



Wilderness Act turns 60!!!

Grand County Wilderness Group celebrates 30 years

Fall Issue 2024

www.gcwg.org

Andy Borek - Interim President, GCWG

I'd like to take this opportunity to address some great successes over the summer and upcoming challenges for the Grand County Wilderness Group. It probably should come as no surprise, but we had our largest year ever for public interactions at both Monarch and Junco cabins. We recorded over 20,000 interactions! That is an incredible amount of work and a significant value to protecting wilderness in Grand County. With the Arapahoe National Forest, along with most public land agencies moving over to recreation.gov to make reservations for camping and other recreation sites (including Indian Peaks Wilderness backcountry permits,) there is no longer an opportunity for direct face to face interaction between the hiker receiving their permit and the local Forest Service office who issues that permit.

What does that mean for us? It means that the first individual in any type of uniform or acting as a representative for the Forest Service is usually going to be us standing at the cabin at the trailhead. This makes our efforts incredibly important to the overall protection of the wilderness and insurance that hikers are knowledgeable about current regulations, issues, and are informed on necessary conditions within the wilderness. Our cabin hosting provides a vital link between individuals entering the backcountry and their conduct when in the wilderness. I appreciate all the hard work that all cabin hosts have done over the summer and I'm very proud to have protected the wilderness in this fashion.

Of course, with any good work there will come additional challenges. The Wilderness Group is currently at a point in its history where we have a dire need for new members. As you may or may not be aware, The U.S. Forest Service recently announced a national hiring freeze for *all seasonal staff* and announced it won't be hiring external candidates for *any permanent* position within the agency in the 2025 fiscal year. Due to a (rumored) close to \$700+ Billion budget shortfall- the U.S. Forest service will not be hiring for the upcoming summer season. What does this mean for the wilderness and the Sulphur Ranger District?

This means *NO WILDERNESS RANGERS* besides Katie Oliver and any untrained interns she may be able to hire. Although intern labor relies on available funds, and there is little hope for additional funding. It also means *NO ANRA STAFF* to manage parking at Monarch, enforce regulations or clear trails.

This is a national issue, and nationwide there will be significant impacts felt by recreation communities like ours. It has the potential to catastrophically affect any needed work, annual or deferred, next summer season.

We do know that partner organizations like Headwaters Trails Alliance, Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, etc will be assisting to the best of their ability. We should plan to do our part. Recruitment of GCWG members, staffing the cabins as much as possible, and getting into the backcountry to assist will all be high priorities. Please consider helping more in 2025 - the USFS needs us more than ever.

Upcoming Events

Fall Meeting – November 10, 2024 – 5:30

Bring your favorite retro dish

- Membership Dues are due

In 2024 GCWG shifted their hosting dates:

Monarch - Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday;

Junco – Monday, Wednesday, Thursday. We will update if 2025 is the same.

Planning on a great 2025 season. More Details in the Spring meeting.

Andy Borek – Interim President, GCWG (Cont)

To combat this incredible labor shortfall, the Wilderness Group will have to step in as much as possible and in new ways. Over the winter, the board will endeavor to launch significant focuses on recruitment of younger members that are interested in serving alongside backcountry workers in the wilderness. In addition, we will be starting a much needed and critical social media presence. The hope of these efforts is to display and encourage younger individuals to step up to serve both their community, and the wilderness as volunteers. In addition to backcountry volunteer opportunities, we will also need to recruit additional individuals for staffing cabins and performing other trailhead hosting activities.

This winter and next summer will be one of the best opportunities we have had in recent memory to fill a significant need for the Sulphur Ranger District. If you have friends, neighbors, cousins, random work associates they are all potential members. I encourage you to reach out to those you know that have a passion for public lands and invite them to join Grand County Wilderness Group as we continue to assist the US Forest Service and protect wilderness in Grand County.

There are several openings on the GCWG Board. Please consider volunteering your time and join the Board

John Hughes: Into the Wilderness
By Eric Sandstrom

Two winters ago, a bitter wind took the snowfall sideways, dogging our efforts to ski the Lynch trail at Snow Mountain YMCA. Our cheeks froze, eyes watered, noses ran. There was no sunshine, which made the trail difficult to follow. Blustery gusts blew parts of our conversation off into the woods.

