

Rocky Mountain Outdoors

the newsletter of Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers & Photographers, Inc.

March – April 2018

Breaking News – Conference Almost Set!

By Don Laine

RMOWP's 2018 conference takes place in the **Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve** area, with headquarters in **Alamosa, Colorado**. Dates are **September 23-26**, (that's Sunday afternoon through Wednesday evening), with both pre- and post-conference activities, field trips, and all the usual instructive and fun activities.

Alamosa is about 235 miles southwest of Denver; 245 miles southeast of Grand Junction, Colorado; 200 miles north of Albuquerque, New Mexico; and 140 miles north of Santa Fe, New Mexico, all of which have airports, some bigger than others.

Most meals, workshops, and other sit-down presentations will take place in the **Adams State University Student Union Building** in downtown Alamosa. RMOWP will provide university parking passes for registrants. Those bringing pets need to know that pets are not permitted in the Student Union Building but can be walked on the university grounds. Of course, service animals can be taken anywhere.

The conference will involve some driving – Great Sand Dunes (www.nps.gov/grsa) is about 35 miles from Alamosa – but it will be well worth the effort. Please bring your America the Beautiful or other federal lands passes, as we will be carpooling into the national park and other public lands.

A **Registration form** is included with this newsletter and is also available online, where you can pay through PayPal. RMOWP will not be able to include beer and wine at meals in the meeting room at Adams State University, but you can buy it at reasonable prices from the official Adams State caterer.

Pre-conference field trips to see and photograph wild horses are planned – see “Join Us for a Wild Horse Photo Tour” on page 6 of this newsletter. Also planned is a post-conference all-day trip on the historic **Cumbres and Toltec narrow-gauge steam train** (www.cumbrestoltec.com) on Thursday, September 27. We'll drive to the railroad's Antonito depot and take a shuttle bus to Chama, New Mexico to board the train for the trip back to Antonito.

So what else is going on? The schedule is still a work in progress, but here's what's shaping up.

The conference officially begins **Sunday** (9/23) evening with a welcome from President Kent Taylor, handouts and announcements, and a reception with food and drink, all in Alamosa's historic train station, now the Colorado Welcome Center. This is also a good time to arrange carpooling for **Monday** (9/24), which will be spent entirely at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve and adjacent attractions. If there's enough water we can see Zapata Falls, just outside the national park boundary, and we may have an opportunity to see the Nature Conservancy's famed bison herd. Be sure



Morning in the Dunes — The clouds have just cleared the dunes, allowing the morning rays to enhance their texture. © William Horton



Shrine of the Stations of the Cross or “La Capilla de Todos los Santos” and its enclosed gardens. Located above San Luis, CO on La Mesa de la Piedad y de la Misericordia (the hill of Piety and Mercy).

© William Horton

See “Conference...” on page 2

“Conference...” from page 1

to stop at the Visitor Center on your way into the park for the low-down on how these huge sand dunes were formed. We’ll lunch at the Great Sand Dunes Group Picnic Area, go on a guided ranger walk, and explore the park, making sure we’re back at the group picnic area in time for a barbecue dinner. Then you’re on your own for sunset and full-moon photography.

On **Tuesday** (9/25) we plan to carpool to Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge (www.fws.gov/alamosa) for a ranger-guided walk, and then head to the Adams State University meeting room for lunch, the presentation of contest submissions, a workshop, board of directors’ meeting, and a general membership meeting. Getting hungry? We’ll chow down before the showcase of selected members’ photography and our always-popular photo critique.

The sunrise photo shoot kicks off **Wednesday** (9/26), and then it’s the writers’ forum, lunch sandwiched be-



Sunsets can be dramatic at the dunes. © William Horton

tween workshops, the auction, and the conference’s official grand finale with the banquet and awards ceremony.

Late September should have wonderful fall colors, especially along the steam train’s route over 10,015-foot Cumbres Pass. The weather will be cool (downright chilly in the evenings and early mornings). This past September your conference organizers woke up to snow in the higher elevations of Great Sand Dunes National Park.

