

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

THE NEWSLETTER OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOOR WRITERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 2007

ROCKY GOES TO ROCKY

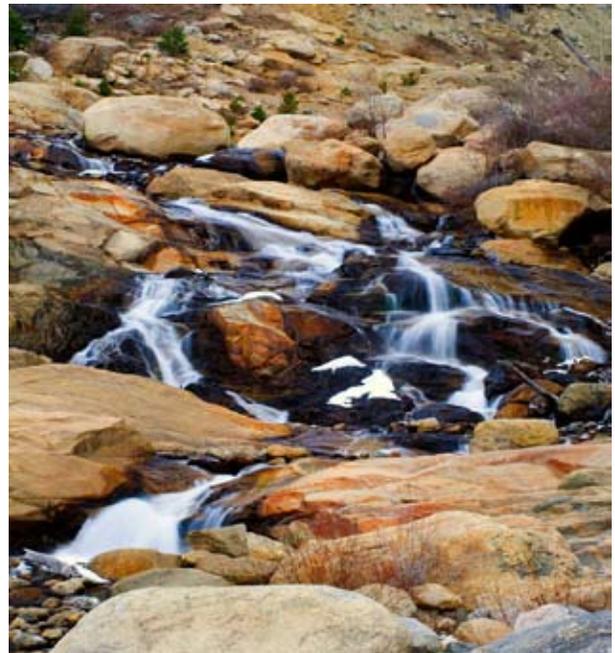
Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers will celebrate its 35th annual conference at what might be called its namesake – **Rocky Mountain National Park**. The conference, scheduled **June 8-12, 2008**, will be headquartered in Estes Park, Colorado, at the eastern entrance to the national park.

This is the first time RMOWP has had a conference at this park, and organizers thought it would be a good way to celebrate our organization's 35th anniversary. The 2008 conference will also be a first in two other ways – this is the first time RMOWP has met in the same state for two consecutive years and the first time that the conference has taken place from Sunday through Thursday. Estes Park is a very popular tourist destination, and scheduling the conference for Sunday through Thursday (instead of the usual Wednesday through Sunday) enabled us to get better lodging and facilities rates.

Speaking of lodging, conference headquarters will be the attractive **Estes Park Rodeway Inn**, 1701 N. Lake Ave., and the special rate for conference attendees is \$88 per night (one or two people). Rooms have either one king bed or two queens, refrigerators, and microwaves. Rates include a continental breakfast and pets are accepted with a fee. We will be using the Rodeway's meeting rooms and having a number of group meals there as well.

The Rodeway has set aside 30 premium rooms that will be held for us until May 8. To be sure you get the type of room you want it is best to make reservations as early as possible by calling the Rodeway Inn at 800-458-1182 or 970-586-5363. Identify yourself as a member of RMOWP to get the \$88 per night rate.

Conference program details have not been nailed down yet, but there will probably be at least two trips into Rocky Mountain National Park, including a journey to the high country and a sunrise photo shoot. The park—among the most scenic in America—has incredibly diverse terrain, caused in large part by its



© Jon Sheppard

Moraine Park in Rocky Mountain National Park.

extremes of elevation. There are ponderosa pine and juniper forests at its relatively low altitudes; then stands of Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir amid meadows of wildflowers; and as we move up into the treeless alpine tundra there appears a bleak, rocky world similar to the Arctic.

Rocky Mountain National Park is also a prime wildlife-viewing area, home to seemingly countless elk, which often congregate in herds in meadows and on mountainsides, and also to mule deer, beavers, coyotes, river otters, moose, bighorn sheep, marmots, and an abundance of songbirds. Trail Ridge Road, which runs 48 miles through the park from Estes Park to the community of Grand Lake, is consistently rated among the most scenic highways in America. Climbing to 12,187 feet, it is the highest continuous paved highway in the United States.



