

Grand County Wilderness Group



Spring Issue 2013

www.gcwg.org

Letter from Nick Schade

The summer is fast approaching and the Grand County Wilderness Group (GCWG) and the Forest Service (FS) have several exciting opportunities to get outside to enjoy and benefit wilderness in Grand County. In addition to cabin hosting, daisy demolition, adopting trail head registration boxes, trail work and the other projects GCWG typically does; some exciting new opportunities are occurring in 2013.

On June 15th GCWG and the FS will hold a one day wilderness trail training event. The trails training will consist of three classes; a basic trails maintenance class, an introduction to hand saws course, and a trails condition assessment class. Each class will last approximately two hours and small groups will rotate through the classes so everyone will have an opportunity to take each class if they wish. We are hoping to offer a guest speaker during our lunch break and free camping for those who wish to stay after the training for an informal fun night of camping.

One of the other interesting offerings this summer will be our Weekend Wilderness Steward Trips. During June through September, one weekend a month in each of the four wilderness areas in Grand County, a FS Wilderness Rangers and GCWG will hold an overnight trip into a wilderness area with a small volunteer group to complete a project. Projects will vary by wilderness area and groups will be doing things such as visitor education, surveying for wildlife, and completing trail work. These are just a few of the many projects and events that the FS and GCWG are collaborating on in 2013. For more information please visit the GCWG website or give the FS a call at (970) 887-4133.

GCWG has been working with the FS over the winter months to not only collaborate on projects but to submit two grants for funding to benefit Grand County Wilderness. Funding was secured to provide for two wilderness rangers to collect data, clear trail, enforce wilderness regulations, educate visitors, and work with GCWG to complete projects in all of the wilderness areas. Funding was also obtained for new wilderness access portal signs with wilderness safety, regulations and other information for both Byers and Vasquez Wilderness Areas. A small team consisting of several GCWG members and a few FS members has begun working on sign design for the wilderness portal signs.

We at the FS have really enjoyed working with the GCWG and are excited about our continued partnership. We are delighted to be able to have two wilderness rangers this summer, in part, as a result of volunteer contributions from GCWG that provide in-kind matching contributions that make it possible to obtain the grant to fund wilderness rangers. Thanks from all of us at the FS for your efforts in improving wilderness in Grand County!

Upcoming events

- **Arapaho Birding Trip**, Friday May 17
We will car pool from Windy Gap, leaving about 8AM for a trip to the Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge. We plan on having lunch in Walden before returning home. Bring binoculars and a bird book if you have them. We usually take a short walk on a boardwalk through a small wetland, and then drive the auto tour route checking the ponds for birds. In the past we have seen many interesting birds including Phalaropes, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Black-Crowned Night Herons, Ruddy Ducks, Bald Eagles and many more. We have also been lucky enough to see Moose and Pronghorn. Join us for this annual event. For more information call Al Rothenbach 887-9042
- **Trail Training Day**, Saturday, June 15
This is a one day event. Three classes will be given; Basic Trail Maintenance, Handsaw Use, and Trail Condition Assessment Training. Each class (workshop) will be 1 1/2 to 2 hours. To sign up, email Jim Magill.
- **Daisy Demolition Day**, Wednesday, July 31
Meet at Monarch Lake with your weed removal tools, For more information e-mail: Webmaster@gcwg.org
- **Zion Camping Trip**, May 7 - 10
This trip to Zion National Park is already full. If you are interested in these trips, make sure to keep track on-line and sign up fast. For more information e-mail: Webmaster@gcwg.org
- **Public Lands Day**, Saturday, September 28, 2013. See page 6 for details.
- **TBD**
The official website for the Grand County Wilderness Group is <http://www.gcwg.org> ! Make sure you visit often to make sure you have the latest information on what is going on this summer!!!

Sign up for Cabin Hosting.

There are only a few spots left. If you haven't hosted a cabin before, be sure to attend one of the orientations.

- **Monarch Lake Cabin Hosting Orientation:** Wednesday, May 29, 10am.
- **Junco Cabin Hosting Orientation:** Saturday, July 13, 10am.

Volunteers Needed

If you are interested in any of the following projects, please call Brock McCormick USFS (970-887-4100)

Adopt an Osprey nest: This involves keeping an eye on one of the 50 or so nests in our area. You check on your nest every couple of weeks to count the number of bird eggs, report when they hatch, and report any issues such as fishing line or other disturbances.

