



**BLUFF
LAKE
NATURE
CENTER**

Wildlife Refuge ~ Outdoor Classroom

BLUFF LAKE NATURE CENTER 2022 IMPACT REPORT

BLNC TEAM

STAFF

- BEN JACQUES**
Program Manager
- CHIRA NOCE**
Program Manager
- EMMA KATE HOLDBROOKS**
AmeriCorps Educator
- ISABEL MENDOZA**
Environmental Education Director
- LAUREN KELLER**
AmeriCorps Educator
- LEILA REGAN-PORTER**
Development Director
- RACHEL HUTCHENS**
Executive Director
- TESS ROBESON**
Natural Resource Manager

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Outgoing team members, thank you for a total of 18 years with Bluff Lake!

Staff: HEIDI PFEIFFER, ERICKSON SMITH
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Board: JON FITZPATRICK, DAVE SANTUCCI, BRAD COHEN



BLNC Staff
(L - R) Front: Leila, Rachel, Tess, Luz Maria*
Back: Lauren, Emma Kate, Ben, Isabel, Sofia*, McCoy*, Chira
*2023 Summer Intern



BLUFF LAKE CULTURE OF INCLUSIVITY



In 2022, the Bluff Lake team decided to co-create an equity statement that goes beyond what is written in our mission statement. This equity statement is a living thing that is reviewed and updated frequently. We use it as a north star for the work we do and still need to do (see our continued journey work below). We are very thankful to our many partners in this work including Prismatic, for helping our team on this journey.

Mission Statement: BLNC educates individuals to be engaged, resilient, and curious; conserves a natural area in the city; furthers equity in outdoor access; and nurtures the health and well-being of communities and ecosystems.

Equity Statement: We believe people are positively impacted when nature is an accessible part of their lives. We acknowledge that human activity continues to impact Colorado's beautiful natural spaces and that the systemic marginalization of communities has created barriers that limit access to much of the outdoors.

With that in mind, we offer programs that we hope are welcoming for everyone to enjoy. We use land management practices that are sustainable and ensure the natural value of the site exists long into the future. We hope that individuals are encouraged to create their own connections with nature. We acknowledge that not everyone will choose to participate and that is okay. We want to meet people where they are and promote individual agency around nature.

Our continued journey work includes:

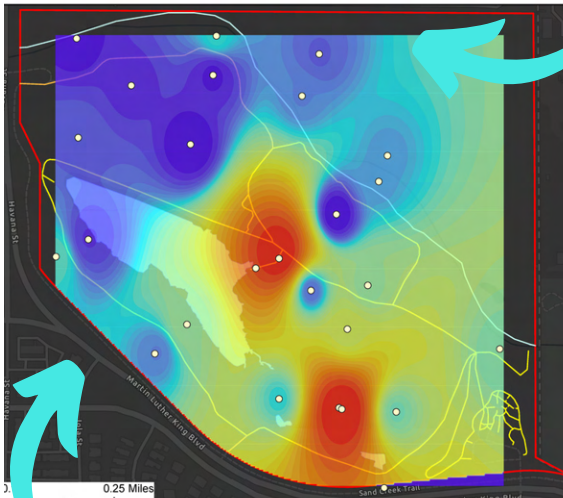
- Removing barriers to entry for outdoor access
- Bringing diversity and equity into leadership roles within our organization
- Working with external organizations and individuals to deliver top quality Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) training for our staff
- Removing financial barriers for families wanting to attend programs by maintaining a robust financial assistance and scholarship program
- Continuing to be an organization that values the perspectives and contributions of all people
- Looking for opportunities to promote diversity and inclusion in our partnerships with other organizations
- Practicing Culturally Competent Learning which includes:
 - Reflecting on one's cultural lens
 - Recognizing and redressing bias in the system
 - Drawing on students' culture to shape curriculum and instruction
 - Bringing real-world issues into the classroom
 - Modeling high expectations for all students
 - Promoting respect for student differences
 - Collaborating with families and the local community
 - Communicating in linguistically and culturally responsive ways

STEWARDSHIP and RESEARCH

In 2022, the Bluff Lake Natural Resource Management team focused on learning more about the site through a wide range of surveys, monitoring programs, and sampling.