Lodging will be at the **Alamosa Super 8**, which has offered us a group rate of \$89 per night for one or two adults in rooms with either one king bed or two queens. Reservations should be made by calling the motel directly at **719-589-6447**.

Although the exterior of the motel is somewhat drab, the rooms are quite nice. All rooms have microwaves and refrigerators and a hot breakfast is included. There’s a small indoor pool and hot tub. Pets are accepted in a limited number of designated pet rooms for \$10 per pet per night and there are several ADA handicapped rooms. Note – cancellations without penalty can be made only until September 8. If you have any problems or questions, talk with RMOWP’s contact there, Manager Jose Rodriguez.



Cumbres Pass, the highest point along the Cumbres & Toltec route.

© Don Laine

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Calling All Young Outdoor Writers!

By Virginia Parker Staat

RMOWP will host our annual Young Outdoor Writers Contest, designed to encourage young people to write about their outdoor experiences in prose or poetry.

The contest is open to youths age 18 and younger who are members of RMOWP, and includes all outdoor topics. Youth membership is \$5 per year, and you may join when you submit your entry.

Entries must be postmarked by June 25, 2018. For more details, please visit rmowp.org for the contest rules and entry form. Contest entry fee is waived for this category. Winners will be announced at the RMOWP conference in Alamosa and need not be in attendance.

Writer's Corner

Behind Every Great Story

By Virginia Parker Staat

*"No one can whistle a symphony.
It takes a whole orchestra to play it."*

~ H.E. Luccock

Drawing stick people is a challenge for me. For that reason, I have had the wonderful privilege of working with a very talented visual artist over the past several years. Andy Ramon has developed a logo, a legend for a cookbook, and is now illustrating a children's book for me.

I like how Andy works. He asks smart questions and listens intently to my needs. Amazingly, his style of communication leads him to somehow see what is in my mind's eye. As a result, he delivers drawings that are exactly what I want.

Andy has given me permission to include in this article the first rough sketch he drew of El Patron, the renegade bear in my children's story. The manuscript is a true story about a starving bear. Driven by hunger, El Patron followed his nose to a poorly kept hunting camp. He was marked as a nuisance bear after he broke into the camp's cabin and consumed fifty-pounds of birdseed, a refrigerator full of food, six cases of rat poison, a bottle of wine, and two gallons of cooking oil. In the process, he wrecked the place. And that was just the beginning of this bear's wild adventures.

In my initial discussion with Andy, he asked what was most important to me. I told him that I wanted the bear to look realistic and not ferocious. One of the key elements in El Patron's story is how we can co-exist with wild bears, so it was most important that my young readers learn to be respectful rather than fearful of these magnificent creatures. When Andy sent this initial sketch, I knew he would be able to capture the essence of my bear. I had found the right artist for the job. I can't wait to see his final pen and ink drawings.

Too often we writers are considered solitary figures, doing our own thing in isolation rather than being collaborators who work as a team with other crafts. The truth is writers do not work alone. Behind every great story, there is an accompanying support team. We have editors to

make our writing better. We may work with researchers, layout designers, publicists, and/or visual artists like Andy. We also receive motivation and support from friends, family, critique groups, and fellow students.

In *Writing Tools*, author Roy Peter Clark suggests that writers should understand the various auxiliary crafts that support our written work. By learning about these crafts and working closely with the people who have mastered them, we can make our writing richer and greatly improve our presentation. He writes, "This requires not just the Golden Rule – treat others the way *you* want to be treated – but what my old colleague Bill Boyd calls the Platinum Rule: Treat others the way *they* want to be treated." The Platinum Rule includes meeting deadlines, communicating clearly, and finding out in advance what each craft person needs to do their best work.

For Andy to do his best work, we had a lot of communication before he drew the first sketch. I had to determine what the layout of the book would be. I chose portrait rather than landscape. Did I want watercolor or pen and ink sketches? I also had to decide which scenes needed to be illustrated.

