

# *Rocky Mountain Outdoors*

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

January – February 2020

## **RMOWP Heads to Country's Newest National Park in 2020**

By Don Laine

Several months ago we announced that RMOWP's 2020 conference was planned for early October in Alamogordo, New Mexico, home to White Sands National Monument. Leave it to our federal government to make a liar of me.

Several weeks ago President Donald Trump signed a bill that included a provision that changes White Sands' status from national monument to national park, making it America's 62nd designated national park (see [nps.gov/whsa](https://www.nps.gov/whsa)). The measure also includes a land swap with adjacent White Sands Missile Range that is intended to end the practice of occasionally shutting down the road into the park while the military shoots off missiles.

The main part of the conference runs from Monday evening through Thursday evening (10/5-8), but a day-and-a-half photography workshop is planned Sunday and Monday morning (10/4 and 5). See page 4 of this newsletter or [www.rmowp.org](http://www.rmowp.org) for details.

For those who want to see where the world's first atomic bomb was exploded there is a tour to nearby Trinity Site on Saturday (10/3). Trinity Site is open to the public only two days a year – the first Saturday of April and October, and you'll be taking it on your own with a caravan organized by the Alamogordo Chamber of Commerce.

Headquarters for the conference will be the Holiday Inn Express in Alamogordo, with a group rate of \$135 per night plus tax, which includes a hot breakfast. Information on other conference activities and a registration form will be in future newsletters and on the website.



*Sunset at White Sands National Park, America's newest national park.*

© William Horton

## Gardening and Grooming ~ The Difference



*Instructor Jack Olson  
at RMOWP's 2008 Photo Workshop*

Text & photos by Jack Olson

A little while ago I was asked about the control of depth of field for photography in a field of columbine and I explained in a newsletter article. Now I want to get into a discussion concerning **Gardening** and **Grooming**. I used to

talk about gardening, and if it was ever acceptable. Some of our photographers may disagree in this but, for now, I hold the stage.

There are times when you photographers may happen across a flower or group of flowers. In this case it's some golden banner at Meyer Ranch Open Space Park. At first, they look healthy and happy. But when you get down on hands and knees and look through the viewfinder of your camera, something just



*Photo 1*

doesn't look right. There's a distracting twig (*photo 1*). What to do?

I pluck the twig out and then take my shot (*photo 2*).

It looks pristine and no one will know the difference. Except me.

That's what I call gardening.



*Photo 2*

## Dues are Due

RMOWP treasurer Maryann Gaug tells us that renewal notices are going out this month. Non-renewing members will be dropped April 1.

Here's an even more obsessive/compulsive example of gardening. I'm driving up an old bumpy roadbed on the way to Rollins Pass. I spot a nice columbine. I pull off to the side and get out my tripod. I look through the viewfinder and see---a fly on the columbine (*photo 3*).



*Photo 3*

What to do? I touch the flower and the disgusted fly flits away (*photo 4*).



*Photo 4*

So what about grooming? I don't do grooming so I have no examples. But, in my definition grooming would be rearranging some rocks around a flower or altering the original view in some noticeable way, making it look more perfect than it really is.

I've been showing this image (*photo 5*) for several years and thought it was such a great coincidence of lichen-covered rocks and alpine forget-me-nots. A little TOO great. I now think someone rearranged the whole composition. I think it's been groomed! I've never groomed, but if you find a reason to, I think you should explain the purpose.



*Photo 5*

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## New Member

RMOWP welcomes **June Wolfe** of Mesa, Arizona. June has attended several conferences as a guest of Frank and Sherry Zurey, and recently joined. She is a nature photographer and won several awards in the novice category at this fall's RMOWP conference.



