

Humbug Spires is a special place where nature comes first!  
To minimize the impact of your visit, please:

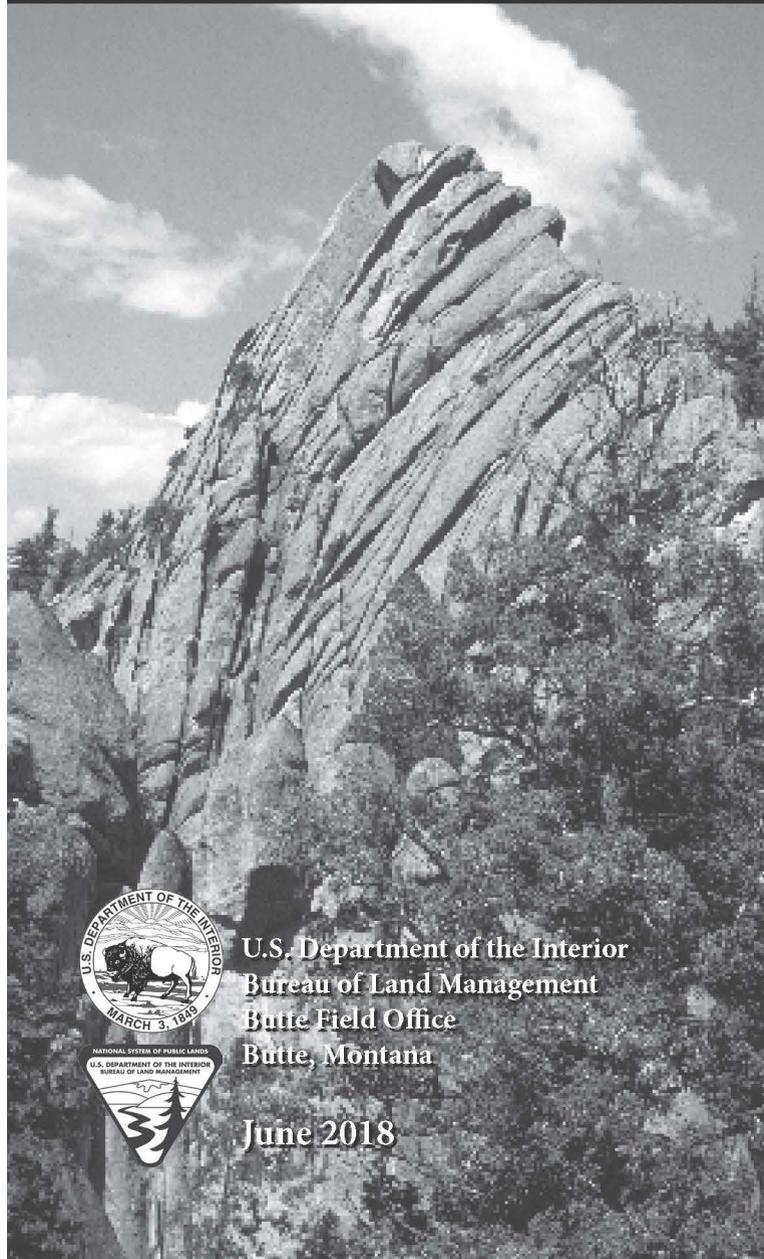
- Leave only footprints and take only memories.
- Pack out all litter whether yours or not.
- Don't remove vegetation or other natural resources.
- Keep all pets on a leash, or better yet, at home.
- Camp at least 100 feet from streams and out of sight from trails.
- Use a stove for cooking.
- If you must build a fire, make sure it is properly constructed, small, and dead out before leaving.
- Wash at least 100 feet from streams using only biodegradable soap.
- Use the "cat burial method" for disposing of human waste.
- Reserve shouting and loud noises for emergencies.