Monitor a blue bird box: There are about 150 boxes in the area from Hot Sulphur to Tabernash and Granby to Grand Lake. Every Sept/Oct these need to be repaired and cleaned. During that time you document whether bluebirds or swallows are using the nest.

Monofilament Recovery & Recycling Program: There are several bins in the area. We need someone to adopt a bin, visit them 2-3 times each summer and take the material to Brock for recycling.

Help with pollinator seeding project.

Check in for new opportunities throughout the year.

Christmas Tree Cutting, sponsored by the Forest Service, is one of the fun projects that GCWG volunteers have helped out with for several years. We work in pairs working as Smokey and his 'handler'. It is amazing how many people have a family tradition of a picture with Smokey as they cut their tree. Sometimes the 'kids' are dogs.



Want a true wilderness experience? Visit a yurt!

Seven GCWG members went to the Gould area on a fantastic snowshoe trip- perfect weather, perfect snow and wonderful scenery, not to mention the absolutely fun group!



We had to carry our gear less than 1/2 mile uphill to our yurt, a very cozy place designed for 9 but crowded with 7! Any movement within the yurt had to be coordinated with someone else, it seemed, and privacy - oh no- none of that! We took 3 - 4 hour treks, as well as a shorter trek the day we had to leave. What a beautiful area - just fantastic!

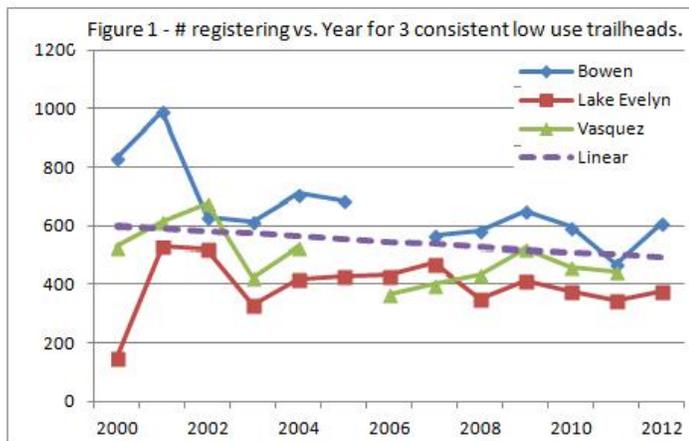


How are the Bees doing?

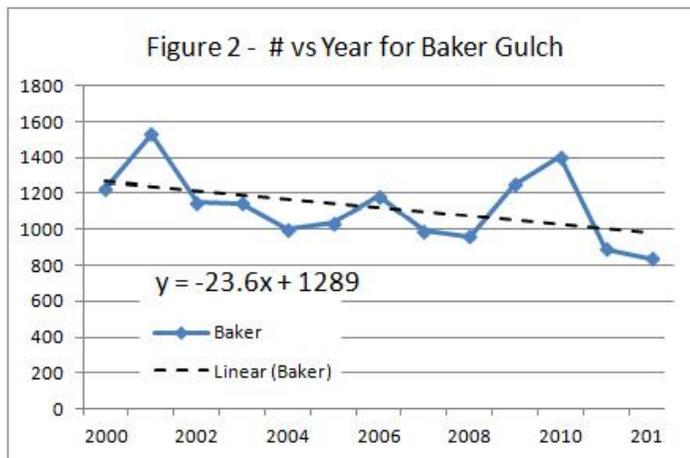
Bees are dying at an alarming rate. This 2013 harvest may be the worst honey harvest we've had in many years. Pesticides are killing our precious pollinators. I hope you're not planning on spraying your trees (or anything else) with pesticides this summer. Pesticides not only kill honeybees but also the wild field bees too. Keep our bees alive. I am looking for several hundred square acres that are not sprayed for my bees this summer. If you can help me, please send email Jean@WinterParkHoney.com.

Trailhead Registrations Trend Downward

GCWG has now been monitoring registration boxes for 13 years! One benefit of taking data over such a long period of time is that trends begin to show out of the scattered data. Such is the case for our lower use trailheads [All but Monarch Lake and Junco Lake]. Figure 1 shows the data for three trailheads for which the data collection has been pretty consistent.



