

1995 SUMMER COMPENDIUM OF WILDLIFE APPRECIATION



Colorado's Wildlife Company

**SHARING THE
SAME NEST**

bushy-tailed
woodrat



Listening For Geese

A Colorado Parable

**"IN MY LIFE,
I HAVE DREAMT OF SEEING
THE GREAT HERDS
OF WILD ANIMALS, JUNGLES,
AND RAINFORESTS FULL
OF BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES,
BUT NOW I WONDER
IF THEY WILL EVEN EXIST FOR
MY CHILDREN TO SEE.
DID YOU WORRY ABOUT THESE
THINGS WHEN YOU WERE
MY AGE?"**

— Severn Suzuki, 12 years old,
speaking at the 1992 Earth Summit.

On a golden October day two young businesswomen sat outside having lunch at a deli along downtown Denver's 16th Street Mall. They chatted of friends and families and happenings at work. Then one said, "Oh, did you hear that? How wonderful!"

"What?" replied her friend. "What did you hear?"

"The geese," said the first, scanning the sky, "The honking of geese!"

"Don't be silly," said her friend over the engine roar of the mall shuttle passing by. But as the bus noise faded, she, too, heard the voices of the geese, a two-toned, vociferous honking sounding from the sky. Looking up, they both saw an immense wedge of Canada geese heading toward the southeast. A few other diners noticed their gaze and also looked up. For just a brief moment, the downtown bustle seemed to quiet down around them and they all enjoyed

the birds' wild calls and the passage of the geese over the busy city.

A man at the next table, who had paused to listen to the geese, leaned over to the first woman. "How did you hear those geese above the noise of the city?" he asked. "Until you mentioned it, I hadn't heard anything but conversation and the ball game on TV from the bar next door." "I guess it depends on what you're listening for," she replied.

We often fail to hear the calls of wild geese these days, or a hundred other wild sounds. But the sights and sounds are there, whether we notice them or not. Awareness of the natural world is often difficult in the context of modern life. Technology has allowed us to achieve a style of life unimaginable to earlier generations. But its tools have distanced us from the natural world, broken our direct connection with so much around us. When was the last time anyone you know milked a cow, or slaughtered a chicken?

With technology as our buffer, we've come to think of ourselves as outside the natural system—there's us, and there's nature. But no matter how much we wrap ourselves in steel and concrete, and how packaged we are in modern life and technology, we are still a part of the natural world. Like the geese, our survival depends on it for those old familiar basics—food, water and air.

And we still have an emotional and aesthetic connection to nature and animals. Many people enjoy nature shows on television and the public has delighted at the antics of polar bear cubs Klondike and Snow. Coloradans often feel their lives are richer just knowing wildlife "is out there." We preserve our connections to wildlife by turning them into symbols. By identifying with animals, we hope to endow ourselves with their attributes of beauty, strength or ferocity. Consider how many sports teams are named after animals, how often wildlife is used to sell a product or a service. Our

**"I don't think we
know enough about
ecosystems to risk
destroying them.**

**There could be unknown
long-term negative
effects of human acts
upon the environment."**

—Student, Jefferson County
Open School.

nation's symbol is a bird. Colorado has a state animal (bighorn sheep), state bird (lark bunting), state fish (greenback cutthroat trout), even a state fossil (stegosaurus).

