

St. Vrain State Park packed this summer

Weekends still booked since Labor Day



Photo by Jen Reeder

Yellow flowers frame Bald Eagle Pond at St. Vrain State Park, on Sept. 17. Fishermen and bird-watchers flock to the park 365 days a year.

By Jen Reeder
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FIRESTONE – The summer busy season may be over, but the campgrounds at St. Vrain State Park are still full every weekend.

“We have been very busy this year,” said Thelma Day, a revenue attendant and camp host. “There were some weekends where we were turning people away by the dozen.”

Day said the campsites were booked solid from April 1 through Labor Day. The park has 87 campsites, with one designated RV area with full hook-ups, and a northern campground with flush toilets and coin-operated showers for the tent campers.

The draw: bird-watching and fishing. A plaque hangs in the entrance station declaring the park one of Outdoor Recreation’s top 10 American bird-watching spots. Birds that frequent the park include pelicans, geese, coots, cormorants, great blue herons, great horned owls, larks, ducks, robins, ospreys, hawks, ibis and bald eagles.

Fishermen flock to the park for its many stocked ponds. Once the temperatures cool off enough, the lakes will be stocked with trout.

“We get a lot of ice fishermen,” Day said.

In fact, plenty of folks stay in the park during the winter, since it is open to the public 365 days a year. Last winter, a man from Alaska

slept in the back of his pick-up for weeks. When Day asked him if he was cold, he said, “This is like a summer day to me – I’m used to 40 and 50 below!”

Even if they aren’t bird or fishing enthusiasts, many people come to find a tranquil campsite on one of the park’s ponds, or to hike the non-strenuous, mile-long trails that surround them.

“A lot of people like to walk around the

ponds,” said Linda Richards, administrative assistant at the park. “The kids can ride their bikes. There’s a lot of open land for them.”

St. Vrain State Park

encompasses 604 acres of recreational land, with 152 acres of water. Over half of the park is currently closed to the public while the wetlands are developed. Students from local schools help plant trees in these areas each spring and fall; school administrators interested in participating should contact the park to schedule an outing, Richards said.

In order to make a more natural habitat for the birds, park

officials plant only trees that are indigenous to the area.

“We’ve planted a lot of cottonwood,” she said.

The park’s proximity to Highway 119, between Firestone and Longmont, is a deterrent to some locals, but for anyone who’s visited, it’s a huge asset, Richards said.

“Everybody loves it because it’s so close to home but it feels far

away,” she said. “We don’t have the mountains, but we have a lot of other beautiful things.”

Park visitors often comment on its beauty and cleanliness, she said.

“We don’t get many complaints

at all.”

Richards said she hopes that potential visitors won’t be deterred by the park’s proximity to Hwy. 119. Campers have told her they don’t hear any road noise at night.

“I’d like people to come and enjoy our park,” she said. “Once they get in, they’ll really like it.”

For more information about St. Vrain State Park, visit www.parks.state.co.us.

Campsites at St. Vrain State Park can be reserved three or more days before a visit by calling 800-678-CAMP, or online at www.parks.state.co.us. To get there, take I-25 north to exit 240 and turn left onto Hwy. 119. Turn right at CR 24 1/2 and continue to the entrance of the park.



Photo by Jen Reeder

A trail cuts through flowers around Bald Eagle Pond at St. Vrain State Park.



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A tent overlooks Mallard Pond at St. Vrain State Park.