

ROCC Talk Report 1/19/23

Members of the Public Lands Committee have begun planning some ROCC Talks for 2023. Our focus is wildlife preservation and mitigation of wildlife interactions with vehicles on highways. We're in the planning stages so haven't yet decided how many of these talks to have this year or where they would be held.

This past Tuesday, Jan. 17, Rein, Arlene, Susan Holland (not yet a ROCC member but interested in these topics) and I met with Sara Coulter for information on the Living With Wildlife series, which she organized. The series, held at Ridgway Town Hall, was very popular and ran for several years until Sara retired from the project about ten years ago. She recruited biologists and other wildlife experts to give public presentations on wildlife native to this area, many of them animals we see in our own backyards.

We also discussed Sara's past work with CDOT and CO Parks & Wildlife in constructing safe passageways for wildlife, including an underpass near Colona. More recently CWTA (the Colorado Wildlife and Transportation Alliance), a partnership between CDOT and DPW, was formed to construct wildlife crossing structures near migration corridors that cross busy highways.

In addition, the state legislature this past summer passed a bill that authorizes funding for wildlife-vehicle mitigation projects across Colorado, the Safe Passage for Colorado Wildlife and Motorists. CDOT, CPW, and CWTA have identified seven projects that will provide safe road crossings for wildlife connectivity. One of those is the wildlife underpass and fencing planned for north of Ridgway near the Billy Creek area.

So our next step is to find wildlife experts who are good speakers and willing to give public presentations on various critters of interest to the community. We'll probably start with CPW. We're also considering a talk on statewide and local projects that prevent wildlife-vehicle collisions and on what more needs to be done.

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