### Polis signs three new gun laws

By Saja Hindi
The Denver Post

In the past seven years, Colorado instituted one new gun law. Legislators passed six times that amount in one legislative session, and on Saturday, Gov. Jared Polis signed three of the bills into law. These bills were announced after the mass shooting at a King Soopers in Boulder on March 22, when 10 people were killed.

But, said Boulder Rep. Judy Ama-Bile at the bill signing event, "it isn't just about mass shootings. It's about what we call everyday gun violence," said Ama-Bile, a sponsor of one of the bills. Everyday people are dying all across the country from accidents, from mass shootings and mostly from suicide.

This year Polis signed two other bills, setting regulations for safe storage of guns in homes and requirements for reporting lost or stolen firearms. Other gun bills, aimed at keeping firearms out of the hands of domestic abusers, are on the governor's signature.

Here's a brief look at the three that were signed Saturday. They are set to take effect immediately.

- **Expanded background checks:** You can no longer buy a gun without a completed background check (a person who sells one before it's complete could face a Class 1 misdemeanor charge). The list of people who are not legally allowed to get guns five years now includes those with violent misdemeanors, third-degree assault, sexual assault, unlawful sexual contact, child abuse, violation of a protection order or a crime against an at-risk person, harassment, a class-6 or 7 assault, or a crime against animals, possession of illegal weapon and unlawfully providing a firearm other than a handgun to a juvenile.

- **Local control of gun regulations:** This reverses a ban that keeps local governments from creating their own gun regulations. But local jurisdictions can only make ordinances that are stricter, not more lenient, than state law. Local regulations currently in place that are less restrictive are effectively overturned. A person can only face a criminal penalty for violating local laws if they know about them and reasonably should have known. The new law also puts concealed carry requirements back in the hands of the state so they're consistent, but it does allow local governments to decide where those guns can be carried.

- **Office of Gun Violence Prevention:** About $2.5 million will go to the Colorado Department of Health and Environment for the first year to create the state's first Office of Gun Violence Prevention, which will be tasked with coordinating and promoting efforts to reduce gun violence, including providing training and public awareness campaigns.

The office can also provide grants to community organizations working on the issue, especially those working with high-risk communities.

### Nature's ebb and flow

**Study tracks value of blossoms, pollinators in mountain meadow's ecosystem**

By Katie Langford
Staff Writer

It's early June, and the wildflowers in Elk Meadow are just beginning to bloom.

Many of the delicate yellow clusters of mountain purple and yellow are still on the cusp of opening, only a few ready to show themselves to the world.

A lone prairie bluebell provides a spot of color in a sea of grass and scrub. The pollinators, too, are slow to arrive this year — a dive-bombing hummingbird is more interested in reflective sunglasses than the early flowers.

University of Colorado Boulder assistant professor Julian Resasco has been using snowshoes since late May to trek up to the meadow near the Mountain Research Station north of Nederland. It's a snow-free hike now, though a few shaded patches can still be hunted.

Rascos has visited this meadow dozens of times since 2013. Every spring, summer and fall, after the snow melts and before it falls again, he takes weekly hikes to catalog the flowers and pollinators in six areas of the subalpine meadow. His trips are so regular that by midsummer, curious Google Maps viewers can see the walk through the meadow on Google Earth.

Wildflowers blooming, attracting pollinators to Elk Meadow.

### Community benefit project

**Staff works to simplify**

Next phase aims to create small, affordable commercial spaces

By Deborah Swearingen
Staff Writer

Boulder planning staff are working to simplify phase two of the community benefit project, which looks to provide affordable commercial space for nonprofit organizations, small businesses, arts and culture, or human services.

Although the Boulder City Council greenlit the project several months ago, it decided in its Tuesday meeting that the ordinance presented by staff wasn't as straightforward as the Council had hoped.

Planning and Development Services Director, Jacob Lindsey said it's clear the Council wants to benefit nonprofits and arts with a community benefit package that's effective.

"We're committed to making that happen," he said. "We hear clearly from the Planning Board and Council that the ordinance as proposed is more complex than they would like to see."