We kept going, John Hughes and I. Anybody can do easy. We relished the difficult.



That morning back in 2023 was spent loving every moment of Mother Nature's ornery ways while talking about mistakes we'd made in our lives. We regretted our bad decisions and how our families were affected. "It was hard," he yelled into the wind. I agreed it was hard.

John Hughes was a man for all seasons. A competitive cyclist, prolific writer, and board member of Grand County Wilderness Group, John also was my good friend. We skied together and met for coffee every few weeks. Last February, John and I sat across a table from each other at the Granby library playing a game of chess. It was proving to be a long game so we agreed to take a break and resume our match the following week. But that never happened. John died five days later in a Denver hospital.

Now, eight months after he passed away, John's voice comes to my mind. His words often raised questions. Good? No? Why? When we talked at the Roastery coffee shop, surrounded by others slurping from paper cups, John and I quite easily managed to solve the world's problems in the course of 90 minutes. Well, at least we often left the shop feeling better about things in our own lives than when we had arrived.

As 70-ish guys whose youthful adventures had become romanticized in the rear-view mirror, we shared an appreciation of what it means to push mind and body beyond what often seemed virtually impossible. As anyone who does endurance sports knows, they create a spiritual sensation. I believe that sensation derives from human wilderness.

According to the Wilderness Act of 1964, "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man..." (That 60-year-old law should be amended to include "woman").

The fact that John had biked across America, among his other exploits, and I had run marathons doesn't tell you much more than the fact that we lived to sweat and sweated to live. We sought out a mystical type of wilderness that didn't meet the conventional definition but still needed to be protected within ourselves. Like that brutal winter day we skied together, I'll always cherish the memory. It was hard.

I love places where there are crowds of trees.

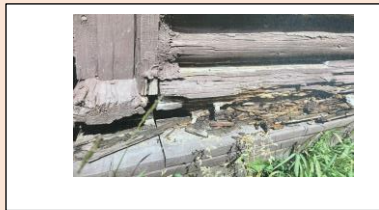
Nitan Namdeo

Like us on Facebook:

<https://facebook.com/grandcountywildernessgroup>

Junco Cabin Needs a Little Love Submitted by Holly Whitten:

Grand County Wilderness Group has been hosting the Junco Cabin since the summer of 2001. Many of you have had the opportunity to spend time at the cabin greeting visitors and sharing valuable wilderness information. Now, as you can see from the picture below, it needs a little help.



For those of you who haven't seen the framed history hanging in the cabin; here's the story:

History of the Junco Cabin – as told by Jack Placchi to Roger Shaw, 02/17/04

The cabin started its life as a guest cabin at the Double A Bar Ranch. This was a dude ranch on the Colorado River just below what is now the Shadow Mountain Lake dam. There were several such cabins on the site along with the barn which still remains there. No doubt the ranch attracted lots of fisher-people because of its location on the river. Judging by the condition of some of the logs of the cabin, I (RS) would say that the cabins probably go back before the dam which was constructed in the early 1940s.

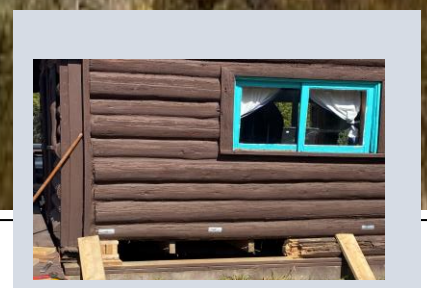
Soon after 1990, the Forest Service acquired the property in a land swap and sold off all of the cabins except this one which was saved specifically for use as an information cabin. Its original configuration had an attached outhouse in the general area where the double doors are now. It was in such bad shape that it was not moved. In about 1994, the Continental Divide Trails Alliance had grant money enough to move the cabin to its present location near Junco Lake. A crane was hired and brought to the site. As it started to lift the cabin with straps underneath, it also started to sink into the ground and tilt. It was necessary to use the crane's hydraulics to right it before proceeding. Still Jack's recollection is that it only took about 2 hours to get it onto the truck which would carry it. The cabin itself held together very well; only a couple of pieces of chinking came off in the move.

