



Passages

Volume 34, Spring 2025

Continental Divide Trail Coalition

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Photo Credit: Jess Cody

Passages

Volume 34, Spring 2025

Continental Divide Trail Coalition

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CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY THAT SUPPORTS THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

CDTC's mission is to complete, protect, and elevate the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail while engaging in and inspiring stewardship of the trail and its surrounding landscapes.. CDTC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and donations to CDTC are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. To donate, visit our website at www.cdtcoalition.org.

Continental Divide Trail Passages is published three times a year for the members of the Continental Divide Trail Coalition. [You can learn more about becoming a member here.](#) Members are encouraged to submit story ideas and photographs for inclusion in Passages to the editor at communications@cdtcoalition.org. For more information about advertising, please contact development@cdtcoalition.org.

LISTEN TO THE ARTICLE

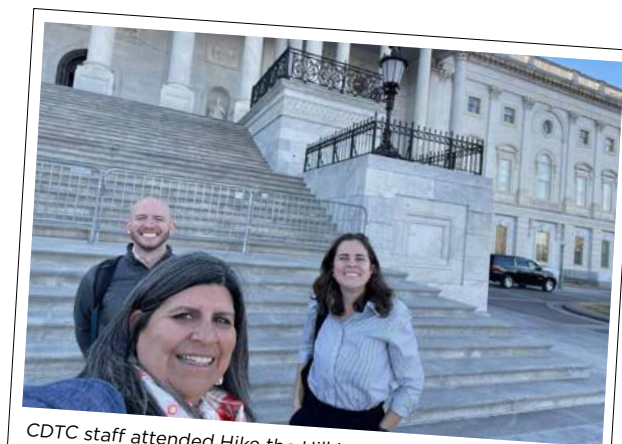
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear CDTC Friends,

Greetings from CDTC! In this edition of *Passages*, we're excited to explore the incredible dark skies along the CDT and the unique perspective they offer when we look up. I'm writing this following our visit to Washington, D.C., where we met with decision-makers to report on the 2024 CDT accomplishments. **We proudly shared our collective 7:1 return on investment for every dollar federal agencies spent on the CDT.** This helped us demonstrate the efficiency of our shared stewardship work and gave us a chance to highlight the relationships we have built with gateway communities, Tribal Nations, partner organizations, and federal agency partners.

It was an interesting time to be in Washington, D.C., especially with the uncertainty facing federal land management agencies. Our stewardship efforts couldn't happen without federal agency staff. They are people who share our passion and love for not just the CDT, but our entire public land system. **While we had many successes to share, we also informed decision-makers about the role federal land management agencies play in our shared stewardship efforts—and why it's crucial to continue supporting both these agencies and the people who care for our public lands.**

As I reflect during these challenging times, I find hope in what unites us along the Continental Divide. As the major watershed of North America, the Continental Divide is the place where waters begin. From those waters, to the sky and stars, the shared spaces along the CDT reveal common ground that has the potential to connect and bring us together. These days, it seems more important than ever to find the things that unite us rather than divide us.



CDTC staff attended Hike the Hill in Washington D.C.: Director of Trail Programs L Fisher (back left), Executive Director Teresa Martinez (front), and Trail Policy Specialist Claire Cutler (back right).



CDTC staff and members of the [2024-2025 Tribal Fellows program](#) met with New Mexico Representative Gabe Vasquez during Hike the Hill.

So, this year, we're exploring dark sky initiatives to uncover the shared experiences that come from looking up. Whether through cultural and spiritual connections or the simple awe of the night sky, we all have the chance to be inspired, dream big, and feel humbled beneath the vast expanse of the Milky Way. **This common experience is also creating space to work with new partners like the National Religious Partnership for the Environment and Dark Sky Land New Mexico.** We hope our work with these partners will help create understanding through experiencing the places we all love, together.

As communicated in CDTC's new Strategic Vision, we want to ignite passion and love for the Continental Divide that builds and strengthens connections. In these divided times, we must embrace those spaces—whether under the stars in Pie Town, at the edge of a water source, or in our love for the land. **We hope you'll join us this summer for Dark Sky gatherings and events along the CDT,** where we'll celebrate both the physical trail carved into the landscape and the symbolic path we follow as the stars emerge—illuminating our imagination and leading us toward common ground.

We remain incredibly grateful for your continued and ongoing support of our work. During these challenging times, your contributions allow us to continue our 2025 stewardship projects, uninterrupted. Long-term federal support, however, is also crucial. Continued investment in federal land management agencies is critical—not just for the CDT, but for all public lands. Our work centered on the CDT is a responsibility and privilege, and we cannot do it alone. We need the entire CDT community working together, and that includes all of you, our amazing staff and board, and our federal agency partners.

