



Grand County Wilderness Group

Winter Issue 2022

Have you heard about all of the amazing work that Headwaters Trails Alliance (HTA) was able to accomplish during 2022?

We serviced 476 miles of trail, cut over 4500 trees fallen across trails or threatening trail corridors, built almost 4.5 miles of new trail, rerouted 3.5 miles of trail for sustainability reasons, built over 130 linear feet of turnpike and 8 new bridges to protect watersheds plus tons of routine trail maintenance. We partnered with the BLM on a redevelopment project in the Phases/Strawberry area rerouting and improving a number of trails while maintaining the spicy flavor of the area, We spent time helping the USFS with fire recovery from the East Troublesome and Williams Fork fires, did 3 multi-day projects with the Continental Divide Trail Coalition and helped lead the longest running National Public Lands Day in the country! We also helped lead the way in promoting outdoor stewardship to encourage users to recreate responsibly across Grand County. For a full synopsis of our field work, visit <https://headwaterstrails.org/sample-page/>

Volunteers adopted 92 trails across the county. Participants with Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado helped finish retreading Jim Creek trail which over 3 years post derecho (nasty wind storm!) took a cumulative 2500 hours to get back in shape. Campers from Camp Chief Ouray helped prepare burn piles for fuels reduction.

Grand County Wilderness Group was our Partner of the Year thanks to the 14,000+ contacts they made between Monarch and Junco cabins to encourage responsible recreation.

A new collaborative National Public Lands Day project with Friends of Berthoud Pass removed over 100 bags of trash. All in, our volunteers donated nearly 6000 hours to the public lands of Grand County in 2022. These collaborative efforts of the broader HTA community have garnered us recognition as a state leader in our niche. In 2022, we received the following awards: CO Parks & Wildlife Northwest Partner of the Year, CO State Trails Symposium Project of the Year (Jim Creek), Best of Grand Nonprofit Project (Trail Improvements) and Volunteers for Outdoors Colorado Partner of the Year.

What's on tap for 2023? We look forward to further supporting GCWG's mission of protecting our wilderness areas by working with the USFS to implement some new paid Stewardship Ambassador positions at Monarch and Junco. These positions will not take the place of the great work that GCWG does at those cabins. Rather, thanks to your group's feedback, we hope to supplement coverage so there is someone at the Monarch Cabin 7 days a week! This program will also have positions at the WP and Granby Chambers of Commerce to help fill the informational void left by the closure of the front desk at the USFS. If any of you might be interested in a 1 or more days per week job next summer, please get in contact with me. These last three seasons partnering with the GCWG have been truly pleasurable for us at HTA. We so appreciate the passion you all share with us in desiring to be great stewards of our natural environment. The sharing of this passion and educating other public lands users is an incredible benefit that you all provide to the Grand County community. We look forward to continuing to grow with GCWG to further this message.

Happy Holidays to All!
-Meara, Maire, Eric and Sea

Upcoming Events

**Winter Meeting/Social Saturday, Feb. 4, d 2023
5:00pm - 8:00pm, Rowley room at Snow Mountain Ranch.**

Get Ready for next Summer's Activities:

Spring Meeting - Usually in June

Cabin Hosting at Monarch – Starts in May.

Cabin Hosting at Junco – Starts in June.

Winter Park Alpine ArtAffair— July Event

Summer Meeting – Usually in August

Summer Hikes -- TBD

Trail Work - Times and dates TBD.

