

GMUG – Elk Park Roadless Area (part of #20407) Trip Report – 07/08/2017

Who: Janice Shepherd

Where: Overland Reservoir to top of Chalk Mountain (11,146 ft) (5th highest in Delta County).

Trip Stats: 4.7 miles 3:31

Observations:

On July 6th we saw a large buck with a sizeable rack in velvet by the trailhead. On July 7th I hiked a short distance along what appeared to be a trail and spotted a different buck with smaller antlers in velvet.

The trail sign doesn't have a number or a name and lists the area open to foot, horse and bicycle. When I asked Paonia District office they indicated that what appears to be a trail is really just a livestock/game trail and the sign was installed to discourage motorized access. See photo below.

The trail does have an appearance of being a real trail but it likely fades or heads to a water source. See photos below.

I hiked about 1/2 mile of the "trail" on the way in before starting my ascent of Chalk Mountain. On the hike in, my approach crossed a large thicket of willows around a creek, so I used a different route on the way back and successfully missed the willows and joined the "trail" 2/10 mile further west. Walking the "trail" is definitely faster than the off-trail travel and has some nice meadows to enjoy.

The Elephantella were a little past their glory, but higher up other wildflowers were amazing. Huge spreads of columbine were on the open slope of the mountain. Bigger patches than I ever recall seeing. In that open slope the wildflowers were so thick and tall it was hard to push through them. Mini-hillocks around bunches of grass in the midst of the wildflowers made for tough maneuvering as they are easy to trip on. Nice purple fringe were present.

The views at the top of Chalk Mountain were wonderful and worth the effort to climb up.

The collapsed remains of a survey tripod or structure is at the top, along with a summit log with lots of signatures from 2012 onwards.

I saw no one and heard only natural sounds until I returned to camp by Overland. Great solitude.

During our stay at Overland we observed at least three hiking group and one mtn biking group heading out on Crater Lake Trail (#800). Average group size: 2.

We've hiked #800 from Overland Reservoir several times in previous years. Once past the reservoir we've always had the area to ourselves. In July 2014 I was lucky to encounter a moose close to Crater Lake. In July 2016 we summited Crater Peak. Crater Peak attracts attention as it is a 2,000 ft prominence peak in CO. Most people approach from the SW. Our 12 mile 7 ½ hour outing to Crater Peak from Overland Res. was fun, challenging and totally in solitude.

GJhikes.com has a nice write up for the hike to Crater Lake (listed under Colorado Miscellaneous)

<http://www.gjhikes.com/2011/08/crater-lake.html>



Post at the start of the livestock/game trail. The sticker at the bottom says "To Protect Wildlife Habitat Area".



The trail is quite clear in places and goes through some nice meadows.



Another nice meadow.



On the slope of Chalk Mountain.



Looking out at Overland Reservoir and Crater Peak.



Lots of wildflowers, especially columbine.



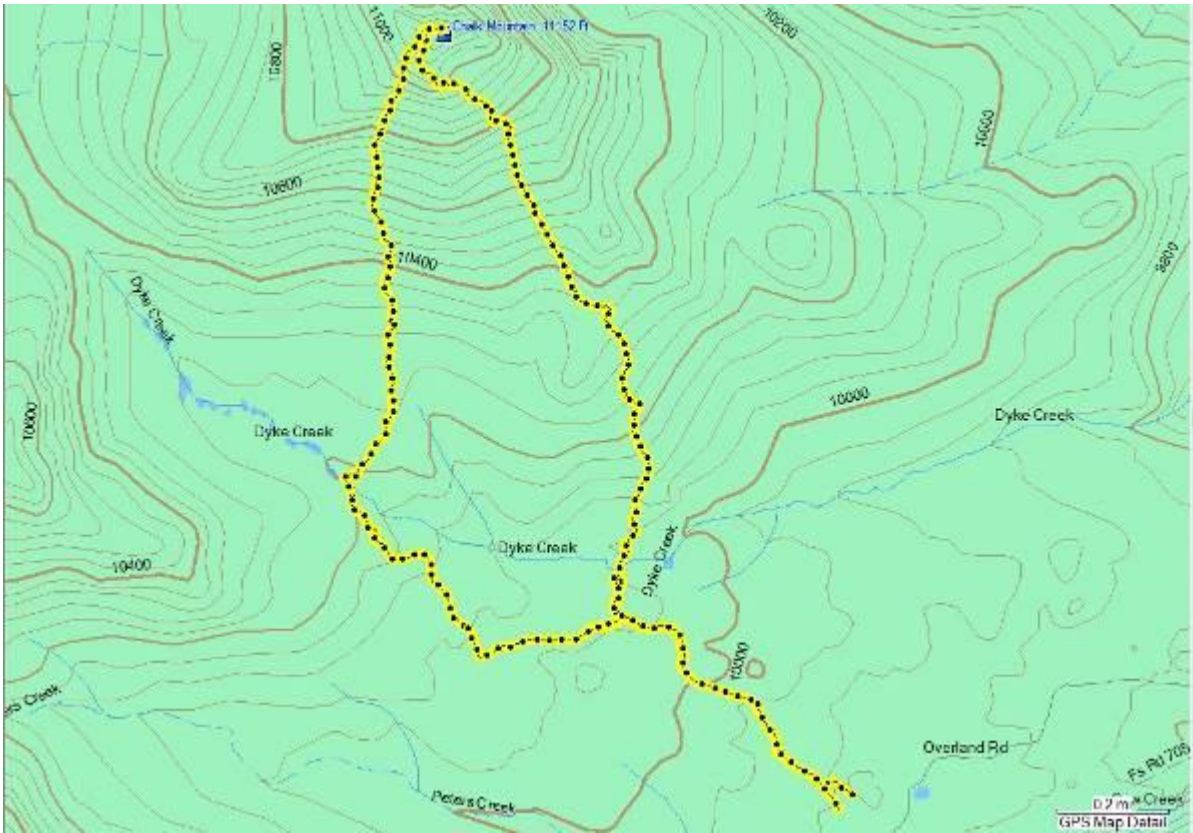
A sea of columbine.



Remains of structure on summit of Chalk Mountain. Historic?



Moose near Crater Lake 7/2015



GPX track of hike up Chalk Mountain.