*"Greater Roadrunner"*  
© June Wolfe  
1st Place Novice, 2019  
RMOWP Photo Contest

## Having a Moment

By Judy Lehmkuhl

I stand on the autumn-warmed tundra  
Pelted by graupel falling straight down  
Listening to the bull elk bugle

Mid-September  
Rocky Mountain National Park  
First curve west of the Alpine Visitor Center  
Wyoming's Snowy Range  
Heart's home, thirty-five miles north  
Beyond layers of grey hills

The air is fresh and cool, not yet cold  
Still just a trace of summer's warmth  
Still, not a trace of autumn's wind  
The trail crosses over a steep shoulder of tundra  
Punctuated by spruce krummholz  
Spending centuries of courage to venture this high

Willow green leaves  
Turned red and gold by last night's frost  
Warming the tundra with color  
For life that was stolen by cold  
Fluffy white heads of Geum seeds  
Backlit by the waning sun  
Scarlet fernlike fronds of Potentilla leaves  
Sedges, brown and pale gold

A surprising gift-- Arctic Gentians  
Cool beauties in creamy white and navy blue  
The flowers that end the summer, signaling  
The growing season is through

Plop Plop ...and then the deluge  
Graupel falling straight down like rain  
Round and icy like hail  
Soft and white like snow  
Melting in moments

Forming curling burbling rivulets  
Flowing down the slope toward  
The Poudre River Valley a mile below  
Softly, almost unheard, and then louder  
Comes the bugle of a bull elk in rut  
Proclaiming his love and longing  
Just around the shoulder of the hill  
Or echoing from the valley way down, down  
That sound, that hot, throaty expression  
Refined by distance and drenching  
Combed by the trees and grasses  
To a trumpet-like, flute-like tone

Because of the evanescent nature of time  
Quickly moving, shifting, changing  
Twisting and turning  
Like the storm clouds above us  
Pregnant with their burdens  
Of graupel and rain and snow  
Moments tend to pass unnoticed  
Or glimpsed out of the corner of an eye  
Passing us by  
But this one catches me by surprise  
I stop here, silent, still

Having a moment

I stand on the autumn-warmed tundra  
Pelted by graupel falling straight down  
Listening to the bull elk bugle...

Want this newsletter e-delivered?

Let us know: [info@rmowp.org](mailto:info@rmowp.org)

Subject: E-mail RMO

Thanks!

## RMOWP Loses an Arizona Friend

Many of those who attended the 2017 conference in Sierra Vista, Arizona, will remember Mary Jo Ballator, who opened her bed and breakfast to us so we could see and photograph the rare birds that congregated there. RMOWP recently learned that Mary Jo died last year, and her family and friends have converted the bed and breakfast to the Mary Jo Ballator Nature Sanctuary, a birding and nature retreat where visitors can see rare and beautiful birds including the lucifer hummingbird and plain-capped starthroat. See [www.maryjoballatornaturesanctuary.org](http://www.maryjoballatornaturesanctuary.org) for details.

**What:** One-and-one-half day Photo Workshop 2020  
**When:** October 4-5, 2020 just before conference  
**Where:** Alamogordo, NM  
**Member Rate:** \$250 including lunch both days  
**Why:** see the following ...

## Take Control of Your Photography

### From conception through post-processing

**Instructors:** William & Katherine Horton

**Length:** 1.5 days

*Take Control of Your Photography* is a 1 1/2 day workshop that will make you a better photographer: more proficient, more artistic, and more confident.

Starting with a photo critique to identify specific needs, this fast-paced and focused workshop will not waste your time on things you already know. You will not fritter away instruction time driving from one location to another. Nor, will you be subjected to endless slides of the instructors' photographs. Instead, you will engage in hands-on classroom activities and practical demonstrations targeting areas of improvement identified in photo critiques.

In addition to activities that will enhance your camera technique, you will also learn how to develop your images to bring out their potential. Working solo or in a team, you will practice editing photographs to meet various criteria, such as for use in a textbook or displayed in an art gallery.

### Objectives:

You will learn to:

- Find the picture in the scene.
- Capture what you see in your mind's eye.
- Develop the potential of a captured scene.
- Fix common problems.
- Identify ways to improve your own work.

### Topics:

The topics we cover will be based upon our initial photo-critique session, because there is no value to teaching you what you already know. However, some of the big issues we will discuss include:

- Identify ways to improve your photography.
- Set meaningful goals for your photography.

