

Grand County Wilderness Group



Fall Issue 2017

www.gcwg.org

Letter from the President Jack Reichert

Like almost everyone else I can't believe the summer is coming to an end. Many of us will be skiing in little over a month!!! Our membership has grown this year, we now have 154 members representing 94 households, this compares to 137 members last year (80 households). Which equals 17 new members this year. About a 12% increase since last year, not bad!

Again, we had a very successful year in hosting the Monarch and Junco cabins. The 2016 numbers are in and as usual Monarch Lake was the busiest by far. The number of registration sign-ins went from 19,880 in 2015 to 22,165 in 2016. The back country overnight usage also went up from 1,801 to 2,213. For comparison, the Junco registrations went down from 3,688 in 2015 to 3,530 in 2016. The drop at Junco is surprising, I have not heard a good reason, but any is probably just speculation.

Our volunteer hours are a significant factor in the USFS Granby office being able to get grants for summer interns. This year Andy Borek had 4 interns and they able to do maintenance on ALL the district wilderness trails. This is fantastic, a few years ago they had no interns and the trails were not in the condition we want and expect. As Toni says every meeting it is extremely important to **turn in your hours**. A few notes on how to count your hours: start counting hours when you leave the door till you get back home (i.e. door-to-door). If you do any preparation specifically to support your GCWG duties before leaving the door, count those hours also. The same applies to returning home with specific duties to perform afterward. If you are part of a group the group lead should turn in your hours to Toni; but it always pays to check with the lead.

If you are leading a GCWG function make sure everyone signs the "Volunteer Service Agreement". Signing this acknowledges you are not a federal employee, you are physically fit to do the tasks, your photo performing the tasks may become public domain, and most importantly to help assure you are covered by the USFS liability and injury compensation.

This only applies to GCWG members, non-members should not do any work or participate in any USFS volunteer functions. In addition to the volunteer hours and cabin hosting we also supported the USFS via a cash contribution. This contribution was in the form of purchasing signs the Forest Service installed in the wilderness. These signs were needed to better inform the public and help reduce illegal camping activities. We also purchased two crosscut saws for the Forest Service to use in maintaining the trails. The total cash contribution came to under \$1000. (See President's Letter page 2.)

Upcoming Events

Fall Meeting: Sunday 11/5/17. Rowley Room, YMCA Snow Mountain Ranch 6PM

White Deer Party Saturday 1/13/18 Rowley Room, YMCA Snow Mountain Ranch. 5 PM

Volunteer Opportunities

Trail Maintenance: Join a core group for trail maintenance. The core group will be led by Jack Reichert.

Hike Leader: Contact Joyce Claire and lead your favorite summer hike.

GCWG is a Service Organization.



GCWG members are requested to do at least 4 days of service per year. There are many unique ways to fulfill this responsibility. For example, Trail Head Hosting or volunteer to help in the Sulphur Ranger District Office. Numbers matter! It is very important to take the time to report your hours. You can report your hours using the on-line reporting form.

Navigate to the GCWG.org page -- Click on Volunteer Hours. Scroll down to the bottom and find: To download an Individual Volunteer Hour Reporting Form click here: [Ind. Volunteer Hours Report](#). Click on the green lettering. This will open the box to save the Microsoft Word document to your computer in a file named ivolhrsprt. Complete the form with the date of your activity, name of your activity and number of hours volunteered either in the Man or Woman hours column. At the end of each Quarter email the completed form to Toni Wujek at [Volunteer Hour coordinator](#) (this link is also on the GCWG.org Volunteer Hours page)

Thank You Chase Green and All 2017 Wilderness Rangers



Chase Green provides great insight into the thoughts of a wilderness ranger:

1. Public land agencies like the Forest Service are able to carry out work that private enterprises would either be unwilling to perform or work that they would tend to carry out unsustainably. Budgetary issues and multi-use land concerns aside, the Forest Service is not forced to compromise in its pursuit of some higher cause because it is not a profit engine.

2. In many ways I find the notion of "wilderness" to be poorly formulated and based on outmoded understandings of both history and ecology. However, the places graced with the term always share one thing: an uncanny ability to facilitate the nourishment and development of the soul. "Wildernesses" are places I escape to where I can cut myself off from direct engagement with social, academic, and financial concerns and simply reflect on, well, anything. They are places that I can escape to and engage directly with my world, where existence is raw and the only thing standing between myself and my next meal is a reckoning with my own willpower.

3. Serving as a wilderness ranger forced me to "walk the walk" of understanding nature, as it were. I no longer see wilderness through the lens of the (mostly bad) nature writing that is common on park visitor center shelves. During my time in Granby, wilderness was not a romanticized notion, hundreds of miles away. It was a fact of life - a state of mind. I will not claim to have lived that fact long enough to have gained a deep understanding of what wilderness means to the world and to myself. However, I had bright, albeit brief, visions of what it might be that inspired me to search for longer, steeper trails in pursuit of a better understanding.