Total Mammal Activity 12/3/21-11/30/22



arcGIS MAPPING

Species observation and mapping at Bluff Lake helps our team to analyze change over time and the impacts of projects year to year. This year's mapping projects included game camera activity heat maps (above), noxious weed removal areas (below), native shrub planting, bat detector deployment locations, tree surveys (right), and more!

Bluff Lake Nature Center - Noxious Weed Removal Areas 2022

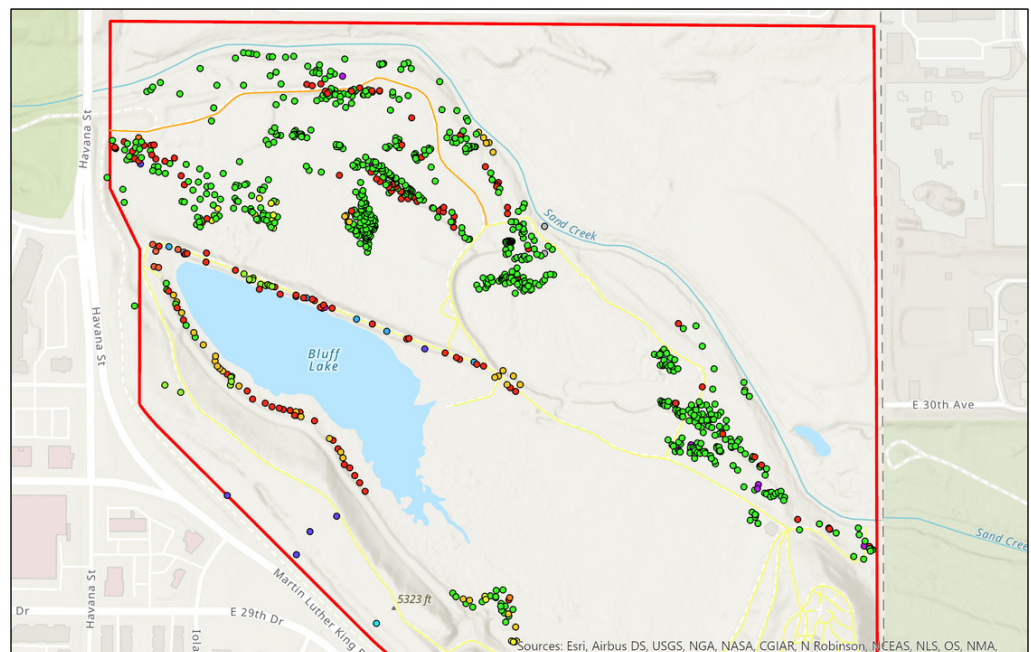


GAME CAMERA SURVEYS

In depth Game Camera Surveys were done in 24 locations around the property. Cameras were deployed in each location once per season, and the Bluff Lake team was able to review footage and record the date, time, species, number of individuals, and behavior observed!

"One of my projects here at Bluff Lake is to help with the game trail cameras. We set them up because we like to know what's going on with the animals. The motion-censored cameras capture 10-second video footage when triggered. We then collect cameras from the trails and upload and review the footage. I put the data in a spreadsheet so that it's accessible to everyone. It's good to know what's going on in the park so we can monitor it. For example, there is a limping deer that is possibly injured, so it's good to know what's going on with it." Tara - DSST Intern

Bluff Lake Nature Center - Mapped Trees 2022



- Ash, Green
- Cottonwood, Narrowleaf
- Hackberry
- Willow
- Boxelder Maple
- Cottonwood, Plains
- Honeylocust
- Trail/Road
- Buckthorn
- Elm, Siberian
- Juniper, Rocky Mountain
- Emergency Vehicle
- Cottonwood
- Golden Raintree
- Mulberry
- Property Boundary

LAKE FISH SURVEYS & WATER QUALITY SAMPLING

Bluff Lake is full and thriving, and it's important for our team to understand more about the lake in order to make management decisions.