- Shoot with editing in mind.
- Juggle aperture, shutter speed, and ISO for perfect exposure.
- Make the subject pop.
- Add depth and drama to your images.
- Deal with high-contrast scenes.
- Take control of your camera with features such as back-button focus and auto-ISO.
- Get tack-sharp images.
- Use blur creatively.
- Establish a sleek, non-destructive workflow.
- Automate tedious editing tasks.
- Fix noise, dust spots, and other unavoidable flaws.
- Continue learning from readily-available online resources.

### Who should attend:

This workshop is designed to help you recognize and capture good photographs, regardless of your current skill level. Participants should be able to operate their DSLR or mirrorless camera in other than fully automatic mode. And, they need to be comfortable using a computer and editing software. For this workshop we will be using Adobe Lightroom Classic. If you do not have it, you can download a free trial ahead of the workshop.

### Agenda

The workshop will be broken into three 3.5-hour units.

#### *Day one:*

Morning Session - 8:30 AM to 12:00 PM

Lunch - 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM

Afternoon Session - 1:00 PM to 4:30 PM

#### *Day two:*

Morning Session - 8:30 AM to 12:00 PM

Lunch - 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM

There will be *no* homework. We will end at a reasonable time so that participants can take advantage of the golden and blue hours—and perhaps practice techniques they have learned.

### Requirements:

- DSLR or mirrorless camera.
- Tripod.
- Whatever lenses you have.
- Laptop with Adobe Lightroom Classic installed.
- Instruction manual for your camera (paper or PDF).
- Minimal pre-work completed prior to workshop.

*See Taking Control, p. 5*

*Taking Control, cont. from p. 4*

## About your instructors

### William Horton

A photographer since childhood, William (Bill) Horton takes pictures of landscapes, animals, and plants for fun. For money, he photographs cars, buildings, and scientific subjects. He has won awards for his photography, including a first-place Denver Audubon Society award and an Epson International Pano Silver award. He has also won numerous Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers awards, including two best-of-shows and 14 best-of-category. Additionally, Bill's images have been used for posters, album covers, scientific papers, book covers, and movies. And, he has participated in many gallery shows and art journals.

Bill is an experienced instructor. Over the past 30 years, he has conducted training in fifteen countries on four continents. He has taught classes in person and online. And he has written thirteen books dedicated to communicating visual and textual information effectively. Bill shares that his proudest achievement is having his words published as fortune-cookie fortunes.

### Katherine Horton

Artist and computer-wrangler, Katherine (Kit) Horton has a proven record of making images beautiful. She has illustrated, edited, and produced camera-ready copy for award-winning books. Kit has also won awards for her own photographic work.

Currently, Kit is responsible for editing and preparing photos for gallery shows, competitions, and publications. With over 20 years of Photoshop experience and twelve years of Lightroom experience, Kit fears no software.

Outside the studio, Kit has conducted training classes ranging from Saudi Arabia to inside a nuclear power plant.



## President's Column

# Embracing the Oxymoron

Text & photo by Virginia Parker Staat

As most of you know, I'm not much for standing in the spotlight. I'm happy being the photographer behind the viewfinder or the writer behind the computer. In fact, as RMOWP's new president, I feel more like my Aussie dingy friend in the photo, frozen under the torches (aka flashlights). It's the problem with us introverts... we spend most of our time trying to be invisible. Sometimes it doesn't work.

My intention, however, is to embrace the oxymoron of an introvert being your president. I want each of you to know that I was humbled and honored when asked if I would serve, and even more humbled and honored once elected as your president. And



*Caught!*

while I may try to stay out of the spotlight, I do look forward to working with each of you toward the future of RMOWP. (We introverts do enjoy working with individuals – as long as it's behind the scenes.)

I admit that I begin my tenure not quite certain how to fill our past president Kent Taylor's very large shoes, particularly his eloquence and style. However, with Don and Barb Laine at the helm to guide me, and our wonderful board of directors and Kent as mentors, I feel in excellent company and more hopeful than fearful. Thanks to each of you for your confidence and support.

