

Larimer County Department of Natural Resources

2014 Devils Backbone/Blue Sky Trail Open Spaces Visitor Count

In 2012 Larimer County Department of Natural Resources purchased three TrafX infrared trail counters. The counters use passive infrared fields identical to a motion sensor light or similar technology. The counters are secured in a steel lock box and attached to a post at waist level. Some minor maintenance is required throughout the year to ensure the accuracy of the data. The counters are downloaded monthly, and the data is uploaded into the TrafX maintained website Datanet. The total count at all the counters is divided by 2, which means the data more closely reflects the total number of people recreating on the trail not just a count of how many times the counter is passed by someone.

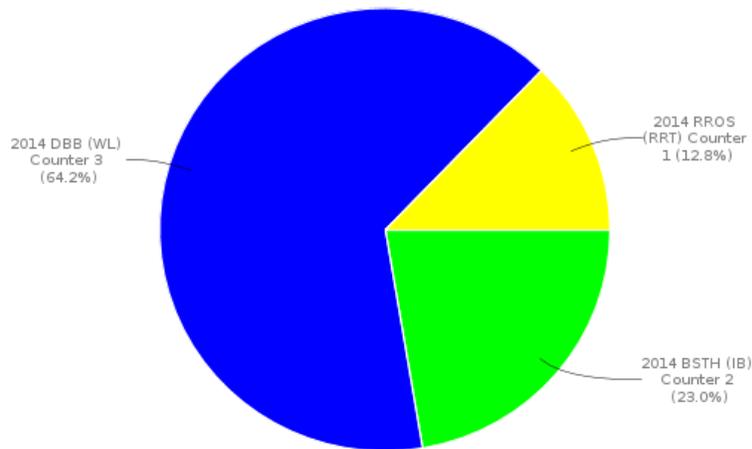
In 2014 a visitor count was conducted at the Devils Backbone Open Space. The counters were placed at: the trail leading away from the Blue Sky Trailhead { BSTH (IB) }, the Wild Loop trail just north of the Devils Backbone Open Space parking lot { DBB (WL) }, and on the trail boundary between Rimrock Open Space and the City of Fort Collins Natural Area Coyote Ridge. The intent of the visitor count was to estimate the visitation to the Devils Backbone/ Blue Sky Trail system which starts at Hwy 34 and extends all the way to the south end of Horsetooth Reservoir's Inlet Bay.

2014 Devils Backbone / Blue Sky Trail Visitation Overall Total

Site	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
BSTH	712	603	1,701	2,358	2,842	3,487	2,517	2,862	2,361	2,876	1,319	1,056	24,694
DBB	5,175	1,838	7,784	7,341	7,576	6,868	4,826	5,754	6,061	6,957	4,101	3,655	67,936
RROS	556	440	1,321	1,514	1,514	1,426	1,293	1,223	1,214	1,391	893	715	13,500
												Overall	106,130

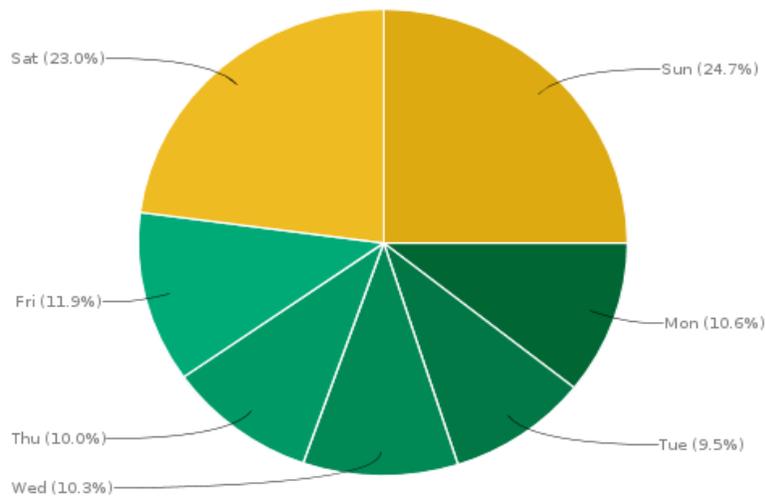
The overall total visitation between all three counters was 106,130. The trailheads were only closed for muddy conditions/safety concerns for under a week during 2014 causing very little impact on the data collection.

Visitation on Specific Trails



From this graph we can estimate the greatest number of visitors accessed the trail system from the Devils Backbone parking lot (blue wedge). One variable of note that could have caused this huge difference in use is that the Inlet Bay Trail (green wedge) accessed from the Blue Sky Parking lot is a paid parking lot, a day pass is required to park there. The Rimrock Trail's (yellow wedge) lower percent of use was most likely due to the remote nature of the area and possibly the more restrictive regulations in place within in the Rimrock Open Space.

