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*Front Range Living—Colorado Outdoor Lover's Guide* provides many safety tips about weather and travel, but good decision-making and sound judgment are the responsibility of the individual. Neither the publisher nor the author assumes any liability for injury that may arise from the use of this book.

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<i>PREFACE</i> .....	vi
<i>INTRODUCTION</i> .....	x

## ■ SPRING

<b>CRANE-SPOTTING: ON THE LOOKOUT FOR SANDHILL CRANES</b> .....	2
---	---

These celebrated cranes migrate every spring and fall through the small farming community of Monte Vista in southern Colorado.

<b>PAWNEE NATIONAL GRASSLAND: THE OTHER COLORADO</b> .....	10
--	----

The sandstone bluffs are the Pawnee Buttes. The unbroken vista is Pawnee National Grassland. Together, they're one of Colorado's best-kept secrets.

<b>WHERE THE BUFFALO ROAM: THE MEDANO–ZAPATA RANCH</b> .....	16
--	----

The only way to really get a sense of the Medano's untamed beauty is to drive out on a primitive road that in spring is a bone-jarring adventure.

<b>FLOWERS IN THE FOOTHILLS: A FEAST FOR THE SENSES</b> .....	24
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On nearly any spring day, you can find exquisite blossom, from the dainty lavender pasqueflower with paper-thin petals to the gaudy late summer brown-eyed Susan.

## ■ SUMMER

<b>COLORADO'S HIGHEST COUNTRY: TACKLING A FOURTEENER</b> .....	32
--	----

You don't have to be an Olympic-caliber athlete to hike one of these majestic peaks. So if you've never been to the summit of a fourteener, now's the perfect time to try.

<b>IN PURSUIT OF THE WILD BUTTERFLY: GLIMPING AN ELUSIVE BEAUTY</b> . . . .	38
---	----

Colorado is home to more species of butterfly than anywhere else in North America, and El Paso County is home to most.

<b>CRESTED BUTTE: A VISIT TO THE WILDFLOWER CAPITAL OF COLORADO</b> . .	46
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Alpine streams and meadows, mature aspen forests, and expansive tundra vistas skirt high mountain passes between fourteen-thousand-foot cliffs. The dramatic rise in elevation provides a continuous show of flowers.

<b>LEADVILLE'S MATCHLESS MINE: A TALE WITHOUT PEER</b> .....	52
--	----

Like the mining site that bears its name, the word "matchless" also suits a story that could have been conjured up for a film, had it not actually unfolded in Leadville.

**THE LURE OF FLY-FISHING: CATCHING SOME TIME AWAY . . . . .59**

What makes it so wonderful is that it's a challenge, and there is a certain amount of delicate expertise to be learned. But you can catch a fish on the first day.

**BIKING THE VAIL TRAILS: ONE OF SUMMER'S BEST-KEPT SECRETS . . . . .64**

Vail is snowy glitz in winter, but when summer arrives, the crowds thin and bicycles replace skis. And while Vail is famous for adventurous mountain biking, there also are fourteen miles of paved trails.

**PHANTOM CANYON: ROCKS REVEAL HOW THE EARTH WAS FORMED . . . . .71**

Colorado is a land of rock—breathtaking walls of rocks, streambeds of pebbles, sculptured mountain tips, lichen-covered boulders, and gravelly scree that makes up a thin layer of soil.

**BIRDING AT BARR LAKE:**

**A PEACEABLE KINGDOM OF FEATHERED FRIENDS . . . . .79**

Hundreds of birds live in the giant cottonwoods and willows that surround Barr Lake, and the closer you get, the louder the broadcasting of trills, caws, chirrups, whistles, and melodies.

**■ AUTUMN**

**STRAWBERRY HOT SPRINGS:**

**A PERFECT COMBINATION OF NURTURE AND NATURE . . . . .88**

Not quite warm enough for water sports. Not nearly cool enough to hit the ski slopes. But September and October are the perfect months to make a weekend trip to one of Colorado's many inviting hot springs.