I hope you, our RMOWP members, will feel that you can come to me with your questions, suggestions, and dreams for this organization. You can write me at [pres@rmowp.org](mailto:pres@rmowp.org). Please let me hear from you.

For now, let me say that I feel privileged to serve such a talented group of folks. I joined RMOWP because of your commitment to sharing your knowledge in the fields of writing and photography and because of your commitment to the conservation and preservation of the outdoors. I feel blessed to have made so many friends within this stellar organization. Mostly, I look forward to our future together.

Blessings to each of you in this beautiful New Year.

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*Sunrise in the Monument © William Horton*

*1st Place, Images from Last Conference, RMOWP 2014 Photo Contest*

Writer's Corner

## Ode To a Chippendale Dancer

By Virginia Parker Staat

*"Don't tell me the moon is shining;  
show me the glint of light on broken glass."*

~ Anton Chekhov



Virginia with her beloved  
Roxanne

When we travel into the city, we almost always stop by our favorite Italian restaurant. It is a third-generation bistro begun in 1938 in the home where the owners raised their children. At one time it was billed as one of the top five restaurants in the world to visit. Now, with his beloved Josephine gone and Sammy in his eighties, the restaurant still has excellent fare but

not the five-star quality it once boasted.

Over the nearly twenty years we have visited this restaurant, we have become more than acquaintances with Marcus, the veritable Eeyore of servers. When we ask how he is each time we visit, his response is always the same: "Can't complain. Doesn't do any good if I do."

Marcus is about an inch shorter than I am. His most recognizable feature is his belly. It looks like a mega-scoop of gelato balanced on a sugar cone. With narrow hips in comparison, he uses suspenders to hold up his trousers. The elastic strains over his belly mountain, sliding to his sides and ultimately landing directly beneath each shoulder.

I promise you... this man hasn't seen his feet in years. His back arches so much that he looks like a woman full term with quadruplets. When he walks he wheezes; he groans; he shuffles. His swayed back causes him to shuffle so much that I often must squelch the desire to meet him halfway from the kitchen to help carry our plates to the table.

My nephew described Marcus' belly best. Marcus stood between my nephew and his fiancée while taking our orders. He later said, "When Marcus stood between us, it was like we were in separate rooms."

Because Marcus has been at the restaurant so long, his role has expanded from simply being a waiter to overseeing many of the restaurant's orders and deliveries. As an example, one day Marcus introduced us to the man who delivers the Italian sausages. The man was dressed in a three-piece black suit, white shirt, black tie, and Fedora. We speculated for weeks whether a Mafia remnant still survives in Houston.

As a result of Marcus being so involved in the restaurant's affairs, he and owner Sammy have differing opinions on how to run the place. Since David and I often arrive before the lunch crowd, we have witnessed several heated

discussions between Marcus and Sammy. They are typically Italian... a flambé of emotions with arms waving and curt shouting. During the first such exchange we experienced – which took place a mere fifteen feet from our table – we felt like we were in the midst of a domestic quarrel. After all these years, we now just feel like part of the family, particularly when both sides offer their apologies after the event and tell us why the other was wrong.

Yet in spite of all the drama, groaning, and shuffling, Marcus is extremely endearing. He is earthy and affable, like a glass of robust house Chianti with a flamboyant aftertaste. He recognizes patrons and asks about their lives. He is the preferred server of the old cronies, men in their eighties and older who gather weekly at their own table, each asking for separate checks. I have heard dozens of couples ask for one of Marcus' tables. He is, after all, a fixture at this restaurant. He even has a cot and television in the back so he can nap between the lunch and dinner crowds.

We have known Marcus so long that he often pulls up a chair beside our table, telling us the current sad tale of his life as we crunch the cucumbers in our salad. Of course, when other patrons arrive, he shuffles off to serve them, leaving us hanging mid-story. With the arriving entrées, filling of a water glass, or handling the check, however, Marcus continues to embellish until we are satisfied.

