

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

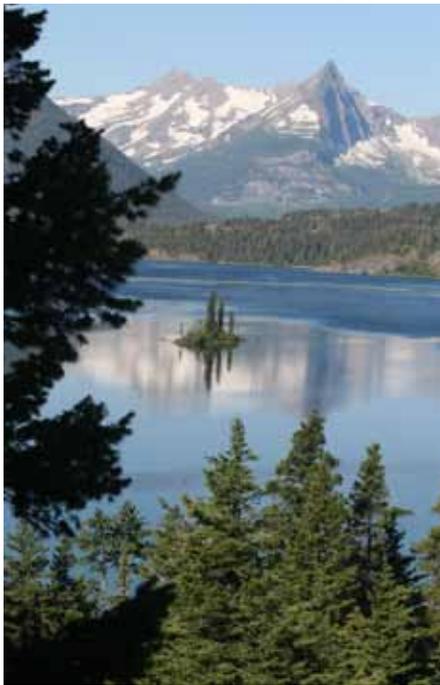
THE NEWSLETTER OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOOR WRITERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2013

Next Stop: Glacier National Park

Article and photos by Don Laine

RMOWP's 2014 conference takes place next **July 23 through 27** in the community of West Glacier, just outside



St. Mary's Lake

the western entrance to Glacier National Park in northern Montana. **Head-quarters will be the Belton Chalet**, with lodging at the Belton as well as the Glacier Highland Resort, a motel next door to the Belton, or you can stay anywhere you choose.

In addition to the usual conference program from Wednesday afternoon through Saturday evening, pre- and post-conference activities are planned, and attendees might also

want to spend a day or two on their own on the east and/or southern edges of this very big park, or perhaps at one of the lodges inside the park.

Planning is still in the early stages, but a highlight of the conference is that RMOWP's own **Tom Ulrich**, who lives in West Glacier and knows Glacier National Park intimately, will lead a number of field trips. There will also be workshops on photography and writing and we're looking

into a boat trip on Lake McDonald and guided trips in the park's famed red buses, a fleet of historic open-air buses built in the 1930s and recently restored.



Morning sun glistens on St. Mary's Lake

Lodging is somewhat more expensive than we're used to, and expect some noise from the trains that rumble through West Glacier (see page 4 for information on taking one of these behemoths to Glacier).

Rooms at the historic Belton Chalet, located directly across the street from the Amtrak station, start at \$155 per night. Dating from 1910, the Belton's rooms are small but comfortable. The rooms along the back of the hotel, without balconies, are the least expensive and also the quietest. See www.beltonchalet.com or call 406-888-5000, and tell them you're with Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers.

Next door to the Belton Chalet is the Glacier Highland Resort, a basic modern motel with rates start-

ing at \$95 per night. Call 800-766-0811 or 406-888-5427. There are several other lodging facilities in West Glacier, which you can find through an Internet search. There's also a KOA with cabins and several other campgrounds in West Glacier, as well as the campgrounds inside the park.

For additional information on what to do and see in the park see www.nps.gov/glac.



Mountain goats along the Going-to-the-Sun Road

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Plan B: Custer State Park, South Dakota

Article & photos by Jack Olson

If, by chance, the federal government, for some cockamamie reason, were to close all the national parks, monuments, and any place else they oversee, a traveler might want to find a worthy alternative, a surprising and brilliant alternative. In fact, South Dakota's Custer State Park can stand on its own as a premier location for recreation, wildlife, and scenery.



Billowing clouds loom beyond a lone tree

to see is the bison. I grew up envisioning herds of "buffalo" thundering across the plains, but the park's literature and website say "bison", so I'll reluctantly go along. The park claims a herd of 1,300 bison, and if you don't meet at least a few hundred you must have your eyes closed.

Although Custer's upper reaches may be home to bighorn sheep, mountain goats, and elk, you must, absolutely must, take the Wildlife Loop Road. This 18-mile slow-speed gateway directs you into the heart of easy wildlife viewing, undisturbed by highway traffic. Stop in at the Wildlife Station Visitor Center halfway along the road. They will supply ad-



Bridal Veil Falls in Spearfish Canyon thread in wisps right next to the highway in the nearby national forest

Although Custer State Park encompasses an amazing variety of environments and activities, the park is probably best known for its wildlife. And the superstar that almost everyone travels from states around



A lone bison munching along the Wildlife Loop Road

ditional information, can suggest various side roads within the Wildlife Loop, and maybe even know where specific wildlife may be found. Be sure to take those side roads. There are bison, for sure, and likely pronghorn antelope and prairie dogs. But the humorous clowns are the wild burros which will find you. They approach cars and beg. I wouldn't feed them, but it's impossible not to laugh or to grab a shot or ten.

