

ESWA SUMMER IN THE WILDERNESS

October 2021

As the summer season wanes, we are tallying results for the year. Our volunteers have been really busy at work and at play!



VWR PARTY / ANNUAL MEETING



Nearly 50 ESWA members gathered outside at the beautiful Eagles Nest Pavilion on a stunningly beautiful day to celebrate the season and honor some of our best. There are many photos [HERE](#).

It was bittersweet to announce that CINDY EBBERT, our guiding light for the past 14 years as a USFS liaison to ESWA, is leaving her position as



Wilderness & Trails Manager for the Dillon Ranger District, and will become Land Specialist for the DRD. Happily, she will still be based at the DRD!



ANDREA RODRIGUEZ, a recent CMC graduate and Wilderness enthusiast, worked all summer as a volunteer intern, mapping trails and assessing conditions in Eagles Nest Wilderness. Andrea was presented with a surprise thank you gift - a check for \$1,500 to help with her continuing education.



The 2021 Currie Craven Award for



Wilderness Stewardship was presented to JOHN TAYLOR, whose relentless pursuit of invasive weeds over more than two decades has kept the noxious plants at bay in many places. The work that he started years ago continues today as ESWA's WeedSpotter Program.

VOLUNTEER WILDERNESS RANGERS

As this second COVID-impacted season draws to a close, ESWA VWRs can be proud of the work that they did. A total of nearly 12,000 Wilderness visitors were encountered on the trails (94% were day-hikers). Our 76 Rangers made 400 patrols, hiking for 1,900 hours, covering 2,700 miles. Visitors encountered were accompanied by 1,300 dogs, about 3/4 of which (950) were properly leashed. Rangers counted 3,400 vehicles at trailheads. Altogether, 45 trailheads were accessed; just 7 accounted for about half of the total patrols (Gore Creek, Lilypad Lake, North Rock Creek, North Ten Mile, Lower Cataract Lake, Bighorn Creek, and Pitkin Creek).



Individual honors for Number of Patrols /Hours on patrol, / and Miles hiked go to

Tom Lawson 48 patrols / 172 hrs / 322 miles

Frances Hartogh 26 /136 / 167

Mike Browning 25 / 133 / 163

VOLUNTEER SAWYERS

Our sawyers worked hard all summer, led by Zach Kauk (Summit) and Ken Harper (Eagle), to keep Wilderness trails clear of deadfalls. They cut and cleared an amazing **798** trees during **904** hours of work on **64** separate outings - just an amazing, record-setting achievement for ESWA.



BACKCOUNTRY WORK TRIPS



Under



the leadership of Tim Drescher, 10 hardy souls and 2 llamas spent the last weekend in August deep inside Holy Cross Wilderness clearing trails and campsites. See all of Tim's photos [HERE](#).

TRAILHEAD HOSTS

Our TrailHead Hosts (THHs) meet and greet Wilderness visitors at trailheads. Many visitors, seeing the displays, maps, and swag, pause to learn about Wilderness. In this inaugural year, we focused on contacting backpackers on their way into the backcountry, and talked about two urgent issues: **fire safety** (no campfires, please!) and the growing problem of **human waste** disposal near backcountry lakes. We handed out many RESTOP "wag bags."



What on earth is a WAG BAG? It's for storing human poop, which can then be carried out and disposed of in any trash receptacle. W.A.G. stands for (get ready) **W**aste **A**lleviation and **G**elling. Our friend Lou Ortega, from RESTOP, has generously provided ESWA with many wag bags for distribution to backpackers in our Wilderness Areas.



Here are the stats for 2021:
26 rangers staffed 50 ranger-sessions (each 3 hours) at 12 different trailheads (most popular were Gore Creek/Lake (8), Surprise Lake (7), and Booth Creek/Lake (7). They contacted 2,437 visitors (398 (16%) were backpackers) who were accompanied by 23 dogs (only 4 (17%) were off leash). They counted 750 cars in the parking lots. Individual highs for Number of Sessions / Total hours: Bill Betz (7 sessions / 24.5 hours), Mike Browning (5 sessions / 22 hours).