Rocky Mountain Outdoors

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Presidential Musings

Tom Cummings,
RMOWP president

The 2007 RMOWP Photo Workshop was again a success. Even though we limit the workshop to 15, we had 16 paid participants this year because I was unable to correctly count. I am confident the new coordinator has better mathematical skills. We had fun and lots of excitement. One of our participants, Oscar Velazquez from Tulsa, lost his wallet the morning we went up Trail Ridge Road to photograph the alpine flowers. He discovered the loss just a couple of hours later so he and Jack Olson made a mad dash back up the mountain to recover the wallet. Unfortunately, just in that two hour period the marmots had discovered his wallet. Bits and pieces of partially eaten wallet, money and credit cards were strewn about. Several went back up later in the afternoon to collect more pieces of Oscar's property. We all had a good laugh over Oscar's wallet.

Three of the participants, Kenita Gibbins, Bob Waters, and Mary Kline (this was Mary's third workshop), also attended last year's workshop. In 2006, we had 2 that returned from the previous year's workshop and this year we had several participants promise to be back



© Tom Cummings

Marmots get a taste of Oscar's cash.

next year with a friend. Why do we have such a high return rate?

Why do any of us have our "favorite products"? They are generally something we trust, enjoy, and something we feel we are getting our money's worth. A look in any of the major photography magazines will confirm we are in a highly competitive market. There are hundreds of workshops offering every conceivable location to visit and photograph. But we offer a workshop that I feel has it all. Our location, Rocky Mountain National Park, offers unbelievable scenics, thundering waterfalls, beautiful sunrises and a great range of wildlife and birds. We have two instructors whose talents, abilities, and reputation are without reproach. We offer a relaxed atmosphere and maximize the participant's time in the field. We keep "tweaking" the workshop. Four years ago we first allowed digital and this year we added a class on digital workflow. We strive every year to give participants their money's worth. And with rare exception, we have succeeded. And the workshop's

success has brought new members to our group.

One of these new members is Nic Showalter. Nic is from Villa Grove, Illinois, and has agreed to become our new workshop coordinator. Nic was a participant in the 2006 workshop and also had a second place winning entry in Scenics of this year's RMOWP photography contest. Nic is married and has two children. We will get Nic to tell you more about himself in our next newsletter. Got that Nic? I have the fullest confidence in Nic and his ability as a photographer and as a leader that he will be a great success as workshop coordinator.

I have mixed feelings about turning over the workshop. When I agreed to be president of our organization, I felt I should step aside as workshop coordinator



© Tom Cummings

RMOWP Photo Workshop participants and instructors on top of the world.

so we could have as many members as possible active and involved in our organization. And I still do. But, this has been my "baby" for four years. Starting in March each year, you worry about having enough registrations to have the workshop, interacting with the participants and their questions, preparing for the mechanics of the workshop, and arriving early to set up and tie-up those loose ends. Then for 5 days from sunrise to well past sunset taking care of all the issues that come up, keeping the workshop on schedule, shuttling to shoot locations and then preparing for the next day. It is a lot of work. Then, pretty well collapsing after the workshop's conclusion. (Nic, did I happen to mention all of this before you agreed to be our next coordinator?) But I did enjoy it. Meeting and photographing with some really fantastic fellow photographers and the great "stories" like Oscar and his wallet. I will now be able to plan trips in the spring but I am sure next spring will seem a little strange without always checking my email or phone for new workshop

inquiries. It was always exciting when we got a new commitment. I will miss that.

The last 18 months has been a time of unbelievable change but I guess that is what life is all about. Speaking of change, I must stop and finish packing or Lynda will leave without me. We leave in a few hours for Europe on a 15 country jaunt (35 days). I won't promise to send you a post card but I can almost guarantee you that you will see part of it in next year's contest. As always, please feel welcome to send to me any comments/questions you might have.

(Ed. note: 2008 Workshop is scheduled June 24-28; see www.rmowp.org for details.)

RMOWP Members Take Home OWAA Awards

Like RMOWP, the Outdoor Writers Association of America (OWAA) holds an annual writing and photography contest, and some RMOWP members who also belong to that group entered works in OWAA's 2007 contest and came home winners.