Andy Ramon is an example of a tremendous artist who has certainly improved my work. His sketches will complete the presentation of El Patron's story, enticing children to read further. I encourage you to learn more about the auxiliary crafts that support your writing. Those rich collaborations are the gems behind every great story.



El Patron by Andy Ramon

Membership Renewal Reminder

By Maryann Gaug

To those who haven't renewed your RMOWP membership: On **April 1** (both Easter and April Fools' Day this year), any member who has not yet renewed (or contacted me for an extension) will be removed from our membership list.

You can renew by check made out to RMOWP (mail to Maryann Gaug, 596 W. Coyote Dr., Silverthorne, CO 80498-9212) or by credit card with Paypal through our website: <https://rmowp.org/member-area/renew/>.

Questions? Contact me at megaug@earthlink.net or call 970-389-1099.

Thanks for being RMOWP members!

Want this newsletter e-delivered?

Let us know: info@rmowp.org

Subject: E-mail RMO

Thanks!

RMOWP Conferences – The Middle Years, Part IX

Article & photos by Jack Olson

Our 2006 conference in **Moab, Utah**, was one to remember. We visited two national parks: Arches and Canyonlands. An intrepid group went out to Arches at sunrise. Dodging around troublesome clouds they stopped at Park Avenue and encircled a sweet evening primrose. Later, when the sun appeared, we could count a record 17 early-birds. In one of our outings, one group went out to hike while the other took a bus tour of Arches. The hiking group scrambled up, down, and through the Windows section of Arches. A memorable change took place in our photo contest. There had been rumblings about digital photography for several years. Some preferred the old comfortable slides we'd always submitted. But those days were over. Some eighty percent of all submissions for the contest were digital. Case closed.



*Kathy Turner exults in Double Arch,,
Arches National Park*

*Jake Fagan &
Cecilia Travis
discuss the
fine points of
photography at
Canyonlands
National Park*

*Maryann Gaug plays her
magic flute in Arches NP*



Colorado Springs, Colorado, was our conference site in 2007. Once again, we had the honor of hiking in a new state park. Not yet opened to the public, Cheyenne Mountain State Park offered plains and foothills terrain. In fact, we had lots of outdoor opportunities. We got a nature presentation and then could hike in Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. Huge fossilized trunks of sequoias buried from long-ago volcanoes were a marvel to us. And one more hike, Trails of Gold, wound through the former mining zone above Victor. Esteemed nature photographers, Bob Rozinski and Wendy Shatil, led our sunrise photo shoot in fantastic Garden of the Gods.



Digital photography succeeded with taking over our photography award submissions at ninety-three percent.

*Photographing the
Air Force
Academy chapel*

*Sunrise lineup in
Garden of the Gods*



We had never set foot in our namesake Rocky Mountain National Park for our previous conferences. We rectified that by choosing **Estes Park, Colorado**, in 2008. As usual, we had a great time with programs and visiting with members who have become friends.

Our only problem was something we couldn't control: the weather. Snow closed the signature feature of the park, Trail Ridge Road, which reaches over 12,000 feet in the tundra for over twelve miles above timberline. Our sunrise photo shoot featured the lovely reflections in Sprague Lake. However, bitter cold winds forced even hardy photographers back

into the woods and, eventually, to the warm bus. It happens. We did have a nice day for a pre-opening tour of Hermit Park Larimer County Open Space.



Tour of Hermit Park, not yet open to the public



Dedicated members man their tripods - others chow down



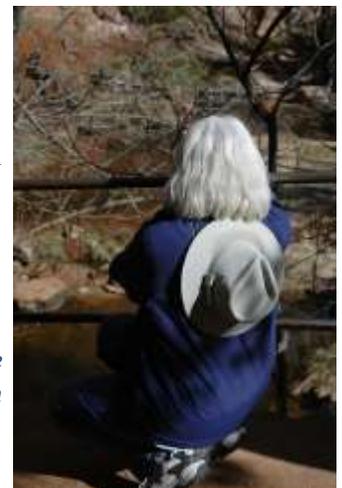
Sleeping on the job, or just the right angle...



