



The Story of the Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo

For over 35 years, the Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo has been 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 non-profit corporation and received 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. In 2008, the name of the organization was changed to the Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo to better reflect the current mission. Over the years of the Nature Center's operation, there have been over four million visitors to the grounds along the Arkansas River, with over 250,000 youth participating in environmental education programs. Over 5500 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 Watts Interpretive Center burned down in an arson fire, and the Raptor Center was condemned for public access due to roof structural issues. Developing new educational spaces and maintaining old structures continue to be some of the key challenges the organization faces today.

The Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo serves Pueblo County and surrounding areas by 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. The scenic location of the Nature Center along the Arkansas River also 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 Nature 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 at the Coyote Grill restaurant with views of the river. The Nature Center is a popular site for outdoor weddings, picnics, and family gatherings, with reservations and catering available through the riverfront office/gift shop. The gift shop offers a variety of nature gifts, field guides, Colorado souvenirs, bird feeders, and bird seed. For more information about the Nature and Raptor Center's programs, please call (719) 549-2414 or go to: www.natureandraptor.org