COLORADO
ROCKY
MOUNTAIN
WEST
SUMMER 1994
NEW MEXICO, UTAH, WYOMING, IDAHO, MONTANA

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Message from the PUBLISHER

In Taiwan, a court has sentenced a Bhutanese princess caught smuggling rhino horns to 10 months imprisonment instead of deporting her to demonstrate the government's determination to protect endangered species. The defendant was caught with 22 rhino horns and nine bear gall bladders when she arrived at the Taipei International Airport from Hong Kong. Despite her pleas that the horns and gall bladders were family owned, the Princess was incarcerated for her illegal possession of the animal parts.

By comparison, the fatal poisoning of the bald eagle, America's national symbol brings a relatively light punishment of only monetary fines and probationary surveillance.

Unknown to most, the Bald Eagle Protection Act classifies the killing of either a bald or golden eagle, or taking any part of their nests or eggs, as being a simple misdemeanor, with a civil penalty of not more than $5,000. Only in the case of a second or subsequent conviction for such a violation can the defendant be charged with a felony and be subject to a $10,000 fine with possible imprisonment of up to two years.

The same Federal law is seriously flawed by not having a mandatory cancellation of grazing privileges on public lands for anyone convicted of an eagle violation. The present statute fails to revoke grazing permits from users found guilty of destroying eagles, their nests or eggs.

Surely those who poison eagles, either directly or indirectly, should lose permission to graze their livestock on public lands if they are not willing to obey the Federal law. In order to properly protect our national symbol, the Bald Eagle Protection Act must be amended to provide that even the first conviction is a felony and all Federal grazing rights of the violator are automatically canceled forever.

Merrill G. Hastings Jr.

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The Colorado Trail

... rooftop of the Rockies.

The Colorado Trail is a pathway to adventure. It will lure you with romantic visions of unspeakable beauty. It will intoxicate you with anticipation so that you can’t wait to get started. You’ll talk about your plans to everyone who’ll listen, and you’ll dream constantly about your upcoming escape.

But then — especially if you start at the beginning, in Waterton Canyon southwest of Denver — your brief euphoria will quickly turn to harsh reality as you arduously climb to well over 8,000 feet. The trail will tax you physically as well as emotionally. You’ll wonder what you’ve gotten yourself into and why you wanted so badly to be there. You’ll question your better judgment; you’ll curse the Trail’s seemingly fickle nature; you might even think of turning back.

But finally, as the Colorado Trail moderates into a smooth, sweeping, undulating pattern of luscious highlands and gentle mountain valleys; as it maintains nearly its entire 470 miles to Durango at more than 8,000 feet, with one dizzying crest topping 13,300 feet; as it seduces you with its pristine beauty and endless awe-inspiring vistas, you’ll know you’ve found the real thing. Your senses will come alive with the awareness of sights, sounds and smells you’ve always longed for. You’ll be in love for life, and no matter how far away you might wander, your heart will always belong to The Trail.

With its myriad of faces and moods, the Colorado Trail can be far more accommodating and forgiving than any friend, though it can also give an unprepared traveler the challenge of a lifetime. Broken by nature as well as necessity into countless sections and segments, the Colorado Trail can be enjoyed for a summer, a month, a week, a weekend, or just for a day. While traversing parts of seven national forests, six wilderness areas, eight mountain ranges, and five major river systems, it touches the very heartbeat of a continent divided by the knife-edged monoliths that define the Rocky Mountains.