Along the Emerald Pools Trail

We decided to flaunt high gasoline prices in 2009 when we selected **Zion National Park, Utah**. What a stunning piece of our natural heritage this is. I'll add just a personal note to say that Zion is one of my three favorite national parks. As we've often done, we offered a pre-conference activity. The day before the opening of the conference we took the park service-limited group of twelve on the trail to Double Arch Alcove. Another personal note: This is one of my favorite short hikes in the U. S. Our conference

headquarters was Zion Lodge, right in the heart of Zion Canyon. Walk out the door and you're looking up at 2,000 feet of red rock. An enthusiastic park service ranger took us on a trail to Emerald Pools. We instituted a showcase of selected members photography and hoped it would continue as a popular feature of our conferences. *(Note: it has)*



Getting just the right composition

[Editor's note: This is the ninth in the continuing conference retrospective by Jack Olson, RMOWP member since 1978. Previous ones appeared in the following newsletters and are available for perusal and download at our website www.rmowp.org: Mar-April, May-Jun & Sep-Oct 2015, Mar-Apr & Sep-Oct 2016, Jan-Feb, Jul-Aug, & Nov-Dec 2017.]



Casanova's Band

Join Us for a Wild Horse Photography Tour

By Don Laine & Virginia Parker Staat
Photos © Judy Barnes

If you love wild horses, be sure to sign up for a unique opportunity to photograph free-roaming mustangs. Pre-conference motor tours are planned Saturday and Sunday, September 22 and 23, with participants carpooling from the conference motel to meet with Spirit of the Wild Horse director Judy Barnes near San Luis, Colorado (approximately one hour from Alamosa) and then heading up to Wild Horse Mesa.

To avoid frightening the horses we need to limit the number of vehicles, so we're hoping that among those participating there will be two or three high-clearance four-wheel-drive vehicles, such as full-size crew cab pickups or large SUVs, to transport the group to the mesa. There, Judy Barnes and RMOWP member Laurie Ford will lead us to the best sites to photograph the 150 wild mustangs who call Wild Horse Mesa home. We will be able to get out of the vehicles to photograph the horses. All participants must sign a liability release form.

There is a maximum of 20 people for each day's trip (first-come first-served), and we'll be leaving Alamosa at 8 a.m. Participants are advised that the only bathroom break,



Adoe-Wind

other than ducking behind a sagebrush, will be at the lunch stop in San Luis. Horses will be quite close, so bring short lenses as well as telephotos. Cost is \$60 per person, including lunch, and \$50 of that goes to help support Spirit of the Wild Horse, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization established in 2007 for the preservation and protection of Wild Horse Mesa and Rio Grande wild horses.

Visit www.spiritofthewildhorse.com for additional information, or one of two Facebook pages: Judy Barnes and Spirit of the Wild Horse. In addition to being the volunteer director of Spirit of the Wild Horse, Ms. Barnes is an accomplished professional photographer who specializes in – guess what? – wild horses.

Website Notes

- An updated directory is available online in the "Member's Only" area of our website. If you lost the sign-in credentials contact info@rmowp.org.
- The sign-in credentials will change on April 1st.
- RMOWP offers a link to your website utilizing a logo or photo you provide, plus a short paragraph about you or your site. Contact info@rmowp.org.



"Biker at Sunset" © Al Perry
Honorable Mention, People in the Outdoors, 2017
RMOWP Photo Contest

New Member

RMOWP welcomes new member **Judy Lehmkuhl** from Golden, Colorado, who joined in February this year. For images, Judy enjoys nature, macro and flower photography. She is also a writer and Native American storyteller.

2018 RMOWP Calendar

May 30 ~ Scholarship application deadline

June 23-27 ~ Photo Workshop in Rocky Mountain National Park

June 25 ~ Contest submission deadline

September 23-26 ~ Annual Conference — Alamosa, Colorado, and Great Sand Dunes National Park & Preserve

See www.rmowp.org for details

What Not to Do

as reported by a very serious Kenita Gibbins

My friend and I were returning home on the Chicago-to-Denver Amtrak route. The train made a stop for cigarette smokers, who absolutely can't smoke anywhere on the train. I exited the train with a hand from the conductor. I told him, "I'm not a smoker, but I am a photographer." He told me we had stopped in Galesburg, Illinois, once the home of Carl Sandburg. He then pointed beyond the front of the train to a big mural and said, "There is a picture of him."

