

## Every new trail treads on habitat

I applaud recognition of the unsanctioned trails problem in Monday's article, "Off the map." However, I believe the most important issue was untouched.

Every trail opens new edges, making it harder for shy animals and delicate plant natives to compete. It's as if we're running little strips of cityscape into the wilderness, replacing bobcat, canyon wren and clarkia with more gray squirrels, scrub jays and domestic plants.

How do we know when we're overburdening the habitat? Studies of the foothill trails behind Boulder, Colo., in the mid-'90s document trail effects.

They include: "Environmental Impacts of Passive Recreational Trails in Riparian Areas," by C.K. Miller and "Recreation Trails and Bird Communities," by S.G. Miller and R.L. Knight.

Plant communities, like human ones, depend on diversity for their health. Painting the issue as bipolar between the Forest Service and hikers is unhelpful. I believe everyone, from environmentalists to hikers to economists, is on the same side, but recognition of the problem is low.

Newton Drury found the common ground when he advised, "We're not so poor that we have to spend our wilderness or so rich that we can afford to."

How terrific if Mr. Powers could channel his considerable energies towards raising public support and funds for purchase and maintenance of more open space, or for college grants for local wildlife studies.

Let's not fight for rights to trample our dwindling close-in wilderness, but look for solutions to managing this incredible heritage for humans and wildlife.

Karen Telleen-Lawton  
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### CHOICE WORDS

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