In preparation for the move, a foundation had been prepared at Junco Lake. The actual placement onto that foundation went smoothly. The wheelchair accessible ramp, deck and double doors were added later.

However, the cabin did not achieve its planned destiny as a functioning information source until the Grand County Wilderness Group came along. In the summer of 2001, that group began staffing it on weekends and brought its journey to fruition.

A GCWG crew went out on NPLD and did some work to shore up the structure. Hopefully, this will hold it through the winter.

It is going to take some work to keep the cabin safe and sound for the future. The USFS has determined that they will not have funding for this maintenance. The GCWG board decided to do what we can to assist. Check the DONATE button on GCWG.org to make donations for the repairs. We will need funding for estimates and the actual labor. If you can help GCWG preserve the cabin, please go to GCWG.org and make a donation. The webpage will designate that it is for the cabin.



Kids and Leave No Trace. Excerpts from LNT.ORG

Research Reveals 30 Minutes of Leave No Trace Training increases kid's connection to nature. Here are a few activities to teach some of the Leave No Trace principles.

1. Dispose of Waste Properly

Spot trash as you walk or hike. Have the kids guess how long it takes for each article to decompose

Use this list as a reference.

Orange or Banana Peel	Up to 2 years
Wool Socks	1 to 5 years
Gum	5 years
Plastic Bags	10 to 20 years
Nylon Fabric	30 to 40 years
Aluminum Can	80 to 100 years
Glass Bottles	1,000,000 years

2. Wildlife

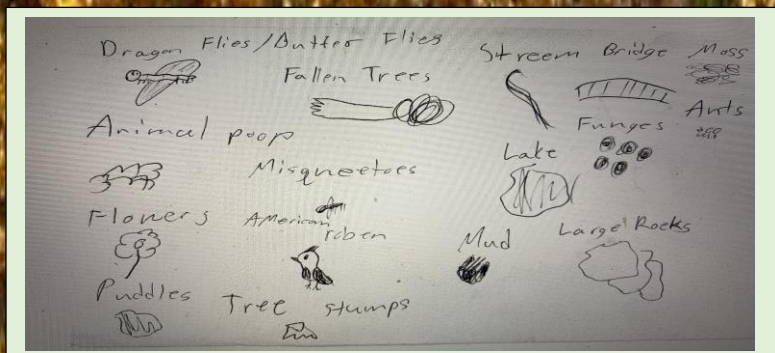
How far away from wildlife should you be? It varies! Cover one eye, stick your thumb up and your arm out straight, and try and cover the animal with your thumb. Still see it? That means you're too close! Back up and try again. If there is no wildlife in sight, use a stuffed animal to practice. Then pretend to be the animal yourself!

3. Pooping in the Woods

It's important to instill the backcountry pooping basics in your kids to set them up for a lifetime of success when it comes to disposing of waste properly and being considerate of other visitors. Here are some tips:

- You should always poop at least 200 feet from a lake, stream or trail. 200 Feet is about 70 big adult steps. Help the child estimate with his own steps.
- Make sure to carry out your toilet paper to eliminate 'forest flowers' and other debris. Turn it into a craft day – have your kids decorate their ziploc with colorful tape, sharpies, or markers. Talk to them about why it's best to carry your toilet paper out.
- Don't forget the hand sanitizer and explain why it is important to use it.

Here is some of the art left by the kids in the backpacks.



Reading Suggestions

During our Fall Picnic at the AA Barn, we were fortunate to have Ralph Swain, retired USFS wilderness ranger, present a very informative talk on the history of the Wilderness Act and importance of the wilderness and GCWG's impact.



Ralph left us some reading suggestions:

Arthur Carhart: Wilderness Prophet by Tom Wolf

Wilderness Forever: Howard Zahniser and the Path to the Wilderness Act by Mark Harvey and William Cronon

Wilderness and the American Mind by Roderick by Frazier Nash and Char Miller



Gary Piper donated a beautiful photograph which was given in a drawing. Tickets were earned by volunteering.