For more information on Humbug Spires, contact

Bureau of Land Management  
Butte Field Office  
106 North Parkmont  
Butte, MT 59701  
or  
phone (406) 533-7600

# Humbug Spires

## Wilderness Study Area



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Butte Field Office  
Butte, Montana

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**Humbug Spires** is 26 miles south of Butte, Montana, along the western foothills of the Highland Mountains. It was designated a Primitive Area in 1972. About 8,800 acres of the 11,175-acre Humbug Spires Wilderness Study Area has been recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Humbug Spires is characterized by rolling hills of Douglas fir and lodgepole pines accentuated by majestic granite spires. Lush meadows, dense forests and grassy flats are found throughout the area. Humbug offers many opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. The primary uses are hiking, stream fishing, rock climbing, back-packing, wildlife watching, photography, hunting, snowshoeing, cross country skiing and horseback riding.

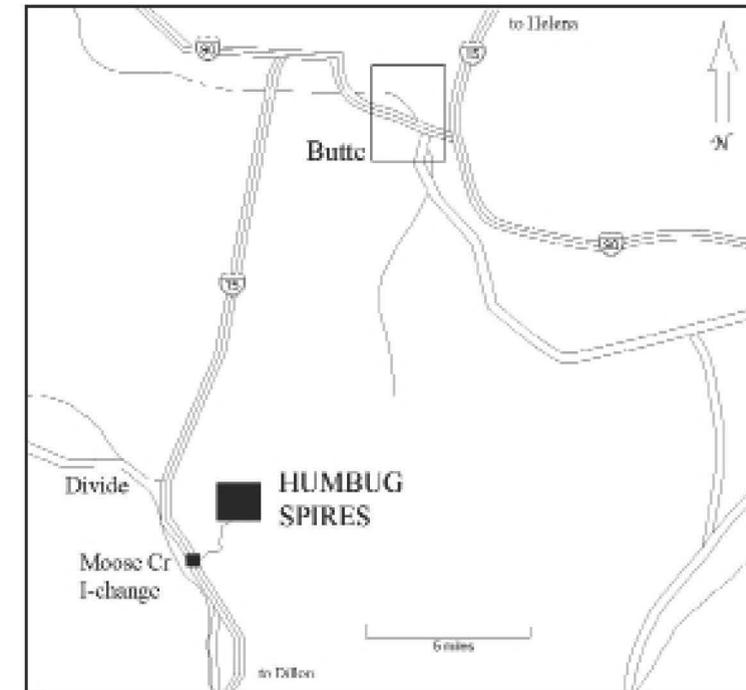
To reach the area, take I-15 to the Moose Creek interchange and go east about 3 miles along the creek on an improved gravel road. Park at the trailhead parking lot. To reach the hiking trail, cross the foot bridge just downhill from the restroom and the visitor information board. Humbug's main trail goes northeast from here along Moose Creek, passing through stands of Douglas fir trees more than 250 years old.

After about 1.5 miles, the trail forks. Take the right fork marked by white arrows. The trail continues for .3 miles up a small side drainage over a ridge, and then along the northeast fork of Moose Creek. From this drainage, numerous game trails leading in all directions are available to the adventurous hiker. These trails provide access to the rock spires located throughout the northern part of the area. To reach the "Wedge," one of the more prominent spires, continue 1.3 miles up the main trail along the intermittent creek. The Wedge is about a hundred yards uphill from an abandoned miner's

cabin at the head of the drainage.

Given the diverse topography of the heavily timbered terrain, visitors hiking off the designated trail should have topographic maps, a compass, and drinking water. United States Geologic Survey 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> minute quadrangle maps cover the area and are available locally. You will need the Tucker Creek, Mount Humbug, Melrose and Wickiup quads for full coverage.

Off site camping facilities are provided at BLM's Divide Bridge Campground, about 2 miles west of the Divide interchange along Highway 43 on the west side of the Big Hole River.



