

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

THE NEWSLETTER OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOOR WRITERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2010

Oklahoma Magazine Features RMOWP Members

The July/August issue of "Outdoor Oklahoma," a publication by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, features photographs by RMOWP members **John Thornton, Mark and Kitty Cromwell, and Tom and Lynda Cummings**, including a dramatic shot of lightning by Kitty on the magazine's cover.

Kitty's lightning shot was taken last August during a huge storm. Kitty, with her trusty point and shoot Canon G9 propped on the truck window, caught a 3-point strike perfectly. In addition, her crystal clear shot of a Ruby Throat Hummingbird on a purple Salvia was used for a two page center spread of the same issue. Of that shot, Kitty told us, "I am very proud of my hummingbird shot, as it is tack sharp, taken with natural light. I sat for a very long time to capture the hummingbird on that flower, staying motionless."



Ruby Throat Hummingbird on purple Salvia

© Kitty Cromwell

Mark had three photos in the edition: a two-page shot of Sandhill Cranes in fall color at Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge, an inset of a Scissortail in flight, and a male Red Bellied Woodpecker feeding at a nest.

Lynda Cummings's image of a ringtail cat shot at Lawton, Oklahoma is her first published photograph but certainly won't be her last. Lynda previously sent several images and an article to "Outdoor Oklahoma," which have been accepted but not yet published.

Not to be left out, Tom had an image of an Eastern Bluebird in the magazine, although he tells us that it was "pointed out to me by Lynda's kids that my image was smaller than Lynda's...ouch!"

John Thornton's photo of a flying squirrel also made the magazine. See "In Oklahoma It's Not Just the Birds that Fly," on page 4.

2011 Conference Set

Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers & Photographers heads to southern Utah **June 8-12, 2011** for a conference at **Capitol Reef National Park**, with headquarters just outside the park in Torrey, Utah. Capitol Reef (www.nps.gov/care) offers a good mix of attractions, including beautiful red rock scenery and a variety of historic sites. See Jack's Jaunts (page 3) for more about the park.

Conference **headquarters** will be the **Sandstone Inn** (www.sandstonecapitolreef.com), which has a meeting room and restaurant. There is also a pleasant commercial campground with full RV hookups nearby - the Wonderland - and the national park also has a good campground, with plenty of shade but no RV hookups or showers.

We've blocked 30 standard rooms from June 6 to 11 - that's Monday through Saturday nights - so those who want to arrive early will have a place to stay, and we'll all be making our own reservations. Cost for RMOWP members for one or two people is \$62 plus tax per night for the standard room, and there are also a limited number of more upscale rooms, with microwave and fridge, for \$10 more per night. Our block of rooms will be held until May 6. To make reservations contact the Sandstone at 800-458-0216 or sandstoneinn@yahoo.com, and tell them you're with the Rocky Mountain Outdoor Group.

More details on the 2011 conference will be in the November-December newsletter.

see YELLOWSTONE CONFERENCE UPDATE ON PAGE 2



Rocky Mountain Outdoors

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Last Minute Conference 2010 Update

We're almost there.

The 2010 RMOWP conference in Yellowstone National Park takes place September 8 - 12, and here are a few last-minute bits of information.

Elevation in the Old Faithful area - our conference headquarters - is from 7,300 to 7,700 feet. **Weather** in early September is expected to be cool, with daytime temperatures in the 60s and nights dropping into the 30s, and snow is always a possibility. GPS coordinates at Snow Lodge: 44° 27.387N 110° 49.777W.

There is always road construction in Yellowstone, and this September is no exception. For current road construction and possible delays see the park website - www.nps.gov/yell - or call the recorded road condition report at 307-344-2117.

There is no Wi-Fi or other public Internet service in the park and cell phone service is not dependable.

Those signed up for the **Wednesday boat trip** should bring polarizing filters to capture images of the underwater thermal features, as well as telephoto lenses for distant scenics and to catch the eagles we're likely to see on Frank Island, one of our planned stops. Also - **THIS IS IMPORTANT!** - the boat trip begins at the Bridge Bay Marina at Yellowstone Lake, which is a **1 1/2- to 2-hour drive** from our Old Faithful area headquarters. We'll have the box lunches at the boat dock, but you're on your own to get to the marina by 9:00 a.m.

You'll find additional details in the conference registration form and schedule that were mailed to you earlier, and information can also be found online at www.rmowp.org.