Dates for other future activities will be posted on the activity schedule at www.gcwg.org

If you don't have your badge, get one at the Spring Meeting



Watching Out for Birds in Grand County

4 short stories by Doris Klein

“Watching out for” has several meanings including: 1: being vigilant for spotting something 2: ensuring the welfare of something

- Christmas Bird Count is the quintessential “looking for birds” event. 2021 marked Grand County’s 20th year of participating! While the Audubon Society gave the option to skip this year, our local leaders decided to adapt vs cancel. With covid precautions in place, on Dec. 18th, 30 volunteers (GCWG’ers among them) counted 1745 individual birds of 36 species within our “count area”, a circle of 7.5- mile radius from the USFS office. While the overall count was low (due in part to the late onset of winter), we collected important data, perhaps most notably the spotting on Lake Granby of a trumpeter swan and 12 pied billed grebes (firsts for the CBC).
- In spring and fall of 2021, two 2-day work events yielded 20 new osprey platforms to replace those destroyed by fire and removed from utility poles by WAPA, as well as some new installations on or near burn scars and private lands, with some platforms held in reserve for ongoing needs. Did you know that an osprey platform is more than a round of wood? Each 4’ plywood circle is drilled with 24 perimeter holes into which 6” dowels are glued. The dowels are interwoven with willows, the center is filled in with more willows and dried grasses and all materials are wired into place so they don’t get dislodged in the installation process. Doreen Sumerlin says this effort was an amazing collaboration among USFS, CPW, private landowners and an “army” of volunteers (including GCWGer’s) and staff. Special kudos to Randy Mayeaux, the private contractor who managed to complete the last installation within hours of our first big storm! Ospreys will return to find housing options!



- On Sept. 25, a young great horned owl, seemingly unable to fly, was found at the dog park at River Run. A Granby Police officer retrieved the owl and notified CPW, who in turn called Chris and Stephen Lee to transport the bird to a wildlife rehabilitation in Rand. A week later, the Lees got a follow-up call from the rehab saying the owl appeared to be ok and asking if they would return it to the general area where it was found. The Lees, joined by the officer, released it into the willows along the Colorado River.
- In early fall, Doug Smith was driving in an area of willows near CR 841. He spotted what he thought was a Townsend’s solitaire. The bird then flew in front of his truck and landed on a roadside willow. Getting a closer and sustained look, Doug could see that the bird had a yellowish beak, brighter orange wing markings, longer tail and larger than a Townsend’s solitaire. As Doug watched, this bird was joined by another, assumed to be its female mate. At home, bird book in hand, Doug made a positive ID as male and female yellow billed cuckoos, a rare but not unprecedented sighting in the Rocky Mountains. Doug has seen cuckoos during his work in Mexico, travels in Mongolia, and now Grand County!

Message: Let’s take every opportunity to “watch out for” our birds!!!

WILDERNESS DELIVERS THE GOODS

By Eric Sandstrom

Big cities give us an energy boost, a kind of Red Bull for the soul. New York, Chicago and Cleveland (you read that right) are bastions of culture and industry that fuel the human spirit toward personal growth. As we meander across the urban landscape, dodging pedestrians and traffic, our feet bounce to the rhythm of it all. The scent of sidewalk vendors steaming hotdogs, the roar of the major league baseball crowd, new museum exhibits, old book stores, unfamiliar restaurants--these rank among our favorite city delights.

Our Red Bull boost wears off. Urban days get exhausting to the point we hanker for what old Ed Abbey called desert solitaire, which we call desert solitude. Mountains have their piney perfumes, their mumbling snow-melted brooks and their elk and marmots sporting expensive furs.

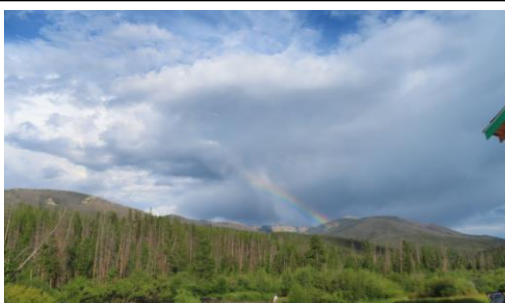
But for pure unadulterated wilderness, deserts deliver more spectacular wonders for us than anywhere else on the planet. Having worked as a park ranger in the high desert of western Colorado, our biases tend to favor the beauty of a prickly pear cactus bloom over a garden rose. Nowhere else do modern worries dry up and blow away in the desert wind quite as fast as they do while hiking in the shadows of 65-million-year-old sandstone cliffs. As for the desert's scorching heat of a summer day, how else are we to meet up with a desert bighorn ram?

