



Fall Issue 2023

www.gcwg.org

Last spring, I was elected as the President of the GCWG board and honored to lead our group. Kaye and I first bought a second home in Grand County in January 2005 and moved here in 2007. Kaye was talking to someone and stated she was looking for a way to find more friends in the county and we were invited to a GCWG meeting and met many great friends. We have been members of since 2007.

I retired in 2014 from a career as an Electrical Engineer for the Department of Defense. Many of you know I am a Landscape Photographer known for large panorama images of Grand County and our Wilderness Areas. I have sold them through the ArtAFair, galleries, and Cozens Museum. This allowed me to combine my love for the mountains, photography, and woodworking (framing them).

I attended the Regional Stewardship Gathering of all Wilderness Groups in Colorado last May. We shared our best practices and issues and much more. The group continues to meet through Zoom and I look forward to learning more about Wilderness and other group practices.

We started off our season this year with our spring meeting where new board members were voted in and sign-up for our summer programs was started. The Forest Service (FS) had many changes in personnel over the past 2 years and we introduced them at this meeting. Working with these new Rangers has been a great experience, we look forward to a great relationship with them. Headwaters Trails Alliance has assisted us this year as our sponsor organization, and we will continue to develop this relationship.

The board is working hard at developing a plan for our group to work out many of the rough spots since covid and make more connections with younger generations. We would like to enhance our support of the FS and wilderness through scheduling and implementing cabin hosting, hiking, trail maintenance, and other projects.

It is a pleasure to serve as the board president and ensure we

Upcoming Events

Fall Membership Meeting – November 12

Winter Meeting - TBD

Training Sessions to be scheduled.

Check the web page GCWG.org often for updates

Letter to the editor: Thank you Grand County Wilderness Group: [News](#) Apr 3, 2023

On behalf of Colorado Headwaters Land Trust, I would like to thank the Grand County Wilderness Group for their generous donation to the land trust for the Granby Highlands-Trails Conservation Easement project. Members of both groups met in the land trust office in Granby on Thursday to present the donation and talk about the shared goals and values of each organization.

When completed, this project will conserve 780 acres of open space, including 480 acres for publicly-accessible recreation and 300 acres as a wildlife preserve, and two river miles of the Colorado River in the Granby north of the Sun Community development at the intersection of U.S. highways 40 and 34.

With their support, the Wilderness Group has brought us closer to our fundraising goal for the easement





Jacob Schmitt – Big Dipper & Night Sky

Like us on Facebook:

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

The Night Sky

When was the last time you went outside and looked up at the sky? When was the last time you did that at night? I've always loved finding constellations. It speaks to the creativity of humans, to find shapes in the stars at night. Orion was the first one I learned in elementary school, but I soon could find the Big and Little Dipper, the cross of the Swan, and others. Each one is unique and has its own story.

In nearly every culture the stars have been significant. Constellations and celestial bodies have been used to determine the passage of time, to explain inexplicable phenomena, and to foretell events. Our relationship with the stars and planets has been central to the development of civilizations and cultures and continues to be in different ways.

We still have much of this love of the night sky, and in recent decades we've added a new appreciation: its importance to the global ecosystem.

The natural world is a network of relationships, and the night sky plays a major role in those relationships. The dark backdrop, the lights of stars and planets, and the prominent position of the moon all contribute to the goings-on of creatures big and small, just like with humans. Birds migrate by the moon. Harbor seals orient themselves with lodestars. Dung beetles move with the Milky Way.

The night sky is also protection: there can be fewer threats at night, and the darkness provides cover. And there are plenty of nocturnal animals that live their lives at night aside from migrating. Fireflies, for example, use their flashing lights to attract mates, but the light is small and hard to see. Their mating dance requires a dark sky. One of the greatest threats to these creatures is light pollution, or excess artificial light.

With the invention of the electric light came the plague of light pollution. While it can be worse in dense areas like in towns and cities, any human development can increase artificial light, affecting everyone and everything who relies on the darkness, and the natural lights, of the night.

A recent study by the international citizen science project Globe at Night shows that from 2011 to 2021, the night sky across North America and Europe got 9.6% brighter every year. The trend likely hasn't slowed; light pollution continues to have widespread effects across the world.

It's not all lost, though – there are simple things we can do to slow the trend ourselves, especially in places with dark skies already, like Grand County. Individual actions include just turning off lights that don't need to be on and making sure indoor lighting doesn't spill out of the windows at night. If an outdoor light must be on, we can alter them to be less harmful to nocturnal animals.

Land conservation defends the darkness, too. By reducing fragmentation and unnecessary development, conserving a landscape creates large areas with unopposed dark skies, reducing the spread of light pollution and the dangers it brings to animals and natural systems.

These actions alone won't stop the light from creeping over the Continental Divide, or even from spilling out of our towns in the county, but places like Grand County are the dark sky refuges many animals – and humans – need.

John Fielder: Submitted by Holly Whitten:

I think that the following excerpt from 'Saving Colorado' by John Fielder expresses very clearly what we in the Grand County Wilderness group are trying to accomplish. Let's keep working together to protect the wilderness areas here in Grand County.

"As Coloradans our wild places tie us together. When you live here, as I have for 45 years, you learn that perhaps the one thing that most connects us to one another is our need to be outside. You learn that, collectively, we are compelled to experience the stabilizing force of our natural surroundings. And today, as the world continues to become more crowded, more chaotic, and more connected, the personal sense of security derived from things that seem to be permanent, like the wilderness, is more important than ever.

