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HGB 2023 Colorado Grasslands Challenge

Inspired by our March and April guest speakers, both of whom talked about how fiber artists respond to their surroundings in their work, and art can be activism, Handweavers Guild of Boulder challenges you to let your imagination run Wild this year as you knit, crochet, felt, bead, quilt, weave, embroider, etc, inspired by the topic of our Colorado prairie and grassland. We've compiled many wonderful resources to inspire you. (see below.)

We'll come together in late Fall to see what we all made, and if we have a good body of work, look for a place to display it in 2024, perhaps in conjunction with the Guild's 60th anniversary.

Resources

General

[Overview of shortgrass prairie ecosystem](#) from the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (affiliated with CSU)

[Collection of resources](#) (scientific and visitor info) from the Colorado State Library

[An article about grassland habitat loss](#) from the World Wildlife Federation

Birds

[Information on Colorado bird species](#) from Colorado Parks and Wildlife

[Studying nesting success](#) of grassland birds in Colorado, from the Bird Conservancy

Plants

[Some of the plants of our prairie ecosystem](#), from the Colorado Native Plant Society.

(this one has some great close-up photographs of flowers.)

[Native plants](#), with a focus on growing natives in home gardens. From CSU extension

[Plant diversity linked to carbon storage](#) in local grasslands:

[Native Grasslands in Boulder County](#) from Images, the free quarterly magazine from Boulder County Parks and Open Space, a great way to discover things you didn't know about your home landscape. You can subscribe here: <https://bouldercountyopenspace.org/i/subscribe/>)

For those who would like to learn more about the little teeny bit of remaining **tallgrass** prairie here in Boulder County (which was only a narrow band right along the foothills; by a few miles out from the foothills, shortgrass prairie takes over, as it is more adapted to dry conditions,) here is [an academic paper by W.H. Moir](#), who was instrumental back in the 60's and 70's in preserving the remaining scraps of it.

Insects

Here is a list of common names of some potentially interesting insects associated with grasslands. I am giving common names for most, but scientific names in a few cases. These should provide good starting points for research about these different insects.

[Pawnee montane skipper](#)

[Hops blue butterfly](#)

[Monarch butterfly](#)

[Prairie walking stick and Colorado walking stick](#)

[Yucca moth and its host plant yucca](#)

[Black and gold bumblebee and other bumblebees](#)

[Romalea](#) grasshoppers

[Rainbow grasshopper](#) (*Dactylotum bicolor*)

[Ruby Spot Damselfly](#) (found by water courses in grasslands)

and [lots of other dragonflies and damselflies](#)

[Plains giant tiger beetle](#) (*Amblycheila cylyndrifformis*)

[Soldier beetles](#) (*Chauliognathus basalis*): often found on sunflowers

[Velvet ants](#), family Mutillidae. They aren't ants at all, but wasps. The females are wingless and crawl around on the ground and look like really big ants (hence the name), and the males can fly.

[Tarantula hawk wasps](#) (genus *Pepsis*)

[Carrion beetles and Burying beetles](#)

CONSERVATION/VOLUNTEERING:

If you want to get involved and actually get to help collect, clean, and sow seeds for native plants, grasses, flowers, and even trees, check out [Wildland Restoration Volunteers](#).

Boulder County Parks and Open Space owns or manages over 100,000 acres of land! That includes mountain and foothills properties, but well over half of it is on the plains; some is leased for agriculture, some is parks and trails, and some is just kept as natural prairie. All of it is protected in perpetuity from development.

Boulder County uses volunteers for many projects as well. (often partnering with Wildland Restoration Volunteers, as do the cities of Boulder, Longmont, and Lafayette). It's early in the season, so there's not much listed yet, but here is the Boulder County Parks and Open Space [volunteer page](#).

WHERE TO SEE GRASSLAND ECOSYSTEMS:

You can get a glimpse of the shortgrass prairie ecosystem along many of the trails in local Open Space properties, once you get away from the riparian areas (along streams, which are a different though related ecosystem) The Left Hand or Foothills North Trails north of Boulder would be one place. The South Boulder Creek Trail, either at Marshall Road just south of Boulder or east from the S.Boulder Rec Center is one place to get little glimpses of that tallgrass prairie that survives in those wetter areas.

To get a feel for what this land might have looked like before European settlement here, one of the biggest preserved areas close by is [Soapstone Prairie Reserve](#) north of Fort Collins near the Wyoming border.

If you want to go a little farther, and see a much bigger expanse, there's the [Pawnee National Grasslands](#), northeast of Greeley, or [Comanche National Grassland](#) in Southeastern Colorado.



Big Bluestem grass in South Boulder in Autumn, photo by Janet Strickler