It may not possess the fame of an Appalachian Trail or claim the Muir-esque mystique of a Pacific Crest Trail — but it is unique as a backcountry trail and true wilderness route. Except for its origins near suburban Denver and its terminus at bustling Durango, the Colorado Trail shuns population centers larger than a gas pump and a general store, and even those are off the prescribed path. Along the Colorado Trail, a campground is a metropolis, a group hike is a crowd, a forest service road is a freeway. And other than those sparse interludes, this path across the peaks takes hikers far away from the world behind and treats them to a soul-satisfying seclusion, where they can be alone with their thoughts and their experience with pure, unspoiled nature.
The Colorado Trail possesses an abundant natural wealth found only in isolated pockets elsewhere in the lower 48 states. It is a living diorama of the North American outdoors, regularly offering observant hikers a glimpse of marmots, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, deer, elk, eagles, coyotes, squirrels, pikas, beavers, hawks, porcupines, skunks, snakes, raccoons, even an occasional mountain lion or bear. It is a vast geologic classroom, replete with evidence of mountain-building, glaciation, volcanism, erosion, tectonics, and prehistoric inland seas. And it is a showcase of the merits and virtues of public land, mixing responsible use with level-headed conservation, keeping open a resource for which all National Forest users have already paid with their hard-earned tax dollars, and all Colorado Trail supporters have enhanced with their gifts of time, money, and sweat.

One U.S. Forest Service official involved in the earliest stages of the Colorado Trail said, “We want this to be a people’s trail, not ours.” Since those early days, the people of Colorado have carried the banner of the Trail as their own. Through the influence of Colorado Trail co-founders Merrill Hastings Jr., publisher of Colorado magazine, and Bill Lucas, Denver’s regional Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, the Colorado Trail received overwhelming initial public support in the early 1970s and essential seed money in the form of a $300,000 grant from the Gates Foundation in 1973. For sheer passion and energy, Gudrun Gaskill (she’s known simply as “Gudy” in CT circles) has given her heart and soul to the trail virtually from the first day she heard of it and has done more than anyone else to keep the Colorado Trail dream from dying in its troubled infancy. The Colorado Trail Foundation went through its own metamorphosis in the early years to emerge as today’s formal organization so necessary for the Trail’s survival and growth.

Over the years, uncounted thousands of volunteers have spent long hours hiking, mapping, hacking, digging, lifting, cleaning, raking, filling and literally hand-molding their own pet portions of the trail. In fact, if any experience can possibly add to that of hiking the trail, it is being a part of a “trail crew.” It is strenuous work in the hardest work-ethic sense of the word.

Some may wonder what could possibly drive sane, level-headed human beings to work harder on the Trail — for free — than they work at their jobs. The answer is essentially the same thing that drives day trekkers and thru-hikers to assault the Colorado Trail with every ounce of energy they possess. It is a chance not only to rub shoulders with nature at its wildest, but in some small way to help others share that experience as well. Whether hiking or working, those who spend time on the Trail sense that what they are doing is bigger than themselves, more lasting than the brief time they spend there, more significant by hundreds of miles than the few miles they are hiking, carving, cleaning, repairing or improving.
The Colorado Trail, in fact, has a way of bringing out the enterprising best in nearly everyone. One highlight of its history, for example, was a fundraising event to benefit the Webb-Waring Lung Institute. All 470 miles of the Colorado Trail were hiked, biked, run, and llama trekked in segments in one day. Through $500 sponsorships sold to corporations, $47,000 was raised on the Trail, to which another $13,000 was added in donations from some of the sponsors, for a total of $60,000 raised in only one day on the entire length of the Colorado Trail.

The Trail also has a way of giving something back to those who invest in it. This year — the 20th anniversary of the Colorado Trail — a "trail treks" program will offer a series of six one-week-long hikes which combined will span the length of the CT. The first trek begins at Waterton Canyon on June 26, with the final hike ending in Durango on August 5. Cost for each segment is $1,100, which includes all food for the entire trip, equipment, tents, and cooking gear — all transported for hikers to specified camping points. All that trekkers need to bring is a change of dry clothes and other personal items. (For information contact Steve Gladbach, 2226 N. Grand, Pueblo, CO 81003; (719) 543-8616.)

Likewise, Western State College is offering a Geology Course of the San Juan Mountains, a one-credit course scheduled for July 17-23. The curriculum will focus on the geologic features of the Colorado Trail through southern Colorado's San Juan Mountains. The course costs $290 including trail meals and backpacking assistance. (For information contact Dr. John Sowell, Biology Dept., Western State College, Gunnison, CO 81231; (303) 943-2146.)

