



The Story of the Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo

The Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo is celebrating 35 years of connecting people with nature. The Audubon River Trails Nature Center was founded in 1979 by the Arkansas Valley Audubon Society to preserve an area where the community could observe, explore, and enjoy nature. In 1981 wildlife rehabilitation was added to the mission with the founding of the Raptor Center. In 1983 The Greenway and Nature Center of Pueblo was incorporated in the state of Colorado as a Nonprofit Corporation and received 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt status. In 2008 the name of the organization was changed to Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo to better reflect the current mission. Over the thirty-five years of the Nature Center's operation, there have been over four million visitors to the site along the Arkansas River with over 200,000 youth participating in environmental education programs. Over 5000 raptors have been cared for from 46 counties in Colorado and several other states including Texas, New Mexico, California, Oregon, Oklahoma, Utah, and Kansas.

In 2007, the Interpretive Center was burned by arson and the Raptor Center was condemned for public access due to roof structural issues. These are the key challenges the organization faces today.

The Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo serves Pueblo County and surrounding areas through offering environmental education programs for school students, nature programs for families, summer nature day camps for youth, and a Raptor Center to rehabilitate injured birds of prey and return them to the wild. Visitors can see live raptors such as hawks, owls, falcons and eagles on display. In addition, the scenic location of the Nature Center along the Arkansas River offers a variety of opportunities for outdoor recreation. Visitors can kayak, tube, canoe, or fish on the river and hike, bike, or rollerblade on the paved bicycle trail that travels through the Center and connects to thirty miles of trails. There are also miles of unpaved hiking trails which provide walks through wooded, riparian, and prairie environments. After a hike, visitors can enjoy a meal in the Coyote Grill restaurant with views of the river. The Center is a popular site for outdoor weddings, picnics, and family gatherings, with catering available. The gift shop in the Riverfront building offers a variety of nature gifts, field guides, bird feeders, and bird seed and also rents bicycles. For more information about the Nature and Raptor Center's programs, please call (719) 549-2414 or go to: <http://natureandraptor.org>