Among RMOWP members who won awards from OWAA are Tom Ulrich of West Glacier, Montana, who won first place honors for his photo "Stormy Mourning" in the color scenics category, third place for his shot "Morning Glory" in the flora category, and an honorable mention for "Monkeys" in the action category.

Tucson resident Lee Allen won second place in the magazine category in the shooting sports section for his article "Archery Anglers Aim for Adventure," which was published in *Arizona Wildlife News*. RMOWP member John Catsis of Silver City, New Mexico, also won a second place award in the OWAA contest for his outdoor essay, "The Bus Stops Here," in the newspaper category, published in *Desert Exposure*.

Dan England of Greeley, Colorado, won third place honors in the OWAA contest for the outdoor section he does for the *Greeley Tribune*, and Gunnison, Colorado resident Andy Lightbody won third place in the technical TV/Video category for his program "Camp Chef Smoke Vault," which was broadcast on Rocky Mountain Television.

Those interested in additional information on the contest or the Outdoor Writers Association of America can check out the group's website, www.owaa.org.

Photographing Alpine Critters

Richard Holmes

It began with an urge to photograph fur. All year I had been filling my viewfinder with feathers, and finally remembered there was something else awaiting me in the mountains—at 12,000 feet.

So late August I drive up to the tundra along Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park and begin searching for marmot and pika. They are not hard to find, but very mobile, and I set about selecting an accessible location from which to shoot, taking note of the lighting and background.

I begin with marmots in the morning light. They appear lazy, often basking on a rock. Although marmots move around a lot, they remain in the same general area. But because they hold a lengthy pose they are easy to photograph, allowing for many shots with a variety of compositions. Approximately the size of a raccoon, a really long lens isn't necessary. My 100-400 zoom is more than enough.

As with many small mammals, marmots often stand on their hind legs, surveying the situation. This is the classic standing shot with front paws raised, and I come alive when it happens. I'm never ready for this,



© Richard Holmes
A Rocky Mountain National Park marmot.

But the real excitement is photographing pikas. They are anything but lazy. About the size of a chipmunk, but tailless, they generally scamper around in search of grasses and other vegetation to bring back to their little haystacks, their source of food when the snows come. They don't hibernate.

After finding a rock field in the tundra with a pika scurrying around I plop into a folding chair with the sun to my back and just watch. And watch. And watch. This time I'm sitting behind a 500 or 600mm lens.

These small mammals establish routes in their territory, along with certain rocks for perching. After becoming used to my presence they resume their activities and may come quite close. If I haven't fallen asleep while waiting to discover their paths and perching spots, I move into position and we play a game. They stop and pose, and I aim and focus. Then they run before I can press the shutter. We do this again. We exchange expletives (for I know what that high-pitched call means) and do this over and over. I have many rock shots and blurred butts to attest to this.

But some of their pauses are lengthy, and over the course of an afternoon I may end up with dozens of good shots. Such as it is in a shooting gallery.

My fur fix fulfilled for the day, I head back down the mountain, satisfied that I have had a successful shoot.



© Richard Holmes
A vociferous pika addresses the photographer.

of course, because my camera is usually in the horizontal position, and if I am too close I must quickly rotate to the vertical. I'm often not quick enough, and the marmot drops back down to lounge in the sun. It will be a long wait before it stands again, and I acknowledge that with an inaudible curse. Such a lazy animal. Soon it will hibernate for the coming winter.

