

Newlin Creek - A wet day in the Wet Mountains by Dave Cooper



Tranquil pond by the parking area - small.jpg

We are definitely spoiled here in Colorado. With more than 300 days of sun a year, if the weather isn't perfect, we just wait to do our hike another day. Unfortunately, we then miss the opportunity to experience the mountains in a different mood. When the skies are overcast and a light rain falling, the light has a softer quality that really brings out colors in the landscape.

Equipped with good raingear, hiking a forest trail can be very enjoyable in these conditions, as we found recently on a rainy autumn day in Newlin Creek, appropriately located in the Wet Mountains. The hike is one described in the book "Southern Front Range Trail Guide, Trails Within 50 miles of Pueblo, Colorado", by Nadia N. Brelje, which

Getting to the Trailhead: From Canon City, drive east for approximately 5 miles on Highway 50 to the Florence turnoff on highway 67. Drive south to the town of Florence (4 miles) and continue on highway 67 south through the town. Measuring from the junction where highways 67 and 115 diverge, drive south on highway 67 to a junction with County Road 15 at mile 4.4. Turn right onto CR15 and drive southwest, following signs to Newlin Creek and Florence Mountain Park. Reach the trailhead at mile 10.8, at the terminus of County Road 15. All but the last 0.2 mile is on good roads. This last 0.2 mile can be a little rougher.

GPS coordinates for the trailhead (NAD83): 38°16'00"N, 105° 11'20"W, 7,113 feet.

Statistics: From the trailhead to the sawmill the trail gains 1700 feet in 2.5 miles one way. Continuing to the ridgeline, as described, adds another half mile each way and 600 feet of elevation gain.

Difficulty: A relatively easy hike on a maintained trail to the sawmill, but with many stream crossings. These could be more challenging with spring runoff. Beyond the sawmill the trail is primitive.

USGS Quad: Rockvale, CO.

we have found to be a reliable resource for exploration of the area.

The Newlin Creek Trail is one of those hikes where the trail and stream are intimately connected. In fact, the trail crosses the creek 17 times. For that reason, and since there is only one constructed bridge, autumn is a logical time of year to enjoy this hike.

The light rain that fell that day did cause the creek to flow, but created no difficulty for the stream crossings, and did feed some of the small waterfalls. The leaves were late to fall on this relatively low altitude hike, and as a result we were treated to a mass of color.

Sheer cliffs and varied vegetation make this a very scenic hike-2 - small.jpg

The highlight of the hike is the old Herrick Sawmill, built in 1887 and with many of the artifacts still intact. This site alone makes the hike worthwhile, but the natural beauty of the area is another compelling reason to visit. Before starting the hike, check out the pond by the parking area.

For climbers, the rocky cliffs that border the creek offer many routes, both traditional and sport, with the highest concentration being on the Creekside Spire. The day we were there, the wet rock put any thoughts of climbing out of our minds.



Hike Description

From the trailhead parking area, the trail leads southwest along the creek. The only constructed bridge is reached at mile 0.6, shortly before the Creekside Spire, a prominent rock feature on the north bank of the creek.

Crossing the first and only bridge - small.jpg



Continue along the trail as it winds its way back and forth across the creek, reaching the sawmill at mile 2.5. Information boards share some of the history of the sawmill.

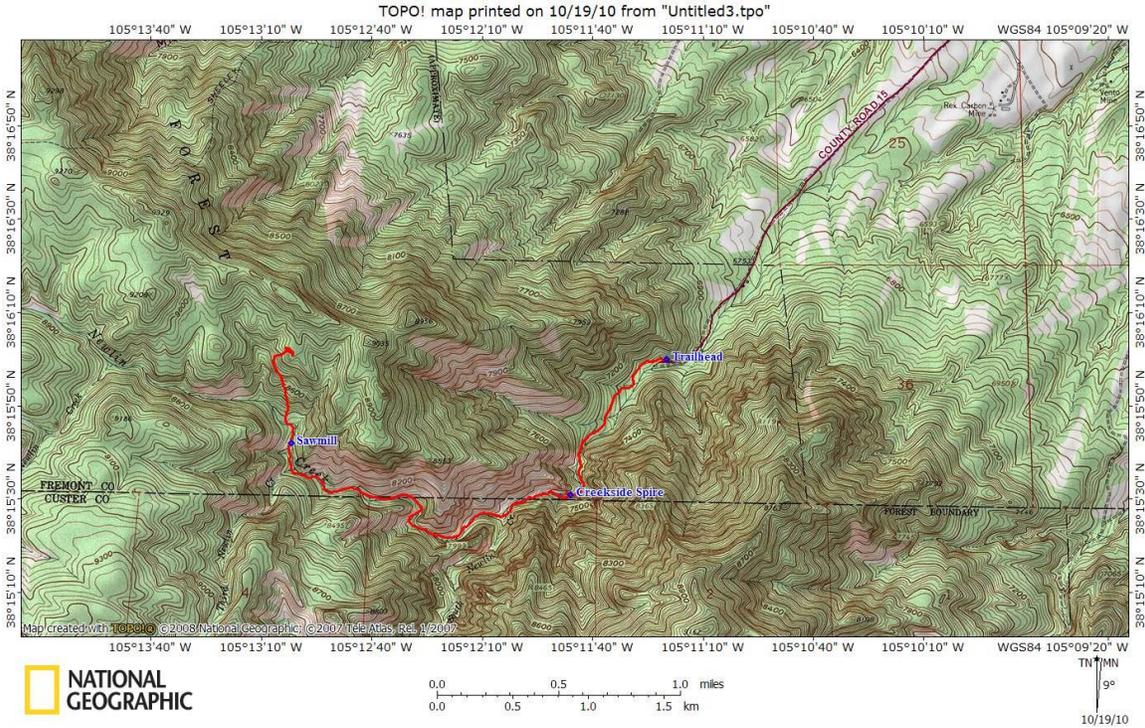
A small waterfall - small.jpg





Remnants of the sawmill - small.jpg

The sawmill is where most people end their hike, though the trail, less distinct now, does continue for quite some distance, leaving the bottom of the drainage and climbing to the top of a ridge at mile 3.0. There were no views to be had on this day, and with the rain changing over to sleet, it was time to turn around.



GPS Latitude / Longitude NAD83 (Deg., Min., Sec.)
 Trailhead, 38,16,0,-105,11,20,7113 feet
 Creekside Spire, 38,15,31,-105,11,46,7402 feet
 Sawmill, 38,15,42,-105,13,2,8363 feet

