



2023 SPRING NEWSLETTER



BIODIVERSITY'S GREAT HOPE

DELHI RANCH CONSERVATION EASEMENT

SAVE THE DATE

2023 FOREVER COLORADO BBQ

Greenland Ranch, Douglas County
Saturday, August 12, 2023

BIODIVERSITY'S GREAT HOPE



Photograph by:
Steve and Joy Wooten

Conserved lands are the solution to some of the world's biggest and most complex challenges.

Biodiversity is defined as the variety and diversity of organisms in the natural world around us — plants, animals, insects, and microorganisms — each working together in an ecosystem to maintain and support life on earth. We depend on this delicate balance of life for the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the water we drink. Biodiversity loss has been identified as one of the most pressing issues we face.

Habitat loss, fragmentation, and land conversions are among the leading threats to biodiversity around the world. Permanent land conservation ensures that the habitat, plant communities,

soil structure, water and other resources that support biodiversity remains intact.

Nearly two decades ago in Southeastern Colorado, farmers, ranchers, conservation partners, and community members came together to facilitate one of the largest biological inventories on private lands in the country.

The result of this in-depth study of biodiversity, known as the *Southeastern Colorado Survey of Critical Biological Resources*, has had lasting impacts for southeastern Colorado, the conservation community, grasslands of the Great Plains, and our understanding of the role that working lands play in the protection of critical resources and biodiversity.

The study area, which encompassed 2.3 million acres of publicly and privately managed lands, featured several large blocks of intact grasslands, which are critical for four of Colorado's native plant species. The rivers and streams that make up the Purgatoire River basin contain Colorado's largest populations of plains leopard frogs, with native fish species still occupying major drainages. Rugged canyonlands in this region provide seeps and springs throughout which nearly all of Colorado's rare fern species can be found. Additionally, the canyons provide steep slopes that are ideal habitat for many declining bird species.

The mosaic of largely intact public and privately managed lands support the region's rich biodiversity. Land conservation maintains habitat, reduces fragmentation, and allows for the movement of organisms and

genetic information. Landscape disruption diminishes the ability for species to thrive, respond, and adapt to their natural environments.

Before commissioning the *Southeastern Colorado Survey of Critical Biological Resources*, many felt that the area was a vast wasteland with little ecological value. This biological inventory halted the proposed Army expansion of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site in the early 2000s. It has also played an integral role in elevating the conservation values of the eastern plains and highlighted the importance of working lands in protecting and managing biodiversity. The number of private lands which support species of conservation concern and their habitats is a testament to the ongoing stewardship of Colorado's ranching families. ~



DELHI RANCH CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROJECT HIGHLIGHT



Photograph by:
Hall Family

This spring, the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT)

partnered with the Hall Family, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Great Outdoors Colorado, Palmer Land Conservancy, the Gates Family Foundation, and The Nature Conservancy to complete an impressive, large-scale conservation project on the 27,340-acre UE and Iron Springs Ranches. The conservation easement, known as the Delhi Ranch Conservation Easement, adds to the incredibly intact, diverse, and working landscape of southeastern Colorado.

The Hall Family arrived in Delhi, Colorado in 1916 and never looked back. Charles and Laura arrived as homesteaders, followed by Lloyd and Edith Hall, Walter and Lynda Hall, and Gary and Havilah Hall. The fifth

generation of the ranch is represented in Gary and Havilah's children.

Today, the Hall Family operates a significant cattle operation, grazing on the now conserved lands of UE and Iron Springs Ranches, as well as state and federal land leases. In addition to cattle, the ranches support a horse breeding and training program, online beef sales, and a notable hunting operation. The family has worked diligently to improve water distribution throughout the ranch. By increasing the availability of water across the landscape, the operation can make better use of the available grazing ground, adjust grazing intensity, and improve the access and quality of forage for the ranch's abundant wildlife.

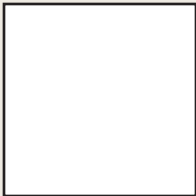
The Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) database identifies sites with significant biological diversity, known as Potential Conservation Areas (PCA). The CNHP database shows the Delhi Ranch Conservation Easement map overlaps areas of significant biological diversity, including the Purgatoire Prairie, Poitrey Hills, Sanford Hills, and the Big Spring and Big Arroyo Hills PCAs. The Nature Conservancy's *Central Shortgrass Prairie Ecoregional Plan*, prepared in 2006, ranked the UE and Iron Springs Ranches as "Very High" for conservation value. These ranches were also identified as having critical ecological communities including shortgrass prairie, riparian areas, wetlands, springs that feed prairie streams, and playas, as well as medium to high aquatic ecological integrity.

The Delhi Ranch conservation easement contributes greatly to the

conserved landscape of southeastern Colorado. It is a profound example of the role that ranching plays in the preservation of biodiversity, healthy wildlife and habitat management, the protection of historic places, food production, and the commitment that comes from generations on the land. The work that each ranch, family, and conservation easement does to steward these landscapes should be recognized and celebrated. CCALT is humbled by the continued efforts of Colorado's farm and ranch families to conserve working lands and the rich biodiversity of the southeastern corner of Colorado.

CCALT is committed to continue delivering conservation solutions on working lands that ensure a future for land, water, communities, and people. ~





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WE'VE MOVED!

You will find Colorado Cattlemen's Association (CCA) and CCALT at
7000 W. 14th Avenue, Lakewood.
Please note our new mailing address: P.O. Box 16088, Denver, CO 80216.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