About two years ago when we visited, Marcus was even more brooding than usual. A dispute with the owner soon erupted over a misplaced candelabra. After both had settled down, we asked Marcus why he looked so glum. He told us his closest brother was dying from misdiagnosed lung cancer. He explained that when his father left the family, it was Marcus and this brother who left school to support their mother and two younger siblings. Marcus continued, explaining that he was so mad at his father's abandonment that he took his frustration out at the gym. He would sit on the rowing machine and row for hours.

His honed physique soon caught the attention of a dance group. Marcus announced that he was recruited by the Chippendales and spent the next five years dancing in their traveling show. I looked up at his receding hairline, each side in a race to see which could first reach the growing bald spot on his crown. Our eyes met through our respective glasses, his even thicker than my own. Marcus playfully tossed his head and pretended to brush long hair from his shoulders. "Hard to imagine, isn't it?"

"Really, Marcus?" was all I could utter. I felt like a jumbled swirl of capellini, hot and sticky, had just dropped in my lap.

Marcus stood next to me, his hand on the back of my chair and that prodigious belly at my eye level. Surely his belly button was an outie. The thought of a G-string suddenly crept into the recesses of my mind. I looked at my

*See Chippendale Dancer, p. 7*

*Chippendale Dancer, cont. from p. 6*

bite of redbfish, dredged in pecans and smothered in white wine sauce. The fork suddenly felt heavy in my hand.

Marcus was called away at just that moment. David and I were left to gaze at our plates. We both took the remainder of our lunch home in *to go* boxes. It was a reminder to me that everyone has a remarkable life story. Marcus was no different. But a Chippendale dancer?

The stories we write have the opportunity to show or tell what is most important to us. Telling is explaining. Showing, however, builds emotion, intrigue, and a reader's connection to our words. Could you more clearly see Marcus' belly with the comparisons I made than if I had simply told you that his was the biggest belly I had ever seen?

Showing rather than telling often employs our using similes, metaphors, and analogies in our writing. Each is used to make comparisons and evoke emotion in our readers. Similes create a comparison by using the words *like* or *as*, as in "*crazy like a fox*." Metaphors directly refer to one thing by mentioning another, as in "*the snow was a white blanket*." Analogies are a bit more complex and compare a more difficult concept to another more simple concept, as in "*as useful as rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic*."

Showing draws on our five senses. In *Stein on Writing*, Sol Stein explains, "Showing means having characters do things that excite our interest, making those pages visual, letting us see what happens firsthand." For me, Anton Chekov said it best, "A writer should seize upon small details, arranging them so that the reader will see an image in his mind after he closes his eyes."

After months of traveling this year, we visited our favorite little restaurant several weeks ago. The air immediately felt different; the umami somehow gone. The old cronies were still at their large round table, talking about aches, pains, and politics. We scooted past them to sit in the adjacent room. An Ichabod Crane of a man waited on us. He was tall and thin and most efficient, like the old schoolmaster himself. He provided us with menus and water almost immediately. He spoke loudly, perhaps because he had been waiting on the old, mostly deaf men.

Midway through our meal, I finally summoned the courage to ask about Marcus. Our server told us rather sharply that Marcus no longer worked there. His eyes, however, softened at my expression. He leaned toward me and almost whispered, "Marcus died about four months ago... from a heart attack."

Our stories are worth telling, however, we must show our readers what is important to us... and make it so important that they clearly see an image in their mind after they close their eyes. I hope I have done this for you with Marcus and his story. It is in his honor that I write this... an ode to the only Chippendale dancer I've ever known. Rest in peace, my friend.

## Dr. Faustus at Sprague Lake

By Ian King

You hadn't exactly been making *tawaf*, that great, frenzied, swarming circumambulation of the *Holy Kaaba* in Mecca; and you clearly hadn't been doing anything quite like the Muslim *Hajj*, either. Nonetheless, in a limited, quasi-metaphorical way, it is the first pilgrimage-like parallel you draw when you reflect on your visit to Sprague Lake in Rocky Mountain National Park in early September 2019.