Over the course of two months, the team caught 37 brook stickleback, 56 crayfish, 90 fathead minnows, and one larval tiger salamander! Data was collected on all fish length and weight.

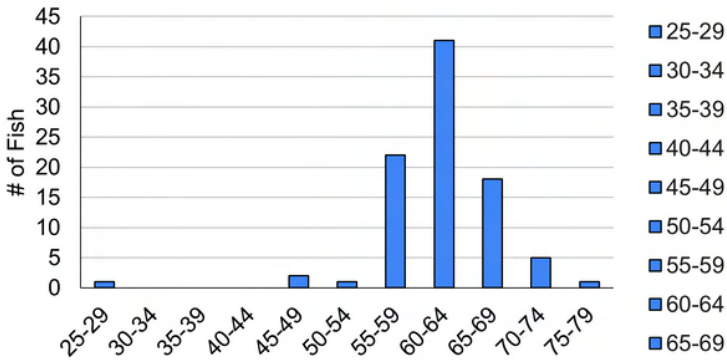
The team used a multiparameter sonde to test temperature, pH, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity. Measurements were taken at each foot of depth down to the bottom of the lake, which was generally between 13-16 feet deep depending on water levels. They also did phosphorus testing of water samples.

All of this information will be useful for understanding the inputs into Bluff Lake and the chemical dynamics of the lake. It will also be important for future public education campaigns in communicating the impacts of consumer choices, like using phosphorus-based fertilizers, on local water supplies.



Erickson recording data collected from the sonde (measuring instrument).

Fathead Minnow Length Class Distribution in Bluff Lake



Erickson and Mile High Youth Corps measure and record fish length and weight.



67 native shrubs were planted in our upstairs xeriscape garden to increase available food sources for pollinators.



OTHER PROJECTS

Staff created new "Why Do We Stay on the Trail" educational signs to prevent social trails from forming.

WHY DO WE STAY ON THE TRAIL?
¿POR QUÉ SEGUIMOS EN EL SENDERO?

GAME TRAILS
SENDEROS DE ANIMALES



Original artwork by Christopher Imhof for Bluff Lake

- Game trails are routes that animals use over and over, eventually making a narrow, winding path of plants.
- If people use a game trail, animals become stressed, stop using the trail, and may even leave the area.
- The only trails meant for people are the ones on the map. These are wide, clear of hanging branches, and usually marked by human-made material such as gravel or stones.
- Los senderos naturales son rutas que los animales usan una y otra vez, y eventualmente forman un camino angosto y sinuoso de plantas trituradas.
- Si las personas usan un sendero natural, los animales se estresan, dejan de usar el sendero e incluso pueden abandonar el área.
- Los únicos senderos para personas son los que están en el mapa. Estos son anchos, libres de ramas colgantes y generalmente marcados por material hecho por el hombre, como grava o piedras.

Invertebrate survey conducted by Land Management intern Anali. She documented 25 new species and 44 new genera previously unrecorded at Bluff Lake!



VOLUNTEERS and INTERNS

Bluff Lake's team is helped every year by a large number of volunteers and interns, who help bring our mission to life!



759 Volunteers

2,265 Hours of Work

\$57,500+ Value of Volunteer Time

- 10** Group Volunteer Events
- 12-Week** Land Management Internship
- 2** Girls Inc. Interns
- 3** 10-Week Mile High Youth Corps Crews (Spring, Summer, & Fall)
- 2** Denver School of Science and Technology Interns



"It was a joy to be able to work in land management within my native Denver. During my time at Bluff Lake we conducted many wildlife surveys from prairie dogs, birds, and mammals through the game cameras but we also introduced new surveys such as water quality, snakes, and invertebrates. I was able to research, design and conduct the invertebrate survey and we were able to identify 25 new species and 44 new genera. Wildlife is my passion but this job also taught me the other side of land management like the maintenance side." Land Management Intern Anali

Thank you to
our 2021-2022
AmeriCorps
Environmental
Educators!



