

## Some Colorado Specialties

Friday morning, September 23, I had the opportunity to visit the new Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge, about a half hour drive northwest from my home. Many decades ago Rocky Flats was used for factory buildings in which were made Plutonium triggers for thermonuclear weapons - hydrogen bombs. Those buildings were removed and the area cleaned of pollution many years ago. It is in the process of becoming open to the general public in the future. To the northwest of the refuge is an area for testing wind turbines for power generation.



Our small group visited a plateau and valleys in the northwestern part of the refuge. We saw some old farm buildings. There were both native plants of a tall grass prairie environment and invasive weeds.



That is a Monarch Butterfly on the yellow flowers. It lays its eggs on the milkweed plant, shown on the right with its opening seed pod. The white sap of the milkweed, from which it gets its name, is toxic to most animals, making the young larvae of the butterfly also toxic to predators. As I recall, the butterfly migrates from a small location in Mexico to Canada and back, taking three years to complete the trip. Yet the life span for an individual butterfly is only about one year and it flies only a portion of the round trip.

The navigational ability is therefore programmed into its genetic codes.



Most interesting to us were two large herds of elk. The bull elk were sometimes calling with loud voices. A few bull elk had antlers that were as tall as their bodies, as shown in the photos. The elk is a very large variety of deer.



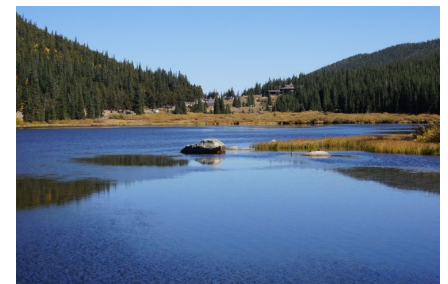
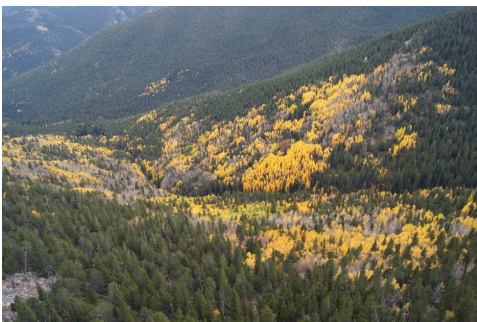


The elk in the lower left is the boss of the herd shown on the previous page.

In the next group photo the herd boss appears to be in the rear among the dark bushes.



On Saturday, October 1, international students from Colorado School of Mines were taken on the annual trip into the mountains to view the bright yellow autumn leaves of the aspen trees, contrasting with the dark green evergreen trees of pine, spruce, and fir. In my van were a family from Turkey and a family from Iran. Other vans had people from Egypt, India, China, Russia, Columbia, Venezuela, and Brazil.





The families at the left were in my van. Chinese students are on the left side of the right photo.



On Thursday, October 13, I went into the mountains to Estes Park to provide transportation to a woman who organizes opportunities for American professors to teach various topics in China. While waiting I photographed some mountain birds that I do not see in the lowlands where I live. The Jay is large and the others are small.



Pygmy Nuthatch looking for insects on the bottom of a branch.



Mountain Chickadee



Steller's Jay, both photos



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