



River Currents

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A Newsletter from the Roaring Fork Conservancy

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*"Protecting and Preserving
the Valley's Rivers"*

River Currents

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Director's Viewpoint

Jeanne Beaudry, Executive Director

Travel back in time for a moment. Historically people have identified where they live by focusing on the river or stream closest to their home. Today many people still do. When asked where they live they respond, Castle Creek, Woody Creek, up the Pan, near the Crystal, 4-Mile, by the Roaring Fork, etc.

Most people not only identify with the river on which they live but can also speak, with knowledge and concern, about the river they know so well. Are people aware of the river and concerned? You bet. How alarmed or quick are we all to respond when something is amiss with our river or any of its drainages?

As I write this, it is Thanksgiving time and we at the Conservancy are very thankful for the momentum and success we are experiencing. We could fill this entire newsletter with a list of our projects over the past year. We are making a difference!

And, even though we are very proud and thankful for all we've accomplished, our mission is greater. Getting more people to contribute time, effort, or financial assistance to protect and preserve this valuable resource is an ongoing goal. We cannot do this alone, so we need your help. If you have the time, a concern, or want to get involved, please give us a call. And, the next time anyone asks, identify your place of residence by the drainage where you live. Then too, like our ancestors before us, quietly give thanks.

Education Corner

Leigh Gillette, Education Director

The Conservancy's education program will celebrate its first full year in January, 1999. Last year at this time, Conservancy educators initiated a pilot wetlands program in the Roaring Fork Valley high schools. The goal of these programs was twofold: to introduce students to the vital and dynamic riparian ecosystem, and to develop lasting relationships with area teachers. We were successful in both areas. Through field-based lessons about riparian plants, animals, soils, water and current events, Conservancy staff reached hundreds of students from Aspen to Newcastle.

The 1998 spring semester education programs were so successful that many teachers requested they be repeated during the fall school term. In addition to adopting the pilot programs, we have continued to develop new classes. Recent examples are the river insect and river awareness classes for the Yampah Alternative High School and the Aspen Middle School.

The Conservancy's education classes focus on instilling awareness and appreciation of nature. Students have been challenged to explore soils with their senses of touch and smell, and to map not only the sights, but also the sounds of a landscape. Our students have witnessed herds of elk sheltering in cottonwood stands and kingfishers gliding above the river in search of food. These simple, yet wonderful experiences develop personal connections to our surrounding ecosystem.

While appreciation and wonder will always serve as cornerstones of our education programs, we are adding a strong scientific research component to our classes. In October, the Conservancy joined the Colorado Division of Wildlife's River Watch program. Through River Watch we received over \$1,000 worth of equipment and training, enabling our staff and students to conduct accurate and reliable water quality monitoring on local rivers.

Thanks to CDOW and a \$4,000 equipment grant from the Aspen Skiing Company's Environment Foundation, the Conservancy is ready to greatly expand its role in water quality monitoring and environmental science education throughout the valley. As part of the Conservancy's Water Quality Monitoring Project, we are working with existing River Watch programs in Basalt, Carbondale, and Glenwood Springs schools. Additionally, we are working to introduce the River Watch program in Aspen schools to accomplish additional monitoring and river education in the upper watershed.

Data collected by area school children will be joined with data collected by the Conservancy and other local organizations. This will help establish baseline data for research on the health of our local rivers. We're very excited about this new component to our education programs.

Thank you to the following participating teachers:
 Karen Zohar, Annie Runyan-Worley
 — Aspen School District
 Andre Wille, Lisa Dameron, Jenny Sadler
 — Basalt High School
 Renée Maggert, Connie Hendershot
 — Carbondale Middle School
 Mike Wilde
 — Glenwood Springs High School
 Susie Ellison
 — Yampah Alternative High School

We invite other teachers or individuals to become involved with the Conservancy's educational programs by contacting Leigh Gillette at leigh@roaringfork.org or call 927-1290.

News From the Field...

Rick Lofaro, Director of Field Programs

The week of November 9th brought three days of exciting and educational work to the Conservancy as two members of the staff worked with a 14-member research crew from the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) participating in a catch and release study on the Fryingpan River. Through a process called "electro-fishing," fish were caught, identified, and released in order to estimate the population in a two-mile stretch of river below Reudi Dam. The days were cold, wet, and long, but proved to be very successful as hundreds of trout were captured and released.

Though the official results and technical data have yet to be released from CDOW, preliminary data shows a healthy population of trout in the river. Brown trout comprised roughly two-thirds of the captured fish; rainbow trout made up the remaining one-third. The research crew also conducted preliminary testing for the microscopic whirling disease organism. The lack of rainbow trout in the lower river leads researchers to believe that the whirling disease infection is more prevalent in that area. (Brown trout have a higher resistance to whirling disease than rainbow trout.) Results of the whirling disease tests will be made available to the Conservancy through CDOW in the coming months.