LAUREN



WYATT



GARRETT



Graland Country Day School students paint trees to protect them from beaver activity.



Weed Warriors water recently planted shrubs.

“My sandals are getting dirty, but it’s worth it for nature.”

C3 3rd grade student on service learning trip

Mile High Youth Corps & NR Intern bury a tunnel to build coyote dens.

DSST Montview students clean up trash around the stormwater outfall.



EXPLORING and LEARNING

Bluff Lake continued to make nature experiences accessible to thousands of people in 2022. We added new programs like our Outdoor Explorers Homeschool Program, sold out our summer camp, and facilitated free field trips for thousands of students.



Summer campers make milkweed seed dispersal balls



Educator Emma Kate does the "Trash Timeline" decomposition activity with students



Field trip students examine duckweed on the lake



Educator Lauren engages with a student during an afterschool program

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS BY THE NUMBERS

- 6,431** School Visits & Field Trips
- 2,842** Onsite Family Programs
- 832** Camp & After School Programs
- 2,215** Offsite Partner Programs
- 92%** School Programs FREE
- 55** Summer Camp Scholarships valued at **\$18,625**

"I forgot I was even on a field trip, I'm having so much fun!"
- 4/14 Montessori Del Mundo 6th grader on Outdoor Survival Field Trip

"I greatly appreciate all of your team members' efforts to offer an engaging learning opportunity. I hear from our teachers and scholars that it was a unique and enriching experience. Having guides for smaller groups and having the option to use bilingual presenters was also very helpful."

- Smith Elementary ECE Teacher, 4/4

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

OUTDOOR EXPLORERS HOMESCHOOL PROGRAM



The Outdoor Explorers Program (OEP) is designed to supplement homeschool curriculum with social development, conceptual understandings of ecology, and practical applications of outdoor skills in our unique setting! The program runs three days a week for the entire school year (weather permitting), with each day hosting different grade levels (K-5). These students get to be onsite all year long, doing projects like setting up and monitoring game cameras, team building exercises, helping our Natural Resources team with site projects, and more! The 2022/2023 school year was our pilot year, and we were able to hire two new staff members to facilitate and manage this program.



Educator Ben helps students set up game cameras

Student journals about their day

Educator Chira shows students a snake (right)



"I am so impressed with your program and am so amazed at how eager and excited he is to come to "the lake". Since starting your program there is a noticeable change in his behavior, his readiness to learn and focus on new things, and especially in his sensory seeking behaviors and clearer communication... The fact that he is so engaged and so motivated to participate and be a part of the group is huge for him, thank you for everything you do, this type of resource doesn't really exist in such an acceptable way, it really is a privilege that this opportunity has made such an amazing impact already :) thank you!!! "



Painting a tree to help protect against beaver activity

Students build a bird house



OEP is a state funded program (free for families) and is hosted in partnership with Alpine International Preparatory Academy. We look forward to seeing this program grow over the coming years. Thank you to our partners at Gates Family Foundation for helping fund this program!

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

FREE COMMUNITY WALKS

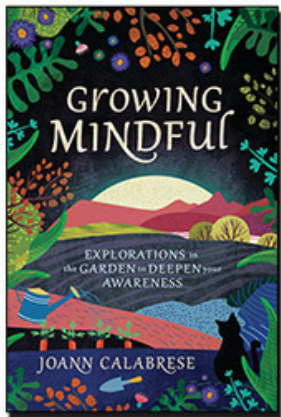
Bluff Lake hosted 26 FREE public walks in 2022, all of which were led by our amazing volunteers! Their dedication allows Bluff Lake to reach hundreds of participants every year.