The reworked second phase will come before the Council for first reading July 13 after its summer recess.

Staff intends to create a fee-based system or a simplified ordinance, through Senior Planner Karl.
THE MORE THAN 4,000 INTERACTIONS BETWEEN PLANTS AND POLLINATORS CATALOGED OVER FIVE YEARS OF THOSE TRIPS ARE THE SUBJECT OF A NEW RESEARCH STUDY PUBLISHED THIS SPRING IN THE JOURNAL ECOLOGY, WRITTEN BY RESASCO AND CO-AUTHORED BY ARGENTINEAN RESEARCHERS NATACHA P. CHACOFF, OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF TUCUMAN, AND DIEGO P. VAZQUEZ, OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF CORDOBA.

Resasco’s research found that some of the most common flowers, like melilot and phlox, don’t pollinate, like flies, play a crucial role in the meadow’s ecosystem and could serve as cornerstones of stability when those systems see big changes.

“Despite their pivotal roles, common and generalist species are often taken for granted and lack conservation protections that are conventionally aimed at rare species,” Resasco and his co-authors wrote.

But their abundance doesn’t mean they are immune to all environmental impacts, and the species could still face decline and extinction, putting ecological communities in further jeopardy. Conservation efforts, Resasco writes, “should not overlook the pivotal and generalist species play in supporting biodiversity across time and space.”

While every trip to the meadow follows the same pattern, Resasco said he’s still learning new things. For one, he has to start checking on the plants early in the season so that they don’t sneak up on him with early flowers. This spring’s abundant precipitation and cool weather means the meadow is off to a slow start.

“Every year teaches you something different,” Resasco said. “You think you have it figured out and then, oh, OK, maybe I don’t. Or you have an idea of what the baseline is, and then you get a crazy year where it’s really different, or you think you’ve seen all the species you’re going to see out here and then new ones pop up every year.”

The meadow is an uphill hike from the Mountain Research Station, across a creek and along an unmarked path. The clearing is at approximately 5,200 feet elevation, likely created by a fire long ago. Trees have been slow to return, though there are some new stands of aspen starting to grow along the edges.

Resasco hikes to his Elk Meadow study plots. There are six plots marked off with small flags and twine throughout the meadow, each about 6 feet wide and 65 to 100 feet long—unless a wandering moose dislocates the borders. Resasco walks the perimeter, looking for flowers. This is the first trip of the year that he’s seen any at all. Most of the buds are still closed or have yet to fully open, and Resasco doesn’t count them until they’re ready for a visit from a pollinator.

A fly crawling along the green, unopened leaves of Indian paintbrush, for example, doesn’t count. Then Resasco walks around each plot for 15 minutes to see what kind of pollinators he can spot. He collects them with a net or an aspirator, which is a small tube with a screen in the middle used to suck up small bugs so they can be taken back to the lab for identification.

Over five years Resasco and his colleagues have catalogued 4,261 interactions consisting of 267 species of animal visitors and 41 species of plants. The most common pollinators were from the hymenoptera family, which includes bees, sawflies and wasps, and the diptera family, which are flies. The next most common pollinators included butterflies and moths, while the most rare were grasshoppers, a snakelike and a hummingbird. The study tracked flowering plants from 16 families, the most common of which was asteraceae, the family to which yarrow, daisies and dandelions belong.

This kind of long-term data set is rare in ecology, Resasco said, because of fluctuating funding cycles or researchers moving on or losing interest. That makes the information particularly valuable for understanding things like climate change and other trends.

“Part of what keeps me coming out year after year is seeing new things, learning more about this ecosystem and the dynamics of what happens from year to year,” he said. “Having those long-term data sets can teach us a lot.”

Resasco said wants to keep tracking the data as long as he can, though he wants to recruit a student to help with his work on other field projects.

But for this summer, at least, it will just be him on those bright Colorado summer mornings, clipboard in hand and aspirator at the ready, chronicling the ebb and flow of life in a mountain meadow.