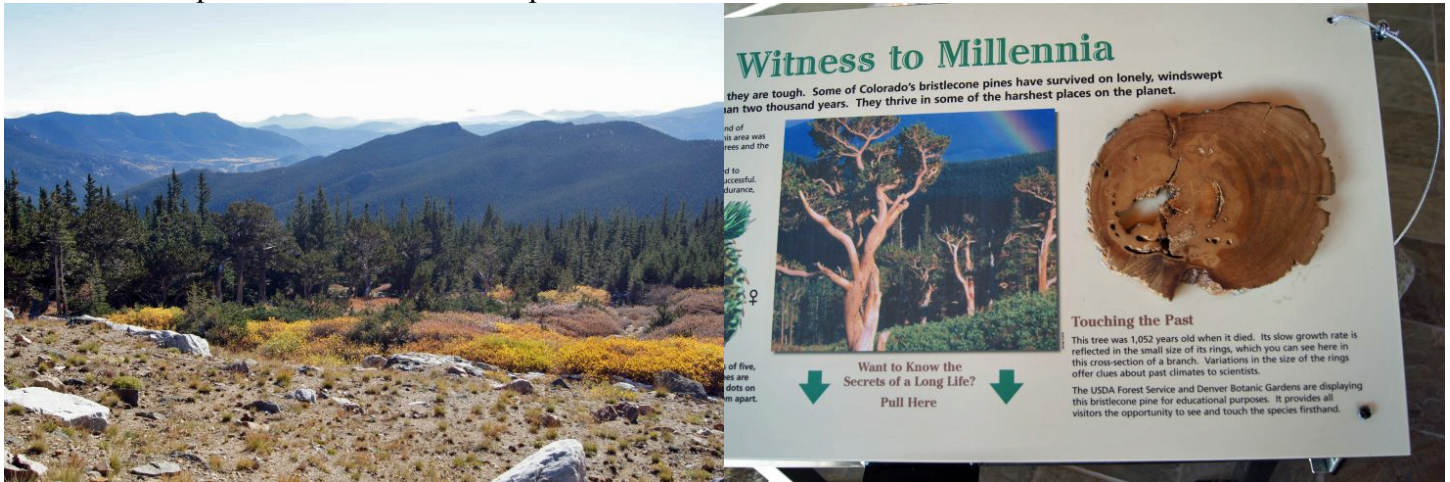
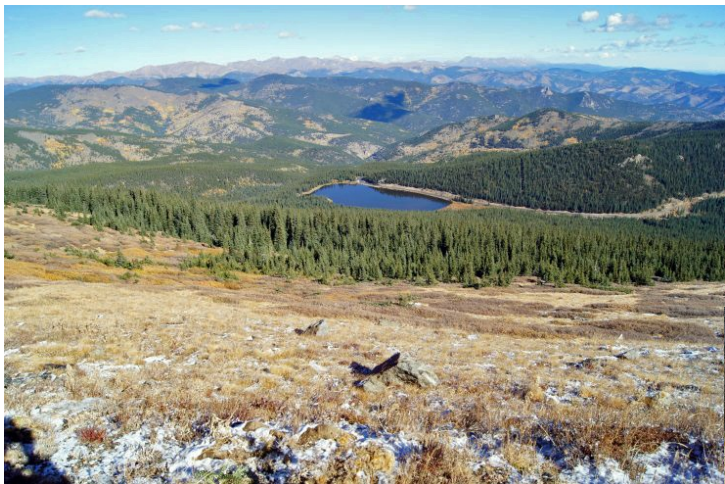


Mount Evans

On Saturday, 3 October, Ye Tian and Sally joined me for a trip to the top of Mount Evans. The road to the top was kept open a month more than usual and was closed for the winter the following Monday. We were not charged the usual fee because I have a pass for the elderly that lets me and the occupants of my vehicle visit various national parks for free or a reduced price.



On our way up we stopped at a visitor's center. We were near the "tree line" above which the climate is too cold for trees to survive. To the east the lowlands near Denver were covered by a thick fog, but we were high above in sunny skies. A display featured information about the bristle-cone pine trees that grow in that area. Their annual growth is very slow, but their lifespans can be hundreds and thousands of years. Their tree rings can record information about climate variations.



We then had a good view of Echo Lake, which we visited the previous Saturday, and the mountains beyond. Notice the snow in the foreground. Further up the mountain we stopped in an alpine tundra region. Sally enjoyed the snow there, making snowballs and footprints in the snow. Back in Sichuan she had not experienced that much snow. Ye had been in Canada, so such snow was insignificant to him.



The sign at the parking lot gives an elevation of 14,130 feet, but there is a foot path to the actual summit at 14,271 feet (4350 meters). When we arrived the air temperature was 29 F (-1.5 C) with a strong wind.



The road to the top is listed as the highest paved road in North America. The top could be like conditions in Tibet. This left view shows the edge of the parking lot and the actual summit. The right view looks down at the parking lot. There is an astronomical observatory in its view center, which is the world's highest.



Sally's red coat identifies them walking to Summit Lake after we ate lunch in the warmth of my van.



There were several black Ravens at the summit and a flock of Brown-capped Rosy-Finches that I could not photograph.



The view to the north from the summit looks down steep cliffs to Summit Lake, where we visited later. Of course we had to document reaching the top.



I then took Ye and Sally to the Phoenix Gold Mine near Idaho Springs. We did not enter the mine. I had been inside several previous times, and the owner suggested that I take Ye and Sally inside without paying the fee. It seemed more interesting outside where many friendly wild chipmunks greeted visitors in return for handouts of sunflower seeds and other foods.



Other free-loading Golden Mantle Squirrels, twice the size of the chipmunks, were not present. Perhaps they were already hibernating. You may notice that the chipmunks store the seeds in their cheeks before running away to hide them somewhere for winter. In the last photo Sally has two chipmunks eating out of both of her hands.

Next we visited Jefferson County Fairgrounds and the Westernaires horse organization. My daughters rode their rented horses during the 1990s and became expert riders and team leaders. We stopped to visit with the owner of a horse after we watched the team practices in the background. On a Saturday there are about a thousand teenagers riding a horse for about an hour and practicing other skills. Half own their own horse.



From there we visited the nearby Foothills Animal Shelter where dogs, cats, and a few other animals are made available for adoption. Then we visited my home and the nearby future park that I manage. So Ye and Sally had a very enjoyable day exploring beautiful Colorado and some of its animals.

Dr. Ed Holroyd
13 October 2015