There's a totally different experience in this very large park of 71,000 acres. It's not the rolling grasslands where the buffalo (sorry) roam and the deer and the antelope play. It's jumbled rock, plus lakes, streams, and tunnels that you hopefully squeak, rather than scrape, through. Don't miss the Needles Highway, named for the many granite spires towering above you. Or take the dramatic Iron Mountain Road that heads to Mount Rushmore.



A sweet family of burros along the Wildlife Loop Road

There are several campgrounds in Custer State Park, some of which take reservations online. The park also features four lodges, where reservations are definitely recommended. RMOWP held a conference here in 1987, headquartered at the historic State Game Lodge. Just outside the state park are commercial campgrounds plus motels in the nearby town of Custer. Trails honeycomb the park, and horseback rides and jeep tours are available. Boating is fun on four lakes in Custer. *see Jaunts... page 3*

Rocky Mountain Outdoors

Published bi-monthly by
Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers, Inc.

Editor: Don Laine
Layout/Design: Barb Laine

Send editorial materials to Don Laine, info@rmowp.org; or snail mail to 76 Eototo Road, El Prado, NM 87529.

Deadline for newsletter submissions is the 20th of the month preceding month of publication. Newsletters are published:

Jan/Feb	Mar/Apr	May/June
July/Aug	Sep/Oct	Nov/Dec

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Jaunts... from page 2

I've been to Custer State Park many times and all have been enjoyable, fun, exciting, educational. What's not memorable about having a wild burro stick its nose in your car window? Getting out of a tour bus while the driver inches it through an 8'4" wide tunnel? Sitting patiently in your car, but on pins and needles, while a herd of bison ambles slowly in front, behind, and around your car? Just relax and think how you'll never forget that.



Grace Coolidge Creek meanders gently through the lower park

If you really crave a bison fix, scoot to Custer State Park in late September for the annual Bison Roundup. At this time the scattered beasts are herded into corrals for branding and health measures. If you're situated in the right location, and volunteers should help you find the best spots, you will tremble as the prairie shakes under the hooves of the rumbling herd.

There are several extraordinary sites to explore in the area. Wind Cave National Park adjoins Custer State Park. Jewel Cave National Monument is truly a jewel of a labyrinth. Mt. Rushmore is just up the road. These parks will fill several days of your adventure---if they are open.

For more information on South Dakota's Custer State Park, go to www.custerstatepark.com. Partway down the right side of the park homepage is a link to "Tatanka: Custer State Park guide," an excellent all-encompassing guide to the park that you can download.



A herd of bison occupy a meadow within the Wildlife Loop Road

CONTEST DEADLINE

Entries must be postmarked by
Monday April 28, 2014.
Rules and Entry Form available
online at www.rmowp.org.

Author! Author!

by Barb Laine

Written works are urgently needed to bring joy to the heart of our writing judge, Mary Taylor Young. (And incidentally more work for her, but she doesn't mind that.)

If you've had an article printed in this — or any other — newsletter, you can enter it in category 26. Words of wisdom shared on the internet are also eligible for category 26. And if you have something that's never been printed anywhere in any way, you can still enter it: category 28 was added last year for unpublished written works.

Of course, we still welcome entries in our old favorite categories of book (31), anything in a magazine or newspaper publication (24), and video scripts (30). The complete contest guidelines will be included in the January / February newsletter, but you can check them out now online at www.rmowp.org.

We know there are writers amongst you out there — so dust off your quill pens and get cracking! We want to read your stuff.

President's Column

Not What You Might Think

article & photo by Al Perry

It might appear to many that the photo of a hummingbird feeding on flower shown below was photographed with a fast shutter speed on a sunny day. How else could you stop the motion of wings of a 3 inch sized bird that is flapping its wings 75 times each second? Also, it appears a wide open aperture was used to create the out of focus background. Keep reading.

Actually, the shutter speed was only 1/200th of second. Artificial light was used in the shade to light the scene and stop action of the hummingbird hovering at flower. The flash was powered at 1/32 of full power to create a short duration of light less than 1/10,000th of a second, causing wings to freeze. As to aperture, f/25 was used to achieve focus of the hummingbird and flower. The background was beyond the depth of field of the 600mm lens focused at near minimum focus of 15 feet and therefore, out of focus.



Black-chinned hummingbird
West Texas, August 2013

Taking the Train to Glacier

by Jack Wendleton

Let me give you some information about Amtrak and how one can get to Glacier National Park by rail. Pat and I will definitely come to the RMOWP conference via Amtrak from Chicago. Maybe other members might want to travel to the conference by this mode of transportation. For us in Missouri the cost of train with sleeper and meals included will be less than the gas to drive.