4. The only way for anyone, young or old, to ever learn to appreciate the wilderness is to literally sob, bleed, and sweat because of it. It is easy to enjoy panoramic photos taken in wilderness areas. Immersing yourself deep in the woods for days, however, is difficult, frequently unattractive to the uninitiated, and an activity inaccessible to many people. But the first time someone experiences coming over the ridgeline after a tough climb, or sitting around the campfire listening to the other hikers bare their souls and all the meaning they feel, or is truly present for a sunrise they are changed, inevitably, for the better.

5. Anyone who claims to be an outdoors-man should advocate for more people to have deeper, more meaningful encounters with the great outdoors in all capacities. Regardless of whether Americans are moving to or away from our remaining isolated areas, they will not care about their protection without a deep and abiding love for the places. If a million more people were to move to western Colorado and bring a love of the wild with them, they would ensure that their new home was preserved.

ANRA Pass information for Cabin Hosts

Please do not void or tear up ANRA passes. We have prepaid for them, so it is like discarding dollars. Be sure a visitor needs/wants/can pay for (cash or check) the pass before you write it out.

Please do not take an ANRA pass as payment for a backcountry permit. It is not ok to staple a day use pass to application in lieu of collecting cash or check payment.

President's Letter (continued from page 1)

The September 24 board meeting resulted in a couple of significant items that will impact everyone. Some of the Monarch and Junco cabin hosts have giving the public inconsistent or incorrect information. Since we are representing the Granby Forest Service office this reflects negatively on them. Some of the public (incorrectly, but do anyway) think we work for the Forest Service. To help eliminate these issues ALL members performing cabin hosting will have to attend an ANNUAL orientation, conducted by Andy Borek (or other USFS employee)... no exceptions. These orientations will be offered multiple times a year as needed, including the spring membership meeting. The wilderness rules change and it is always good to keep current and get a refresher each year. Also, I am sure Andy will make it an interesting presentation each year, that we will all look forward to attending.

We are eliminating the weekly "Orientation Hikes" and replacing them with weekly "Light Trail Maintenance hikes". Each person will need to bring along a tool (pruner, small saw, loppers, etc.) and as we are walking the trail plan to spend a few extra minutes (15-30) doing easy trail work. Most will be surprised at how much better the trails look with just this small effort.

This year we did not get in much heavy duty wilderness trail work. The most significant was clearing Baker Pass area from a big avalanche the previous winter. We had six GCWG volunteers and we cleared a lot of trail. We were lucky in that the Forest Service was able to use the Rocky Mountain National Park roads and drive us close to the work area (saved us about 4 miles of steep uphill climbing). We drove along the Grand Ditch for a few miles.... what a unique view and experience!

Snow Mountain Ranch (SMR) has a large demand for the Rowley room and other rooms, especially on Sunday afternoon, and this is stretching their staff. Starting in 2018 they will charge a fee to use the Rowley room. However, after talking with their coordinator, if we are flexible on our dates they may drop the fee. In the future, some of our meetings may occur on Saturday evening or possibly Friday evening. The board will decide the dates based on availability and amount of the fee. We may also move the meeting place to another SMR location or an entirely new location.

Ron Sears Gives New Meaning to Sears Appliances!

Ron Sears is our official GCWG alfresco chef and kitchen manager...and he has the monogrammed apron to prove it! For years we have relied upon Ron to bring his outdoor cooking equipment to the spring camping trips and his smoker (Ron says, "We called them 'hog roasters' in Iowa.") to the AA Barn for GCWG summer picnics. 2017 has been no exception. Ron hauled his camp kitchen gear to Snow Canyon State Park in April. Always one to surprise us (and sometimes surprise Jan, too) with new items he has added to his collection, Ron brought an 18x36 griddle he had custom made for his grill, so we could make french toast, sausage and bacon for a crowd. Speaking of crowds, Ron smoked about 85 lbs of pork for the 90 people who attended the summer picnic. He was at the AA Barn at the crack of dawn, put the meat on at 5 am and tended it throughout the day. The results were melt-in-your-mouth DELICIOUS.

