

Volunteering at a Nature Conservancy Property

Overview: The Nature Conservancy (TNC) owns the Carpenter Ranch, an historic property with important habitat near Hayden, Colorado. The budget for maintenance is always tight and a group of us have been able to supplement it through volunteer labor on a major project each year since 2007.

Through friendship with the Carpenter Ranch Manager, several of us learned in late 2006 that the five-bedroom historic ranch house needed to be painted. We suggested that if the house could be prepped, we could assemble a crew to paint it the next summer. Thus began what has become an annual event.

So far, we have completed the following projects:

2007 Painted ranch house

2008 Painted ranch house trim and all out buildings

2009 Painted barn

2010 Built post and rail fence

2011 Rebuilt deck behind main ranch house: removed decking, replaced rotten floor joists, expanded deck, and installed new Trex decking

2012 Built stone patio north of deck; miscellaneous garden work

2013 Installed new siding on garden building

2014 Installed new roof on garden building, hung elk gates on hay yard, installed system for hanging canoes in vehicle shed

2015 Built concrete step for porch entrance to intern house; weeding; mowing

2016 Stabilized the old feed shed

2017 Built a log bridge for the trail across the drainage from the pasture

2018 Painted corral fence

2019 Built shelves, work bench, mobile table, and new door for work shed; repaired damaged window sills on intern house; hauled old farm machinery scrap to recycle dumpster

The ranch manager has always been able to obtain sufficient budget for materials and/or convince local supporters. Each spring we coordinate with ranch manager to identify potential projects and possible weekends. Meanwhile, in Boulder, we alert people who have been involved previously to determine interest and, if necessary, recruit others. It always a lot of fun and folks are pretty good cooks so there are normally more people interested than needed. The ranch has capacity to sleep 14 adults and plenty of kids. We all bring sleeping bags and towels, so the ranch manager doesn't have to do laundry and we clean the place up before leaving. Most of us drive over on Friday morning, returning Sunday after lunch, although as more of us retire it is easier to do the four-hour drive on Monday morning and avoid the traffic.