**JEWELS OF THE FOREST: HUNTING THE WILD MUSHROOM . . . . .94**

Wild mushrooms must be collected from the forest and cannot be cultivated on a mushroom farm. The exquisite, tender chanterelles or the robust, meaty boletus rarely are found fresh in stores. They're discovered in the mountains of Colorado.

**SPLENDOR IN THE GRASSES: COLORADO'S PRAIRIE . . . . .100**

Those stalwart grasses with unremarkable flowers held aloft need only catch a slight breeze to continue their species.

Sample file

**UP, UP, AND AWAY: IN THE BELLY OF THE BALLOON . . . . .105**

As temperatures begin to drop, balloonists gather along the Front Range for airborne festivals. Traveling by balloon gives a bird's-eye view of spectacular scenery.

**■ WINTER**

**MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE:**

**A WINTER WALK IN THE COLORADO FOOTHILLS . . . . .112**

Bats may be hibernating, but winter brings other changes to those out and about. In winter you'll see plant and animal relationships that would rarely be noticed any other time of the year.

**MOONSTRUCK: HIKING BY THE LIGHT OF THE SILVERY MOON . . . . .119**

Full moons make for perfect nighttime hiking. They offer enough illumination for you to see the trail and the beauty that surrounds you at a quiet time.

**GLIDING ON A BLANKET OF SNOW:**

**SNOWSHOEING IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK . . . . .123**

The lure can be enticing for someone who has never donned a pair of snowshoes—a snowshoe hike with a ranger for two hours of trails. During the past four years, park rangers have collected would-be snowshoe enthusiasts for hikes during the winter months.

**SOLITUDE IN THE CITY:**

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARSENAL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE . . . . .130**

It's a place where bald eagles soar, mule and white-tailed deer cavort, and coyotes compete with foxes for food. You could spend an entire day here and rarely see another human being. And this serene, natural retreat is right in the middle of—Commerce City?

**RENDEZVOUS WITH RAPTORS:**

**BIRDS OF PREY GET A SECOND CHANCE . . . . .134**

Getting raptors back on their wings is the goal of the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program in Fort Collins, where injured birds are rehabilitated.

**APPENDIX . . . . .141**

Sample file

When I first met with the original writers at Front Range Living nearly three years ago, most of us had arrived from the world of Colorado newspapers. All of us had experience covering the daily stories of everyday life and we wanted to continue to do so—but in a different arena with a new slant. Together we hammered out the areas that we believed were of compelling interest to readers. One was the cultural world of history, design, and architecture. The other was the natural world, whether cultivated in gardens or visited on a mountainside.

We pooled our ideas and came up with a philosophy for covering the immense and spectacular terrain of Colorado. And while there are magazines devoted to environmental concerns and books devoted to extreme sports, we imagined chapters more personal, almost like a diary.

“Animals,” said Dianne Zuckerman, who has always championed the feathered and furred. For this former theater critic for newspapers and magazines, the natural world is a tooth-and-claw stage full of crises and struggles, winners and losers.

“Leisure and fun, too,” said Beth Krodel, who loves to soak in a hot springs after a day of hiking. Following a stint as a foreign correspondent in the Middle East, Beth is content to find adventure closer to home.

“Learning about the rocks, plants, and land formations,” was my response. No one can overlook our spectacular rocks, but I wanted to write about the smaller worlds, too—the delicate pasque flower with petals as thin as tissue, the migration of butterflies in mid-July, and the call of birds that flock around Barr Lake.

We would take our readers on journeys into our wide-open spaces and ask questions that any ordinary person might ask. And then we would report back. Not one of us is a scientist or an Olympic athlete. We would search for outdoor experiences that anyone would enjoy. And in most cases, these would be trips on which you could take a child, mother, neighbor, or friend.

When Carol Ward and I sat down to discuss how best to cover antiques in Colorado, we came with similar perspectives. We wanted to introduce our