There are three Amtrak stops for Glacier: East Glacier Park, Essex (at the southern border of the park) and West Glacier, where the Amtrak station is right across the street from the Belton Chalet, the conference headquarters.

The train is the Empire Builder (Pat and I have taken it twice to South Washington. It's a great train and food).

Below is the schedule:

WEST BOUND: Leave Chicago at 2:15 pm, arriving at Glacier National Park the next evening, at East Glacier Park at 6:45 pm, Essex at 7:41 pm, and West Glacier at 8:23 pm.

EAST BOUND: Leave Seattle at 4:40 pm or Portland at 4:45 pm. The two trains join up at Spokane, and arrive at West Glacier at 8:16 am the next morning, Essex at 8:55 am, and East Glacier at 9:54 am.

The longer ahead you make reservations can greatly vary the train fare. For further details, see www.amtrak.com.

day and tutored a 17-year-old high school boy in conversational English.

The students act and look like American young people, although most don't have as many privileges as American youth, she said. They learn English at their schools, but they seldom or never have the opportunity to hear English spoken by a native speaker.

Global Volunteers needs volunteers, according to Kenita. You may call the Global Volunteer office in St. Paul, Minnesota for more information at 800-487-1074, or visit the organization's website, www.globalvolunteers.org

"Americans are funny people. We think we can fix all of the world's problems," Kenita says. But in Poland she learned that the Poles are in charge and we are there only to help. Kenita thinks that all of America would do well to learn that lesson.

In other member news, **Jack Olson** and **Jon Sheppard** have new e-mail addresses. Contact us at info@rmowp.org for them.



Kenita in front of a class

Member News

RMOWP member **Kenita Gibbins** of Denver recently returned from Siedlce, Poland, serving with Global Volunteers in Poland for the sixth time, and highly recommends the organization for those who love children and possess a sense of adventure. And, Kenita adds, you do not have to speak Polish to qualify to teach English to Polish students, although it helps to know basic grammar rules.

Yes, Kenita believes in helping children in America, but she also feels it is of utmost importance to show children



Kenita and students

around the world that Americans truly care about them. By reaching one child at a time, she says, we can create growth toward understanding and peace, and everyone needs to know how people different from themselves exist in the world.

The small city of Siedlce is located about 1 1/2 hours east of Warsaw. Kenita's typical day there began with a team breakfast, and then she and two teammates were driven to a village school where they taught two classes. Kenita's students were fifth graders. The team was then driven to another school where they taught two more classes. After lunch Kenita planned her lessons for the next

e-NEWSLETTER?

If you would like to receive this newsletter via e-mail rather than snail mail, just let us know.

Contact us at: info@rmowp.org



Tour Guide at Florida Scrub Jay Sanctuary © John Thornton
Honorable Mention,
People in Nature 2013 Contest



Less Than Five Percent

by Virginia Parker Staat

*"I want to see the thirst inside the syllables. I want to touch the fire
in the sound: I want to feel the darkness of the cry.
I want words as rough as virgin rocks."*

~ Pablo Neruda, *Verb*

Passive verbs continue to haunt many writers. They remain terribly easy to write yet offer so little to our stories. Years ago one of my professors gave me a rule that I still use today. He insisted that good writing should contain less than five percent passive verbs. He believed this fervently. If he was in a particularly foul mood, he returned graded papers with each passive verb circled in red ink.

In school we learned to distinguish the difference between active and passive verbs by conjugating sentences. The active voice is conjugated as subject>verb>object (*I hit the ball*), while the passive voice is conjugated as object>verb>subject (*The ball was hit by me*). But who conjugates sentences anymore?

While a variety of grammar rules apply when determining the passive voice, a good clue to keep in your pocket is to know that passive sentences always include an auxiliary form of the verb *to be* (such as *is, am, are, were, was, had, have, and been*) before the action verb. Let's look at the difference between three passive and active verbs and how they might affect a story. Please consider the following sentences:

The man *had knelt* to the child's level before he spoke. (*Passive, weak*)

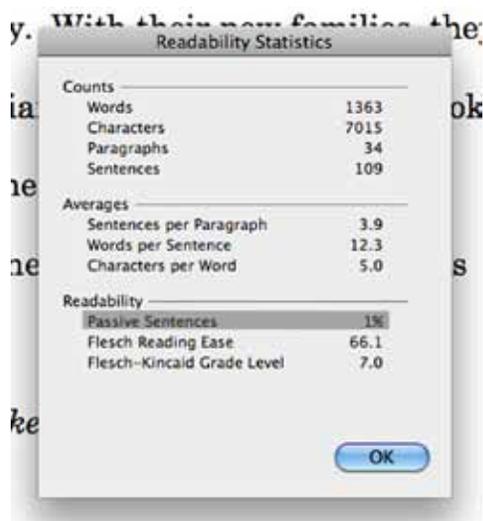
The man *squatted* to the child's level before he spoke. (*Action, good*)