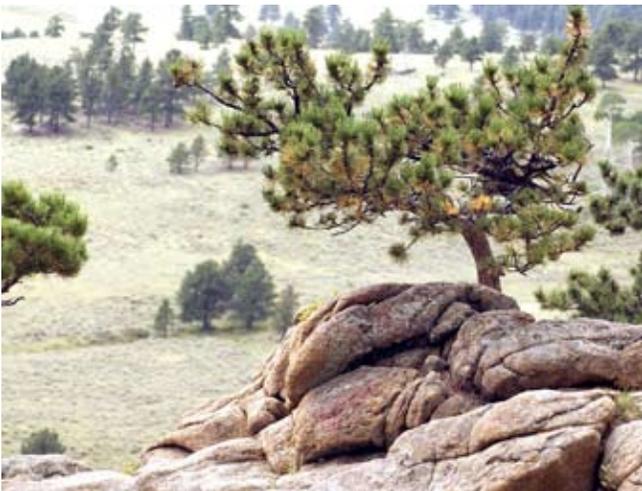
Barbara Bradley Dies

Barbara Strawn Bradley, a member of RMOWP from Lancaster, South Carolina, died August 31. Those who attended RMOWP's 2006 conference in Moab will remember Barbara as the delightful woman who came to assist wheelchair-bound member Angelo Sciulli. Barbara later told us that almost at the instant she walked through the door to the welcome happy hour, she knew RMOWP was a group she wanted to be a part of.

Barbara soon joined RMOWP and submitted entries to the 2007 contest, winning a first place for her photo of an hibiscus and second place for a newsletter article. She registered for the Colorado Springs conference this past June but was forced to cancel due to ill health.

Back in South Carolina Barbara had worked for the *Lancaster News*, where she was news assistant and also wrote feature stories that ranged from the local impact of Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS) to a feature on a person who raised snakes for a hobby. A series she did on ALS won public service and community service awards from both the South Carolina Press Association and Landmark Community Newspapers, Inc.

Survivors include daughter Janice Carter and granddaughter Alicia Bagatti of Myrtle Beach, S.C., son James Bradley of Carolina Beach, N.C., and brother George Strawn of Silver Spring, MD.



© Jon Sheppard

MEMBER NEWS

RMOWP member (and vice-president) **Maryann Gaug** is working on her third hiking guide for Falcon, *Best Hikes near Denver and Boulder*. The Silverthorne, Colorado resident has been having fun hiking two to three (or more) trails a week for the past three months. Her first two books are *Hiking Colorado 2nd Edition* and *Hiking Colorado's Summit County Area*.

Maryann is scheduled to give a talk and "slide" show at REI in Boulder on Nov. 15 at 7 p.m. in the store's new community room. She says she will talk about her books and the adventures she had while working on them, and invites fellow RMOWPer's in the area to stop by and enjoy the show.

As usual, it isn't difficult to spot the work of **Jack Olson** of Denver. Leafing through the 2008 National Parks Conservation Association calendar, Jack's shot of Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico jumped off the page.

Jack must be spending a lot of time in his neighbor state to the south, since he tells us he also had three photos of El Malpais National Monument, near Grants, New Mexico, in *Odyssey Magazine*. Jack also had a cover photo for a recent edition of the Colorado AAA magazine *EnCompass*, and his work is also on the cover of two 2008 Colorado calendars.

Leafing through the November issue of *New Mexico Magazine*, what did we spy but an article by not one but two RMOWP members. **Ben Moffett** of Bosque Farms, New Mexico, wrote the text for a profile on retired Albuquerque educator Oran Caton, with a full-page photo of Caton by Datil, New Mexico resident **Kelly Gatlin**. The story focuses on Caton's love of sports, with a nostalgic and fascinating look back at high school basketball in rural New Mexico in the 1930s.

Your newsletter editor (**Don Laine**) has also been busy completing an update of *Frommer's National Parks of the American West*, with help from **Jack Olson** on several chapters. The sixth edition of this monster—almost 700 pages—is due in bookstores in the spring of 2008.

Colorado's 5 Best Wildflower Hikes

(Part 1)

Jack Olson

OK, let's be honest. These are my favorite wildflower hikes and they're all within a hundred miles of Denver. They're day trips from the Mile High City. I'm going to have to give driving directions, so bear with me. Save this column (and Part 2, which will run in the next RMOWP newsletter), for next summer, or your next trip to Colorado. You won't be sorry.