Still, the real lures of the Colorado Trail are the physical challenges and personal rewards it offers. Covering the entire 470 miles of the Colorado Trail is a feat worthy of the boasting most thru-hikers naturally afford it. However, hiking the Trail piecemeal — for a day’s enjoyment, to initiate children to the trail arts, for a weekend outing, or for a first taste of the CT’s virtues — is also recommended, as proven by the vast majority who hike only segments at a time.

There are sections ideal for hardy mountain biking devotees (though all six wilderness areas along the Trail are strictly off-limits to mountain bikes). Other segments lend themselves to a perfect one-way hike for a family with two cars (one parked at the terminus) and a covey of eager children. Anglers routinely use the CT for access to cutthroat-rich cirque lakes and small streams teeming with brook trout. Even visitors more accustomed to laying low in U.S. Forest Service campgrounds often taste the wonders of the Colorado Trail when they discover CT markers nearby and are immediately drawn onto the backwoods boulevard.

What advantages can there be to spending one day or weekend going from point A to point B on the Colorado Trail? Pacing, first and foremost. It is only natural that thru-hiking will become distilled to the precise measurement of miles per day. By contrast, day tripping or overnighting will usually be evaluated in terms of enjoyment, discovery, escape, self-evaluation, education, or whatever the hiker is seeking to find in the prescribed distance he or she has chosen. Perhaps it is the serenity of Galena Lake above timberline near Leadville, the exhilaration of cresting the Continental Divide in the Cochetopa, a first brief encounter with a true wilderness area (accessible at numerous points along the Trail), or the sheer challenge of conquering

**National Trails Day & the Discovery Trail**

National Trails Day, America's only event dedicated to hiking trails and the people who enjoy them, is celebrated annually each June. In 1993, for the first National Trails Day, more than 750,000 outdoor enthusiasts participated in 2,500 local events. All 50 states were involved, as was the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Twenty-five governors declared National Trails Day for their states, and now the Colorado congressional delegation has initiated a bill for a national proclamation for an annual Trails Day.

This summer, America's first coast-to-coast trail is being celebrated in conjunction with National Trails Day. Called the American Discovery Trail, the trail makes its way from San Francisco in the West to Lewes, Delaware, on the Atlantic shore. In Colorado, it divides to form northern and southern routes, taking in the Colorado National Monument — with 20,443 acres of sandstone monoliths and canyons — the Grand Mesa, Schofield Pass and Crested Butte in the heart of ski country. The trail's southern route includes parts of the famed Colorado and Continental Divide trails, while the northern route follows the Platte River Valley south of Greeley to Ft. Morgan and Julesburg.

The American Hiking Society, a national nonprofit organization, promotes hiking and educates hikers on low-impact backcountry use. It also lobbies in Washington to make sure the interests of hikers throughout America are heard. Through its more than 100 affiliated clubs, such as Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado and the Colorado Mountain Club, AHS represents millions of trail advocates and serves as the voice of the American hiker. For information on the American Hiking Society and its projects, write to AHS, P.O. Box 20160, Washington, DC 20041; or call Dave Lillard at (703) 255-9304.

**Printed Resources**

*The Colorado Trail: The Official Guide Book*, by Randy Jacobs, $15.50 incl. postage from the Colorado Trail Foundation, P.O. Box 260876, Lakewood, CO 80226-0876.

*The Colorado Trail: Topo Maps*, $12 for half sets (Maps 1-16 or 17-29), or $20 for full set.

The Colorado Trail Foundation, P.O. Box 260876, Lakewood, CO 80226-0876.

*Hiking the Colorado Trail*, by Robert P. Denise. Lothlorien Press, P.O. Box 484, Fort Collins, CO 80522. $14.95 at bookstores.

*Colorado Traveler Guidebooks: Day Hikes on the Colorado Trail*. The American Traveler Series, Renaissance House Publishers, P.O. Box 177, Frederick, CO 80530. $4.95 at bookstores.
Keenebuc Pass from the Junction Creek side. Enjoyment of the Colorado Trail should not — indeed, cannot — be measured in so arbitrary a unit as time or distance.