Ron is a retired high school social studies teacher and Jan is a retired vocal music teacher and talented pianist. Ron first came to Grand County as a kid, but he and Jan moved here fulltime in 2003. After building their home overlooking Lake Granby, they were ready to get involved. Herd and Yvonne Clark invited them to a GCWG meeting and the rest is history. Ron has gone on numerous encampment trips and led the most recent ones. For several years he ferried GCWG members across Lake Granby to the easiest access point for Knight Ridge trail work. Ron has helped install kiosks, hosts at Monarch cabin with Jan, and has been involved in many other activities. Asked what he would tell prospective members, Ron says, "If you are new to the area, joining GCWG is a fabulous way to meet new and interesting people and become a contributing resident of Grand County. The organization's structure allows you to participate at the level you choose. And there is great satisfaction in seeing the results of our efforts to maintain and preserve wilderness lands through our hands on work and educating the public."

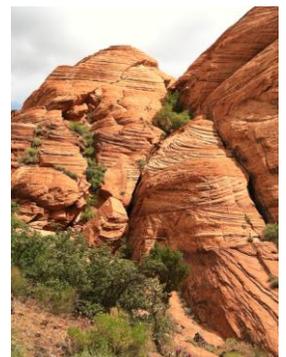


Ron Sears



Snow Canyon State Park, Utah

The site for the 2017 spring camping trip was "discovered" in 2016 by the advanced scouting party of Ron and Jan Sears. They suggested it would be an ideal new destination for our annual retreat from Grand County snow and mud...and it was!!!! In fact, the Navajo sandstone landscape at Snow Canyon (near Saint George) is breathtaking and the park's Quail group campsite offers 5 star amenities. 32 members joined in the fun of shared hikes, shared meals and campsite camaraderie. Cacti and other native flowers were in gorgeous bloom and some members were even lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a desert tortoise (although admittedly most of us got our best "look" at the tortoise through the camera work of Dick Sunderland). The spring camping trip...there is no better way for new members to immerse themselves in the GCWG group, for seasoned members to welcome new ones and reunion with old friends, and for everyone to discover the unexpected. Planning for the 2018 spring camping trip is already underway. Carolyn and Dick Sunderland and Dick Sprague and Donna Ferber have volunteered to be our trip coordinators...stay tuned for details.



2016 Registration Box Report Stephen Lee

The Grand County Wilderness Group has been monitoring and maintaining registration boxes for trailheads leading to Wilderness Areas for the US Forest Service for 17 years. There are now a total of 11 registration boxes that are maintained by the GCWG. A volunteer provides registration sheets, retrieves them and tabulates the numbers for that trail. These numbers are given to another volunteer who pulls them together and writes a report for the Forest Service. This report has been identified as being very important in Forest Service planning and funding.

Looking at the registration box data for 2016, wow, Monarch Lake has jumped again! After leveling off in 2015, numbers are higher again for 2016. And not a small increase, but almost 2300 additional folks visited Monarch this past year.

After showing significant increases in 2015, the Bowen & Baker sites show a leveling off in 2016, even somewhat of a decrease for Bowen. This is hard to explain. We had hoped that more folks were being redirected from Monarch to these Never Summer gateway trails, but the numbers don't bear this out. We are confident that the numbers at both Bowen & Baker are indicative of the actual foot traffic through those areas.

Junco seems to be holding fairly steady to slightly decreasing, 3688 in 2015 vs. 3530 in 2016. The Junco registration box is one of the few where we have data for all of the past 17 years. There have been some up and down fluctuations, but overall numbers have been fairly steady. Trailhead numbers for the other sites seem to be holding steady as well. The numbers for Devils Thumb Trail did increase for 2016. It does seem that more day hikers are making the tough climb up to the Thumb. The other exception is Roaring Fork, which showed an increase for 2016, 1021 visitors versus 860 in 2015. After leveling off in 2015, Monarch overnights showed another increase for 2016. Looks like Monarch will continue to be the most popular site in the County for the foreseeable future. Overnights for Baker were higher for 2016, while those for Bowen were lower. This does match the overall numbers we discussed earlier.

The overnight visits at Roaring Fork Trailhead have shown an increase as well. This could be just a natural fluctuation from year to year. However, this area does seem to be getting more usage, both day hikes and overnights. It will be interesting to see if this trend holds for 2017. And overnight visits to the Vasquez area doubled from 2015 to 2016, but these numbers are relatively small, so hard to say if this is significant. More information that is easy to pull from the visitor sheets is the number of through-hikers traveling the Continental Divide Trail. Bowen Trailhead recorded 89 hikers on the CDT, while Monarch recorded 91. And for the first year, we have a report of 59 through-hikers for the Roaring Fork area. Does the Roaring Fork number include some of the CDT hikers that passed through Monarch? It

is impossible to say. What is probably most important is that we are picking up higher numbers for CDT hikers, whether they are hiking from border to border or just some of the segments. According to the Continental Divide Coalition, 46 hikers completed the entire CDT in 2016. The Coalition indicates that approximately 150 hikers do some part of the CDT each year.

