office Depot, Target, or Hobby Lobby gift cards • Binoculars for students • Heavy work gloves • Wood chipper • Pickup Truck