The parallel with executing the Fifth Pillar of the Islam, admittedly, is far from apt in so many ways: you hadn't been naked, as apparently some of the pious pilgrims making the *Hajj* perhaps had been in centuries past; you'd only



*One of the many moods of Sprague Lake. © Ian King*

leisurely lapped the "sacred site" *once*, not the requisite seven; you had perambulated clockwise, thus countering the religious injunction to go in the opposite direction; there'd been no imposing black cube, symbolically representing the House of God, *Bayt Allah*, that had been the focus of your attention; you'd been there in early September, a full four weeks *after* the eighth to the thirteenth days of *Dhu al-Hijah*, the month of the Islamic calendar when the pilgrimage is to be conducted; and, no-one had been frenzied, in spiritual ecstasy, but in fact had been in vacation mode: relaxed, casual, and—*mostly*—smiling.

So, what's your gig, then? Why compare an otherwise casual stroll around a lake nestled in the mountains to an exulted spiritual experience? Well, the analogy is, on careful consideration, not a total stretch of the imagination, a case of poetic license completely run amuck. And you're quasi-joking, of course, in a satirical way, finding amusement in making ridiculous comparisons about ridiculous human nature. But beyond the joke, experiencing Sprague Lake does have its uplifting moments, some of them that seem truly transcendental, taking you out of yourself and

*See Dr. Faustus, p. 8*

Dr. Faustus, cont. from p. 7

out of your materialist culture back home, almost, perhaps, touching the finger of Gaia, primal Mother Earth goddess.

Sprague Lake is a sizeable body of water, lightly rippled by the wind in a soothing way on the day you'd been there. Its waters are bounded by reddish earthen banks, with expanses of marshy grasslands cresting them until quickly giving way to



Reflections on a rippling Sprague Lake  
© 2012 Harry Snelson

thick forest just starting to yellow here and there with autumn's impending arrival. In the distance beyond the lake, purplish-grey mountain tops appear above the tree line, caressed by a canopy of scuttling cumulus clouds on a breezy late summer's day, and giving just a hint, perhaps, of boiling up into a thunder shower later that afternoon.

It's a thoroughly *iconic* scene, an enchanting riff from Nature's playbook, where bodies of water—babbling brooks, placid ponds, roiling rivers, serene lakes, and majestic waterfalls—surrounded by lush vegetation and epic geological formations proffer liquid life to and induce mystical reverence in our species. We intuitively feel these icons' attractions and delight in their exquisite aesthetic appeal. And we know, too, as the cognitive scientists inform us, that our species has evolved to have this powerful attraction organically married to our brute material survival. Well-watered valleys with lakeside encampments are

our evolutionary Gardens of Eden, where visions of earthly utopia were perhaps first imagined, to be imprinted in our memory banks ever since as deep, instinctual sources of profound emotional, and even spiritual, resonance. And the shots you'd taken of the lake that day, confirm the scientific claims.

There's the lake itself, a vast mirror to the natural resplendence all around it. Its lightly rippled surface distorts the reflected images, but they're pleasingly mysterious and abstract in an impressionistic way, like a Monet, perhaps, mesmerizing you with its scatter of multi-colored brush strokes. And the ripples' varied refractive qualities play alchemically with the light waves, affording you with an artist's palette of colors rather than just the monochromatic deep blue you've often naively assumed water to be. Near shore, for instance, where the water shallows, it takes on the hue of a dark brown shading to a golden yellow just a few feet farther out where the reflected marsh grass comes into view. It shines a lime-ish green in patches where mats of algae may have formed, a dark emerald green where the conifers are captured upside-down, and a bright yellow where the autumning aspens are feeling the change of the seasons. Then there's an array of blues, of course—azures, turquoises, and aquamarines—but they're just as likely to be reflections of the sky above as they are the emergent properties of the water's chemical composition. Finally, you can detect ashy greys, dark purples, even near blacks, as the mountains in the distance are brought close, too, in the great reflecting pool that is Sprague Lake. It's clear that Nature has taught Monet and his Impressionist friends well.

*(Ed Note: The above, by RMOWP member Ian King, is part of a longer piece he wrote following last fall's conference. To read Ian's article in its entirety, see <https://rmowp.org/category/news/>)*

## Rocky Mountain Outdoors

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