So what ideas and conclusions can we draw from the Registration Box data for 2016? We talked about increased visitation into the Never Summer Wilderness in 2015. This past year the numbers seemed to have leveled off, though Baker did show an increase of around 200 overnights compared to 2015. Destinations such as Bowen, Blue, and Parika Lake seem to be driving this increase.

Monarch Lake still has the highest attendance, both day use and overnight. The numbers have been highest at Monarch since 2000 when the first trailhead data was recorded. A lot of this can be attributed to Monarch's easy accessibility and lower elevation, which does allow for visitation outside the summer tourist season. And of course, fishing is a major attraction at Monarch, as well as climbing in the Indian Peaks.

Once again the other trailhead sites seem to be "holding their own". Numbers are relatively steady with no major decreases in attendance numbers. Junco's overall visitation seems to have changed very little over the last 17 years, but note that overnight numbers went from 74 in 2014 to 245 in 2015 to 343 in 2016. We attributed the increase in Junco overnight visits last year to the rehabilitation of the Columbine Lake Trail. It will be interesting to see if this trend holds into the future.

PS: A follow-up to last fall's report on Buddy Backpacker. Buddy passed through the Roaring Fork trailhead last fall and allowed us to share his story in the Fall 2016 Newsletter. Checking his blog: <https://buddybackpacker.com/blogs/blog/cdt-complete> "On September 18th, 2017 Buddy Backpacker and his family completed the 3050 mile Continental Divide Trail. This completed a long journey that has spanned almost 8000 miles and last more than 5 years. Buddy and Crew began hiking in April of 2016 at the Crazy Cook Monument on the Mexico border. They hiked almost 2000 miles in 2016, ending that part of their trip at Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park. In 2017 the trio completed the last 1000+ miles southbound from Canada from July through September 18th when they finished back at Old Faithful. At 9 years old Buddy is the youngest person to have completed the Continental Divide Trail." Check out the blog for some cool pictures.

Thank you Doris!

Many thanks to Doris Cline for providing articles and pictures for the Fall Newsletter.

Solar Panel Installed at Monarch Cabin

Until 2014, the Sulphur Ranger District office in Granby was open for visitors, backcountry permit issuance and landline calls from Monarch cabin on Saturdays and Sundays. Since that time, Monarch cabin hosts have been exclusively reliant on a radio for communication with the Forest Service on the weekends. For a couple of years there has been talk of getting a solar panel to charge the battery, which powers the Forest Service radio. Such has been the arrangement at Junco cabin for many years and it has worked well.

August 7, 2017, marked a "Monarch milestone", when a small solar panel was installed by Jack Reichert and Bob Saint. GCWG purchased the waterproof solar panel, having been given USFS/ANRA approval to mount it on the cabin roof. This should ensure more reliable radio capability, since the batteries will remain charged, instead of needing to be swapped out for recharging.

On weekends, dependable radio contact between Monarch and Junco cabins, USFS and ANRA personnel in the field and local emergency services is vital for safety, urgent questions, worrisome situations and the coordination of backcountry permit sales. Note: Charging the battery with solar power does not change anything regarding our use of the radio.

Out of the mouths of kids: On Daisy Demolition Day, a mother and her two young daughters went to Monarch Lake for a hike. The older daughter, about age 7, was overheard asking her mom, "What are all those people in blue (GCWG) shirts doing? Pushing up daisies????"

GCWG Fun Fact!

GCWG sold a record 804 ANRA passes at Monarch cabin this season.



GCWG Hike near Hot Sulphur Springs



Training

Labor Day Hosting at Monarch Lake

Ed Bittle and Barb Madden-Bittle and George and Pam Armstrong were the hosts at Monarch, Labor Day 9/4/17. We were greeted with this "mess" upon arrival after an obvious bear visit. We laughingly said there are NEW duties to add to cabin hosting. But, we discovered too late that there are gloves in the closet. The bear destroyed the functionality of the receptacles. The Recycling barrel got left outside and of course, it was dumped too.



We had a very nice day....the haze from the fires north and west of us was very visible as is in Grand Lake.



Eclipse begins in Casper, WY



Full Eclipse in Casper, WY

2018 Membership. Join Today. Pay your \$20 dues to Grand County Wilderness Group PO Box 4116, Granby, CO 80446. Send change of email, address or phone information to Bob Saint at this same address.

(Application to Join: Fill in information below and send this form with payment or pay on-line at GCWG.org.)

Name:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Interests (Please refer to the activity list on page 6 and make contact accordingly):

Special Thanks to Chas McConnell at [McConnell Printing](#) for his help with printing this newsletter.

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Grand County Wilderness 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
- Join a Daisy Days project and help eradicate noxious weeds
- Pollinator seeding 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, hat, vest to bring awareness

Protection

- Construct signage
- Update trail bulletin boards

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