HOW TO BE INVOLVED

There are plenty of ways to be of service. We hope that you became part of GCWG because you care about wild places with wild creatures in Grand County and intend to help preserve them. NOW is the time to make choices for your involvement. After each we have included the point person for that activity. If you want to explore some of the options below, ask the point person* or another member. Here are some examples of opportunities for your reference:

1. Pay your annual \$20 dues to GCWG
2. Consider joining the GCWG Board
3. Host days at Junco Cabin – Beth Collins
4. Host days at Monarch Cabin-Monica Sandstrom
5. Help open or close up a cabin at the start or end of hosting season
6. Hike a wilderness trail ANY DAY, wearing your GCWG shirt. Report your hours via the website form
7. Assist in the backcountry- Andy Borek
8. Adopt a trail registration box and retrieve the sign in sheets- Stephen Lee
9. Help calculate the data from sign in sheets-Monica Sandstrom
10. Take digital photos and/or write an article for the GCWG newsletter-Holly Whitten
11. Help update signage and trailhead bulletin boards as needed-HTA/USFS
12. Work on trail maintenance and other projects-HTA
13. Staff the GCWG information booth at community events- Andy Borek
14. Submit ideas and information to be shared on GCWG website and social media-Kaylee Borek
15. Uproot noxious weeds wherever you find them
16. Keep track and report your individual GCWG volunteer hours-Mike Braddy (Cabin hosting and group activities are captured through the sign up system or activity leader)
17. Work on a National Public Lands Day and/or Colorado Public Lands Day project-Monica Sandstrom
18. Pick up monofilament fishing line on shorelines and deposit in recycling tubes
19. Purchase and wear GCWG shirts, sweatshirts and hats to spark conversation and interest. Carry GCWG business cards to distribute.
20. Watch for emails from the Board for one time projects needing volunteers

*Many of the point people are Board members. Their email contact is available on the back of this newsletter.

Make sure to check the activity calendar for current activities. GCWG.org

“Forest Bathing”

by Doris Klein

(Before you start picturing “forest bathing” ...read on. It’s probably NOT what you would imagine!)

We usually enter a forest or the wilderness with a plan...to hike a trail, reach a waterfall, go further/faster than we have beforecamp at a pre-reserved campsite. In other words, we plan to exert ourselves with a goal or destination in mind.

“Forest bathing” is quite the opposite. The term shinrin-yoku was coined in 1980’s Japan in response to workplace stress and the demands of fast-paced life. The concept is rooted in Shinto and Buddhist beliefs, including an aesthetic sensitivity to nature and reverence for living in harmony with the natural world. “Forest bathing” is the mindful/meditative practice of immersing yourself in nature in a slow, quiet, and intentional way... letting the sights, sounds, smells of your surroundings “wash over you”. The only requirements are: a peaceful treed location, your time and attention (and a willingness to leave distractions and ambitions behind). “Forest bathing” is a national pastime in Japan and its practice is being embraced in the US and elsewhere.

Whereas rigorous exercise is meant to raise your heart rate and breathing; the only thing “forest bathing” is meant to elevate is your awareness/consciousness. Each approach to being in nature has its own physical and psychological benefits. Exercise gets the heart pumping and excites, “forest bathing” lowers blood pressure and heartrate and calms. Why not incorporate both into your outdoor experiences? Go for that hike, trail run or camping trip, but also allow yourself opportunities to pause and just sit, breathe, observe and listen.

BTW: A secondary goal for the Japanese government’s heavy investment in “forest bathing” as a wellness strategy was to protect Japan’s forests and inspire stewardship of the land. Now doesn’t THAT sound like a familiar aim.) For more information google “forest bathing” (aka “forest therapy”)

Special thanks to McConnell Printing for helping print this newsletter



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 monofilament (fish line) and deposit in a collection tube
- Work on a National Public Lands Day project
- Help with Wilderness monitoring while hiking trails

Improvement

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

Public Understanding

- Host Junco and Monarch cabins
- Hike wilderness trails
- Become a trail ambassador
- Take digital photos to share
- Staff the GWCG booth at a community event
- Wear your tee shirt or hat to bring awareness

Protection

- Help to maintain trails
- Construct signage

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2024-25 Membership. Yearly membership renewals of \$20 per household were 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