Straight Creek

Until recently, almost no one else would frequent this valley, although thousands pass the trailhead every day. It seems to have been discovered this year, but it still isn't crowded. If you set foot on the trail in mid-July, you will find the valley absolutely chock-full of wildflowers. Colorado blue columbine overwhelm you in the first few minutes, if you can keep your eyes off the field of deep red Indian paintbrush on the other side of the trail. The show goes on and on as you amble down the trail toward the end of the valley, perhaps a mile and a half ahead. If you want to climb to the top of the Continental Divide, take the right hairpin in the trail and switchback to the top.

To get to Straight Creek, take Interstate 70 west from Denver. Zoom, at the speed limit, through the Eisenhower Tunnel and immediately pull over to the right when you exit the west end of the tunnel. Park your car in the large parking area. Walk back toward the tunnel and up a pavement to your left that leads toward an administration building. But go right, toward, and around, a gate. You're only about two minutes from your car. There's a short stretch of pavement, turning to an old dirt road, and quickly to a trail.

Shrine Ridge

Oh boy, is this a wondrous knock-your-socks-off hike! Anytime in mid-July, you will be rewarded with wildflowers, and a hike, that is hard to beat. It's very popular, for good reason, so I'd suggest going on a weekday and arriving early. More than once, I've begun hiking at 7:00am and haven't seen a soul in three hours. Your hike to the top of the ridge starts in a marshy area and then begins a gentle climb through meadows overloaded with Indian paintbrush from yellow to deep red, and everything in between. There



© Jack Olson

Indian paintbrush is among the the variety of wildflowers on the Straight Creek Trail.

are dozens of other wildflowers for you to pause and enjoy, and catch your breath. In about two miles you will reach the top of the ridge and I swear you'll gasp as you catch your first glimpse of the northern Sawatch Range, featuring Mount of the Holy Cross. That's not all. Your 360 degree view will encompass the Gore and Ten Mile Ranges. Most people choose a trail to the right, and it's very good. I recommend the trail to the left. It's beautiful, it's lightly traveled, and there's a surprise at the far end of the ridge, about a mile away. You will suddenly enter the biggest field of deep blue lupine known to man or woman. Eat your lunch here. Take your time.

To get to Shrine Ridge, drive west on Interstate 70 past Frisco and Copper Mountain and begin the ascent



Fields of lupine dominate the landscape at Shrine Ridge.

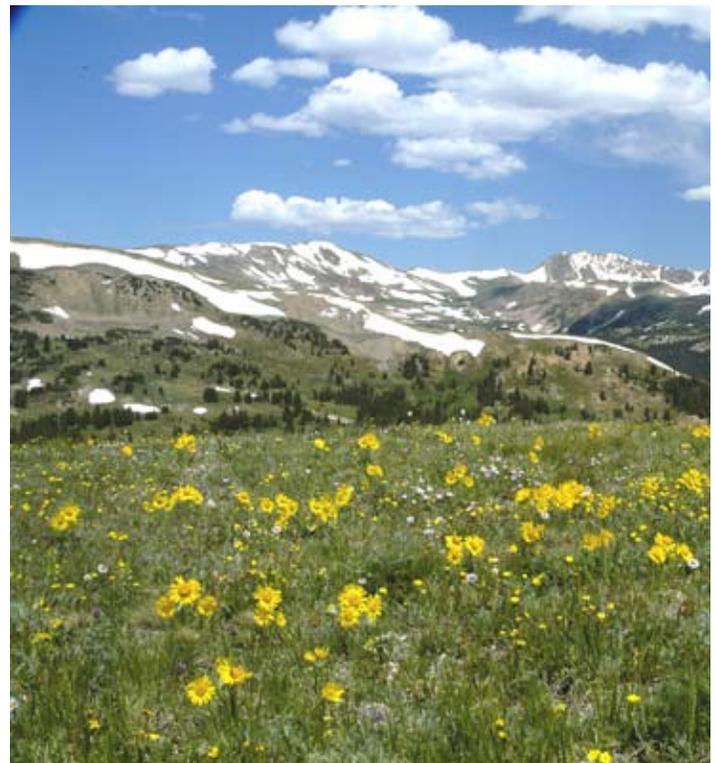
© Jack Olson

up Vail Pass. Take unnamed Exit 190 and, at the top of the ramp, go left over the Interstate. Continue straight up the dirt Shrine Pass Road. In two and a half slow miles you'll reach the top of the pass and park in the lot. The trailhead is nearby.

