

## ***ESWA SUMMER IN THE WILDERNESS***

It's high summer in the Wilderness, and our volunteers have been busy! Read the news from July - VWR patrols, TrailHead Hosts, sawyering, and more as we head into August.



### **BEFORE WE BEGIN**

Our **ANNUAL MEETING** is set for the first weekend in November. We are working hard on the details and finding a venue convenient for everyone. Deadlines for submissions to the 3rd annual **Photo Contest** (details [HERE](#)) and for nominations for the **Currie Craven Award** for Wilderness Stewardship (details [HERE](#)) will be in mid-October.

### **VOLUNTEER WILDERNESS RANGERS**

July 2021 has proven to be a busy month in the Wilderness.

In July, a total of **61 VWRs** made **125 patrols**. Altogether, they spent **632 hours**, covered **881 miles**, and contacted **5430 visitors** (359 (7%) of whom were backpackers). Those visitors had with them **490 dogs**, 128 (26%) of which were properly leashed. There were **1400 vehicles** counted at trailheads.



Read below (near the end of the newsletter) some of the amusing and interesting **comments** from VWR after-patrol reports.

As for individual honors, 7 VWRs had a year's worth of patrols in July: Tom Lawson (11patrols), Frances Hartogh (6), Brad Benz (5), Eleanor Finlay (5), Mike Browning (5), Glenn Hackemer (4), and Larry Edmondson (4).

Those who hiked the **MOST MILES** were Tom Lawson (73.75 miles), Brad Benz (68.2), Frances Hartogh (37), Bob Barrows (35), Mike Browning (33),

Larry Edmondson (33), Eleanor Finlay (32), Michael North (31), Thomas Copper (30), and Steve Elder (25).

Who spent the **MOST HOURS** on patrols? Tom Lawson (39 hours), Brad Benz (32), Frances Hartogh (31), Eleanor Finlay (30), Mike Browning (28), Larry Edmondson (25), Scott Bebee (24), and Glenn Hackemer (22).

The **MOST POPULAR TRAILHEADS** (of 30 total) were: Acorn Creek (17 patrols), Other (13), Lilypad Lake (11), Lower Cataract Lake (10), and Gore Creek (8).

**THE HEAT WILL BRING EVEN MORE VISITORS TO OUR COOLER ALTITUDE IN AUGUST, SO KEEP ON RANGERING!**



## **VOLUNTEER SAWYERS**

Dead beetle-killed lodgepole pine trees continue to rain down on our Wilderness Trails, but under the leadership of Zach Kauk (Summit) and Ken Harper (Eagle), ESWA volunteers are working hard to help Forest Service crews clean them up for safe hiking. ESWA now has responsibility for 13 trail sections, a huge increase from previous years, thanks to the dozen new sawyers who became certified at the June 10-12 training weekend.

Zach reports that in July, his crews spent 175 hours on 11 trips, during which they cleared 196 trees from the trails. The largest project was the Slate Lake weekend trip led by Dave Brewster. During that trip, the crew of 5 volunteers spent 55 total hours clearing 106 trees.

On July 27, Zach accompanied 5 sawyers on a day trip to Boulder Lake - they cleared 45 trees! See the full report and the photos below enlarged [HERE](#).



**BEFORE**



**DURING**



**AFTER**

## BACKCOUNTRY WORK TRIPS

ESWA 's final weekend trip into the deep backcountry to work on trails and campsites is scheduled for August 27-29 (Sopris/Brady). Our 2 llamas will carry the tools. We need volunteers, no experience necessary. Contact [Dave Brewster](#) to sign up.



## TRAILHEAD HOSTS

The inaugural year of TH Hosts is in full swing. Our rangers meet and greet Wilderness visitors at trailheads, encouraging Leave No Trace ethics and focusing especially on fire safety and proper disposal of you-know-what (that's "number 2" - we offer free *wag bags* to



backpackers). All designated sessions - dates and trailheads - have been staffed, and our rangers report interesting, fun, and rewarding experiences. Below are the stats for July. On to August! **We are still in need of TH Hosts for multiple days in August and September so please sign up [HERE](#) to be a host for a shift or two.**

July 2021 stats: 22 rangers staffed 30 sessions (each 3 hours) at 6 different trailheads (Booth, Surprise, N. Rock, Gore, MO Lakes, Lake Constantine). They contacted 1130 visitors (xx backpackers) who were accompanied by 155 dogs (15 (10%) off leash). They counted 370 cars in the parking lots.

Individual highs for Number of Sessions: Bill Betz (5 sessions), Mike Browning (3), and Tom Copper (3), and for Number of Hours: Bill Betz (18.5 hours), Mike Browning (15.5), Tom Copper (11.5).

Read in the COMMENTS section at the bottom some of the observations from ranger reports.

## NOXIOUS WEED MITIGATION

WeedSpotters have been busy in July. We had two weed pulls - one at Hunters Knob and one at Martin Creek - and thousands of Musk and Plumeless Thistle were removed. Also our National Forest Foundation Ski Conservation Grand funds allowed the USFS to attack another half-dozen noxious weed infestations across Summit and Eagle Counties. The sharp eyes of our WeedSpotter team have also reported several infestations to the USFS for eradication later in the year.



## ESWA IN THE NEWS

ESWA Board member **Karn Stiegelmeier** (right)

hosts a column every Friday in the **Summit Daily**. Each "**Get Wild!**" article touches on a topic of interest to lovers of Wilderness. The first 13 weeks have dealt with a host of topics, including wildflowers, bluebirds, bears, beavers, moose, flyfishing, sawyering, and more. You can access them all [HERE](#).



In addition, several Summit Daily articles have featured expert commentary by ESWA members. Dr. Joan Betz offered advice about mushrooming ([HERE](#)) and Karn Stiegelmeier shared her knowledge of wildflowers ([HERE](#)).

Below, we present a sample article from week #9 for your enjoyment.

## Get Wild: One crew's impact on trail clearing

[Columns COLUMNS](#) | July 9, 2021

*Emily Elder*  
*Get Wild*



**A crew of sawyers in training with the Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance clear a trail near Lily Pad Lake on June 13. Pictured from left**

**are Emily Elder, Frances Hartogh, instructor Anne Dal Vera, Ellie Finlay and Katy Sinclair.**

*Photo by Steve Elder*

When hiking in the wilderness, you'll occasionally come across a tree that has fallen across the trail. What you might not know is that since 1964, when Congress passed the Wilderness Act, all of those trees have been cleared using hand-held, crosscut saws. The act created the legal definition of wilderness in the U.S. and protected 9.1 million acres of federal land. It also barred the use of motorized or mechanical tools or transport, including things like mountain bikes and chain saws. These regulations serve not just to protect wildlife but also to preserve a pristine wilderness experience.

This has created a demand today for skilled crosscut saw users, so the Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance and Friends of the Dillon Ranger District recently partnered to train a fresh batch of "buckers," or sawyers certified to clear fallen logs. Through the training, I learned firsthand what a four-person crew, armed only with hand tools, can do in less than a day to improve a trail (and how physically and mentally challenging the work can be).

On the northeast side of Lily Pad Lake, our group of sawyer trainees found the path so buried that the main trail was impassable and nearly invisible. Day hikers were having to route around the blockage on a steep, rocky hill overhung with dead trees. It was not only inconvenient but potentially dangerous.

The problem of clearing the trail was assigned to myself and three other women. Before commencing work on the project, all crews run through a process of site assessment called OHLEC, which stands for objective, hazards, leans, escape paths and cutting plan. The process was then evaluated by Anne Dal Vera, our instructor, before we could begin work on the site.

I must admit, we were initially daunted by the size of the task at hand, but our crew got welcome help limbing the downed trees from some of the men. Removing all of the branches revealed what we call a jackstraw pile, or five large tree trunks stacked on top of one another. Eventually, the guys were shooed off to work on their own problem logs while we traded in our small, folding saws and axes (the best tools for limbing) for the longer two-person crosscut saw.

Our approach, which applies to most jackstraw piles, was to start by bucking the log at the top and working our way down. With every cut, we

had to reassess the order based on the new information and hazards that were revealed. Heavy logs, when cut, can release intense energy based on the physical forces acting on them.

Each time we made a new cut, we asked ourselves, “Is there a clear escape path if this log starts to move? Are the hikers around us safe?”

Often, we would remove one handle of the saw and finish the cut with a single buckler from the uphill side, in case the log were to roll.

Finally, after five hours, we had worked our way through the mess to reveal a surprisingly wide, beautiful path. A few minutes later, some children who had been wading in the lake traipsed through barefoot — a lovely reward for our efforts. And despite our hesitation at the start that four women might not be strong enough, we never had to call in backup. At the end of the multiday training, the crew all became certified buckers and the entirety of Lily Pad Lake Trail was cleared (for now)!

Get Wild” publishes on Fridays in the Summit Daily News. Emily Elder is a volunteer with the Eagle Summit Wilderness Alliance, an all-volunteer nonprofit that helps the U.S. Forest Service protect and preserve the wilderness areas in Eagle and Summit Counties. For more information, visit [EagleSummitWilderness.org](http://EagleSummitWilderness.org).



Emily Elder

## RANGER COMMENTS

Our VWRs and TrailHead (TH) Hosts fill out a report after each trail patrol or TH host session, and they are asked to share their more memorable encounters. Below are some examples, which illustrate the fun, breadth of experiences, and challenges that our rangers face. THH comments follow the VWR comments.

## VWR COMMENTS

Encountered 2 moose, informed dog owners, especially those off leash, about why to use leash for one's and the animals' safety

Spectacular wildflowers and no trash on the trail. Amazing! The wilderness

boundary sign is broken off at the base and leaned against a tree. There were four or five downed trees across the trail with a couple of them requiring a detour off the trail.

We did encounter one hiker with a handgun strapped to his chest. He was very friendly, but he did have a gun, so we were very friendly as well.

Horseback rider had an e-collar for three dogs! Man open carrying a pistol. In the morning on Lower Cataract Lake, water calm, there were 2 women on paddle boards on the water doing yoga.

columbine are at peak

"Frank Gutman gave us a great overview of the trees and plants along the trail.

The trail and Lily Pad Lake area was very busy, hardly a wilderness experience, but nearly everyone we encountered were following the rules and respectful."

saw moose. Hike to common backpack camps and did not see fire rings/waste.

Early hikers were excited by moose encounter on the trail.

5 groups in national forest before wilderness, 10 people

2 Moose sightings, one hung around lake from 8 - 9 am

All human encounters were most pleasant, including dogs off leash, where I did 3 interactions. The funniest encounter was a group up Tenmile who asked how the lake and waterfall were. We had a laugh together as they read reviews from some app that talked all about the beautiful lake and waterfall on N Tenmile. They were grateful to have their expectations managed, and seemed to be enjoying the trail anyway!

Multiple trees either leaning on or fallen on trail once into the Wilderness area. Will get gps on future hikes

One lone moose seen and 1 lost horse(not seen)

Met Ranger Steve & cohorts walking into saw trees. Met lady that was having tachycardia but she took her beta blocker & was feeling fine. (not her first bout).

Backpackers returning from Willow Lakes said there were LOTS of trees,



but the trail had been cleared in the southern part. This was a mentor hike for Stephen King, who did a great job.

The mountain goats at Gore Lake are becoming very comfortable around humans. Almost every over night group talked about them and how they are hanging around the campsites waiting for users to urinate in the area and then they head to that spot right after.

We had a great crew of 6 sawyers who cleared the GRT between N Tenmile and Meadow

"travels with charlene"

Saw one burro on a leash with owner- training for the burro races  
Encountered two deer and one grouse. Trail users that I spoke to were thrilled to hear about ESWA, the volunteer wilderness ranger program, and its objectives. Five of the nineteen hikers attempted Ptarmigan Peak.

What's the fish limit? One party wouldn't leash the dog, but were aware of the rule.

Encountered six 7 and 8 year old hikers that made it all the way to Ptarmigan Peak!

Waited out one black bear at Surprise Lake / GRT Junction....153 trees on GRT between Surprise Lake and Brush Creek trail

Oddly, the most common question was "is there fish in lily pad lake?"

Second most common question is where are the wildflowers?

The overnight hikers didn't have a form because I encountered them in the parking lot at the trail head while I was leaving. I did remind them that they would need to fill one out, I had forgot slips, and I have made sure to put them in my bag for next time. My mistake. The box did have a few of them available. It was busier as the morning progressed, and was fun to see so many people enjoying the outdoors. I spotted a moose in the treeline at a clearing, a safe distance away, but it gave me a sense of urgency to stop people to chat and give a friendly heads up. Unfortunately, I also neglected to pack gloves and shovel to break down the illegal firepit spotted on the trail. The fell trees, a person is able to go under them. Otherwise, the trail is beautiful. The views are great, the wildflowers plentiful, and I was thoughtfully reminded by the buzzing wildlife that I need to get more bug spray. Thanks for the opportunity and I'll be better prepared next time.  
Thanks.

one couple wonder where Bill was.

one young girl hiked barefoot with parents (doesn't like to wear shoes) lol

Saw 6 Moose on 7/17 during my overnight trip

Flowers above Booth Lake and along West Booth Pass are magnificent.  
Magenta Paintbrush are spectacular!!

various hikers commented on aggressive goats at Willow Lake. 20 goats

3 goats at Lake

We met a group of 10 seniors from Summit County Senior Center dog walking group with 8 dogs off leash. Many many other hikers complained that the dogs were out of control, chasing wildlife, jumping on hikers, etc.

We talked to the senior group on their way down and they put their dogs on leash. There were many other dogs off leash and complaints about them from many hikers. A few dogs were on leash. Given the number of users and dogs on this trail, all dogs should be required to be on leash. Many people asked us to recommend this to the USFS.

Wildflowers were in full bloom. The meadow cleared of musk thistle is being repopulated .

Beautiful meadows of Flowers, Many mushrooms, one goat  
A bear was sighted by a hiker, in the distance, through binoculars.

Hiked with Will Kearney (mentor hike). He's a wonderful addition to our team!

We gave out one brochure to someone interested in volunteering-- encountered, and conversed with 3 hearing impaired people who said that they were having a great day.

ran into Maggen clearing trees on the willow creek tr, nice chat.

Everyone was very friendly and there were no confrontations about dogs or anything else. Great day for a hike, on a great trail. Only muddy place was below the bog bridges approximately 1.5 miles in.

Surprisingly quiet for a summer Sunday  
19 bikers

"Pulled False Chamomile just past trailhead,

no Moose on trail-saw Moose on drive down"

Evidence of campfire ten feet from lake.

Outward Bound group, been out for 8 days, I "assumed" they had permits

## **TRAILHEAD HOST COMMENTS**

Booth Lake Parking Lot closed. Most questions were about that. using the free Vail bus was easy commented a hiker

Encountered my 2nd year medical school physiology professor (from 42years ago), the afternoon's ESWA trailhead host who questioned us on the true function of the kidneys!

We saw only 2 backpackers heading in, and they arrived just as we were packing up. We saw 3 RMYC crew members - Thea, Madi, and Maverick (that's his name!) - on their way out. They had cleared the loop (Surprise - Tiperary - Eaglesmere) with their crosscuts.

People were very open and excited to see Trailhead hosts. We spoke to not only hikers but many bicyclists that were riding the trail as well. The porta potties at the trailhead need attention. Vail Honeywagon has been called.

multiple reports of loud group of campers near lakes with dogs running wild; separate report from woman harassed by off leash dog; road in pretty bad shape in places

Early, moose on boulder field; WHERE TO PARK? Parking lot full, sent to Buffalo Dr, Salt Lick TH, Royal Buffalo TH; Mesa Cortina TH; cars on shoulder were ticketed by Sheriff at noon. Need to know Wildernest bus schedule; 4 trees across trail, 1 stroller to W boundary only, Needed more ESWA trifold and DRD rec guides.

Suggest Surprise Lake only be covered in am and table moved to Lower Cataract for pm (or just not do pm). Very slow as most backpackers left in am.

"1) a lot of interesting conversations with the backpacking groups who thanked us for being out there.

2)Had someone report two overnight campers on the island on lower cataract lake with a fire active. Mark hiked over and approached the campers, a male and a female. The male was confrontational and basically stated he didn't have to listen to a volunteer ranger. Mark then stated there was a Stage 2 fire restriction in effect as well as the fact they were not supposed to be camping there. He then stated that once we drove out we

would contact the forest rangers to come out and they could officially fine them and enforce their regulations. At that point they started packing their gear. The fire had been extinguished with no residual smoldering. "

Seems like many day hikers arrive pre-dawn for a one day ascent of Holy Cross. Almost equal number of day users and backpackers going to Constantine and Holy Cross. Almost all people encountered after 2 pm where coming out either from a backpack (BP) or early climb of Holy Cross. Surprisingly few BPerS heading in Saturday to climb Holy Cross on Sunday.

church group of 10 from Denver camping overnight at Boulder Lake

I met 9 groups (26 total) dayhikers coming out - I assume that they were counted going in in the morning, so I did not include them in my tally. Two KSS [Keystone Science School] groups were coming out (one had backpacked from Brush Creek -2 nights out. It was a fun afternoon, meeting some really interesting people, including a good friend of my cousin from Iowa City. Small world.

This was my first time hosting. Very positive experience. Looking forward to next time!

Hiker traffic had been quite heavy on the morning shift but very slow in the afternoon."

Folks were happy to see me at trail head. Everyone was very happy and they loved the hike



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