At Colorado National Monument, it was our privilege to give walks-and-talks to visitors from cities far and wide. Urban dwellers have many questions. How deep are those canyons? When's the best time of year to see desert flowers in bloom? Any rattlesnakes out here?

We have the answers: 500 feet give or take 100 feet; just about any time in May; you bet your britches we got rattlers. Just one species, what scientists call *Crotalus concolor*, grows to a mere two or three feet long and packs enough toxic venom to kill you. We know it as the midget faded rattlesnake. It shares its sandy habitat with golden eagles, bighorn sheep, packrats, scorpions, ravens, rabbits and on occasion, homo sapiens.

Once upon a time, a mountain lion crossed the trail ahead. She paid little attention to us. We didn't take it personally. Another day, a long-nosed leopard lizard, a pregnant female as a matter of fact, surprised us by dragging an even larger lizard across the desert sands. She had killed the lizard which remained fixed inside her jaws and looked ready for lunch. Our camera recorded the magic for posterity.

These days, the Rockies serve as our habitat along with plenty of other outdoorsy souls. Most of us volunteer to protect wilderness wherever we find it. We can always return to big cities for Cubs' games, Van Gogh paintings and a climb up inside the Statue of Liberty. Those things should last a lifetime. Still, it's good to know the wild, wild West waits back home for us. At least for now. The question is, will it be there tomorrow?



Opportunities in 2023 will be available throughout the summer and fall. Depending on what your interests are, contact correct person listed below:

1. Pay your \$20 dues to GCWG
2. Host one day at Junco Cabin – Monica Sandstrom
3. Host one day at Monarch Cabin – Monica Sandstrom
4. Open up and clean either cabin to start the season
5. Hike a wilderness trail ANY DAY. REPORT your hours via website form.
6. Lead an informative trail hike - Joyce Clair,
7. Light trail work Steve Hennings: swhennings@hotmail.com
8. Adopt a registration box and retrieve the reports – Stephen Lee (stephenchris@rkymtnhi.com, [708-990-5967](tel:708-990-5967))
9. Spreadsheet analysis of trail usage from registration boxes
10. Take digital photos and contribute articles and photos for the newsletter - Holly Whitten (news1@GCWG.org)
11. Help construct signage and update trailhead bulletin boards, including photos for the boards – Jack Reichert
12. Work on trail maintenance and other projects - Jack Reichert
13. Wear your wilderness tee shirt or sweatshirt every time you hike in the forest and report your hours
14. Staff the booths at the Art Affair or Fourth of July – Ingrid Anderson
15. Staff Grand Lake Regatta in August - Bob Saint
16. Uproot noxious weeds– Beth Collins ([970-726-5423](tel:970-726-5423))
17. Record and report volunteer hours – Toni Wujek
18. Distribute our “business” cards
19. Help Smokey Bear- Chis Lee (, [708-990-5967](tel:708-990-5967))
20. Work on National Public Lands Day or Colorado Public Lands Day
21. Purchase shirts, sweatshirts and hats
22. Adopt an Osprey nest or monitor a bluebird box–USFS
23. Empty monofilament bins, cleaning line, and getting it to FS for recycling
24. Our partners at HTA always welcome new volunteers:

<https://headwaterstrails.org>

Excerpts from ‘Spotlight on Grand County Wilderness Group’ by Beth Collins:

As the name implies, Grand County Wilderness Group's emphasis is on “Wilderness.” There are five Wilderness Areas in Grand County: Byers Peak, Indian Peaks, James Peak, Never Summer, and Vasquez Peak. Information about these Wilderness areas can be found on the Forest Service website under “Special Areas”

Next summer, like last summer, Grand County Wilderness Group is looking forward to working with Headwaters Trail Alliance to provide productive, enjoyable, and safe volunteer opportunities that will benefit the Forest Service, the Wilderness and Grand County. GCWG will be scheduling hikes, trail work, and of course Cabin hosting at Monarch and Junco Lake trailheads.