Loveland Pass West Ridge

You can hike either way off the top of Loveland Pass, but I especially enjoy the west ridge, due to the wildflowers and the ease of hiking once you hit the top of the Continental Divide. The hike begins at 12,000 feet, and tundra flowers won't wait, so the end of June or first of July is great up here. The trail is on the west side of the road. Walk over or around a hill; the trails meet on the other side of the hill. Then you'll begin a long traverse to the top of the Divide. Alpine sunflowers, sky pilots, and snow buttercups will announce that you're in the real high country. You may have to cross through, or around, some lingering snowfields. When you reach the top of the Divide, keep hiking right and you'll experience a rolling land of tundra and rocks, and unending vistas.

To reach Loveland Pass, drive west on Interstate 70 to Exit 216, U.S. 6, Loveland Pass. Take U.S. 6 to the top of the pass and park.



© Jack Olson

The west ridge of Loveland Pass is a good place to find alpine sunflowers.

(To be continued...)



RMOWP members want the group to go to the Grand Canyon, but it looks like Jon Sheppard has beat us to it.

© Jon Sheppard

RMOWP Members want it All

Members of Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers want to have the group's annual conferences in beautiful locations such as major national parks, with field trips to the most scenic spots led by top professional photographers. At least that's part of the story.

Questionnaires to obtain RMOWP members' wishes for future conferences were included in annual dues notices in early 2007, and 62 completed questionnaires were returned. Members were asked to rank locations for future conferences, conference activities, and were also asked for suggestions for both locations and how to make the conferences better.

The results clearly show that we can't please everyone about everything – no surprise there – but they also show that great scenery and lots of photo opportunities are very important to conference attendees.

For future conference locations, the top choice was Yellowstone National Park. A very close second was a tie – Grand Canyon and Rocky Mountain national parks. Tied for third place were Grand Teton National Park and Monument Valley, a Navajo Tribal Park along the Utah-Arizona border. Zion National Park in Utah was fourth and the

Grand Junction, Colorado area, where Colorado National Monument is located, came in fifth. Six was a three-way tie: Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico; Rapid City, South Dakota; and Custer, South Dakota. Dead last was Los Alamos, New Mexico, the gateway to the Valles Caldera National Preserve.

Members' suggestions for conference locations included Big Bend National Park in Texas; Canyon de Chelly National Monument in Arizona; Mesa Verde National Park and nearby prehistoric American Indian sites; Navajo National Monument in Arizona; Glen Canyon National Recreation Area; Bryce Canyon National Park; and Capitol Reef National Park. Suggestions also included Durango, Colorado and the San Juan Mountains; Sedona, Arizona; Taos, New Mexico; Salt Lake City or Park City, Utah; Gunnison and/or Crested Butte, Colorado; and having a joint conference with a California group and going to Yosemite National Park. Several of RMOWP's Canadian members suggested meeting in the Canadian Rockies.

There was also a recommendation that we go to the Florida Everglades and also to Charleston, South Carolina.

The favorite conference activity by far was scenic field trips, followed by a tie for historic field trips and presentations by professional photographers. Third place went to hands-on outdoor photo workshops. Social activities were more popular than fun trips, and most workshops were fairly popular, although there was little interest in a workshop on video production.

There was, however, quite a bit of interest in an intensive full-day workshop on digital photography, and even more interest in a full-day program on Adobe PhotoShop software.