Even experienced thru-hikers admit that predetermined mileage goals should be allowed to fall in favor of the once-in-a-lifetime chance to top a 14,000-foot peak, to contemplate the boomtown past of a silent and lonesome ghost town (like Carson, just one mile off the Trail), to peer cautiously into the gaping maw of an old riches-to-rags mining effort (never, but never, step inside), or to indulge a weekend of relative luxury in a history-rich small town like Leadville or Creede.

Out on the Trail itself, dayhikers and long-distance trekkers alike should be careful to never underestimate the surroundings they are in, to never forget that the Colorado Trail is not a sidewalk in a city park. While parts of the CT might seem to be a little mundane, other sections are either so remote or so difficult to mark that getting lost or stranded is more than just a remote possibility. (This alone is a good reason never embark on the CT without The Colorado Trail: The Official Guide Book at the very least, and a complete 29-panel series of weatherproof Colorado Trail topo maps at best — see “Printed Resources” on page 11.)

The Cochetopa Hills in the San Juans are especially infamous for their deceptive ways, mixing barren ridges, self-effacing rockslide trails, sign-destroying weather and thick stands of aspen to trick unwary CT trekkers into losing their way along the Continental Divide. Those who do become disoriented in the Cochetopas (it is rumored even Trail matriarch Gaskill once took a wrong turn in these parts) can take some solace in knowing they have at least intersected the Continental Divide, a feat which in December of 1848, eluded pathmarkert John C. Frémont and his ill-fated fourth expedition. Trying to strike the Divide, probably near present-day Cochetopa Pass, Frémont and his mountain man guide Old Bill Williams apparently misguided their men and mules up Cave Creek rather than Carnego Creek out of the San Luis Valley, just east of today’s Colorado Trail. They never did hit the Divide, becoming snowbound instead on the exposed flanks of Mesa Mountain, viewing from another angle the same expanse of identical-looking peaks that hikers see today. Their eventual mad dash back down the Rio Grande left 10 men dead and spawned rumors of cowardice and cannibalism. If this section of the trail is on your itinerary, may you always consult guidebook, map and compass, and may your table fare offer something better than roast mule and fellow explorer.

Close encounters like this with the legend and lore of Colorado are quite common along the Colorado Trail. Draw close to Creede (as you will where the Creede pack trail intersects the CT at San Luis Pass), for example, and you will brush shoulders with some of the wildest chapters in Colorado history. In its day Creede typified everything an Old West mining town should and shouldn’t be, with its get-rich-quick hysten, gunshuffling bravado, sleazy “soiled doves,” and headlong rush into infamy. It is also where Bob Ford, the man who killed Jesse James, was himself shot-gunned to death by a drifter named Ed O’Kelley.

Likewise, skirting the scarred hills around Leadville, hikers would be remiss not to take the time to recall the one-time silver kingdom of Horace Tabor, who along with his mistress-turned-wife Baby Doe, presided over Colorado high society. Leadville was the epicenter of a boom that saw more than $82 million in silver wrested from the bowels of the rich ore district that included Tabor’s Matchless Mine. But when the U.S. government demonetized silver in 1893, Tabor was ruined financially. After a stint as a U.S. senator, Tabor died virtually penniless, instructing his beloved Baby Doe to guard the Matchless for the day when silver again would pave the road to wealth. This she faithfully did through years of poverty, finally freezing to death in her little shack at the Matchless.

Uncovering the seemingly infinite chronicles of Colorado’s past — both historic and prehistoric — is an exercise that can consume as much of a hiker’s off-trail time as keeping up with the Trail itself.

Almost to a person, those who fall in love with the Colorado Trail compulsively follow its growth and progress, just as they might routinely keep tabs on a niece or nephew they adore. The Trail is like a living organism, maturing with age, growing with time, changing to meet the needs and challenges created by its very existence. That’s why wise hikers — besides owning The Official Guide Book and the 29-map series — keep tabs on any late-breaking information concerning improvements or modifications to the trail that might save them unpleasant surprises along the way. In fact, information, planning, and preparation are the best allies any hiker can have, even along the user-friendly Colorado Trail.