The man *hunkered* down to the child's level before he spoke. (*Action, better*)

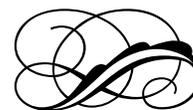
In the first sentence we see the passive verb combination *had knelt*. The entire sentence feels pretty mundane and offers little to spark our reader's imagination. In the second sentence, our subject (*the man*) is acting on the verb *squat*. The active verb works well, giving our reader essential action, detail, and information. The verb *hunker*, however, is what I consider to be a super action verb. As a long-time lover of words, to me, *hunker* feels tinged with emotion. With *hunker*, I can visualize a tall, lanky man folding himself up like a Swiss army knife just to look this child directly in the eye.

These three examples offer the reason why action verbs are critical to our writing. Action verbs catapult our characters right off the page and directly into the mind's eye of our reader. Those gremlin passive verbs remain dangerous because they only cause our readers to yawn.

Modern word processing software easily assists a writer in knowing the percentage of passive verbs written in any given document. For example, after running the *Spelling and Grammar* function in Microsoft® Word (located under the **Tools** navigation bar), a box appears showing readability statistics, including the percentage of passive verbs (see illustration below).



I invite you to test your writing for its percentage of passive verbs. I also encourage you to keep a list of super action verbs to incorporate into your writing during final edits. If our manuscripts are laced with super action verbs and contain less than five percent passive verbs, surely the vibrancy of our written work will trigger a connection to our reader's five senses so that they may fully enter our stories and make them come alive.



Tentative Schedule
RMOWP Conference 2014
Glacier National Park

Meetings & Group Meals at Belton Chalet in West Glacier, Montana, except as noted.

Tuesday, July 22

6:00am-3:00pm Pre-Conference Field Trip: Welcome to My Backyard - A Photographer's Exploration of Glacier National Park with RMOWP member and West Glacier resident Tom Ulrich (limited to 15 participants; \$60 each; includes box lunch)

Wednesday, July 23

5:00-8:45am Pre-Conference Photo Shoot with Tom Ulrich (limited to 12 participants)
2:00-5:00pm Board of Directors Meeting (open to all members)
4:00-10:00pm Registration & Opening Reception with Happy Hour and Cookout (included in registration fee) at Tom Ulrich's cabin in West Glacier (carpool from Belton Chalet)

Thursday, July 24

5:00-8:45am Photo Shoot with Tom Ulrich (limited to 12 participants)
9:00-9:45am Welcome by RMOWP President Al Perry, Trail Info from Jack Olson and Tom Ulrich, and General Membership Meeting
9:45am Break
10:00-11:30am Presentation of All Photo Contest Submissions
Noon-1:00pm Lunch Buffet (\$xx including tax & tip)
1:00-2:30pm Macro Photography Workshop with Tom Ulrich
2:30pm Break
2:45-4:00pm Writing Workshop TBA
4:15-6:00pm Boat Trip on Lake McDonald (\$xx each; carpool from Belton Chalet)
6:00-7:30pm Dinner on your own
8:00-9:30pm Showcase of Selected Members' Photography

Friday, July 25

6:00-10:00am Photographers' Hike with Tom Ulrich (limited to 12 participants)
10:30am-Noon Anne Sullivan Writers' Forum (formerly Writers' Critique) with Kenita Gibbins
Noon Lunch on your own
1:30-3:00pm Workshop TBA
3:00-7:30pm Free Time & Dinner on your own
7:30-9:00pm Photo Critique Session with Tom Ulrich & Jack Olson

Saturday, July 26

5:30-8:00am Sunrise Photo Shoot with Jack Olson
9:00am-1pm Red Bus Western Alpine Tour (\$50 adult, \$25 child; carpool to Agpar Transit Center)
Noon Lunch on Your Own
1:00-3:00pm Free Time
3:00-5:00pm Auction
6:30-10:00pm Banquet Buffet (\$xx including tax & tip) and Awards Ceremony

Sunday, July 27

9:00am-7:00pm Post-Conference Red Bus Crown of the Continent Tour (\$80 adult, \$40 child; depart from Agpar Transit Center; optional lunch at Many Glacier Hotel)

(This tentative schedule is intended to give you an idea of what to expect in Glacier.

The Belton Chalet is set, and Tom Ulrich has agreed,

but negotiations are still in progress for additional workshops, the tours and meals.)