FOREST BATHING (Shinrin-Yoku)

5 Events
33 Attendees
Volunteer: Erika

Forest Bathing (Shinrin-Yoku) is the practice of taking time in nature to “bathe” in the rich sensory experience of all that surrounds you. It was developed in Japan during the 1980s to relieve stress and enhance well-being. During this relaxing two hour guided walk, participants are invited to open their senses and engage with nature in a deeper way.

"I took one of your forest bathing programs this summer, and it was truly meaningful. Such an incredible resource for the community!"



Check out Joann's book about mindfulness!

Qigong is a gentle mind-body practice that promotes health and vitality as well as focused awareness. After a forty minute Qigong session, the group enjoys a mindfulness walk around Bluff Lake.

"These events were very welcoming and created a safe space for individuals to be vulnerable and share openly. The Qigong sessions were accessible for any level of practice and Joann's knowledge enabled all participants to connect with their body and nature in a truly unique way. I left feeling emotionally centered and back in touch with nature."

QIGONG & MINDFULNESS WALKS

10 Events
90 Attendees
Volunteer: Joann

BIRD WALKS

11 Events
587 Attendees
Volunteers: George, Jason, Steve, Lisa, and more!

These walks are for expert birders and newbies alike. Groups are not split according to levels of knowledge or experience, as we believe those who are more seasoned can help introduce birding to a new audience. Participants sign up for one of two two-hour time slots.

"I have really enjoyed the bird walks. I think I've attended around 5 now. I'm learning so much from all the experienced birders. It feels like a very inclusive group, which is nice."



FINANCIALS

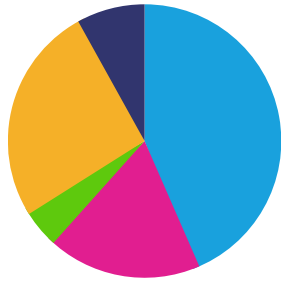
2022 Financials have not yet been audited

2022 Revenue
\$620,000

Earned Income
\$160,600

Contracts
\$27,400

Endowment
\$50,000



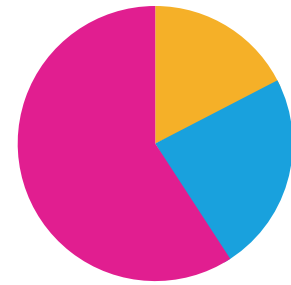
Donations
\$112,700

2022 Expenses
\$603,200

Grants
\$269,400

Educational Programs
& Site Management
\$357,500

Administration
\$105,100



Fundraising
& Events
\$141,500*

*Bluff Lake is taking the next steps needed to support the incredible growth we have seen. These fundraising expenses reflect those next steps, and are supported by increases in resource development. We hope that you will join us as we plan for our next phase!

Community support makes our work possible.
Thank you to our 2022 donors and sponsors over \$1,000!



David and Jody Smith
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The Denver Foundation



HARVEY
FAMILY FOUNDATION

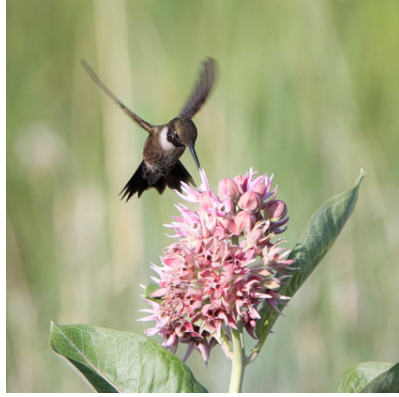


DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY



THE KETTERING
FAMILY
FOUNDATION





Questions about this report?

Email us info@blufflake.org

Give us a call (720) 708-4147

Check out our www.blufflake.org website

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Photos in this report courtesy of BLNC Staff and Partners. Additional photos provided by Alan Ford, Julie Price, Tony Fernández, and George Ho.

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