Fellow Name: Laurel Sebastian

PIFP Partner Organization: Palmer Land Trust

Please give a brief description of what you do for your organization:
I primarily work with Palmer Land Trust’s Stewardship Program. Once PLT conserves a property (or legally prohibits negative changes to the land), someone must go out every year to visit the property and make sure everything looks as great as expected. During those visits, I answer landowner questions, look for invasive weeds, and take photos throughout the property. Back at the office, I write reports about my findings, which go to the landowners and into our permanent records. I’m also working on some GIS (mapping) projects, including recording where original property photos were taken so we can revisit those exact same sites over time. Lastly, I’ve started an Instagram for Palmer Land Trust to share the beautiful places we protect throughout southeastern Colorado. Feel free to follow my work and other PLT projects at @Palmerlandtrust!

What’s the most interesting thing you’ve learned in your fellowship so far?
It’s been reassuring and inspiring to see how seriously landowners take the conservation of their land. When visiting city and county properties last week, including University Park and Paint Mines Interpretive Park, the employees were already well aware of all noxious weed patches and actively working to eradicate them. Private landowners showcase the same pride in their land, eager to share a great wildflower patch or wildlife habitat area.

Why did you want to become a PIFP Fellow?
I’ve been particularly interested in Palmer Land Trust’s conservation work for the last few years. Through my time in the Environmental Science Department at CC, I learned about the unique power of land trusts to preserve private spaces that are otherwise untouchable by state or federal conservation projects. When I heard about this PIFP position, I knew it would provide the perfect opportunity to learn more about the world of land trusts, as well as the general structure and operations of a successful nonprofit. All my expectations have been met in that I’ve learned a
tremendous amount about local conservation and nonprofits each and every day here.

**What activities outside of your work do you enjoy?**
Recently, I’ve been enjoying evening mountain bikes rides in many of the places Palmer Land Trust has worked to conserve, like Red Rocks, Ute Valley Park and Stratton Open Space. I love all sorts of art, and recently set up a stained glass studio in my house. I’m also an avid gardener, and am currently tending to the Synergy garden at CC.

**What is something most people would be surprised to know about you?**
I grew up with tons of animals, including llamas, ducks, chickens, guinea pigs, cats, and dogs. I’m dying to get a dog now, but am determined to wait until I’m settled down enough to provide a great home.