Until we meet along the trail, join me in a wish upon the stars for finding common ground and unity along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. See you on the trail—



Teresa Ana Martinez

Teresa Ana Martinez
Executive Director
Continental Divide Trail Coalition

LOOK UP: Dark Sky Land and a New Frontier of Conservation

By Audra Labert, CDTC Director of Communications

Under artificial light, the darkness can seem like a solid wall of nothingness. But when fully immersed in the night—away from light pollution—subtle light and life become visible. As the eyes gradually adjust, shapes become clearer, other senses heighten, and the environment reveals itself. From a human perspective, darkness has often symbolized wickedness, danger, and despair. Some organizations, however, are working to change that perspective. A growing movement is creating more awareness and appreciation for the presence of pure night, and conservation efforts have expanded to include the concept of an astro-wilderness and the protection of dark skies as a vital component of the Continental Divide landscape.

Closer to the Stars

Dark Sky Land Inc. (DSL) is a small, newly established nonprofit focused on preserving New Mexico’s night ecology. The organization began to take shape after founder Marisela La Grave visited Pie Town, New Mexico. With a background in media and experience living in New York and other major cities, La Grave was no stranger to vibrant urban life. When she arrived in the desert of New Mexico, the land and sky took hold of her—and she ultimately decided to stay.

“I realized after coming to the desert that I didn’t miss New York City,” said La Grave, who relocated to Santa Fe and now divides her time between there and Pie Town.

The region of New Mexico that includes Pie Town is unique, owing to its rural character and proximity to large swaths of protected land. Its sparse development attracts visitors who see the lack of modern amenities as part of the appeal. With fewer services and less artificial lighting, the nights are darker—revealing a view of the Milky Way with the naked eye, and a sky filled with stars and other astronomical phenomena.

Pie Town, New Mexico: A Stargazer’s Haven on the Continental Divide

Nestled in a remote, high-elevation region with minimal light pollution, Pie Town, New Mexico, is a remarkable destination for those seeking pristine night skies. The small community’s location makes it ideal for astronomical research, stargazing, and astrophotography—attracting visitors who appreciate the open view of the cosmos.

Just a short distance away, the Cosmic Campground International Dark Sky Sanctuary (CCIDSS) offers one of the most spectacular night sky viewing experiences in the United States. Designated by the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), the sanctuary boasts 360-degree unobstructed views, making it a premier destination for both professional astronomers and casual stargazers. It is notably the first International Dark Sky Sanctuary on National Forest System lands in North America—and one of only fourteen certified IDA Sanctuaries worldwide. These sanctuaries are recognized for their exceptionally dark and undisturbed starry skies and for their role in preserving the natural beauty of the night (U.S. Forest Service).

For hikers on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT), Pie Town offers the perfect stop to experience the wonder of an unspoiled nightscape. In addition to its otherworldly nighttime beauty, the town is beloved for its famous pies—making it a memorable destination for astronomers, hikers, and travelers alike.

Together Across the Distance

According to NASA, there are 88 officially recognized constellations. Despite being grouped together by name, the stars within a constellation are often

vast distances apart and share no real connection. As Earth moves, different constellations come into view while others fade. There is no single, uniform way of interpreting the stars, and under the same sky, each person looking up may see something from a slightly different viewpoint.

“If we can bring the night into all of these narratives and efforts, I think we can create something special,” said LaGrave.

Reflecting this diversity of perspective, Dark Sky Land’s approach is deeply interdisciplinary. Their mission considers land stewardship, cultural heritage, ecology, wildlife, and collaboration with like-minded organizations—like the Continental Divide Trail Coalition (CDTC) and the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE). Each of these organizations are working together to elevate awareness of the significance of dark skies, and part of their collaboration includes plans to host a star party in April. Pie Town is a popular stop for thru-hikers along the CDT, and the event also aims to engage the entire community. Much like the trail itself, dark skies are places where many paths converge. Together, these organizations hope to amplify their efforts and foster an appreciation for the deep connections between people and place.

The Earth Moves

Undoubtedly influenced by La Grave’s background in media arts, Dark Sky Land (DSL) leads a variety of creative projects aligned with their mission—from a traveling exhibition series, a film production, and public events to the development of a new map. The map is generated by Anrika Rupp, one of DSL’s board of directors, and it expands Dark Sky Land’s definition of the astro-wilderness corridor from 300 to 600 miles. La Grave sees vast potential in the night sky and believes it is something meant to be shared. Throughout history, the stars have sparked creativity, inspired storytelling, and encouraged contemplation. Connected dark skies have the potential to add another dimension to the

concept of protected wilderness and to incorporate community and culture into their preservation. Each star party or observatory event is an opportunity to raise awareness and share knowledge with families, travelers, and communities along the CDT.

With greater appreciation, perceptions can shift. Nighttime—rather than being viewed as sinister or ominous—can instead become a relaxing dimming of distractions and a retreat into the senses. Dark skies are not just about what can be seen, but what remains hidden: the creatures that thrive in darkness, the subtle sounds that emerge without light, and the heightened awareness that awakens when vision gives way to presence.

Through Dark Sky Land, La Grave is working to foster that appreciation—not because she spent a lifetime studying astronomy or wildlife biology, but because she looked up and discovered a love for something. And now, she is working to protect it.