ESWA IN THE NEWS

ESWA Board member **Karn Stiegelmeier** (right) hosts a column every

Friday in the **Summit Daily**. Each "**Get Wild!**" article touches on a topic of interest to lovers of Wilderness. The first 20 weeks have dealt with a host of topics, including wildflowers, bluebirds, bears, beavers, moose, flyfishing, sawyering, and more. You can access them all [HERE](#).



Below, we present a recent article for your enjoyment.

Get Wild: Aspens are our beauties and saviors

September 23, 2021

Karn Stiegelmeier

September is the peak time for the glorious, brilliant yellow color changes of aspens. This year is as spectacular as ever.



Green,

golden and rust-colored aspen leaves are pictured Sunday, Sept. 19, at Salt Lick Gulch. *Karn Stiegelmeier/Courtesy photo*

Many have told me they have never seen so many orange aspens. My theory is that we have more young aspens than ever. We have many aspens growing in areas where lodgepole pines have died out due to the pine bark beetle. I was surprised that aspens can grow in so many of these locations. Aspens typically grow in wetter areas, but they also get out-competed by pine, fir and spruce just because they are established and using the nutrients. After bark beetle losses, the aspens have come in, taking advantage of the nutrients available with the loss of conifers.

Aspens are named *Populus tremuloides*, meaning quaking aspen or trembling aspen due to the leaves quaking or trembling in the breeze because of their flattened petioles (attachment of the leaf to the stem), which reduce the aerodynamic drag of wind on branches. In September, we can observe this quaking with the breeze, creating a fluctuation of sunlight fluttering on the leaves. At lower elevations along the Blue River, we see the cottonwood tree, *Populus deltoides*, a close relation to the aspen.

Aspens are also able to photosynthesize through their bark, which is very noticeable in the spring when their white bark commonly has a green glow. One of the most fascinating features of aspens is the rhizomatic nature of their root systems. This means that the stems of aspens run underground and generate new shoots, generating many new trees and colonies of trees. When we see a particular group of bright yellow trees and nearby another group colored light green, we are seeing a colony of one organism of trees connected underground with another organism with slightly different colors next door. Individual trees may live for 50-150 years, but the connected

root system of the colony can live for thousands of years.

Aspens have been able to take advantage of the bark beetle's attack on lodgepole pines. In Summit County, we have more young aspens than in recent years due to the aspens taking over some of these areas naturally. And these young aspens tend to be more orange than yellow this time of year. We also have some experiments with aspens being planted to take over areas for fire mitigation near developed locations for the protective advantage of aspens. They are also our saviors due to climate change and fire mitigation. They do not burn easily due to their high moisture content, and when they do burn, their roots respond with more root sprouting, creating even more trees.

For peak leaf peeping, the sunlight is important. The right light creates especially magical, bright yellow appearances among our mountains. There are many theories about why aspens turn colors when they do. Temperature has an obvious role. Moisture, especially soil moisture, is another. In the drought of 2002, our aspens were struggling with lack of moisture, fungal attacks and the lack of ability to flush out disease with moisture-laden sap. The leaf colors were less brilliant than usual. You will have to ask each colony of aspens to know what is really impacting them this year.

Aspen changes seem to have a different personality each year, and trying to figure out what they are responding to is an ongoing puzzle. They have centuries of experience and many mysteries for us to postulate about each fall.

Enjoy the beauty and mysteries of our amazing aspens while we await a big snowfall.

“Get Wild” publishes on Fridays in the

Summit Daily News. Karn Stiegelmeier is a board member of Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance, an all-volunteer nonprofit that helps the U.S. Forest Service protect and preserve the wilderness areas in Eagle and Summit counties. For more information, visit EagleSummitWilderness.org.



Copyright © **|CURRENT_YEAR|* *|LIST:COMPANY|**, All rights reserved.
|IFNOT:ARCHIVE_PAGE|* *|LIST:DESCRIPTION|

Our mailing address is:

|HTML:LIST_ADDRESS_HTML|* *|END:IF|

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)

|IF:REWARDS|* *|HTML:REWARDS|* *|END:IF|