## A Gift to Future Generations

The Town of Estes Park, with help from the Estes Park Urban Renewal Authority and Estes Valley Land Trust, purchased the 20-acre property located between U.S. Highway 34 bypass, MacGregor Avenue, and downtown. A conservation easement permanently protects the open, natural character of the property's wetlands (the Willows) and the rocky crest (the Knoll). The site is intended primarily for passive recreation and education and includes two historic structures.

## Enjoying Your Visit

Observe wildlife from the safety of the trail. Be aware that elk cows use the shelter of the willows for calving from mid-May through July. Mothers are protective of their young and will charge if they perceive to be threatened.

- Neither pets nor bicycles are permitted on the Knoll-Willows property.
- Remain on the designated trails at all times.
- Carry out all trash.
- Do not approach or feed any wild creatures.
- Stay off Birch Ruins and stone steps.

For more information about the Knoll-Willows Open Space property please contact:

Estes Park Museum
200 Fourth Street
Estes Park, CO 80517
(970) 586-6256
www.estes.org/museum

# Knoll-Willows Open Space

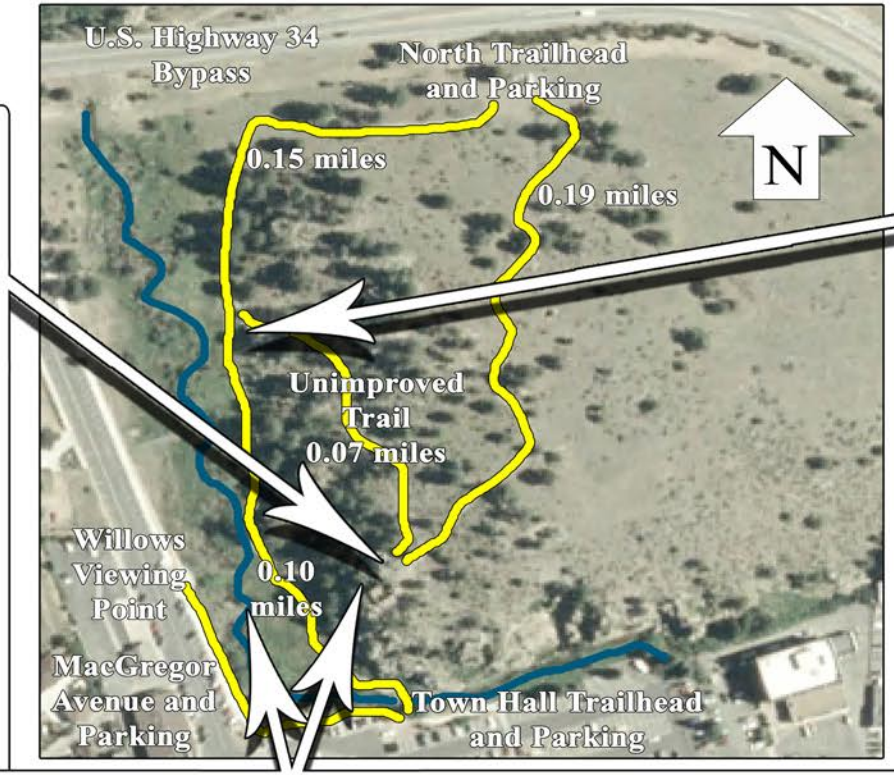
This 20-acre conservation easement, located in the heart of downtown Estes Park, preserves a critical natural habitat and a remarkable heritage.

Experience this Estes Park gem for yourself.

ESTES EP PARK

# Knoll-Willows Open Space

Just steps from downtown, there's a hidden historical treasure. Below a rocky outcropping and near a meandering stream sits the 1908 Birch cabin. Above it linger the ruins of another structure built in 1907 by Albert Birch, city editor for the *Denver Post*.




## The Ruins

Birch hired a local stonemason to build a small, one-story bungalow with a massive fireplace and wraparound porch on the knoll. Large windows showcased stunning views of surrounding mountains. Stone steps, clearly visible in some places, led up nearly 75 feet to the structure. Unfortunately, on the bitterly cold night of December 21, 1907, the small house caught fire due to faulty construction of the fireplace. No one was hurt, but the bungalow burned before help could arrive.

## Black Canyon Creek and Montane Meadows

The willow-lined Black Canyon Creek, flowing southward from the Lumpy Ridge area, provides a habitat for trout, beaver, elk, great horned owls, red-tailed hawks and a host of migratory songbirds. The rocky cliffs above the creek, covered with ponderosa pine and patches of shortgrass prairie, harbor communities of Abert's squirrels and Wyoming ground squirrels.

## The Cabin

Just two weeks after the 1907 bungalow fire, Birch began building a cabin in the willows below the ruins. He used native ponderosa pine logs. The bark was left intact for the exterior and was hand-peeled for the interior. This rustic-style structure also has a storage shed and outhouse nearby. The Birch family enjoyed the cabin as a summer retreat until the 1980s. The Birch cabin and ruins were placed on the State Register of Historic Places in 2001.