As in the past, GCWG members are trained on the Leave No Trace (LNT) ethic and on how to effectively communicate with trail users about LNT principles and Forest and Wilderness regulations. The emphasis is on not alienation. Starting in the 1990s, GCWG members hiked and backpacked. They volunteered as trail ambassadors, dispersing information and reporting trail conditions. These activities continue today.

Why become a member?

MEMBERS HAVE THE SATISFACTION OF HELPING VISITORS ENJOY THE FOREST AND RECREATE RESPONSIBLY

Seven Principles of Leave No Trace

1. Plan Ahead
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces
3. Dispose of waste properly
4. Leave what you find
5. Minimize campfire impacts
6. Respect wildlife
7. Be considerate of others

Like us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/grandcountywildernessgroup>

A special thanks to MC Design and Print for their help in printing the newsletter.

Wilderness is not a luxury but a necessity of the human spirit.

Edward Abbey

ANRA Passes: We will no longer be selling ANRA passes or backcountry permits when we are cabin hosting. The ANRA passes will only be available at the office or the Kiosks. The backcountry permits will have to be purchased



National Public Lands Day 2022:
Monica Engstrom

GCWG adopted Monarch Lake as a NPLD project this year.

Sixteen people, including some non-members, accomplished cleanup of the Monarch Loop Trail, the many picnic areas, the beach, the hillside behind the restroom, and the parking lot.

Invasive plants were pulled; spearheaded by Chris and Stephen Lee.

Paisley, Ann Steers and Bob Saint led the rebuild of the east path to the restroom joined by Steve Hennings and then the rest of the crew.

A table was set up to greet visitors and inform them of NPLD and Leave No Trace. While we were there-8:30-12:30- there were over 400 visitors .

Other volunteers included Ingrid Anderson, Carol Cahalane, Anne Gerleman, Sue Hagerty, Vickie Marra, Ann Rosati, Al Rothenbach, Eric Sandstrom, Monica Sandstrom and Toni Wujek.

A picnic lunch was enjoyed by all.



The Annual Picnic at the AA Barn is always a favorite activity. Many thanks to Ron Sears for again smoking the best pork in the Valley.



Grand County Wilderness Group Mission Statement: To assist the US Forest Service in the preservation, protection, improvement and public understanding of the wilderness areas in Grand County.

Preservation

- Patrol shores for fish line filament and recycling
- Work on a National Public Lands day project
- Adopt an Osprey nest
- Monitor a blue bird box

Improvement

- Adopt a registration box
- Build a bluebird nest
- Eradicate noxious weeds
- Work on a maintenance project

Public Understanding

- Cabin Hosting (Junco and Monarch)
- Hike wilderness trails
- Lead a group hike
- Take digital photos to share
- Staff the booth at the Art Affair
- Wear your tee shirt or hat to bring awareness

Protection

- Update trail bulletin boards
- Construct signage

GCWG Contact Info:

President: Beth Collins
president@gcwg.org

Vice-President: Monica Sandstrom
vpres@gcwg.org

Treasurer: Toni Wujek
treas@gcwg.org

Secretary: Joyce Clare
sec@gcwg.org

Newsletter Content: Holly Whitten
news1@gcwg.org

2022-23 Membership. Yearly membership renewals of \$20 per household are due at the Fall Meeting. New members, please complete the following form and mail to Grand County Wilderness, PO Box 4116, Granby, CO 80446. You can also join on-line at www.GCWG.org.

Name:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Interests (Please refer to the activity mentioned in this newsletter and make contact accordingly):

Grand County Wilderness Group
PO Box 4116
Granby, CO 80446