The conductor turned from me and without thinking I took off to photograph the very famous poet Mr. Sandburg. Our train car was near the end. I walked as swiftly as possible since I'm a little old lady. Well, maybe not so little. I reached my destination and happily clicked and clicked.

I proceeded back to my car and immediately noticed no smokers! I picked up my pace. I then saw the conductor frantically waving his arm. He yelled "GET ON THE TRAIN". I couldn't find an unlocked door. I started running. I hadn't run in years. Thank goodness I wasn't at Denver altitude. I reached my hero at the door and he literally pulled me into the train. He told me he was surprised the engineer waited for me. I immediately wondered if Galesburg even had a hotel or taxi? My what ifs scared me.



Mural near the train station. © Kenita Gibbins

That evening my friend and I enjoyed a wonderful steak dinner, the company of a very interesting young man, who had been to New Orleans via Amtrak. Our conductor walked through and I asked him if he would like to see my images? He liked them, but of course didn't like the way I obtained them. As always he was a gentleman and didn't admonish me for my one track mind of taking pictures.

Until I looked at my images I didn't realize I not only delayed the train, but I also delayed a vehicle that could not move until the train moved. I will never again inconvenience so many people in this manner. I'm only hoping to reach the age of wisdom before I turn eighty.

President's Column

Frank's Trophy: an Extra "Touch" of Nature

By Kent Taylor



Late last summer, wife Laura and I were watching TV one evening. She was in her favorite chair with her iPad, scrolling, relaxing after teaching high school music all day. I think the Rangers were playing. We are baseball people. The next thing I knew, I heard a strange, gasping sound coming from her direction and looked over just in time to see a rather active garter snake, writhing and wiggling its way off Laura's lap and onto the floor. This was followed by abrupt motions, sounds of hyper-ventilation and shrieks of disbelief. "Frank just dropped a snake in my lap!" she screamed.

Frank is a Chiweenie, by the way, a Chihuahua/Dachshund mix and weighing maybe 8 pounds dripping wet. He is a digger, a burrower. To say he loves to hunt for lizards, mice and snakes would be an understatement. Frank has presented us with trophies before but usually not live ones. So amidst all the calamity, there was Frank, wagging his tail proudly having earned his keep, so to speak, with this latest catch. Laura, in particular, was not

impressed although she did manage a meager, "Good boy, Frank" as he stood there, delighted.

You're probably wondering, "What happened to the snake?" Well, thankfully it was content to hang out under the chair until we swept it up into a plastic box and relocated it to the front yard bushes, away from Frank's pursuit. Frank seemed happy with the whole thing, Laura, not so much.

In your travels and "touches" with Nature this year, I wish you well. Even more, I look forward to seeing and hearing what you've found, or perhaps what has fallen in your lap. See you in September.



© Kent Taylor



"Hoppers" © Terry Guthrie
2nd Place Members Choice 2017

Members' Choice Contest Update

By Maryann Gaug

Time to start thinking about which of your two favorite photos you would like to print and mat for submission in the Members' Choice contest at our annual conference in Alamosa, Colorado this September.

Complete rules and guidelines are available on <https://rmowp.org/annual-contest/>. Photos will be displayed at the conference and voted on by members in attendance.

This year we ask that you NOT put your name on the backs of the photos submitted in order to keep a little mystery in the contest. Instead, please write "Members' Choice" and the title of your photo on the back of each. We will keep track of which is whose.

You may mail your submissions to Frank Zurey (see contest rules) or bring them to conference.



Long-time member **Jon Sheppard** tells us he is represented at the Vail Library through mid-March. Stop in and browse his work if you're in the area skiing.
(Photo of Vail Library courtesy Jon Sheppard.)

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