

## Elliot Ridge

5,090 acres (8 square miles)

### Setting

Elliot Ridge is a high, rocky divide on the crest of the Gore Range. It is a prominent spine of Precambrian granite. Its steep talus and screefields fall away into rolling hills blanketed in lodgepole pine forests that have seen some historic logging. The terrain here consists of the northern crest of Elliot Ridge and part of the Elliot Creek drainage that flows northeast into the Blue River, just below the dam of Green Mountain Reservoir. The elevation ranges from 8,600 feet at Elliot Creek to 11,645 feet on Elliot Ridge.



*Fragile tundra meadow on Elliot Ridge*

### What's special about it

**Ecology:** The proposed Elliot Ridge Addition to the Eagles Nest Wilderness Area contains excellent summer range for big game. As a result, this area supports large herds of elk and mule deer. The animals use this landscape as a movement corridor between lower-elevation BLM lands in the Colorado River basin to the north, and higher-elevation mountains in the Eagles Nest Wilderness Area to the south. The Mahan Lake area is high priority wildlife habitat, and contains a large population of a very rare plant species, the brown lady slipper.

The area also provides habitat for a wide variety of animal species: black bear (overall range); elk (overall and severe winter range), lynx (potential habitat), moose (overall and severe winter range), mountain lion (overall range), mule deer (overall and severe winter range), wild turkey (overall range), Colorado River cutthroat trout, boreal toad (aquatic habitat).

**Recreation:** The proposed Elliot Ridge Wilderness Area is an important destination for hunters in the autumn, and it acts as a natural buffer between the Eagles Nest Wilderness Area and the heavily-logged lodgepole pine forests to the north of the proposed Area. The proposed Wilderness Area receives little summer use, and provides excellent opportunities to experience solitude year-round.

### Potential threats

**Logging:** Numerous recent timber sales along the roads that access this area have dramatically altered the natural qualities of the forests there. The maze of obliterated roads will take many years to recover.

**Motor recreation:** The area is vulnerable to irresponsible and destructive off-road vehicle use.

### Division of Wildlife habitat qualities, species of significance

This area supports a strain Colorado River Cutthroat trout. Elliot Ridge also contains elk winter range and production areas.

### Continuing discussions

Hidden Gems Campaign continues to meet with snowmobile groups about adjustments of the area.

**Other info**

The proposed Elliot Ridge Wilderness Area is one of 12 Roadless Areas that are contiguous with the Eagles Nest Wilderness Area, which together forms a roadless complex of over 168,000 acres (262 square miles).