For all its lush greenery, the Colorado Trail can quickly become a thirsty, waterless desert for those who do not lay a strategy for replenishing their supplies. Just because thunderstorms and gentle showers keep the grass and trees growing does not mean there is a constant supply of springs and pools. Again, The Official Guide Book is absolutely essential. Careful planning for finding and using water along the way can spare you the awful embarrassment of panhandling H2O from fellow hikers who need it just as badly as you do.

It is also wise to remember that some parts of the Colorado Trail by natural topography do not conform to the original goals of keeping the Trail accessible to hikers of every conditioning. As Trail trekker/writer M. John Fayehee has observed, “Some parts of this wonderfully rugged state are too wonderfully rugged for moderate trails. Much of the Sawatch Range falls firmly into this category.”

Maps, of course, are relatively worthless without a good compass and a level head. Those who thru-hike the CT from Denver to Durango, or vice-versa, more than once will find themselves frantically scanning ridges and hilltops for some sign of a Colorado Trail marker. This is not because of any shortfall on the part of those who have built the trail and lovingly maintain it, but because the same natural elements that routinely knock down 80-foot trees and reshape hillsides find little challenge in obliterating a few puny signs.

Perhaps it is that closeness to nature itself that gives hikers their biggest thrill, along with their most anxious moments. The Trail, of course, can be eerily dark at night, strangely silent in the wee hours of morning, weird and spooky when things go bump in the night. But for heart-pounding, unrestrained fear, nearly all veteran CT trekkers cast their vote for the terror only a high country lightning storm can induce. Though lightning is nothing to be trifled with, the night is the best time to feel it.
FOUR FAVORITES ALONG THE TRAIL

All segments of the Colorado Trail rewards hikers and bikers with splendid mountain scenery. Listed below, however, are four of the more popular segments:

WATERTON CANYON TO SOUTH PLATTE TOWN SITE
C-470 to CO 121, then south to Martin Marietta. Signs on 121 for turn off. 16 mile trail segment.

The Colorado Trail officially begins at an obscure trailhead deep within Pike National Forest, 6.2 miles beyond the Waterton Canyon parking area. At 5,520 feet above sea level, this point is the lowest anywhere along the Colorado Trail, and serves as a gateway from the eastern plains grasslands to the foothills life zone. Immediately above the shadows of the cottonwood, the dry, rocky slopes of the canyon support little more than yucca, gambel oak and juniper. High up on the cooler, moister mountain slopes, dark patches of ponderosa and Douglas fir are visible.

The wide trail switchbacks up through a shaded Douglas fir forest, offering intermittent glimpses of the rocky summit called Turstkhead. This segment includes an old logging road built by C.A. Deane, who had a sawmill at the confluence of Bear Creek and the South Platte River. Besides providing ties to the DSP&PRR during its construction, Deane later expanded his profitable operation by adding a hotel and the whistle stop that became known as Deansbury. This section concludes when you cross the South Platte River on a beefy bridge and enter the historic railroad junction, where the boarded up South Platte hotel recalls memories of another era.

BUFFALO CREEK TO FOREST SERVICE ROAD 543
(NEAR LOST CREEK WILDERNESS)
US 285 to Pine Junction; south on country road 116 to four miles south of Buffalo Creek. 10.9 mile trail segment.

This section continues through the ponderosa forest, joins an abandoned road that leads south, then briefly follows an old jeep road. The trail then traverses through ponderosa and Douglas fir forests, joins an old road and descends slightly on a rounded ridge sprinkled with fragments of quartz. It remerges to the left just beyond and assumes a more southerly bearing into Morrison Creek Canyon. It then passes under a huge mass of granite blocks on the steeply descending north ridge of Little Scraggy Peak and continues past a jeep road and ascends to the crest of the ridge. From here it wanders down and back up again, bisects several gullies, crosses a logging road that descends to the right. The trail continues to wind in and out of small gullies, and briefly joins a logging road before ascending steeply to a flat-topped ridge. The Castle's granite bulwark is visible to the south.

KENOSHA PASS AREA — WEST FROM FOREST SERVICE ROAD 817,
OR EAST TO JEFFERSON LAKE ROAD
Kenosha Pass, approximately 58 miles from Denver; 14-mile and 6-mile trail segments.