Something New at Old Faithful

Just in time for RMOWP's 2010 conference, Yellowstone National Park has a new visitor center in the Old Faithful area. The new Visitor Education Center officially opens with ceremonies August 25 after more than two years of construction work.

The old visitor center, built in the late 1960s, was demolished to make way for the new two-story, 26,000 square foot structure designed in the rustic architectural style of the Old Faithful Historic District.

The new \$27-million building - with over half the funds provided by the nonprofit Yellowstone Park Foundation - received a gold rating from the U. S. Green Building Council by using sustainable elements in building location and construction materials, water conservation, and indoor air quality.

Boasting a variety of interactive state-of-the art exhibits, the new visitor education center includes a working model geyser.

We're Going to -- a Reef?

Story & photos © Jack Olson

Just a minute! We're in the Rocky Mountains. That's what we do. And we're going to a reef? Isn't that by, you know, water?

Usually, but the formerly seafaring pioneers who entered this area described the elongated folds of rock formed in the course of mountain building as a *reef*. *Waterpockets* are the natural catch basins for rain and snowmelt. We know it now as the Waterpocket Fold. And *Capitol* came about due to the similarity of the area's



Sunset over Capitol Reef from overlook near Torrey

rounded white sandstone features to the domes of capitol buildings in the country. There you have it: Capitol Reef National Park.

Many of our members have been in Capitol Reef, but few have explored it. Utah Route 24 passes right through the narrow east-west corridor of the park, with no required stop for pay or pass. And most go on toward Bryce Canyon, Zion, even Grand Canyon. They are missing a little-known gem, with a unique identity. To begin, the park has a singularly string bean shape. A hundred miles long, north to south, its width may vary from fifteen miles where the road crosses to a sinewy 2 or 3 miles at the southern end.

History buffs and writers won't have to look far to discover some of the special human impressions in the area. Along Utah 24, near the visitor center, are the reminders of the pioneer settlement of Fruita - a few structures and, most notably, an orchard. It's not unusual to find deer wandering among the fruit trees.

Humans inhabited the area thousands of years ago, and more recently, the Fremont culture, lasting until about 1300 A.D. Their petroglyphs and pictographs adorn rock walls along the Fremont River and elsewhere in the park.

Cue the "bad guy" music. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, and their Wild Bunch, were reputed to hang out here in the 1890s. It's a short hike to Cassidy Arch, the only reference to the park's infamous visitors. Another less nefarious feature is Hickman Bridge, on a very enjoyable short hike.

The paved Scenic Drive slices 13 miles along the Waterpocket Fold, unfolding one spectacular view after another. At the end is a gravel road into Capitol Gorge; from the end of which there's a two mile flat hike into the Gorge. Another easy hike into the dramatic interior of the Waterpocket Fold is Grand Wash, accessed either from the Scenic Drive or Utah 24.

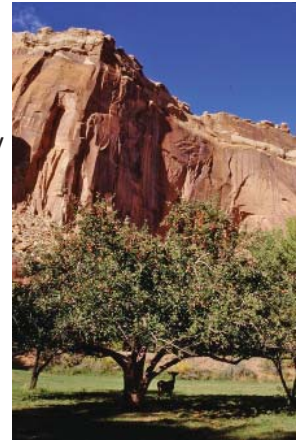
With its hundred mile length, much of Capitol Reef is remote and less traveled. There are other exciting roads, some of which may be handled by cars, but others best suited to 4WD or high clearance vehicles. Perhaps the most popular backcountry road is the Burr Trail, paved from the town of Boulder, on Utah 12, east through Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, to the boundary of Capitol Reef. From here it is a graded dirt road, with striking vistas and a series of dramatic switchbacks to its junction with the Notom-Bullfrog Road. This road can be traveled north within the park and then to a paved stretch outside the park to Utah 24. Travelers may want to check on backcountry road conditions before entering.

Enough directions. Enough definitions. Briefly, what special features will Capitol Reef offer RMOWP at the 2011 conference? First, there are outstanding, distinctive, colorful southwestern sandstone formations, strung out in a unique linear form, the reef. There are gorgeous drives and both easy and ambitious hikes into the heart of the Waterpocket Fold. Our headquarters will be in Torrey, on the west, sunset, side of the park. We'll take advantage of those sunsets.