On the whole, the Fryingpan River is thought to be in excellent shape. Trout range from brilliant fry measuring two inches in length, to trophy giants weighing ten pounds or more. For more information, contact Rick at the Conservancy at rick@roaringfork.org or call 927-1290.

Conservancy Leads the Way in "Adopt-A-Road/Riverway" Program

The Conservancy is working with Eagle County to implement an "Adopt-A-Road/Riverway" program along the Fryingpan Road and Fryingpan River.

The Conservancy held its first roadside/riverside cleanup day this past fall on stretches of public land. The Conservancy is looking for other "sponsors" and help in coordinating the cleanup efforts. If you or your business would like to sponsor a 2-mile section of the Fryingpan Road, please contact Rick Lofaro at rick@roaringfork.org or call 927-1290. Help us promote community stewardship of the rivers!

Conservancy Chosen to Hold Rose Ranch Conservation Easement

The Roaring Fork Conservancy has been conveyed a conservation easement by the owners of Rose Ranch, a development along the Roaring Fork River in Garfield County. What is so exciting about this particular piece of land is that the parcel is home to one of the larger great blue heron rookeries (nesting colony) in the valley. The great blue heron is a specific indicator of pristine river habitat. As such, information gathered by monitoring this species will provide the Conservancy with yet another source of data on the health of the river and the effects of development on heron rookeries and other wildlife habitat.

In addition to holding the easement on this parcel of land, the Conservancy will conduct extensive rookery monitoring throughout the year. The Conservancy will also produce a brochure and conduct educational programs for homeowners within the Rose Ranch development.

The Conservancy is working to identify other potential conservation easement sites. Many of the riparian or wetland areas that are desired may be unsuitable for development. By entering into an easement agreement, this land can be set aside and the owner may benefit from significant tax advantages. For more information on conservation easements, please contact us directly.

Other News

- **Multi-River Objective Study:** Jeanne has been part of a steering committee working to compile Roaring Fork River watershed information. Some of this information includes collecting aerial photography, identifying historical channels, compiling biological data, researching flood information, and identifying erosion "hot spots." This information will be complete by early 1999 and will serve as an invaluable resource.
- **Basalt River Days a Success:** Thanks to the many hours of volunteer labor from citizens and participating groups, we are happy to report that our participation in Basalt River Days was a complete success. Over 200 young people and adults participated in our Water Fest activities. Special thanks to Colorado Tree Ranch for loaning us some shade "seedlings" and saving us from the beautiful but scorching hot weather!
- **Conservancy Wish List:** With our growing staff come growing needs for office supplies and equipment. Currently, we are in need of a copy machine and an IBM-compatible laptop computer. Donations are always welcome and greatly appreciated.
- **Conservancy Fund Drive:** The Conservancy has just completed a mailing for its annual fund drive. Gifts from individuals go a long way toward helping us accomplish our goal of protecting and preserving the rivers of the watershed. Please consider a donation this year!

We're Growing...

Meet Our New Board and Staff Members

Carter Brooksher joined the Conservancy Board of Directors in August and has a long history of volunteerism and fundraising. She has been involved in many organizations including the Women's Board of the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago,

where she served as founding president and is now an honorary board member, and the Boys and Girls Club of Chicago, where she served as president. She is an avid supporter of the outdoors and has worked to preserve the natural environment. She brings great enthusiasm and experience to the Roaring Fork Conservancy team and we're happy that she'll be focusing her volunteer efforts here in the valley.

Donna Dowling is editor of the Roaring Fork Sunday, a weekly regional newspaper she helped form in November 1995. As a journalist, she enjoys covering land-use, growth, and environmental issues, and has written articles on the health of the Roaring Fork River, the future of the valley's agricultural lands, and the implications of backcountry development. She has also written for the Aspen Daily News, Los Angeles Times, and Ventura Star-Free Press in California, among others. In addition, she is a self-proclaimed struggling photographer. Donna moved to the valley in 1994 with her husband, Curtis Robinson. She joined the Conservancy Board of Directors in August, 1998.

Leigh Gillette has been selected to direct the Conservancy's education programs. Leigh, who conducted many of the Conservancy's school programs in the past year, assumed her full-time role in August. As Director of Education, Leigh has taken on the task of furthering the education programs and initiating the Conservancy's Water Quality Monitoring project.

Carlyle Kyzer has joined the Conservancy staff to assist part-time with grant writing and special projects. She comes to us with a broad range of experience in the environmental non-profit world. She is Director of Abwenzi African Studies. As such, she has created numerous educational programs. Most recently, her work directing and producing the children's film "Letters from Africa" was recognized with a national Emmy Award. She and Jeanne have worked together before. Specifically, in 1995 and 1996 their combined efforts succeeded in bringing five African park rangers to Aspen for interpretive/educator

training. She looks forward to working with Jeanne again and to focusing her efforts on preserving the Roaring Fork Watershed.