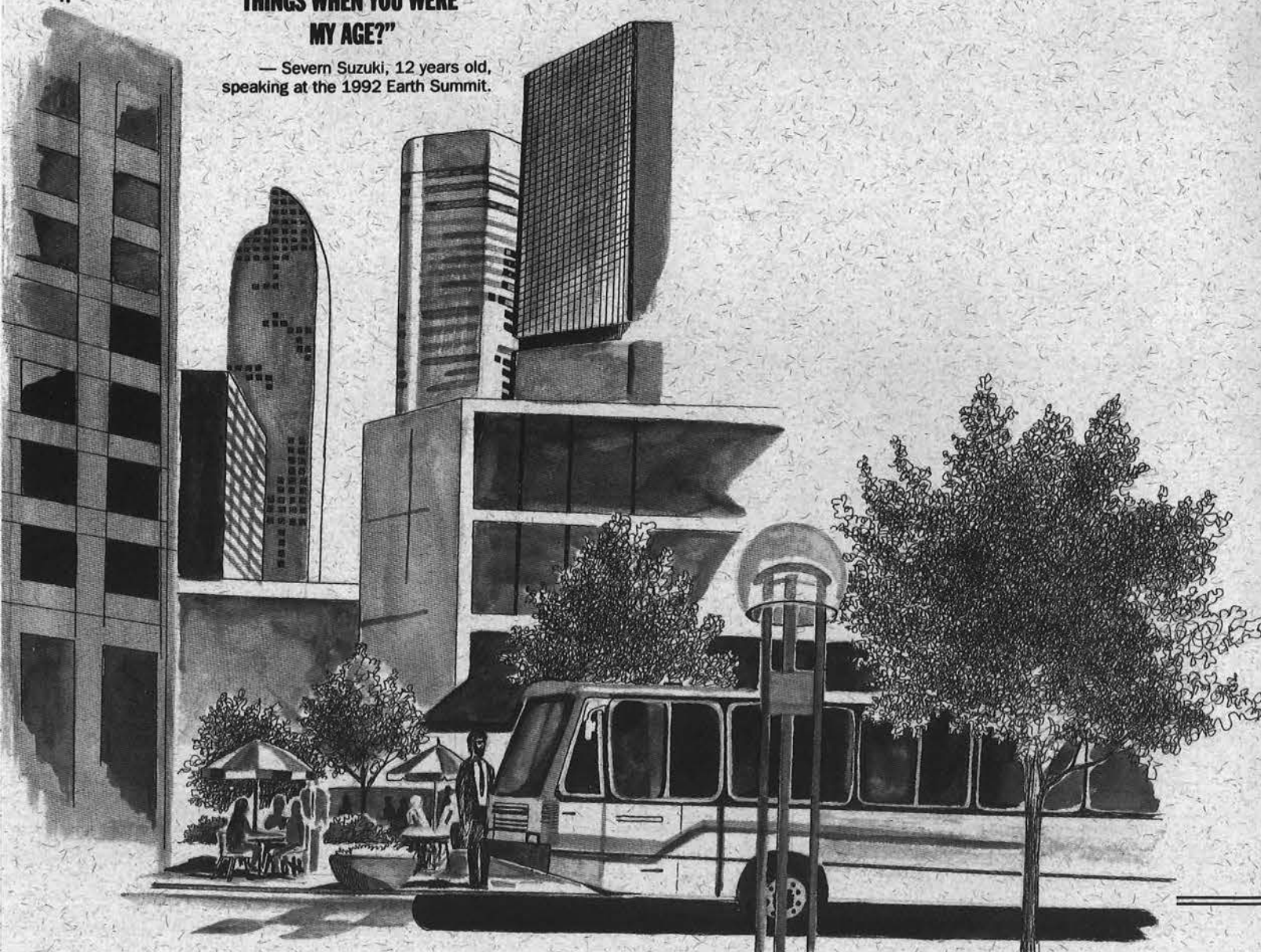
These days, the environment is a hot topic. The term "biodiversity" is bandied about as the new mantra of environmental thought. The Supreme Court is ruling on interpretation of the Endangered Species Act, the very renewal of which is under debate. But what is this all about? Why all this effort, energy and concern for

wildlife conservation, preservation of habitat and wild places? It goes far beyond cute bear cubs and saving our nation's symbol. When the earth becomes uninhabitable for a species, that species becomes extinct. Because, like wildlife, we are dependent upon the earth's ecosystem—its materials, products and systems—our survival depends upon its continued health. If the system breaks down too far, we, as a species, are also in peril. What happens to wildlife eventually will happen to us. As our partners in the ecosystem, wildlife are our "canaries in the coal mine."

That's why it's important to listen for geese. Awareness is a first step towards overcoming the many environmental challenges of our age. By learning about the natural world, appreciating it and remembering our connections to it, we learn why we want, and need, to preserve it. If we all keep listening for geese, perhaps there will always be geese to hear.

