

Palmer Lake Historical Society, May 18

Authors show ways to find history on hikes

By Marlene Brown

At the May 18 meeting of the Palmer Lake Historical Society, authors Rocky Shockley and T. Duren Jones presented a lively PowerPoint on the book *Easy Hikes to the Hidden Past*. Their book describes many hikes in the Pikes Peak Region, including along the Palmer Divide, the Monument Preserve, and Palmer Lake area. With pictures of relics (junk of the past), there are many interesting points along the way.

Mount Herman, also known as Monument Preserve, has remnants of a Bureau of Forests Planting Station Tree Nursery. Millions of seeds were collected from pinecones and planted in beds. Rows of seedlings were established and shipped all over the Pikes Peak Region. The nursery was abandoned during World War II and rows of young pine trees were left to grow on their own (page 155, *Easy Hikes of the Hidden Past*).

Palmer Lake sports many historical hikes, including Palmer Lake Trail, New Santa Fe Regional Trail, and Santa Fe Open Space. Santa Fe Open space, recently opened by El Paso County, has many ranch relics along the trail, a 2-mile loop at the base of Ben

Lomand Mountain and Elephant Rock (www.elpaso-co.com/el-paso-county-parks-open-santa-fe-open-space).

Continuing on the trail and looking for relics or “junk” on the sides of many worn roads and you will find the past. If you look hard enough, you can imagine the settlers that came and carved out history in stone or metal. You can find old car bodies from the 20s, 30s, 40s and so on. You can find stairs to nowhere and fire chimneys with no house attached. There is whole world out there when you take *Easy Hikes to Hidden Past*. The book is available at Covered Treasures in Monument and other booksellers online.

Next month, the Palmer Lake Historical Society meeting will be the annual Father’s Day Ice Cream Social held at the Palmer Lake Town Hall, 28 Valley Crescent St., on June 18, from 2 to 4 p.m. Rain or shine, the event is free and open to the public. Bring your lawn chairs and enjoy free pie and ice cream with music by Craig Walter. The event is sponsored by John Spidell of The Spidell Foundation.

For more information regarding the society’s



Above: The Palmer Lake Historical Society meeting May 18 featured the book *Easy Hikes to the Hidden Past*. Pictured are authors Rocky Shockley, left, and T. Duren Jones. Photo by Marlene Brown.

monthly historical talks and field trips, go to its website <http://palmerdividehistory.org>.

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On the Trail (in memory of Tim Watkins)

Storms damage trails and roads, fill reservoirs

By Steve Pate

With the recent torrential rains, many local trails have been damaged. After being closed briefly for storm damage repairs, the Palmer Lake reservoir road was reopened and is passable for hikers and mountain bikers. Both Palmer Lake reservoirs are full.

On a hike around the Ice Cave Creek Trail (ICCT) loop on May 26, I found the ICCT in great shape. Ice Cave Creek is running strong, and one might get their feet wet hiking the two crossings on ICCT and Swank trails. Rains have caused erosion on Swank trail, especially just south of Ice Cave Creek with water running down the eroded center of the trail.

Road damage has restricted access to Mount Herman via Mount Herman Road. According to reliable reports, most of the trails around Mount Herman, Raspberry, and Limbaugh Canyon are passable for hikers and bikers, but please do not attempt to drive up Mount Herman Road to the trailhead, FS 716. The U.S Forest Service closed the road to vehicles. Those who hike regularly in the area know that someone opened the gate and drove their 4 Runner up Mount Herman Road into a washed-out ditch.

With spring rains, the area’s trails are beautiful and greening up. Even the “devastated” wildfire mitigation areas are showing signs of renewal.

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Photos by Steve Pate taken May 26



Above: Ice Cave Creek crossing Swank Trail.

Below: Mount Herman Road closure.



Above: Upper Palmer Lake reservoir.

Below: Lower Palmer Lake reservoir.



High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)

Very good plants, harmful invaders

By Janet Sellers

Is June too late to plant summer flowers and crops in our area? With moisture from heavy May rains and hot dry summers, we can still plant some greens easily in pots or in the ground, planning waterings to protect against moisture loss.

We started kale, lettuces, and sunflowers at the Tri-Lakes Cares food garden in late May, and they sprouted in four days! If bought for transplanting, fruiting plants (peppers, tomatoes, eggplant, etc.) that should’ve been in the ground by now will provide summer and fall harvests. Choose fast-growing seeds of beans, beets, and squash for late summer crops—even everbearing strawberries could offer fruit this year.

Flowers that grow well in our area include cosmos, bachelor buttons, marigolds, sunflowers, and zinnias, and they will all sprout and grow easily from June planting. Some of the issues in the last few years for our local victory gardens include late snows/frosts and invaders: gophers, voles, moles, and deer. We live in a climate perfect for wildlife, and they are here. Gardens are nice for us, but easy pickings for the varmints, too. What to do?

Castor oil mixed with plain clay cat litter and

broadcasted protects lawns. Also successful in keeping critters away is scattering this for a 2-foot border outside the flower or food beds. We know that pet cats and feral “community” cats are effective to keep critters out of the garden. Many farmers and homesteaders add diatomaceous earth to farm animal and cat food to protect them from possible parasites.

Protect your pets and kids

The rain helped a lot of plants get started, including weeds. We have some noxious weeds to look out for and remove, usually just pulling them with gloved hands is enough. We see the harmful, invasive spotted knapweed (a bushy plant of tiny, scraggly, pink or white thistlelike flowers); spurge (greenish-yellow flowerlike bracts of seeds), and the butter-n-eggs (which look a little bit like tiny snapdragons) are about a foot tall in June on roadsides, landscape edges, etc. The spurge latex sap seriously irritates the skin of people and animals and can cause human blindness upon eye contact.

Janet Sellers is an avid “lazy” gardener, letting Mother Nature’s wisdom lead the way to gardening in the high desert Rocky Mountain climate. Contact her at JanetSellers@ocn.me



Left: Avoid local spurge plants that are emerging now, often found at or near roadsides, in our landscapes, and in common areas. The plant’s white, latex sap causes serious irritation symptoms, including severe skin and eye itching. The National Capital Poison Control Center

(www.poison.org) reports that leafy spurge contains the alkaloid euphorbia, which is toxic to humans and animals and is a known co-carcinogen. These plants are most effectively removed by hand, but wear gloves (and wash them afterward!), long sleeves, pants, and boots. These should be pulled out all the way to the creeping roots and disposed of properly. We are all required by law to remove noxious weeds from any place on or even near our property. Photo by Janet Sellers.