

# Nature Notes

NEWS FROM DURANGO NATURE STUDIES



SUMMER 2004

## COMMUNITY BUILDS NATURE CENTER

### The Durango Nature Center

is labor of love for many people in our community. Since it opened to the public four years ago, a host of dedicated volunteers have shared countless hours of their time (as well as gallons of elbow grease!) to help improve this nature preserve and outdoor learning lab. For example, volunteers from High Noon Rotary have completed six community service days at the Nature Center in the past several years. They've worked on projects like trail building, weeding and highway clean up, and also raised \$10,000 to build a footbridge over the Florida River. The Durango and Bayfield Lions Clubs have also been involved, raising funds for the pavilion, now dubbed "The Lions Den 2," and sending volunteers to help with its construction. From Girl and Boy Scouts to students from Fort Lewis and Colorado College, many different segments of the community have played a role in making the Durango Nature Center what it is today. Many thanks to all the generous people and groups who have given of their time, energy, and talents!

### New at the Nature Center

The arrival of spring brings high water to our rivers, wildflowers to our meadows, and migrating birds to our treetops. This time of year, when the world is awakening from its winter slumber, is an energizing time of renewal. It's also prime time to enjoy the Durango Nature Center!

If you haven't been to the Nature Center lately, you're in for a treat. Staff and volunteers have been busy sprucing up the trails, and working on several



**YOU'RE INVITED!  
10th Birthday Bash!!**

**Saturday, June 12 • 4-8pm  
at Durango Nature Center  
Free Food & Drink  
Live Music • Nature Walks  
Story Telling • Kid's Activities**

development projects. The Habitat Play Space is nearly complete. A giant anthill, larger-than-life wooden snake, recycled metal "creature fence," and boulder field provide hours of fun for young visitors, while adults can relax, picnic, and take in the scenery from beneath the newly constructed palapa. Future plans for this area include the installation of a human sundial, as well as a section of a 400-year-old tree marked with interesting historical dates.

The Prairie Dog Trail is also nearing completion. This quarter mile trail winds through the resident Gunnison prairie dog colony, giving visitors the chance to view these critters and their dens up close. Interpretive signage for this area is in the works, and will be installed before year's end.

**Come join us** at the Durango Nature Center for a workshop, event, or a relaxing afternoon by the Florida River. We will be open to the public until June 12th, when we host a down home birthday celebration. Live music with Tim Sullivan, free food and drink, and festival activities will make our 10th Birthday Bash a party to remember! Kid's activities include face painting, arts and crafts, naturalist-led hikes, and storytelling with Sarah Ransom. The event runs from 4-8 p.m. and is free to the public. It's our way of saying thanks to the community for ten years of involvement and support. We hope to see you there!

This event is presented by First National Bank of Durango. Additional sponsors include KSUT Public Radio and Ska Brewing.

Celebrating 10 years of bringing nature into the lives of all people.

DURANGO NATURE STUDIES  
Nature Notes · Summer 2004

**MISSION**

Durango Nature Studies is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to increasing awareness of, knowledge of, and respect for the natural world by providing diverse and hands-on learning experiences for all ages.

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*Community Resource Coordinator*

Ann Rilling

*Project Director, Dgo Nature Center*

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DURANGONATURESTUDIES.ORG

BRINGING NATURE INTO THE  
LIVES OF ALL PEOPLE

# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our yearlong series of 10th anniversary events is now in full swing, and the outpouring of community interest and support has truly been outstanding! Things got off to a good start in February when local mountaineer, Peter Jamieson, shared his experiences climbing Mount Everest with a crowd of nearly 150. Wild Words on March 20th brought an evening of nature writing, speaking, and song to the community with authors Craig Childs, Katie Lee, and Ken Wright. The 3rd Annual Earth Day Silent Auction on April 23rd was also a great success, raising nearly \$13,000 in support of environmental education in the Four Corners. And many a musk thistle was upended on May 1st, when a group of 25 weed warriors, including various

community members and volunteers from High Noon Rotary and Ecosphere Environmental Services, converged on the Nature Center for the first annual Weed and Beer Fest.

Durango Nature Studies is fortunate to be a part of a community that possesses such a deep sense of caring and involvement. Thank you, everyone, for helping us reach this milestone, and for propelling DNS forward into a second decade of achievement!