Comments on how to make the conferences better ranged from adding a camera gear swap meet to bringing in editors and publishers who might be interested in buying members' work. Some members are looking for business advice, suggesting sessions on marketing and on building an outdoor industry business. There were suggestions that members bring brochures promoting their work and providing time for conference attendees to present their own 5-minute slide shows.

On the technical side, members requested workshops on image preservation and restoring images from old slides. Question and answer sessions with professional writers and photographers was mentioned. Some requested more outdoor activities, but one member asked for more instruction and fewer field trips. It was also suggested that there be more group meals, rather than meals on your own. Choosing dates will be challenging: some members specified May rather than June, while others said they could not attend unless it were held in June.

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Maptech, producing Terrain Navigator Pro, CD-ROMS combining topo maps and aerial photos, plus specialty CDs of national parks, highest mountains, the Continental Divide, and marine charts and navigation display systems. www.maptech.com.

Remington, manufacturer of fine sporting arms, ammunition, gun care products and knives, plus factory-authorized gun parts. www.remington.com.

Singh-Ray Corporation, manufacturer for over 40 years of top-quality Singh-Ray filters for digital and film cameras. www.singh-ray.com.

"Chasing the Hunter's Dream"

by Jeffrey Engel, Sherol Engel, & James A. Swan
Harper Collins 2007, paperback, \$19.95

A Book Review by John Catsis

Finding a place to hunt is often a hit or miss proposition. Friends are a good source of information. Advertising in outdoor magazines tell you about guides who want your business. Then there's this book: 514 pages of information not normally found in a single source.

Jeffrey and Sherol Engel are Wisconsin-based authors who host a TV show on the outdoors, and James A. Swan is a columnist for ESPNoutdoors.com. Together, they compiled a list of places to hunt around the world. Yes, not only the U.S., but Africa, Europe, Asia and Australia. More than just a list, the book also contains stories of hunts, tips on preparing for hunts, and even 33 pages of wild game recipes.

A project such as this is certainly ambitious, yet one should not expect this to contain every vital piece of information on where to hunt. For one thing, it omits the mention of introduced species in New Mexico, such as Persian ibex and oryx, which are found in abundance. There appears to be no reference to the massive Gila Wilderness, thick with deer and elk. It also does not give specifics on which areas are better than others. And the photos contain no captions. This can be especially frustrating when seeing images of animals not found in the U.S.

Like anything else, this book is a good starting point. But it's no bible of hunting information.

Outdoor Newspaper Seeks Submissions

Writers and photographers, especially those with expertise on outdoor activities in Idaho, are needed by *Big Sky Outdoor News & Adventure*, according to publisher Amy Haggerty. Ms. Haggerty says the newspaper, which is going into its fourth year, is a monthly tabloid, usually 32 pages, and contributors are paid depending on the piece.

The newspaper uses color photos, submitted as PDFs or large jpeg files, according to Ms. Haggerty, and the paper's website is www.outdoorsmontana.com. Interested writers and photographers can contact the editorial department at bigskyoutdoornews@mac.com or write to Big Sky Outdoor News & Adventure, 5625 Jeffery Lane, Lolo, MT 59847. Phone is 406-370-2480.

Funny Photos are True Winners



© Georgette Sotos

RMOWP's top Humorous Photo for 2007, "Reveal or Conceal."

Everybody loves a funny photograph, and at the instigation of member Angelo Sciulli, RMOWP initiated a humorous photo category in this year's annual writing and photography contest. But, alas and alack, those brave photographers who entered and won awards in the humorous photo category were completely left out when this newsletter reported the contest results last month.

So now – drum roll please – here are the winners of the 2007 RMOWP Writing and photography Contest, Humorous Photo category:

First Place – "Reveal or Conceal," by Georgette Sotos of Alexandria, Virginia.

Second Place – "Stuff Happens," by Tom Ulrich of West Glacier, Montana.

Third Place – "Angel of Ciry," by Kenita Gibbons of Denver.

We wish them all a belated congratulations and humbly ask that they keep up the good work. A good laugh is the best medicine for many ailments.

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