Dark Sky Land. (n.d.). Dark Sky Land. February 28, 2025. <https://www.darkskyland.us>

NASA. (n.d.). What is a constellation? NASA Space Place. February 28, 2025. <https://spaceplace.nasa.gov/constellations/en>

U.S. Forest Service. (n.d.). Cosmic Campground. U.S. Department of Agriculture. February 28, 2025. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/gila/recarea/?recid=82479>



Learn more about Dark Skies and CDTC’s collaboration with Dark Sky Land and the National Religious Partnership for the Environment.

[LEARN MORE >](#)



Dark skies near Pie Town, credit to Dark Sky Land

Welcome New Board Members



As CDTC welcomes new members to the Board of Directors, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to those who have completed their service. We thank Don Owens, Nick Martinez, Jo Hazelett, Clancy Clark, Mike Ksenyak, and Benjamin Gabriel for the leadership, dedication, and generosity they brought to their roles on the board. Their experience and insight have helped build a strong foundation on which our organization will continue to grow and thrive.

Several new board members have joined CDTC from across the country, reinforcing the regional approach outlined in our strategic vision. We look forward to the journey ahead—sharing new experiences, strengthening our leadership, and advancing our mission to protect, complete, and elevate the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.



Regan Betts

Regan Betts has spent most of the last 20 years within the outdoor industry not only as a marketer, but as an architect of corporate advocacy groups. Most recently, at Oboz Footwear, Regan was the Brand Manager and a founding member of Oboz's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access committee. Then in the fall of 2023, she established her own marketing and copywriting business, and now also works part-time at her daughter's elementary school as a paraprofessional.



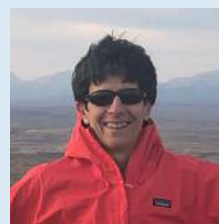
Brett Bruyere

Brett Bruyere is a faculty member and conservation social scientist at Colorado State University. Over the years his teaching and research has focused on conservation education, collaboration and partnerships, and conservation leadership. He has published 50+ publications in academic journals and received several teaching, mentoring and outreach awards.



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Sharon Buccino

Sharon Buccino has served in a variety of professional roles. Most recently she led the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement at the U.S. Department of the Interior. Previously, Sharon directed the Land & Wildlife program at the Natural Resources Defense Council. She is an active member of the Wyoming Bar.



Naomi Hudetz

Naomi thru-hiked the CDT in 2012. While she doesn't have a "favorite trail," she says that if she could only hike one more trail, it would be the CDT. Thru-hiking inspired her to leave her corporate career to pursue her passion for the outdoors. She's a co-founder of Treeline Review, a website dedicated to making the outdoors accessible to everyone while also reducing consumption.



Joe Jessepe

Joe Jessepe is an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe and has spent his entire life on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. He attended college at Flathead Valley Community College, University of Montana, and was a member of the first cohort of the Native Americans in Natural Resources at Humboldt State University at Arcata, California, and majored in Natural Resource Conservation.



Alexa Tubbs

Alexa "Highlight" Tubbs is a creative entrepreneur and passionate community builder who thrives on bringing people together. Inspired by their shared love of long trails and the communities that make them special, Alexa and her partner Matt "Brew Hiker" Leef planted roots in Silver City, NM, and co-founded Open Space Brewing—a craft brewery with a mission to give back to the trail community.

LISTEN TO THE ARTICLE

Darkness and the Divine:

Lessons of the Night Sky

By Katie Glenn Brown, M.T.S.
Program Manager, National Religious
Partnership for the Environment

"The one who sends forth the light and it goes, he called it, and it obeyed him, trembling; the stars shone in their watches and were glad; he called them, and they said, 'Here we are!' They shone with gladness for him who made them."
- Baruch 3:33-35

Woven throughout the sacred texts shared by the Judeo-Christian traditions is the story of creation in relationship with God the Creator. This goes beyond the human-divine relationship and extends to the connection between the land, the waters, and even the skies and the stars. The prophet Baruch explores this sacred relationship between God and the stars, who find joy and gladness simply by being. The stars announce their presence and mysterious existence as if shouting, "Here we are!"

What a wonderful model for us. How often do we delight in our own existence? At the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, we have been exploring the significance of the stars and the night sky for faith communities, especially communities that have access to truly dark skies like those along the Continental Divide Trail. We believe that there is something deeply sacred about looking up at the stars. For many, it is an act of worship in itself, connecting us both to the Creator and creation.

Br. Guy Consolmagno, an astronomer, physicist, and Catholic brother who serves as the Director of the Vatican Observatory, describes this draw that we have towards the stars and the sky as part of what it means to be human:

"It's only human beings that have this curiosity to understand: What's that up in the sky? How do we fit into that? Who are we? Where do we come from? And this is a hunger that is as deep and as important as a hunger for food because if you starve a person in that sense, you're depriving them of their humanity."



NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTNERSHIP
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Our culture today is far too good at avoiding these big questions, the very questions that make us human. Our lives are filled with artificial light—from constantly scrolling on social media and impulsively shopping for the next best thing to mindlessly flipping through channels. These distractions can be numbing and pull us away from encounters with the world around us, darkness and all.

As we enter into a season of longer, milder days and more opportunities to be out in nature, what would it look like to examine our relationship with darkness? To deepen that relationship? The Judeo-Christian scriptures recognize darkness as having a sacred role in our collective story. The Israelites wandered in the darkness of the desert, Jesus was in the darkness of the tomb, and there was the dark quiet of the earth just before the beginning of life. Moments of joy, belonging, and connection to the divine are all complemented by the still, humble darkness that precedes them – a darkness that is necessary, beautiful, and sacred.

So, next time the darkness begins to feel overwhelming or starts to prompt those big questions that can make us feel small, may we remember to not turn away. May we resist the temptation to drown out the darkness with distracting, artificial lights. May we instead look up to the stars and join in their joyful, collective chorus – shouting, "Here we are!"



Learn more about CDTC's Dark Skies Partnership with NRPE

[LEARN MORE >](#)

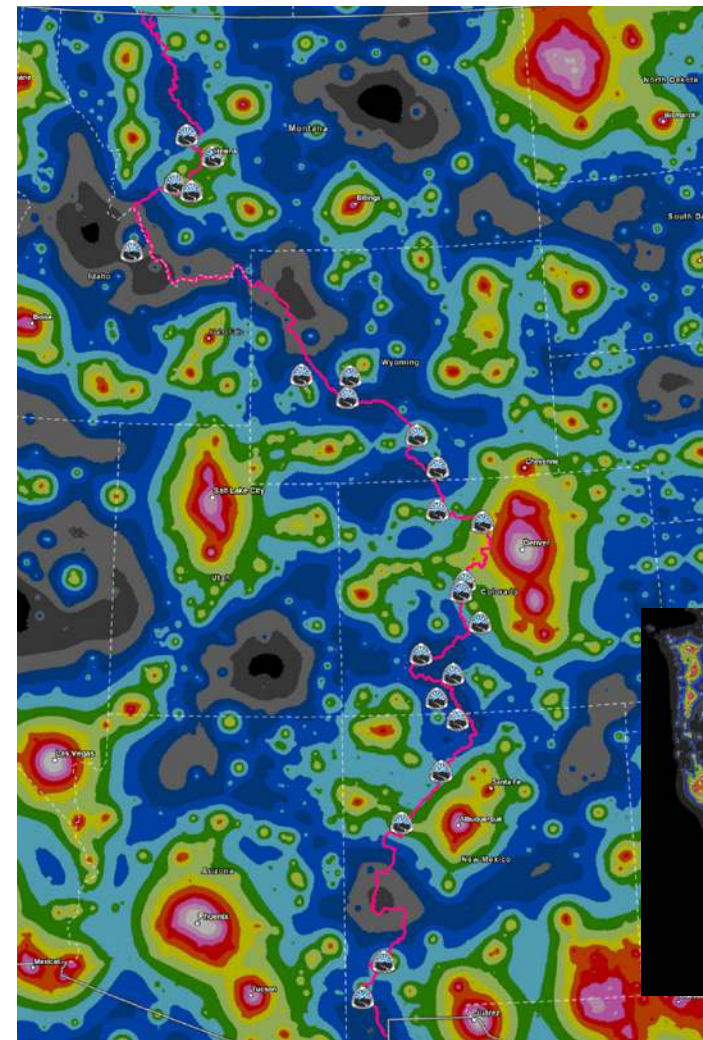
A Hiker's Perspective

By Zack "Beekeeper" Stockbridge

CDT at Night

In April 2023, my wife and I set out to thru hike the Continental Divide Trail. Our first day was a hot, but relatively easy, 14 miles from Crazy Cook Monument to Water Cache #1 where we set camp in some scraggly shrubs. There are virtually no artificial lights in the Bootheel of southern New Mexico, so stars appear quickly once the Sun exits the sky, stage west. Low and behold, Orion was low in the western sky.

Long distance hiking is many things. Chief among them is an escape from towns and cities to take refuge in the wilderness. Seeking out amazing landscapes by day is obvious to all of us in the hiking community. As an astronomy professor and astrophotographer, I love standing in awe of star-filled nightscapes. I am thrilled that the CDT also carries us to places where darkness is thick at night and provides a wonderful opportunity to enjoy both kinds of grandeur.



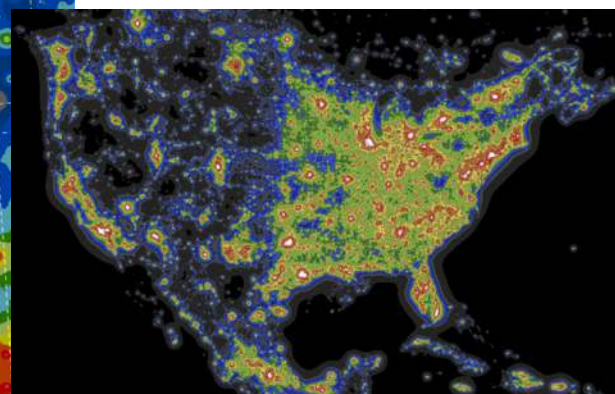
Earth Below, Heavens Above

The Milky Way is a stunning sight. But as cities and towns continue to grow, the collective glow of artificial lights brightens the sky and washes the stars from view. As a result, it is becoming more and more difficult to see our home galaxy.

Back in 2016, a global study of light pollution determined that 80% of Americans and 60% of Europeans cannot see the Milky Way from where they live. That number has only grown over the years. In comparison, you should be able to see the Milky Way in the night sky almost anywhere along the 3100-mile footpath of the CDT.

In April, the core of the Milky Way rises in the early morning hours. The problem is that most hikers cherish every minute of sleep we can get after a long day of hiking. Few want to stay up late or get up early to see the stars. I am no exception. We were 200 miles into our hike before I got my first good photo of the Milky Way. My wife and I were camped at the hot springs near Doc Campbell's Trading Post, on the edge of the Gila Wilderness when I rediscovered a silver lining to late-night calls of nature. As I was returning to my tent, I saw the Milky Way silhouetting a tree along the cliffs above as the hot springs steamed nearby. I watched our galaxy rise for as long as I could before the cold drove me back into the tent that night.

Perhaps our most dramatic view of the Milky Way was only a few days later. We were camped near Snow Lake when I had to go to the bathroom rather desperately at about 4:30 A.M. And I saw it. The Moon had set during the night and now the Milky Way was blazing over the lake. Although I was miserably sick at the time, it was 25 degrees outside and my wife was not amused, I stayed out for about fifteen minutes oohing and aahing at the dramatic scene.



Dark Sky Map vs CDT Dark Sky Map

GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences. (n.d.). GFZ Data Services [Data set]. <https://dataservices.gfz-potsdam.de/contact/showshort.php?id=escidoc:1541893>



Distance: A Shift in the Heavens

Understanding astronomy adds another level of appreciation to just how long the Continental Divide Trail is. If you make it from one terminus to the other, you will have traveled far enough and long enough to change the very heavens above you.

You may remember that the North Star (Polaris) is the one star in the sky that does not change position. Hour-to-hour, night-to-night or month-to-month, the North Star's position in the night sky is, for most practical purposes, constant. Less widely known is the fact that "height" (altitude) of the North Star above the horizon is directly tied to your location on the globe.

The Crazy Cook Monument at the CDT's Southern Terminus is 31.5° north of the Equator. As a result, Polaris will be 31.5° above the horizon. The trail's Northern Terminus, along the shores of Waterton Lakes, is at 49° north — which puts the North Star 49° above the horizon. If you were to continue on to the geographic North Pole, (90° N), the North Star would be directly overhead (90° above the horizon).

What exactly does that mean? The stars above you will shift because of how far you have traveled across the face of the globe.

Southbounders will not only see Polaris dropping lower in the sky. They will also see constellations unknown in the north, as a new region of the heavens slowly crawls above the horizon.

Time: A New Cast of Characters

There are two ways in which we reckon the length of a thru-hike: distance and time. We've seen how distance can change the heavens, but time has an even more marked effect. Most long-distance hikers take five to six months to complete the Continental Divide Trail. The time it takes you to hike from Mexico to Canada (or vice versa), is long enough that our planet will travel almost halfway around the Sun.

As seasons pass, Earth turns its back on one set of constellations and a new cast of characters will fill the sky as Earth faces the exact opposite direction in space. The changes are gradual. Each night, stars rise and set just a little bit earlier than the night before. As constellations change with the seasons, a thru-hike gives you a front row seat for the parade.

We lost Orion while still in southern New Mexico. He was soon replaced by Hercules, Pegasus and Sagittarius, among others. As time passes, the winter constellations make way for the constellations of the Summer Triangle (which include Lyra, Cygnus and Aquila).

The Milky Way follows the same patterns as the stars and it became easier to enjoy as our hike wore on. By the time June rolled around, it was great at midnight. By early September, the Milky Way put on a show just after sunset.

Night Hiking

Hikers may not stay up late to see the stars, but you know what we will stay up late for? More hiking! Many hikers enjoy the novelty of hiking by the light of the Full Moon. My wife and I rarely do that. We usually use my knowledge of the night sky to position ourselves so we can hide from the spotlight in the sky.

The Moon does not rise and set at the same time every night, but the times for the Full Moon are easy to remember. The rule of thumb is that you can expect the Full Moon to rise in the east as the Sun sets in the west. Around midnight, the Full Moon will reach its high point in the sky towards the south before setting in the west at sunrise. If we can find trees to shade us to the south, we're happy campers!



We had several memorable encounters with the Moon in 2023. Our first CDT run-in with the Full Moon came the first night north of Pie Town, NM. The trail is a road walk surrounded by private property. Thankfully, the TLC Ranch kindly offers CDT hikers a place to camp. However, the night we were there, the barn porch was already full and the treeless landscape provided no place to hide that night. We spent the night mercilessly bathed in moonlight, sleep hard to come by.

There's no question that hiking by moonlight can be magical, though.

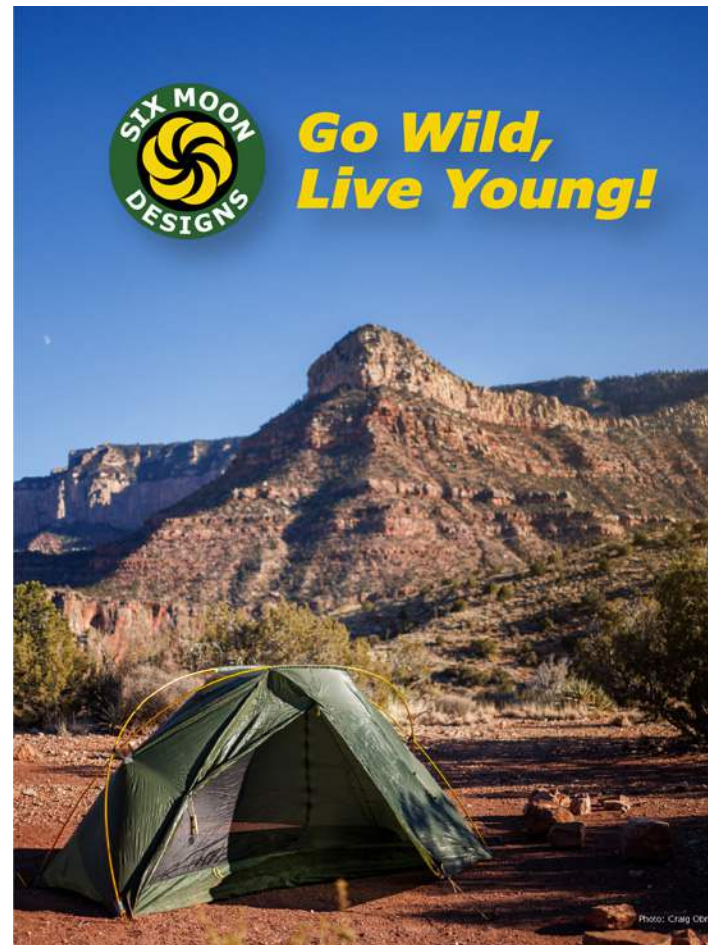
The Full Moon lights up the landscape far more than most people realize. Allow your eyes to adjust and there is often no need for a headlamp. That can come in handy! We were thankful for the extra light when late summer rolled around. In May, we had taken three weeks off as we waited for snow to melt out a little more in the San Juan Mountains of southern Colorado. The plan didn't work, and we were forced to flip up to Glacier National Park so we could hike the rest of the trail southbound. The lost time meant we had to make up miles and push hard crossing the Great Basin when we reached Wyoming.

Our first night in the Basin was unforgettable. We hiked by moonlight with a group that would become our extended trail family, finally setting camp in the dark where the CDT crosses the Oregon Trail.

A month later, the Moon once again lit the land - which was a big help as we raced through southern Colorado.



MAKE HIKING FUN AGAIN



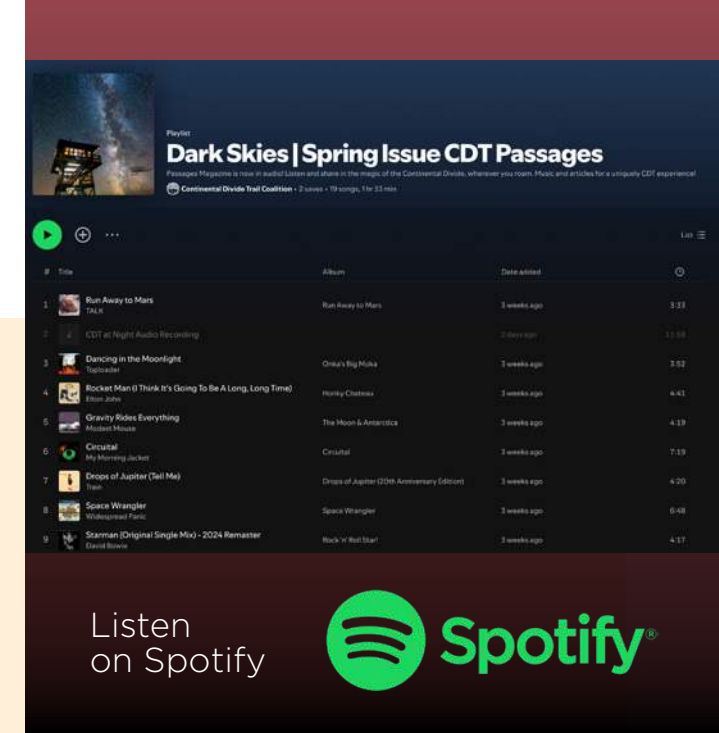
Go Wild,
Live Young!

MEDIA ROUNDUP

PLAYLIST | DARK SKIES: SPRING ISSUE OF PASSAGES



Passages Magazine is now in audio! Listen and share in the magic of the Continental Divide, wherever you roam. Music and articles for a uniquely CDT experience! [Listen to the full playlist](#)



PODCAST | MONARCH



Looking for a spooky listen of a CDT thru-hiker? This fictional tale follows Hallie Halprin - trail name Monarch - on her five month journey of the CDT, as she attempts to create an audio project about supernatural encounters. Inspired by real events with added imagination, Monarch will give you goosebumps on or off trail.



FILM | GOOD NIGHT OPPY



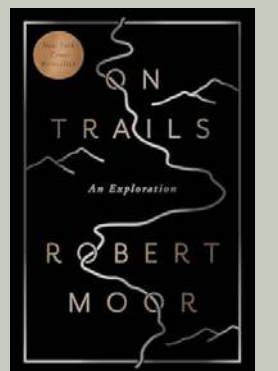
Mars is frequently visible with the naked eye from just about anywhere on the CDT. Good Night Oppy tells the true story of Opportunity, a Mars rover and its remarkable extended mission on the red planet. The film follows this groundbreaking journey and the bond forged between Oppy and her makers.



BOOK | ON TRAILS: AN EXPLORATION BY ROBERT MOOR



Appalachian Trail thru-hiker Robert Moor travels the world exploring assorted trails, from the microscopic to international scenic trails spanning multiple continents. Moor blends science, nature, history, and his own experiences into a thought provoking collection on how trails originate and are utilized.



Why the CDT is the CDT



 LISTEN TO THE ARTICLE

The work to Complete the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail

By Dan Carter



Today, only five percent of the CDT needs to be completed to have a continuous, publicly accessible path along the spine of the continent! Explore the remaining major gaps through the Story Map. Each of the gaps has its unique challenges and present opportunities for creating experiences along this magical landscape.

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail was envisioned as more than just a long-distance trail. According to the 1976 Study Report, it was designed to showcase the “rich heritage and life of the Rocky Mountains and the southwestern United States,” where the landscape “overwhelms everyone who passes that way.” A continuous route from Canada to Mexico enhances this experience, serving as a unifying thread for communities, cultures, and the natural environment.

On the ground, the CDT is developed with minimal impact to optimize outdoor recreation while preserving the natural landscape. As one of eleven National Scenic Trails, it has a distinct purpose, shaped by decades of planning and collaboration.

Patchwork

When designated in 1978, 62% of the CDT was assembled from existing trails, roads, and rights of way that met National Scenic Trail standards. A planning corridor—up to 50 miles wide—was established to account for challenging terrain, environmental concerns, and land ownership constraints. While some question deviations from the geologic Continental Divide, these adjustments make the trail more feasible and sustainable.

 Gateway Communities	 Bureau of Land Management
 CDT Gaps	 Local Government
 Continental Divide NST	 Private
	 State of Wyoming
	 USFS

Esri, CGIAR, USGS. Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community. Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



CDTC Trail Completion
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Private Easements

Despite passing primarily through public lands, 6% (169 miles) of the CDT crosses private property, often along public roads. Some segments benefit from right-of-way easements, allowing public access under specific conditions, such as prohibiting camping or fires. Respecting these conditions is crucial to maintaining access. CDTC is actively assessing private land segments to ensure long-term trail access.

Trail Management

The CDT is managed by multiple agencies, including the USFS, BLM, NPS, state, local, and tribal governments, as well as private landowners. Though guided by consistent principles, local management adapts to unique landscapes and land use needs. This results in a diverse experience: from cross-country navigation in New Mexico’s Bootheel to alpine traverses in Glacier National Park, or even sidewalks in trail towns like Rawlins and Grand Lake.

With increasing use and climate change impacts, sustainable trail construction and management continue to evolve. Recent improvements include installing walk-through and equestrian gates in the Bootheel of New Mexico, and replacing hazardous barriers.

Many Types of Users

The CDT accommodates a wide range of users, from day hikers to long-distance trekkers. Originally designed for hikers and equestrians, it also supports compatible uses along different sections. Managing these uses requires balancing sometimes conflicting interests while preserving the CDT’s intended experience.

Alternates

The CDT’s “choose your own adventure” reputation stems from unofficial alternate routes pieced together on existing trails and roads by users. However, these are not actively managed, and some traverse private lands. Hikers should research land ownership and regulations before deviating from the official route. Connecting trails, particularly those leading to trail communities, play a vital role in the CDT experience.

Gaps

Though 95% complete, some CDT segments still follow major roadways, such as Muddy Pass and Silver City. Filling these gaps is complex due to private land and environmental concerns, but efforts in Cuba, El Malpais, and Lordsburg are making progress.

Currently, 23% of the trail follows motorized routes, which is not ideal but necessary due to existing infrastructure. The long-term goal is to relocate these sections onto non-motorized trails through collaborative planning and the Optimal Location Review process.

Other Resources:

[USFS CDNST Management Toolbox](#)

[CDT Experience - CDTC](#)

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Members are the core of our organization and its efforts to protect the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. By being a member, you support the protection of the CDT and our work to build a broad-based community of people who love and support the Trail. Thank you!

