

# ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

THE NEWSLETTER OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOOR WRITERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2014

## Conference Plans Almost There...

Article by Don Laine, photos by Jack Olson

Registration forms for RMOWP's 2014 conference will be going out by February first, but it's not too early to make arrangements for lodging and transportation. The conference, with headquarters just outside the west entrance of Glacier National Park in northern Montana, takes place Wednesday through Sunday, July 23 through 27, with pre-conference activities Tuesday, July 22.



St. Mary Lake at sunrise

A major highlight of the conference will be RMOWP's own **Tom Ulrich**, an internationally-recognized wildlife and scenic photographer, who lives in West Glacier and knows Glacier National Park like the back of his hand. Tom will be hosting an opening reception cookout at his cabin and also leading field

trips. The number of participants for each trip is limited to 15.

These trips include a \$60 extra-cost full-day pre-conference exploration of the park on Tuesday, which will include Logan Pass, St. Mary Lake, Many Glacier, Two Medicine, and Goat Lick. If more than 15 people want to go on the Tuesday field trip we may be able to schedule another one Sunday, July 27. Tom's other field trips are included in the registration fee. On Wednesday and Thursday mornings he will lead guided photo shoots at Lake McDonald and Ava-

lanche Gorge, and on Friday Tom will lead a photographers' hike from Logan Pass to Hidden Lake.

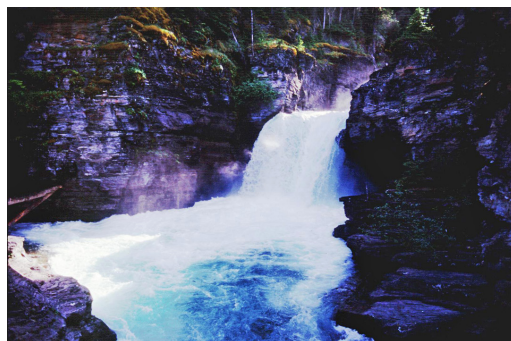
A tentative schedule, with emphasis on tentative, is in the Nov-Dec newsletter.

**Conference headquarters** is the Belton Chalet in the community of West Glacier.

Lodging is a bit more expensive than we're used to, and expect some noise from the trains that rumble through West Glacier. Rooms at the historic Belton Chalet, located directly across the street from the Amtrak station, start at \$155 per night. See [www.beltonchalet.com](http://www.beltonchalet.com) or call 406-888-5000, and tell them you're with Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers. Speaking of Amtrak, the train would be a fun way to get to the conference. See [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com), and book early for the best rates.

Next door to the Belton Chalet is the Glacier Highland Resort, a basic modern motel with rates starting at \$95 per night (800-766-0811 or 406-888-5427). You can find other lodging through an Internet search. There's also a KOA and several other campgrounds in West Glacier, plus park campgrounds and lodges.

For additional park information see [www.nps.gov/glac](http://www.nps.gov/glac).



St. Mary Falls



Bighorn sheep on Logan Pass

## 2014 CALENDAR

April 28 ~ RMOWP Contest Deadline

May 23-25 ~ OWAA conference, McAllen, Texas

May 30 ~ RMOWP Scholarship deadline

June 24-28 ~ Photo Workshop, Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, Colorado

July 23-27 ~ RMOWP conference, Glacier National Park, West Glacier, Montana

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## North of the Zoo

Article & photos by Jack Olson

Many, perhaps most, of you have visited our glorious national park, Grand Canyon. If you haven't, put this down and make a reservation now... I'm waiting. Most visitors stay at the South Rim, where there's lodging in and near the park: the El Tovar at the top tier, cabins and lodges, and many motels just outside the park. You can come by car, or even train. It's great in every way. But it's also a zoo.

Just 10 miles as the crow flies to the north, but nearly



Grand Canyon Lodge offers spectacular views from large lobby windows.

300 miles as the crow drives, is the more relaxed and much less crowded North Rim.

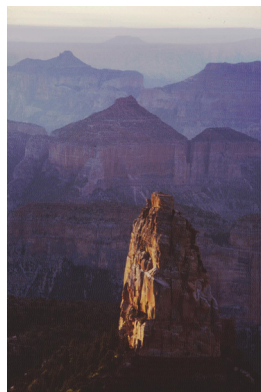
The road in from Jacob Lake, Arizona, ends at the Grand Canyon Lodge, where there are a few rooms as well as nearby cabins. Camp spots are available in the

lodge area and there's a motel just outside the boundary of the park. That's it.

If you haven't made reservations well ahead you can still drive in some 40 miles from Jacob Lake or Kanab, Utah, another 35 miles to the north. It's worth it.

On my last trip to the North Rim I stayed at Kaibab Lodge, on the boundary of the park. It seemed like Point Imperial would be a good place to view the sunrise and avoid the crowd at Bright Angel Point, right near the park lodging. It was a bit of a drive so I took off in the dark (it snakes through the woods and there's nothing to see anyway). So I slapped a tape of the "Grand Canyon Suite" in the player and just hummed along with the mules and the thunderstorm.

Since it was early October it wasn't crowded. The only other people at the viewpoint were a honeymoon couple. I'm not sure if they were happy that I showed up,



Sunrise picks out a tower deep in Grand Canyon from Point Imperial.

but I did shoot a photo to send them. The view from Point Imperial is mainly to the east, great if there are clouds to light up but not ideal if you want to photograph what the sun is hitting. Nevertheless, I thought it was a great experience to be almost alone. I'm sure in mid-summer more people would collect there.

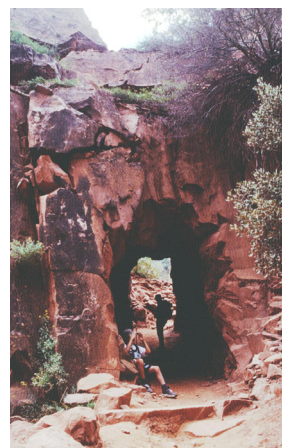
Cape Royal is an excellent viewpoint to scan the canyon east to west. That's also true of Bright Angel Point, despite the crowds that gather from nearby lodging. I mean, why do you suppose they built Grand Canyon Lodge right there? And rebuilt it after it burned?

There are several dramatic trails along the rim. I recommend picking at least one, and the trail of renown is North Kaibab. I strongly suggest hiking it at least to the Supai Tunnel (four miles round trip, and 1,350 foot vertical drop). This will give you a feel for the enclosing sandstone walls of a side canyon. Troop on farther if you want. Trek all the way to the bottom and stay at Phantom Ranch, if you have reservations. I have a friend who has run the Rim to Rim to Rim (south to north and back to south) in eight hours. