

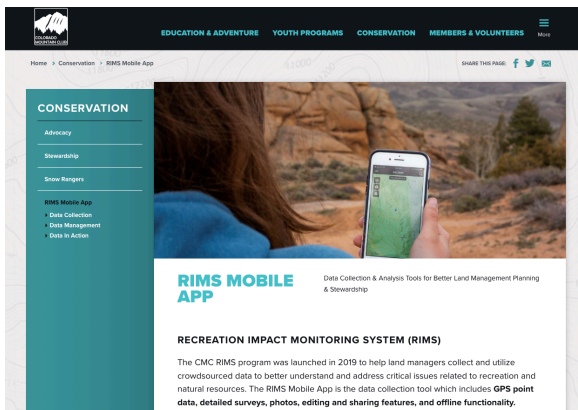


Blue Mountains Trail Newsletter - Winter 2024

Happy winter trail lovers! With warm temps and very little snowfall so far, hiking season on the Blue Mountains Trail may commence early this year. We are hard at work filling our calendars with exciting outings and projects for 2024. Take a look below for the latest news and let us know if you'd like to join in. Looking forward to seeing you out there!

Happy trails,
Pip Redding, BMT Trail Coordinator

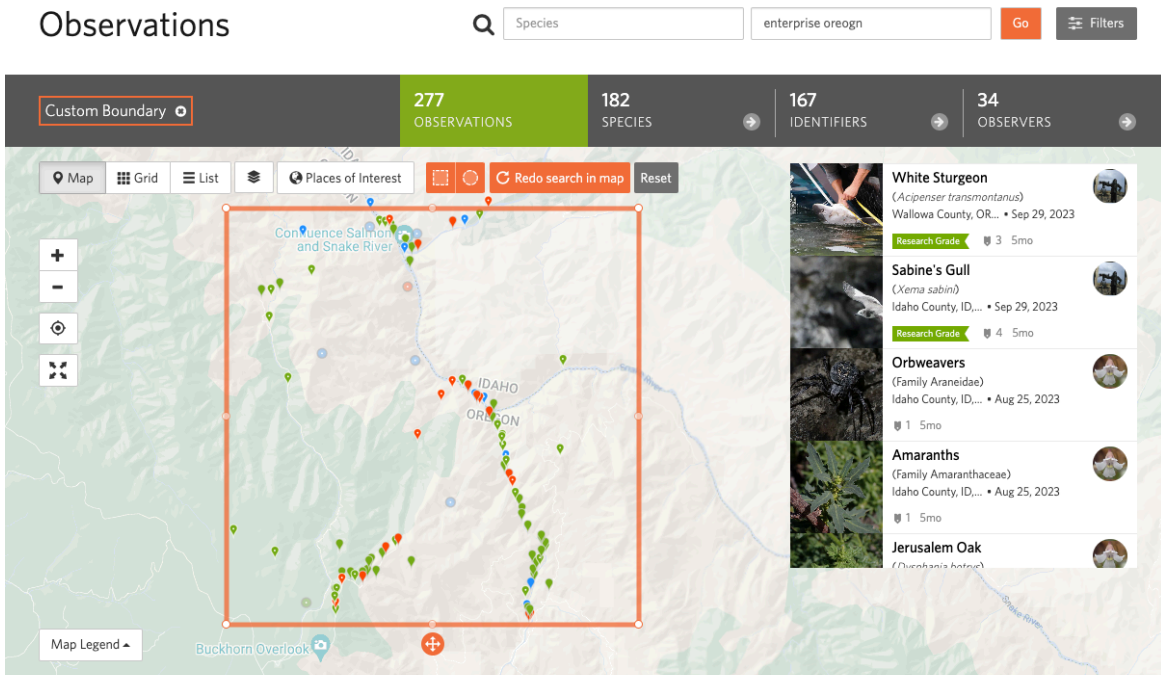
RIMS - Submit Observations From the Trail



GHCC is excited to announce the launch of the Colorado Mountain Club's Recreation Infrastructure Monitoring System (RIMS) on the Blue Mountains Trail. This free-to-use crowdsource reporting tool allows volunteers, advocates, and land managers to collect, analyze, and respond to condition reports submitted by trail users just like you! RIMS is a great way to flag something that needs attention on your favorite trail, even if that isn't the BMT.

Each report submitted is one step toward establishing baseline usage and impact data for recreation sites on public land. This is of particular interest to GHCC as we seek to mitigate impacts while the BMT grows in popularity. To get started, [download the free mobile app](#). You will be directed through a short training session. After that, you'll be ready to start reporting!

Read how volunteers with the Oregon Natural Desert Association used RIMS to collect data in Wilderness Study Areas [here](#).



iNaturalist - Record Species of Interest on Your Hikes

Certain species are important indicators for ecosystem health and should inform critical land management decisions. We're working on developing a comprehensive list of species of greatest interest along the Trail and throughout the Blue Mountains. iNaturalist is a fun, free, and easy-to-use tool for volunteers to contribute directly to the documentation and stewardship of wildlife on public lands. We're asking all BMT hikers to visit www.inaturalist.org, download the free mobile app, and start submitting direct observations (or signs of activity) of beavers, white bark pine, gray wolves, western bumblebees, or any plant or critter that catches their attention while on the trail.



Mark Your Calendar for Volunteer Trail Trips on the BMT

If you're interested in helping maintain the BMT in either the Wallowa-Whitman, Malheur, or Umatilla National Forests, BMT Trail Coordinator Pip Redding will be leading several volunteer trail trips, both independently and alongside our partners at WMHCTA and the Blues Crew. Exact dates and locations are TBD based on signups and individual availability.

Planned Trips will be during the following date ranges:

- Week of June 24-29 - GHCC/WMHCTA, Wallowa-Whitman NF, PO Saddle to Freeze Out
- July 11-17 - WMHCTA, Wallowa-Whitman NF, Twin Lakes and Sugarloaf
- Week of July 22-26 - GHCC, Malheur NF, Strawberry Wilderness from John Day

Contact [Pip Redding](#) to signup and share your preferred dates!

Gearing Up for Work on the BMT in the Umatilla National Forest



Together with our partners at the Blue Mountains Land Trust's Blues Crew we are preparing to host the Northwest Youth Corps as they restore important infrastructure on the Blue Mountains Trail in the North Fork Umatilla Wilderness. This work and more was made possible by funding from the [Oregon Trails Coalition](#) to ramp up stewardship capacity along the BMT. We are looking for volunteer support for several projects in preparation for the contracted work. If you are interested in helping out, please get in touch with [Pip Redding](#) for information on how to join.

- April 15-19 - Corporation-Buck Tie Trail Wash-out Restoration
- May 13-17 - Coyote Creek Bridge – Double-stringer Log Bridge Construction
- June 17-21 - North Fork Umatilla River Trail – Turnpike construction

WMHCTA and the BMT Lead Volunteer Saw Trainings

Recent changes to the U.S. Forest Service saw program allows credentialed volunteers to teach and evaluate other prospective sawyers at the A and B levels. In our continued efforts to bolster the skills and capacity of trail volunteers, BMT coordinator Pip Redding and Wallowa Mountain Hells Canyon Trails Association (WMHCTA) will co-lead several saw trainings in Wallowa County for volunteers interested in crosscut and chainsaw operation. These multi-day training sessions will provide instruction and certification opportunities for new and experienced sawyers interested in safely and effectively bucking, limbing, and brushing. Certification is required for saw operations on large diameter timber during official volunteer activities on all National Forests.

Mark your calendars for **May 3-5 (chainsaw), May 10-12 (crosscut), September 20-22 (chainsaw), or September 27-29 (crosscut).**

Then get in touch with [Mike Hanson](#) to sign up. Spots are limited.



STRAWBERRY WILDERNESS LOOP - 2-3 DAYS

Departing from [Strawberry Campground](#), near [John Day and Prairie City, Oregon](#), this hike takes you into the heart of the Strawberry Mountain Wilderness. The relative crowds drop quickly dissipate after the short hike to Strawberry Lake. As the trail gains elevation, you'll experience the changing flora found through the Malheur National Forest, camp at pristine high alpine lakes, and enjoy the solitude of this majestic wilderness that feeds the South Fork John Day River.



Visitor Planning Resources for the BMT

We are preparing to release a set of short trip suggestions for trail lovers who are interested in the BMT but can't get away for a month-long thru hike. These itineraries vary in physical and logistical difficulty from strenuous weekend backpacking loops to accessible Sunday drives, but each is designed to highlight the natural beauty, cultural significance, and ecological challenges of this amazing landscape while encouraging responsible use and active stewardship. Check the BMT website this spring for the completed itineraries, which will include maps, town guides, planning tips, and downloadable resources for offline use. Soon to follow will be a print brochure with overview maps and helpful trip planning details.

We'd love to spend all summer on the trail getting the best photos possible for this project, but we need your help! If you or someone you know is handy with a camera, we want your most spectacular photos of the BMT. Professional photographers have no fear, we can work with you to keep your rights.

Email [Pip Redding](#) if you have photos or you want an assignment with a built-in excuse to hike the trail!

2024 BMT Map and Data Book Updates are Complete

The cartographically inclined will be happy to hear that the 2024 BMT map and databook revisions are complete and ready for use when planning an upcoming excursion. The most

significant changes are as follows:

- A couple of short route improvements and reopened trails now appear in the southern Wallawas near Twin Lakes. (BMT Section 1A and 1B)
- The south fork of the Walla Walla River returns as the main route after damaged bridges and trail washouts were repaired. (BMT Section 3B)
- Some unnecessary alternates have been removed. (BMT sections 5A and 6D)

The accompanying databook and water chart were previously only available in one direction of travel, Joseph to John Day. We are excited to announce that, thanks to a couple of 2023 thru hikers who started in John Day and offered feedback from their experience, this helpful document now has a northbound version! If you have previously received access to the databook and wish to have this new alternative, or if you would like to request the maps and databook for the first time, reach out to [Pip Redding](#). All the other resources, including Caltopo section maps, printable pdfs, and databook remain at the same URLs, so no need to worry about having the most up to date link.

A BIG Thank You to BMT Sponsors!



GHCC works to protect, connect, and restore the lands, waters, native species, and climate resiliency of the ecologically magnificent Greater Hells Canyon Region.

[Join us](#) in protecting the Greater Hells Canyon Region and making the Blue Mountains Trail a path to resilience for Northeast Oregon.

Pip Redding, Blue Mountains Trail Coordinator

By joining GHCC's River Runner program for \$10/month or more, we'll throw in a special gift.

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