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CDTC Charter Members helped build the base of support necessary to help launch CDTC's efforts in 2012. CDTC owes an incredible debt of gratitude to these important supporters.

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Legacy Members make a lasting impact to protect the CDT for future generations by including CDTC in their will or estate plan. Contact CDTC Director of Development Lauren Murray at lmurray@cdtcoalition.org if you are interested in becoming a Legacy Member.

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LISTEN TO THE ARTICLE

ANSWERING THE CALL:

INSIDE BACKCOUNTRY SEARCH AND RESCUE OF COLORADO

By Anna DeBattiste, Colorado Search and Rescue Association

Melissa was just sitting down to dinner with her husband and two children when she heard the text message come in. She swore under her breath, knowing what it probably was. It was Sunday night, typically the busiest night for search and rescue incidents in her county, and she'd been waiting for a page for the last few hours. She had hoped it wouldn't come, however. Between her busy job for a telecommunications company and her volunteer rescue responsibilities, she'd had little time for her family lately. Her husband had cooked a special dinner that night, telling her he hoped she would be able to stay home and enjoy it. Her husband was so supportive of her busy schedule that she felt guilty all the time.

"It's OK," he said before she could speak. "You do what you need to do and we'll put a plate in the fridge for you."

Many Colorado residents, even those who recreate frequently in the backcountry, know little about how backcountry search and rescue (BSAR) works in the state. Colorado statute mandates that county sheriffs are responsible for coordinating search and rescue, but most don't have the trained staff it takes to handle this function. Few sheriff's offices have small paid teams of law enforcement officers who juggle BSAR duties with their law enforcement responsibilities, but most sheriffs rely on nonprofit teams composed of trained volunteer rescuers. Many sheriffs say they don't know what they would do without these dedicated volunteers.

Colorado BSAR teams have many specialties—and those specialties are highly dependent on the type of terrain they service. A team on the western slope might specialize in canyon rescue while teams in areas with a lot of climbing terrain specialize in high-angle rescue, and some of the high alpine teams specialize in avalanche rescue. Some teams train for proficiency in swift water rescue, dive rescue, downed aircraft recovery, cave rescue, and other highly specialized rescue situations. All teams train for proficiency in searches and medical evacuations, and for teams across the state, hikers needing help are the largest demographic they serve.

BSAR incidents often happen at night, in all kinds of bad weather. What makes a person volunteer to be cold, wet, and tired outdoors in the middle of the night? The reasons are as varied as the backgrounds of our

volunteers, but some of the most common we hear are the desire to give back to the community, a love of the outdoors, the rewards of teamwork and camaraderie, and the occasional excitement of working with helicopters, rescue dogs, technical rope systems, etc. Most BSAR volunteers will tell you they love what they do, but that doesn't mean backcountry recreationists



Image Credit: Andy Novak of Park County Search and Rescue

shouldn't try to lighten their load. As Colorado sees higher and higher visitation numbers, the number of incidents our teams respond to has steadily risen over the past few decades. Some teams, especially those in smaller rural counties, can be strapped for resources during the busy summer hiking seasons.



Image Credit: Heath Sample of Summit County Rescue Group

What can you do to help? Be prepared for your hike!

Consider the "Three Ts" of preparedness:

Trip plan - Tell a reliable person back home where you're going, what trailhead you'll be parking at, what your intended route is, and when you expect to be back. Tell them how to call for help if you're not back within a reasonable time of your intended plan. If they are in the same county you're hiking in, they can simply call 911. If not, they need to know the county your route is located in so they can look up contact information for that county's sheriff's office.

Training - Make sure you have the technical skills and physical conditioning for what you're doing. Work your way up to the endurance needed for multi-day and high-elevation hikes. Don't overestimate your abilities and do enough homework so you don't underestimate the terrain. Use the resources on [CDTC's website](#) to help you start your research.

Take the essentials - Carry [the ten essentials](#) plus any terrain-specific gear you might need. If you are injured and have to wait hours for rescuers, do you have enough clothing and shelter to survive until they get to you? Remember, even in July, it will be cold in the Colorado mountains once nightfall descends. Colorado BSAR volunteers are not stationed in a firehouse waiting to slide down a pole when the 911 call goes out. They will be responding from their homes or places of work, and they must get to the trailhead and hike to where you are. Helicopter rescues are the exception rather than the rule, and we reserve them for cases in which life, limb, eyesight, or rescuer safety is at stake.

The BSAR community is the safety net for Colorado's multi-billion-dollar outdoor recreation economy, an economy that continues to grow. Wondering how you can support that safety net beyond staying safe on your hike?

Donate to the Colorado Search and Rescue Association or a local team.

Volunteer if you live in Colorado!

The Colorado Search and Rescue Association is a membership organization composed of volunteers from BSAR teams across the state. They bring organizations together to find, rescue, and recover those in need in the Colorado backcountry. They also assist and empower BSAR teams through public education, advocacy, coordination, collaboration, and continuous skill development.



Find contacts for your local team

[LEARN MORE >](#)



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Image Credit: Jack Hickisch of Arapahoe Rescue Patrol