*Lisa K. Branner*  
Lisa K. Branner

## New & Renewing Donors

January through April 2004

\$10,000 +

La Plata County Conservation Trust Fund

\$1,500 +

First National Bank of Durango

Giant Industries

La Plata Electric Association Round-Up Foundation

Walter S. Rosenberry

\$500 +

Southern Ute Indian Tribe / Sky Ute Casino

\$250 +

Colorado Trails Ranch

Ecosphere Environmental Services

Jerry & Charlotte Fischer

Kiwanis Club of the Narrow Gauge

Maria's Bookshop

Michael McQuinn

John Rothwell & Marjorie Cristol

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\$100 +

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# Unsung Heros

Volunteers Going Above & Beyond!

# AMAZING ANTS

## Ant Jobs: Life in the Colony

Ants are **social** insects that live together in a colony. Every ant has a job, and they all work together to help the colony survive.

The **queen** ant begins her adult life with wings. She flies out with the males of the colony to mate. After mating, the queen returns to the nest. There she loses her wings, and begins laying thousands of eggs.

**Worker** ants are “sterile” female ants who do not lay eggs. Worker ants gather food, feed other ants, care for young, and dig and build more nest tunnels.

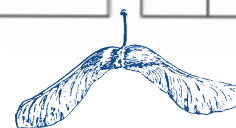
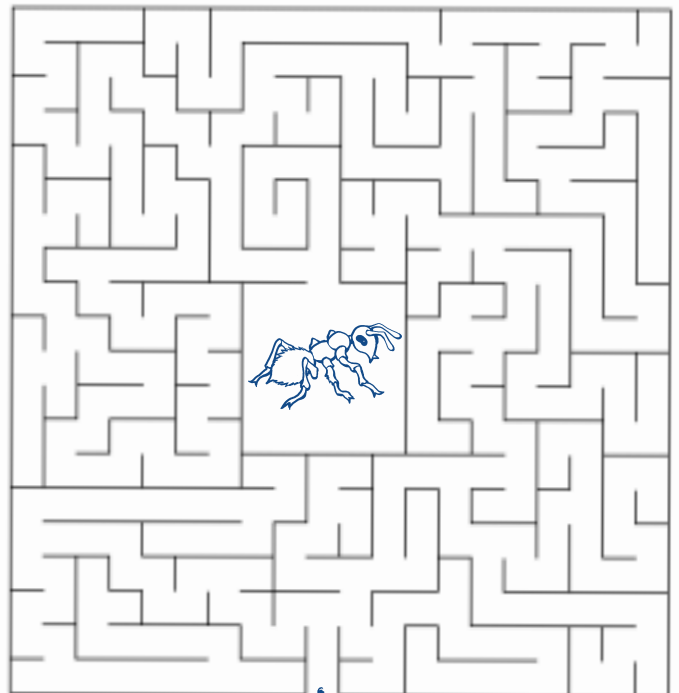
**Soldier** ants are also sterile females. They are large workers who defend the colony and sometimes capture slave ants from other colonies.

**Male** ants are smaller than soldiers or workers, and they have wings. Their only job is to fly out of the nest and mate with the queen. After mating, male ants die.

## Metamorphosis: Ants Growing Up

Ants go through **metamorphosis** as they grow up, just like butterflies! A worm-like **larva** hatches from the ant egg. This larva sheds its skin many times as it grows. After it is done growing, the larva spins itself a **cocoon** and becomes a **pupa**. While in the cocoon, the pupa’s body changes into an **adult** ant with six legs, three body parts (head, thorax, and abdomen), two antennae, and two compound eyes.

*A little harvester ant has just come out of her cocoon! She must leave the nest and find food for the colony. Help her find her way through the tunnels of the ant nest and get to the maple seeds.*



Most volunteers are allowed to say “no” when we solicit their help, whether leading hikes or “sweating it out” at a DNS work party. There are a select few, however, who have less choice in the matter: our spouses! In this column, we celebrate some of the great guys who provide brains, brawn, and backrubs, and share precious garage space with random DNS items like snowshoes and solar cookers.

**Matt Kenna:** Involved since the early days, Matt provided legal advice at the very first DNS formation meetings. Over the years, he has played camp chef for Jr. Naturalist Field School, brewed beer for events, cooked elk treats for volunteer parties, and built educational materials. More importantly, Matt has taken good care of the kids while Janet worked, and donated time and money as needed (or nagged) by Janet! Matt practices public interest environmental law, helping protect public lands and endangered species.

**Pete Skartvedt** is another spouse that has been around from the beginning. Pete has done some of almost every type of task in his support of DNS (and wife Ann Rilling), from licking stamps to hauling our new giant tree stump. Pete’s background in biology and habitat restoration have come in handy with our revegetation projects and land management issues. Pete runs his own business, Southwest Restoration Services, providing wetlands restoration and environmental consulting services.

