

Ruby - Feature #19688

Add indentable block comment syntax

05/24/2023 10:47 AM - ccmywish (Aoran Zeng)

Status: Closed

Priority: Normal

Assignee:

Target version:

Description

Ruby's default block comment is using `=begin` and `=end`

```
=begin
  Some block comments
=end
```

However, we must place them at the top of the line, thus we can't indent them, for example:

```
class A
  class B
    class C

    =begin
    The comment for this method
    =end

    def hello
      end
    end
  end
end
```

This is something like the situation of `<<HEREDOC` and `<<-HEREDOC`. Finally, we added `<<~HEREDOC` which is very handy.

Things become worse when documenting using RDoc and YARD, see the **686 lines** of the leading `#`, it's very trivial if we don't use block comment:

<https://github.com/ruby/net-http/blob/master/lib/net/http.rb#LL35C1-L721C1>

So, I propose a new syntax to declare block comments using `#begin` and `#end`

```
class A
  class B
    class C

      #begin
      The comment for this method

      @param str
      @return [String]

      Any other document. Now we are easy to break
      a line, without touching the leading `#` like before.

      #end
      def hello(str)
        end
      end
    end
  end
end
```

I've some thoughts on this:

1. Honestly, I don't know if RDoc and YARD rely on the line comment rather than block comment.
2. I choose `#begin` and `#end` because they still use the `#` symbol to denote that this is comment.

3. #begin and #end's leading # doesn't conflict with the old =begin and =end for compatibility.
4. #begin may influence the speed of the lexer, because we now should scan at least later 5 characters after #

Related issues:

Related to Ruby - Feature #13518: Indented multiline comments

Rejected

History

#1 - 05/24/2023 02:19 PM - nobu (Nobuyoshi Nakada)

- Description updated

- Status changed from Open to Feedback

#begin has been parsed as a single line comment.
Changing it can be incompatibility.
Why not just indenting =begin?

#2 - 05/24/2023 04:19 PM - nobu (Nobuyoshi Nakada)

- Related to Feature #13518: Indented multiline comments added

#3 - 05/24/2023 06:01 PM - rubyFeedback (robert heiler)

I think I can somewhat understand the rationale for the issue, even though I personally don't really need it. I use mostly HEREDOC syntax, in particular:

```
result = <<-EOF
```

```
This is a heredoc.
```

```
It provides a nice syntax  
for multiline strings
```

```
EOF  
return result
```

So I typically just capture it into a variable, and if necessary I then modify the variable before returning or displaying it on the commandline. I also stopped using =begin/=end a long time ago and just comment with '#' instead. This may be a bit more cumbersome to do when one uses a simple editor, but I found that it is also easier to understand and ultimately quicker in the long run. Although I have no data to back this up, I think most ruby users tend to use '#' and HEREDOC; =begin/=end is, I think, not as popular. Perhaps by being more flexible it could become more popular, but I am not certain. I think ruby user may not be that fond of the =begin/=end variant.

As for rdoc: I don't like rdoc's syntax either. I feel the entries such as "@param xyz" are quite distracting. These are, however had, extremely popular - a lot of ruby gems use them, probably because the generated documentation e. g. in yard, can be quite helpful.

PS: If tenderlove reads this, it reminds me a bit of his old blog entry "I am a puts debugger", with which I agree with. Simplicity is kind of neat. I guess a question here may be how long-term ruby developers out there comment their source code. =begin/=end is probably quite rare.

#4 - 05/24/2023 07:59 PM - austin (Austin Ziegler)

rubyFeedback (robert heiler) wrote in [#note-3](#):

As for rdoc: I don't like rdoc's syntax either. I feel the entries such as "@param xyz" are quite distracting. These are, however had, extremely popular - a lot of ruby gems use them, probably because the generated documentation e. g. in yard, can be quite helpful.

@param xyz is not syntax for rdoc; it is something created by YARD out of some misbegotten love of Javadoc or Doxygen, I guess. I have nothing nice to say about that syntax, and several worse things to say about YARD's ignoring rdoc directives in favour of such silliness.

I think that the `=begin/=end` format has seen less use because I'm not entirely sure that rdoc supports parsing properly inside those comments, and it's atypical to see `=begin/=end` comments attached to method definitions.

#5 - 05/24/2023 11:23 PM - matz (Yukihiro Matsumoto)

- *Status changed from Feedback to Closed*

I can understand the need for multi-line comment (although I mostly use Emacs or IDE to comment a region out). But proposed `#begin` and `#end` is not acceptable, due to the compatibility issue [@nobu \(Nobuyoshi Nakada\)](#) mentioned.

Matz.