"It's critical to remember, though, that our landscapes are not static, but rather living, dynamic environments full of both the calm and fury of nature. We all should want to keep it that way. We should want to maintain these treasures for our children, and our children's children, so they can experience the flows and patterns and sensuousness of the outdoors. I am a nature photographer, and I can say this without reservation: It is one thing to view photographs of our wilds, and something else entirely to be in those landscapes. There is no substitute for tasting, smelling, feeling, and hearing wilderness. The mineral-rich flavor of a mountain stream in spring; the touch of powdery aspen bark in the summer heat; the smell of decaying leaves during autumn; the sound of winter winds whistling through blue spruce; these are the ways a Coloradan should experience the state's abundance.

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"History shows societies that protect their fresh water and forests survive longer, and that a close relationship with nature makes people healthy, happy and prosperous. In turn, flourishing societies have the resources to preserve the environment. In biology, this is called symbiosis—one thing depends upon the other. Colorado and its citizens have long understood this intuitively; however, as we move forward, the question becomes: Do we have the wisdom, foresight, courage, and sense of obligation to continue to make choices and investments that will perpetuate Colorado's remarkable wild places and fresh water? Will we not allow the extractive to destroy the attractive. I hope the answer is yes. It would be a shame, and a tragedy, if one day we can enjoy our state's unmatched beauty is only through one of my photographs. "

John Fielder (August 2, 1950 – August 11, 2023) was an American [landscape photographer](#), [nature writer](#), the publisher of over 40 books, and a conservationist. His photography influenced people and legislation, including the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993.



The above pictures are some that John Fielder took in the Indian Peaks Wilderness.

On Sept.18, Doris and David Klein and Ricardo Loza, USFS, scraped and re-stained the porch at Monarch cabin, a maintenance project for which President, Gary Piper, had requested volunteers. Ricardo's appearance was a wonderful surprise to the Klein's, who thought they would be tackling the task on their own. Ricardo, his agency experience and truck full of tools made things more manageable and efficient. The job got done in 7 hrs! Besides staining, we had lots of interaction with people coming through. Many of the visitors ASKED about signing in when they didn't see the registration box, which had been removed to the picnic table. (I guess we have educated them well!) It was a very satisfying day of GSWG and USFS teamwork: refreshing the cabin porch, greeting the public and hearing words of encouragement and thanks from visitors (although no one offered to pick up a brush or roller 😊). Submitted by Doris Klein

We accomplished a lot during National Public Lands Day at Junco Cabin. Caulking, winterizing, staining, replacing several boards, repairing deck supports, and smiles by everyone. Thank you so much to everyone that came out for another great day of volunteering!





We have fun
The Chili Su
great hit.

Special thanks to
Printing for help
newsletter

On-line Overnight Wilderness Permits Make Cabin Hosting Easier

By John Hughes, Secretary

Remember hosting the Monarch Cabin before the pandemic and the hassle of dealing with back country permits?

Five backpackers walk up from the parking lot.

“Beautiful day,” you say. “Where are you from?”

“He’s from Chicago, he’s from Florida, these guys are from California and I’m from Idaho. We’re old college roommates and we meet different places every summer to backpack.”

“Where are you planning on camping?”

“We’re thinking Crater Lake. It’s only 8 miles.”

You think *Only 8 miles — these guys look like they haven’t hiked all summer.*

“Crater Lake is one of the most beautiful places,” you reply. “You guys got your Wilderness permit?”

“Not yet — we thought we could get it here.”

Grumble, grumble “Crater Lake is very popular. I can look at the Forest Service spreadsheet of camping availability as of Friday, which may be out of date, and I’ll show you camping options on the map inside.”

In 2021 the USFS moved backcountry permits online, which allows visitors to view available zone(s) in advance and plan their trips. Now the Wilderness Group volunteers don’t have to deal with permits any longer. Previously campers had to display the permit on a tent, which allowed the ranger to contact the campers if the party hadn’t observed a regulation but weren’t at the camp. For example, camping and campfires aren’t allowed within 100 feet trails and lakes so campers don’t intrude on the wilderness experience of others.

With online permits the Forest Service wilderness rangers have no way to notify a group the campsite is illegal when the campers weren’t there. Katie Oliver, Wilderness Program Lead, has designed a tag to be hung on a tent to notify the campers of any problems. As always the Forest Service is short of funds. Andy Borek, with the Forest Service, is on the GCWG Board and proposed we pay for the tags. Per Toni Wujek, Treasurer, we have about \$6,000 and spend very little. The Board voted to pay \$874 to print 700 tags, enough for two seasons in the Indian Peaks and Never Summer Wildernesses.



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

9. Patrol shores for fish line filament and recycling
10. Work on a National Public Lands Day project
11. Monitor stream flow program

Improvement

12. Adopt a registration box
13. Eradicate noxious weeds
14. Work on a maintenance project

Public Understanding

1. Host Junco and Monarch cabins
2. Hike wilderness trails
3. Become a trail ambassador
4. Take digital photos to share
5. Staff the booth at the Art Affair
6. Wear your tee shirt or hat to bring awareness

Protection

7. Help to maintain trails
8. Construct signage

GCWG Contact Info:

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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