## GEOLOGY

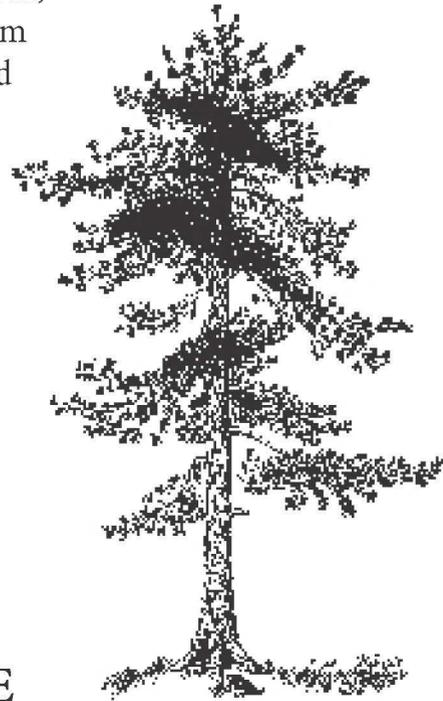
Humbug Spires is one of the most spectacular outcroppings of quartz monzonite within the Boulder Batholith, a large, late Cretaceous granitic intrusion. Nine of the spires rise 300-600 feet above their surroundings and dramatically show the effects of erosion. These granite rocks are renowned for climbing opportunities. In all there are some 50 spires.

The topography and vegetation of the Humbug Spires combine to give the visitor a complete sense of solitude, where one can readily enjoy a natural setting free of human influences.

## VEGETATION & SOIL

There are three dominant types of vegetation in the Humbug Spires area. The outer extremities are characterized by bunchgrasses and sagebrush with only scattered stands of young trees. Mature stands of Douglas fir or lodgepole pine are in the central, steeper areas near the spires themselves. Willows, dogwood, aspen and lush grasses make up the third type of vegetation and can be found in the riparian areas along Moose Creek and its tributaries, Lime and Selway Gulches, the South Fork of Tucker Creek, MacLean Creek and Pine Gulch. Small open meadows and beaver dams are scattered along most of these riparian bottoms.

Most of the soils in the Humbug Spires formed from granitic materials and are coarse-grained, shallow, acidic, well drained and highly erosive. In some areas, soils formed from both alluvial and metamorphic materials. In contrast to the granitic soils, these tend to be finer-grained, richer in nutrients, capable of holding more water, and less erosive.



## WILDLIFE

Humbug Spires provides a variety of wildlife habitats, including dense forest, sagebrush and grass, meadows and riparian drainage bottoms. Big game species found in the area include black bear, moose, elk, mule deer and bighorn sheep.

Other mammals using the area include mountain lion, coyote, fox, bobcat, weasel, chipmunk, red squirrel, porcupine, cottontail and snowshoe hare. There are also several species of small rodents. Birds include blue and ruffed grouse, several species of raptors, and small nongame species. All in all, the diverse habitat types support a large number of animal species.

## ROCK CLIMBING

Rock climbing is one of the most popular activities at Humbug Spires. Due to exposure to weather, many of the spire walls are smooth, almost featureless surfaces which are difficult to climb and offer only limited spots where climbers can place protection as they climb. Most routes are confined to vertical crack systems, the majority of which range from 5.5 to 5.7 in difficulty, with some of the more difficult routes reaching 5.12. Routes can be found to challenge hikers with all levels of ability, from beginners to experts. Humbug Spires has more diverse climbing opportunities than most areas of its size in the western states.

## HIKING & FISHING

Visitors can enjoy both backpacking and day hiking trips on foot or horseback. Most travel within Humbug Spires is along the drainages or ridge tops. Although a few established hiking trails exist in some of the more prominent drainages, most of the area remains undeveloped. Numerous game trails and cross country openings are available to the adventurous hiker seeking a more challenging recreation experience. Water runs yearlong in most of the



tributaries of Moose Creek. Before drinking any water from the area, it should be treated with tablets, filtration or by boiling as a safety precaution.

Moose Creek is a tributary of the Big Hole River and supports populations of brook, rainbow, and cutthroat trout in its lower reaches, and cutthroat only in its upper portions. Steep waterfalls form a barrier separating the trout in the lower reaches from the cutthroat in the upper parts of the stream. The fish are small, rarely exceeding 10 inches, but good tasting and fun to watch from numerous vantage points along the established trails.