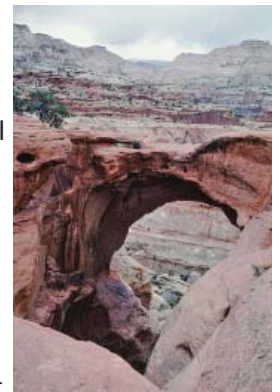
History is right out front at Capitol Reef. Remnants of the village of Fruita, including a schoolhouse, home and barn, are open to visitors. The most visible, and signature historical evidences of human residence in the area are the orchards at Fruita. Managed by the Park Service as historical landscapes, fruit trees include cherry, apricot, apple, peach, and pear. Ripe fruit may be picked and eaten in the orchard at no charge, but ripe fruit removed from the orchard must be paid for. It is possible that some cherries will be ripe during the RMOWP conference. Just sayin'.

Cultural references may be found in numerous petroglyphs and pictographs throughout the park. Learn more about the Fremont Culture at the Visitor Center.

Finally, by national park standards, Capitol Reef is relatively uncrowded, hosting not much more than a half million visitors a year. It's likely that many of these visitors don't stray far from Utah 24. Wander a distance from the main roads and you may find---solitude.



deer in Fruita orchard



Cassidy Arch

Don't forget to bring to Conference:

YOUR FUNNIEST SHIRT

store-bought or homemade
the more original the better

DONATIONS FOR AUCTION

matted photos (Members' Choice Contest entries?)
published books, photo equipment
craft and gift items
stuff lying around you no longer want...

(RMOWP accepts payment in checks or cash, no credit cards)

PHOTOS FOR MEMBERS' CHOICE CONTEST

1 or 2 matted prints – not framed

8X12 print matted to 12X16 maximum

color or black and white, altered/manipulated
photo must have been taken during your lifetime

3 categories: Scenic, Flora, Fauna

label the back with your name, photo title, "Members' Choice" & the category

PHOTOS FOR THE PHOTO CRITIQUE

3 to 5 digital images on CDs or flash drives
jpeg format readable by a PC

WRITING FOR THE WRITERS' CRITIQUE

at least 5 copies of up to 5 pages double-spaced
unpublished work -- something you want help with

Buck Knives Donates to RMOWP

Buck Knives, a former RMOWP Supporting Member, will donate three knives to the group for the 2010 conference in Yellowstone National Park. Two will be included in the auction, which benefits the scholarship program, and one will be an award for the Members' Choice contest. All three knives will be engraved.

While not forgetting its hunting roots, Buck Knives continues to strengthen its position as the knife manufacturer with the widest array of product choices, according to a recent news release.

New knives include three Folding ErgoHunters, with comfortable, sure-grip handles, hollow-ground 3-inch Skinner blades, and ambidextrous one-hand opening.

Also new this year is what Buck calls a revolutionary approach to assisted openers – the Paradigm. Although not Buck's first one-hand opening folder, this multi-purpose knife features the handiest deployment system and the safest locking action of any, the company says. It has a 3-1/4" drop-point blade and comes in two models.

Another major breakthrough for Buck is the new EcoLite Series, utilizing eco-friendly materials including handles made from 100% waste paper. The knives are a new, light-weight version of Buck's famous 110 Folding Hunter.

For additional information on all Buck products, see their website, www.buckknives.com.

In Oklahoma It's Not Just the Birds that Fly

Story & photos © John Thornton

(Ed. Note: After learning that RMOWP member John Thornton of Stillwater, Oklahoma had an image of a flying squirrel published in the July-August issue of "Outdoor Oklahoma," we contacted him and asked for some details, which we found fascinating)

Although flying squirrels are fairly common in deciduous woodlands, they are rarely observed because they are entirely nocturnal. They are rat-sized and make their homes in hollow trees. They feed on nuts and large seeds. Skin between their fore and hind limbs provides an air foil which allows them to glide through the air from one tree to another, thus the name flying squirrel.

We live in the woods and attract and feed birds on our deck using sunflower seeds. This past winter we discovered that flying squirrels were helping themselves to the seed each night about 10 PM 'til midnight. We also discovered that they became habituated to having the deck light on so were able to view them. They are very quick but will "freeze" on the side of a tree if they sense a human's presence, allowing me to easily photograph them using my Nikon and a Speedlight (See photo 1).

The challenge was to try to catch one of these fast, cute little critters in "flight." I soon discovered that if I waited to press the shutter release until they were in my viewfinder, it was already too late.

Eventually I discovered that by anticipating when they were about to jump from a tree to the feeder I could occasionally catch one in flight. The photograph I entered in the "Outdoor Oklahoma" contest was of a single individual in flight (see photo 2), but later I was fortunate enough to get a pair together in the air (see photo 3).



photo 1 - frozen to the tree



photo 2



photo 3