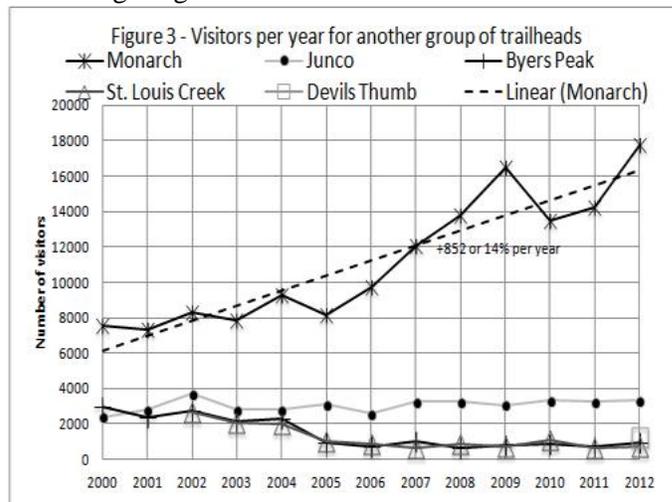
The downward trend of each set is apparent and quite similar. I have just estimated a trend line (labeled "Linear") which would indicate an average loss of 9 hikers or 1.5% per year. Another example is Baker Gulch trailhead, as shown in Figure 2.



Another feature for Baker is the hump for 2009 and 2010. Backpack Magazine ran an article about the Baker – Bowen loop in their May, 2009 issue. The hump can likely be attributed to that article but it appears to be pretty well forgotten over the last two years. Note that the article suggested going in Baker and out Bowen so the latter data does not show the hump but did likely see the increased use. Even leaving those two elevated points in, the linear fit to the data indicates a loss of almost 24 hikers or 1.8% per year. The Fraser Experimental Forest trails of St. Louis Creek & Lake and Byers Peak also show similar declines of 2.7% and 1.2% per year. Data has not been taken long enough on the Roaring Fork and Devils Thumb trailheads (Newly adopted in 2012) to yield trends yet.

If, however, you prefer to see increasing numbers, look no farther than Monarch Lake and Junco Lake trailheads, as shown in Figure 3. Here linear fits yield increases of 14.0% and 1.6% or 852 and 44 visitors per year,

respectively. These results taken together allow one to conclude with some confidence that the less well known trailheads within our database are showing a gradually decreasing usage.



What does it all mean? Perhaps there is a gradual decrease in the number of "serious" hikers, those who backpack and or take on multi-mile hikes, which is more than matched by those who want to enjoy a pretty "wild" place without too much effort. This would seem to relate to the declining fitness in the general population. Other possibilities are a trend in the recommendations from the USFS front desk or an increasing reluctance to tell the government any more than necessary. It will certainly be interesting to see what the next 13 years tell us.

Encampment Marches On!

by Roger Shaw

Encampment will happen once again. For newcomers, this is a backpack trip, not too far and not too fast since I'm getting old, with the feature that we hike into a gorgeous spot, set up camp and enjoy the surroundings for 2 full days and 3 nights before heading out again. My plan for our first trip is to return to Baker Pass. During the last trip, we saw more moose than we've ever seen before. We actually had to shoo them away from our campsite (which seemed to be their campsite for the summer). I've recently discovered an intriguing lake on the topo map that will make a nice destination for one of our full days. The lake appears to be as large as Parika Lake and is nestled in a cirque a bit below the tree line. There may even be some fish in the lake for you fisher-folk. Parkia Lake is about 3.2 miles beyond our camp and appears to be a rather easy tundra hike with a total uphill of 800'.

The hike up Baker Gulch to Baker Pass campsite in the Never Summer Wilderness is 5.6 miles with total uphill of 2340'. The trip is planned for the last week of July or the first week in August, depending on the schedules of those interested (probably during the week but that's negotiable in a low traffic area like this). For now just email Roger Shaw at ShawRW20@gmail.com if you are interested. If you have a preference as to which week or days you prefer, please include this information in your email.

Grand County Wilderness Group - You have joined a service organization and, holy moose, there are plenty of ways to serve.

We hope that you became part of GCWG because you care about wild places with wild creature in Grand County and intend to help preserve them. NOW is the time to make choices for your involvement. All you need to do is set aside the time and sign up. NO ONE WILL CALL, it is up to you to get out there and make a difference. Here's the list of opportunities just for you:

1. Host one day at Junco Cabin – set date with Mary Ann Grosword (970-726-4390)
2. Host one day at Monarch Cabin – same as above
3. Don't worry about knowing how to host a cabin. Toni Wujek always gives us a training session to start the season.
4. Open up and clean either cabin to start the season - call names above
5. Hike the wilderness trails ON WEEKENDS and report via website or USFS.
6. Lead a Friday hike of your choice – Ingrid Anderson (970-726-8617)
7. Adopt a registration box and retrieve the reports – Roger Shaw (970-726-4626)
8. Spreadsheet analysis of trail usage from registration boxes – call Roger
9. Take digital photographs for our bulletin boards, newsletter and historian.
10. Help construct signage – Jim Clair (970-887-9097)
11. Work on trail day once a year with the group – Doug Smith ((970-722-7680)
12. Pay my \$15 dues to Grand County Wilderness Group – PO Box 406 Tabernash, 80478
13. Send change of email or address or phone – Mike Braddy – PO Box 406 Tabernash, CO 80478
14. Wear your wilderness tee shirt or sweatshirt more often.
15. Staff the booth at the Art Affair for 2 hours
16. Consider backpacking with the Encampment group
17. Uproot noxious weeds wherever we can find them – Beth Collins (970-726-5423)
18. Join the TUTI gang and clear the Knight ridge trail – Roger Shaw (970-726-4626)
19. Record and report volunteer hours – Dawn Schoen (970-887-9494)
20. Update trailhead bulletin boards
21. Distribute our “business” cards
22. Contribute to this newsletter, next edition – Holly Whitten (WPHolly@aim.com)
23. Contact the Forest Service anytime – John Simmons JKSimmons@fs.fed.us
24. Work on National Public Lands Day
25. Purchase shirts AND vests at Grand Lake Craft Fair
26. Adopt an Osprey nest – Brock McCormick USFS (970-887-4100)
27. Monitor a blue bird box – Brock (970-887-4100)
28. Help with pollinator seeding project – Brock (970-887-4100)

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2012 dues are due. Only \$15: Send to Grand County Wilderness Group – PO Box 406 Tabernash 80478

Application Form (Fill in information below and send this form with payment.)

Name:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Interests (Please circle interests listed above and make contact accordingly):

What does Wilderness mean to you?

Please send feedback.

Part of the criteria for identifying areas with Wilderness-like characteristics used by NFS and BLM is that it provides:

"Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive, Unconfined Recreation - The area must offer a visitor the chance to avoid evidence of other people or provide for outstanding opportunities for primitive and an unconfined type of recreation activity like hiking, fishing, etc. Solitude or outstanding primitive recreation opportunities do not have to be available in all portions of the area. An area may possess outstanding opportunities through either the diversity of possible recreation opportunities in the area or the outstanding quality of one opportunity." Here are some quotes:

"To those devoid of imagination a blank place on the map is a useless waste; to others, the most valuable part."

— Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: With Other Essays on Conservation from Round River*

"Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity..."

— John Muir

"We need the tonic of wildness...At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature."

— Henry David Thoreau, *Walden: Or, Life in the Woods*



Columbine Lake
Photo by Dan Vasicek

"It had nothing to do with gear or footwear or the backpacking fads or philosophies of any particular era or even with getting from point A to point B. It had to do with how it felt to be in the wild. With what it was like to walk for miles with no reason other than to witness the accumulation of trees and meadows, mountains and deserts, streams and rocks, rivers and grasses, sunrises and sunsets. The experience was powerful and fundamental. It seemed to me that it had always felt like this to be a human in the wild, and as long as the wild existed it would always feel this way."

— Cheryl Strayed, *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail*

I would like to know what the wilderness experience means to you. As you hike through the wilderness this summer, think about it's meaning and write a little quote for me to include in our next newsletter. Attach a picture too if you want. You can e-mail it directly to me at wpholly@aim.com.



The End of the Rainbow
Fraser Valley – Photo by Dan Vasicek



Corona Pass (Photo by Dan Vasicek)

Public Lands Day, Saturday, September 28, 2013

SAVE THE DATE! Mark Your Calendar!

For many years, members of GCWG have joined other outdoors enthusiasts in Grand County in improving our public lands. We have built bridges, stripped logs, improved trails, planted trees, cleared river beds and many other projects in need of volunteer energy and muscle! The day begins with a light breakfast where we join a group of choice, grab our sack lunch, and move on to our project of the day. As a reward for your hard labor, we'll enjoy dinner, drinks, and entertainment courtesy of local merchants.

The next time you drive by SMR, be sure to notice the log lined trail and sturdy bridge crossing the field and wetlands to the west of Hwy 40. Many members of GCWG worked on that project and came away feeling good about our labor and developing friendships with people who share our concern about the environment.

Join us this year! Mark your calendar today! September 28, 2013. For more information contact Marianne or Pat Hogan, 970-531-9313. Related article - Ski-High News, Oct. 2, 2012, *Grand Turns Out in Force for Lands Day*

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
- Join TUTI
- 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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