Here you can choose one of two hikes. The longer hike begins 3.2 miles west of Kenosha Pass off US 285. Turn left onto "Lost Park Road" (FS 127), follow it 11 miles, then go left on FS 817 for less than a quarter of a mile. Park and hike up a 4WD road until you intersect the CT. Turn north (left) and hike sloping hills until you reach Kenosha Pass 14 miles later. One popular option is to end this hike at Ben Tyler Trail (actually a road), for a shorter but equally enjoyable hike of a little more than 7 miles.

The second hike begins at Kenosha Pass Campground north of US 285 (do not use the campground for day-use parking). Where that road bends left twice and goes through a gate, the Trail begins on the right. Six miles later it reaches Jefferson Lake Road. If you want to leave a vehicle at this end of the hike, turn right on Jefferson Lake Road in the town of Jefferson, which is 4.5 miles west of Kenosha Pass on US 285. After driving 2.1 miles on Jefferson Lake Road, turn right again and continue a little over 3 miles to the CT. If you feel up to it, plan this trek to go a full 13.5 miles all the way to Georgia Pass.

GULLER CREEK TO CAMP HALE
I-70 To Copper Mountain Resort. 17.9 mile trail section.

To begin, cross the highway to the main entrance of Copper Mountain Resort and continue on the busy street, which is named Copper Road. Stay on Copper Road as it slowly bends around the north end of the resort to mile 1.5, where the road crosses West Tenmile Creek on a wide bridge. Embark here on the paved bike path, which continues west, paralleling the creek. In 0.3 mile you will pass the cutoff to Union Creek Base building, where horses and pack animals should detour off the bike path. Pedestrians can continue west on the path, which runs close by I-70, to mile 2.6. A convenient bridge crossing here takes you across West Tenmile Creek. After crossing the bridge, bear to the left (southeast) and follow the trail to the west side of Guller Creek on a convenient double split log bridge.

From the log bridge at Guller Creek, the trail slowly ascends, through occasional wet spots and willow patches, following Guller Creek as its trends generally southwest. The balance of this part of the CT is highlighted by the challenge of fording Cataract Creek (unless it is late summer you will probably get your feet wet) and the remains of Camp Hale, which once housed the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division that popularized downhill skiing.

(continued from page 12) with, a sky-splitting electrical storm's bark usually is much worse than its bite if hikers have followed standard safety precautions and sheltered themselves from it. There's something almost mystical about huddling in a mummy bag with nothing but a thin sheet of nylon between us and all the energy of a high country storm for 20 or 30 nervous minutes. For all our high-minded independence, we can discover on the Colorado Trail that we are pretty weak and helpless after all.

The sheer enormity of the mountains that punctuate the Colorado Trail, the steepness of its most challenging grades, the unbridled beauty of its rolling hills and velvetmeadows, the cautious freedom of its wildlife inhabitants — all these remind us of our frailty as well the privilege we have of not just viewing them from afar, but of sharing their fellowship up close by way of the Colorado Trail.

Judging from a few books written about the CT, it appears that hiking the Colorado Trail and enjoying the Colorado Trail are two different experiences. A small percentage of those who choose to follow the people's trail seemingly do so more to criticize and condemn the people on it — or humanity in general — than they do to enjoy the distinct Colorado camaraderie its founders originally had in mind.

Make no mistake — the Colorado Trail is probably not the best pathway to personal isolation. There will indeed be times on the Trail when you will be as alone as you want to be — or choose to be.

But often — most often, in fact — you will be treated to a generous slice of the diverse people and personalities irresistibly drawn to Colorado and its namesake trail, all sharing a vigor for life and a love for the Rockies. Neophytes, hardened trail veterans, Boy Scouts, flatlanders, families, volunteer trail workers, senior citizens, wildlife photographers, backpackers, natives and transplanters — they all stake a claim in the Trail as soon as they set foot on it. With few exceptions, they have sought out the Colorado Trail to enjoy it for exactly what it was meant to be — a pathway to the thrill of exploration and adventure embodied in its very name.

For more information contact the Colorado Trail Foundation, P.O. Box 260876, Lakewood, CO 80226-0876, (303) 526-0809.