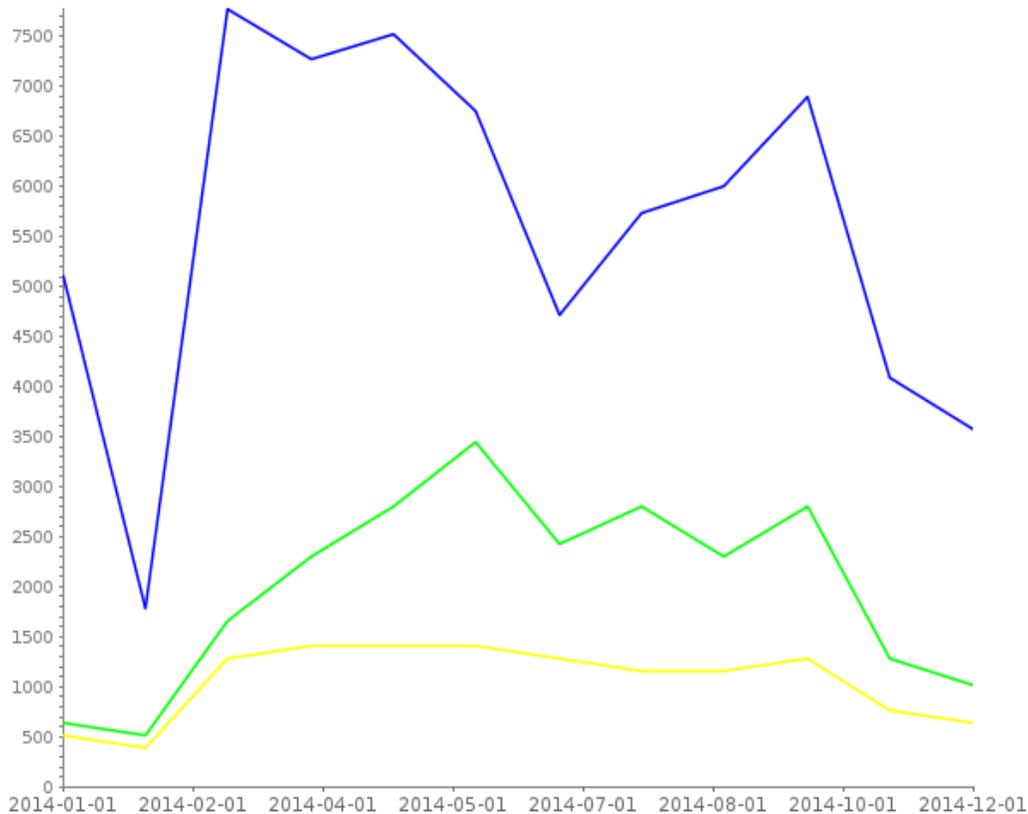
Visitation During Different Days of the Week



The data reflected in this graph is expected with the majority of use experienced over the weekend, with a slightly larger amount of use occurring on Sunday rather than Saturday.

Visitation Trends at Devils Backbone / Blue Sky Trail Open Space

Y-axis Visitation Totals



Blue Line = Wild Loop Trail (accessed from DBB TH)

X-Axis Months of the Year

Green Line = Blue Sky Trail (accessed from BS TH) Yellow Line = Rimrock Trail (accessed from Coyote Ridge TH)

The graph above clearly describes some of the most interesting findings from the 2014 Visitation Count conducted on the Devils Backbone/ Blue Sky Trail. The Wild Loop Trail (Blue Line) accessed from the Devils Backbone Open Space experienced a huge spike in visitation during the late winter/early spring months. This is unique to this trail system and has not been recorded in previous visitation counts on other properties, while the reasons for the unusual visitation pattern are not quantified in the data. The Devils Backbone Open Space parking lot is free parking no day permit is required, possibly making a visit during the winter months more appealing, paying a day fee is harder to justify when the visit will be a shorter length of time. The terrain within the first few miles of the Wild Loop Trail is flat with little elevation change, making it an excellent trail during winter months because snow cover and icy sections of trail are not as technical to navigate. In addition visitation to the Wild Loop experienced a huge decrease in visitation during the high temperatures of summer. This is most likely attributed to the lack of shade and southern exposure of the Wild Loop Trail. This is further confirmed by the rise in visitation during the fall months when temperatures start to decrease again.