Rick Lofaro has been hired as the Director of Field Programs for the Conservancy. He has returned to the valley after spending a few years in northwestern Montana working as a fishing guide.

Prior to Montana, Rick spent three years in the valley working for the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies. Rick was influential in the start-up of the Fresh Tracks Nature Tours including the snowshoe program on Aspen Mountain and the downhill skiing tours. He also played a major role in the Colorado River Cutthroat Trout re-introduction program at Hallam Lake. His main interest lies in fresh water ecosystems with a primary focus on trout. Keep an eye out for Rick mucking about in our local streams or monitoring the heron populations throughout the mid-valley.

Conservancy Staff

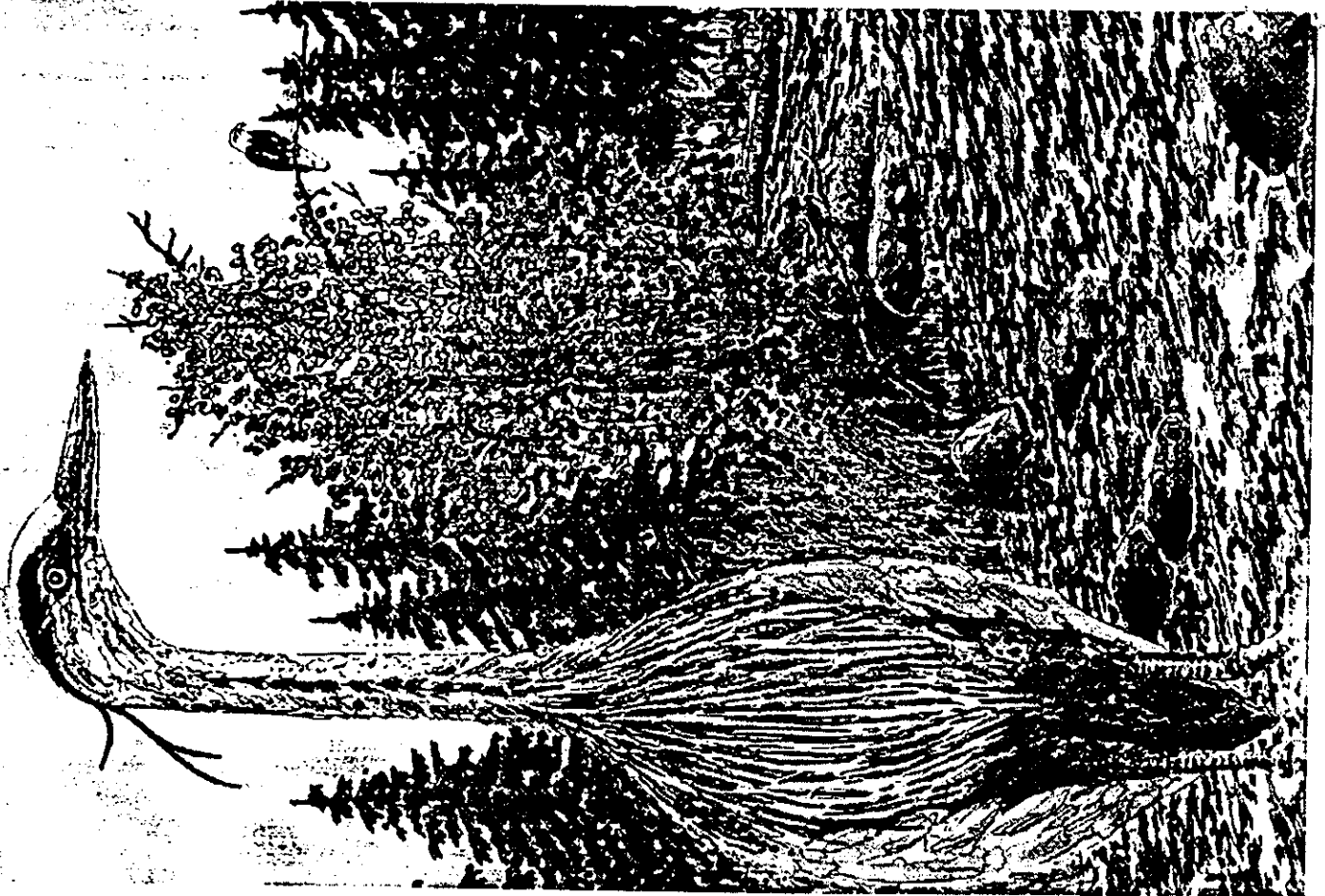
Jeanne Beaudry, Executive Director
Leigh Gillette, Education Director
Carlyle Kyzer, Development Director
Rick Lofaro, Director of Field Programs

Special Thanks to Justine Campbell, Kristine Crandall, Stacey McIntyre, and Denise Mytty for assistance on special projects.

Board of Directors

Shane J. Harvey, President
Carter Brooksher
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Andre Wille

Best Wishes for a Joyous Holiday Season and Happy New Year from the Roaring Fork Conservancy!



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