**"A March morning is only as
drab as he who walks in it
without a glance skyward, ear
cocked for geese."**

— Aldo Leopold,
A Sand County Almanac.



Watchable Wildlife In Parks

Before long you'll notice the illustration on this page re-created at least four times bigger and displayed on kiosks in nine different Colorado state parks. The kiosks are the result of the Watchable Wildlife in Parks project (WWIP), a cooperative effort between the Colorado Division of Wildlife and Colorado State Parks.

Placed strategically in selected state parks, the kiosks will offer information on wildlife watching. The target audience is people visiting the park to engage in other recreation such as fishing or boating. "The basic theory behind the Watchable Wildlife in

Parks Project is that our 11 million annual (state parks) visitors are a ready-made audience for watchable wildlife education," says Tom Easley, State Parks' WWIP administrator.

Each kiosk will bear six panels—three panels will cover the basics of wildlife viewing and ethics; three will cover material specific to each park, seen through the eyes of an artist naturalist. The outstanding art work on the panels is the work of *Colorado's Wildlife Company's* own Paul Gray.

With a beginning yearly budget of \$500,000, WWIP is financed jointly by DOW, State Parks and

Great Outdoors Colorado. The first eight kiosks are under construction at Barr Lake, Cherry Creek, Island Acres, Lory, Mueller, Ridgway, Stagecoach and Trinidad state parks. The prototype kiosk is already in place at Colorado River State Park in Grand Junction. Ultimately watchable wildlife kiosks will be placed in every state park.

The kiosks are only the first of a host of efforts under the WWIP plan to provide wildlife viewing information and opportunities. A birdwatching blind overlooking a marsh has been built at Trinidad State Park and ground has been broken on a wildlife

viewing/outdoor education facility at Stagecoach Reservoir State Park and a moose viewing station on the State Forest in North Park. Interpretive trails, overlooks and viewing blinds are planned for many other parks. The goals of Watchable Wildlife in Parks are: to provide watchable wildlife opportunities for state parks visitors; to enhance these opportunities with interpretive information about the natural history of wildlife in the parks; and to promote knowledge and understanding that will generate support for the parks and wildlife divisions and their missions.

This illustration will be displayed in color on kiosks at selected State Parks.



ABOUT OUR COVER

We took creative liberty with the scene shown on the cover of this issue. None of us actually found the nest of a bushy-tailed woodrat (also known as a packrat) containing a copy of *Colorado's Wildlife Company*. It's our way of illustrating that humans are a part of, not separate from, the system of life. This packrat found good use for our newsletter, though we doubt if it was impressed by our carefully-crafted prose, fine illustrations or attractive design. Instead, we unwittingly played a role in the life of the packrat, providing it with nesting material. We probably don't exist in the awareness of the packrat (unless we disturb it, in which case it would regard us as a predator) but it can make use of something we produce. We thus became a resource for the packrat. We are both parts of an interconnected ecosystem; we're "sharing the same nest."



Have You Seen This Sign?



Ever noticed this sign along a roadway in Colorado and wondered what it meant? The binoculars sign lets you know you are approaching a Wildlife Viewing Site, a location where you have a high chance of seeing a variety of wildlife, or particular, high-profile species.

The binoculars logo is found on highway

signs throughout the U.S. denoting wildlife viewing opportunities. Most Wildlife Viewing Sites in Colorado are described in the *Colorado Wildlife Viewing Guide*, which discusses 110 prime sites to see wildlife throughout our state. The Guide is available for \$8.95 (which includes shipping) from the Colorado Wildlife Heritage Foundation, P.O. Box 211512, Denver, CO 80221.

So next time you see the binoculars logo, keep your eyes peeled for some of Colorado's watchable wildlife!

1994 Checkoff Update

Thanks again, Colorado, for your support of the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Income Tax Checkoff! Contributions as of May 1, 1995 (for tax year 1994) total \$183,933 from 31,300 contributors. This is down from last year at this time, when, with 70% of tax returns processed, 31,415 contributors had donated \$239,270.

Your donations support research on nongame and endangered wildlife, efforts to re-establish threatened and endangered species, as well as education and management efforts for our state's nongame wildlife.



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**Nongame and Endangered
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