

GMUG – Blue Creek/Bunch Ground/Mailbox/Bug Point Trip Report – 7/22/2017

Who: Janice Shepherd (and 4 other hikers)

Where: Blue Creek Trail (#620) to Bunch Ground Trail (#634) to cattle trail to Mailbox Trail (#619) to bush-whack to Bug Point Road (#410) to cattle trail to Divide Road.

Trip stats: 10 miles 6 ¼ hours

Observations:

Very pleasant hiking along Blue Creek Trail and up Mailbox Trail. Nicely shaded and right beside a creek. Both have write-ups on GJHikes.com; Blue Creek is also described on mtbproject.com;

Bunch Ground Trail is very overgrown. We were only able to follow it a short distance from its south end. At south end, the Blue Creek trail **sign is on the ground** (see photo) and the start of the Bunch Ground trail is blocked with branches. We pushed through those. The Bunch Ground **sign is missing the horse and foot only** part of the sign (see photo). We followed the trail to approximately 699731.18 m E 4276993.65 and there a **trail post has split and shattered**. The next segment is not visible and we didn't have a gpx of it so decided not to chance guessing where it might be.

The North end of Bunch Ground Trail is also overgrown and not visible from Bug Point Road (#410) (see photos).

After losing Bunch Ground trail, we continued on the pronounced cattle trail over to Mailbox Trail (#619). This cattle trail is visible on some topo maps as an old track. Part way across it we believe we spotted the "mailbox" that gives the canyon and trail its name (see photo). It is striking to see in person and several of us remarked at first that it looked man-made. Developing an official trail from #619 to the spot where the "mailbox" is visible would likely be of interest for those traveling on #619 (unless they can see the mailbox elsewhere along #619.)

The bush-whacking section between Mailbox and Bug Point trails was quite tough going as the vegetation was above waist height and while there were game trails they were lightly used. We later followed a cattle trail from the spring by Bug Point Road (#410) (701191.71 mE 4278840.00 mN) up to Divide Road and that was very pleasant hiking.

Walking Divide Road was not too bad as it had very light traffic even on a nice Saturday afternoon (two trucks, two UTVs, two motorcycles). There were nice wildflowers along the road and nice views.

Continuing on Blue Creek past Bunch Ground leads to a **nice viewpoint** at 699529.12 mE 4276739.72 mN, it might be worth noting on a recreation map. It is about 1/3 of a mile past the intersection. That's at about 3 miles from the start of the Blue Creek trail and for many a 6 mile out and back hike is sufficient. Our senior group likes a longer outing.

Wildlife:A **dark coyote** seen twice (morning, afternoon) crossing Divide Road near Bittle Loop road. Black and White Tiger moths (Police car moths?) (see photo). Bear scat observed thick with undigested grasses. Ant hill dug into by bear. Salamanders: **many dead (25+)** but some alive in pond at: 700156.17 mE 4279211.90 mN near Mailbox trail. (see photo). The beaver seems to have departed from the pond at: 701544.21 mE 4276491.15 mN (see photo).

Of interest might be: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/saving-salamanders-with-citizen-science>

Wildflowers: bush honeysuckle, striped coralroot (orchid), white checker mallow, horse mint, Parry's harebell., monkshood.

The spring along Bug Point road (#410) at: 701191.71 mE 4278840.00 mN is overflowing over the rim as well as through the overflow drain pipe, this is causing **erosion** along the edge of the tire (see photo).

Found a jacket – camo, XL, on trail. Mostly in good condition, some holes need repaiing. Left it hanging in a tree by trail. At: 701269 mE 4276451 mN. (see photo). Might have been lost last fall during hunting season.

Found **wooden hunting seat and foot rests** attached to tree above trail at: 699976 mE 4276910 mN (see photo).



View at 3 mile point along Blue Creek trail (#620)



Blue Creek sign on ground at intersection with Bunch Ground trail (#634)



Bunch Ground sign only found after pushing through branches. Sign missing recreation types allowed.



Nice view looking up at Bug Point from Bunch Ground trail.



View along cattle trail of a mailbox shape natural rock formation, likely where Mailbox trail gets its name. Blue arrow shows "box". Viewed from approximately: 699380 mE 4277029 mN



Sample view of Mailbox Trail (#619).



Bunch Ground trail sign at north end, intersection with Bug Point Road #410. No trail visible behind sign.



View behind Bunch Ground trail sign, north end. No visible trail to follow.



Pair of black and white tiger moths (or Police Car moths).



Abandoned beaver pond along Blue Creek trail.



One of at least 25 dead salamanders in pond by Mailbox trail; some still alive in pond at: 700156.17 mE
4279211.90 mN



White Checker Mallow



Spring by Bug Point road #410 at: 701191.71 mE 4278840.00 mN



Water appears fairly clean.



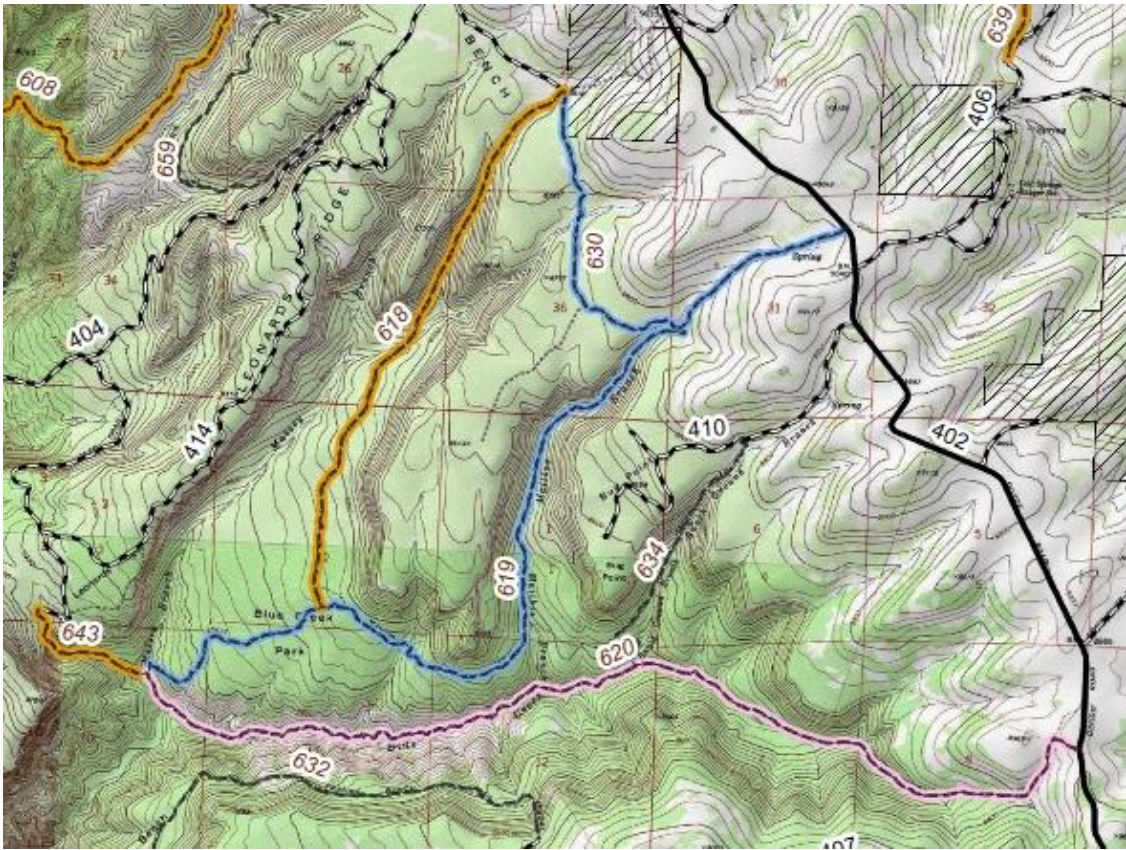
Tire is overflowing and undercutting soil supporting the tire.



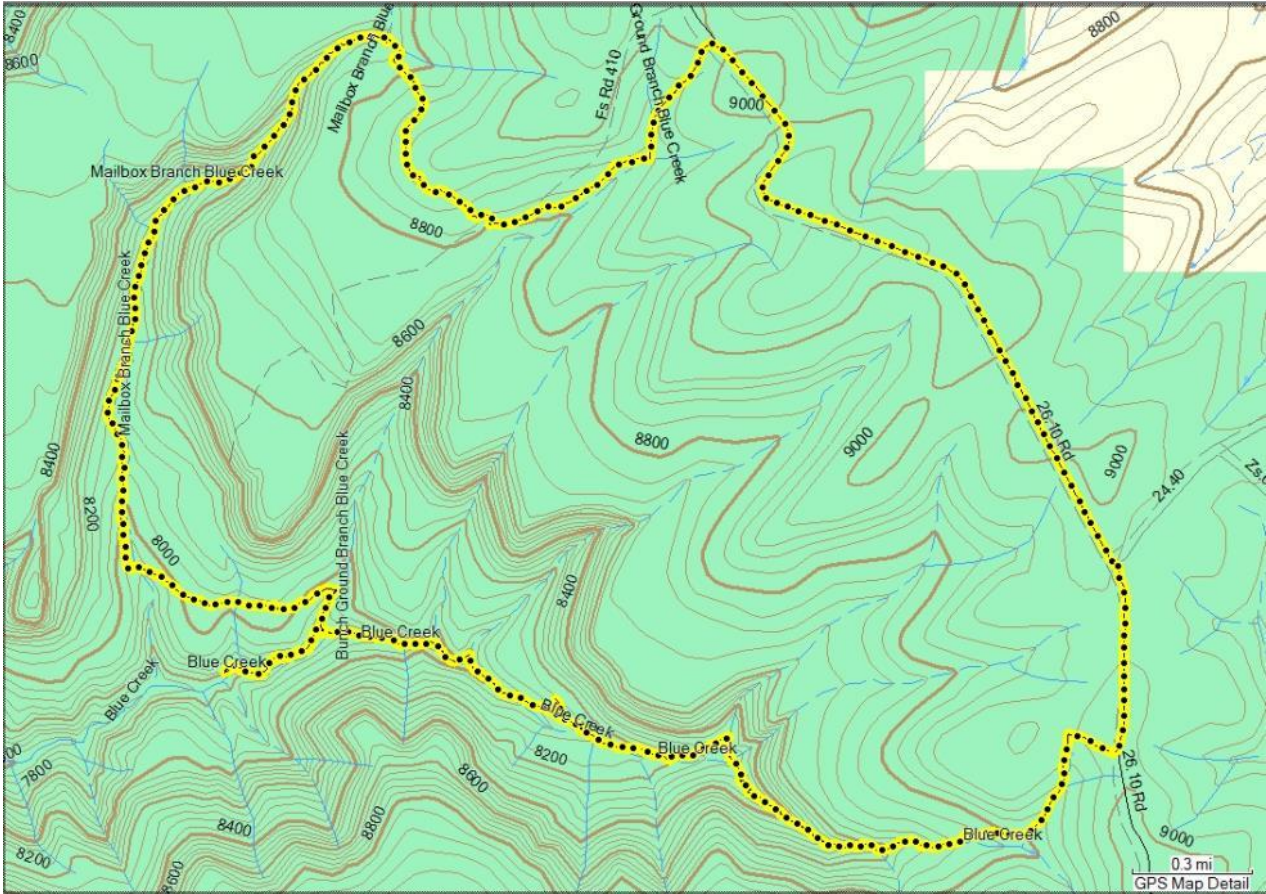
Lost coat. We found it on the ground and hung it in the tree by the trail. At: 701269 mE 4276451 mN.



Hunting seat and two foot rests left attached to tree beside trail. At: 699976 mE 4276910 mN



Forest Map of Trails in area.



Our 10 mile loop. Blue Creek (620) -> Bunch Ground (634) -> Mailbox (619) -> Bug Point (410) -> Divide Rd (402)