**Klemens Branner:** Whether slaying weeds at the Durango Nature Center or snapping photos of DNS programs in action, Klemens is always a willing volunteer for DNS. Klemens is also the owner of Venture Snowboards, a company that handcrafts snowboards using sustainable materials like Forest Stewardship Council certified wood and organic cotton. You may have seen an example of his handiwork up for bid at the Earth Day Silent Auction!

**Michael Francis:** When not building bird houses, hiking under the full moon, or hauling gear for DNS events, Michael is a wildlife biologist working on riparian restoration projects for the Bureau of Reclamation. He is also president of the La Plata County Animal Damage Advisory Board, and involved with the Southwest Wetlands Focus Area group. An avid horseman and naturalist, Michael has kept the home fires burning on many a Saturday while Jennifer was out teaching.

**Kevin Kolb,** Leigh's mate, has bridged the gap from spouse to DNS educator by becoming a trained volunteer naturalist. In addition to leading nature hikes in Pagosa Springs, Kevin has participated in full moon hikes, bartended at DNS fundraisers, and most recently, built a shade structure for the Habitat Play Space. Kevin works for Endless Energies, where he installs solar systems and fireplaces. In his free time he skis, bikes, and brews beer--his Hyland's Scotch Ale was featured at the Earth Day Silent Auction.

Thanks guys! Without you, where would we be?

# SUMMER FUN!

## Hiking the Strawberry Moon: 6/3

7:30-9:30p.m., \$3 members/\$5 non-members, at Sand Canyon, Cortez

## 10th Birthday Bash: 6/12

4-8p.m., FREE, at Durango Nature Center

## Wee Wild Walkabouts (4 & 5 yr. olds): 6/22, 6/25

9a.m. - 1p.m., \$18/day members, \$21/day non-members, Location: La Plata Co. Fairgrounds and Animas River Trail

## Daycamp for People with Disabilities: 6/29, 7/13, 7/27

9a.m. - 3p.m. \$10 (includes lunch), call Adaptive Sports Association to register: (970) 259-0374

## Medicinal Mountain Plants Hike: 7/17

9a.m. - 12p.m., \$10 members/\$15 non-members. Location: TBA

## Jr. Naturalist Field School (8 - 11 yr. olds): 7/19 - 7/23

9a.m. - 3p.m. with overnight camping on 7/22, \$140/members, \$150/non-members. Location: Turtle Lake and Junction Creek

## Hiking the Blue Moon: 7/30

\$3 members/\$5 non-members. Time and Location TBA

## Magical Nature Days (6 & 7 yr. olds): 8/2, 8/4, 8/6

9a.m. - 1p.m., \$18/day members, \$21/day non-members, Location: Durango Rec Center and Animas River Trail

## San Juan Mountains Mushrooms Hike: 8/7

9a.m. - 3p.m., \$15 members/\$20 non-members, Location: moistest mountains near Durango, specifics TBA

# VOLUNTEER OPS

Durango Nature Studies needs volunteers for the following walks, camps and events. In most cases, no experience is necessary!

### • Dalton Ranch Kids Camp

Wednesdays in June & July

### • Southern Ute Community Center Kids Camp

Tuesdays & Thursdays in June (trained naturalists only, please)

### • Durango Mountain Resort Kids Adventure Camps

Various Fridays in June, July, & August

### • Wee Wild Walkabouts

June 22nd & 24th (1/2 days only)

### • Mammal Mania Extravaganza, Cortez Library

July 1st

### • Junior Naturalist Field School at Turtle Lake

July 19th - 23rd (full days)

### • Magical Nature Days

August 2nd, 4th, & 6th (1/2 days only)

### • Durango Farmers Market Kids Booth

every Saturday June - October

### • Durango Arts Fair Kids Booth

August 14th & 15th

### • Four Corners Folk Fest Kids Booth

September 4th & 5th

Call or e-mail Jennifer for more details:

382-9244 / [jen@durangonaturestudies.org](mailto:jen@durangonaturestudies.org)

VISIT [WWW.DURANGONATURESTUDIES.ORG](http://WWW.DURANGONATURESTUDIES.ORG) OR CALL 970.382.9244 FOR MORE INFORMATION



POST OFFICE BOX 3808  
DURANGO, CO 81302

## Join Us!

The support of people like you enables us to continue providing high-quality environmental education throughout the Four Corners. Join our family of 300 member households today and help us bring nature into the lives of all people! Call Jennifer at 970-382-9244.

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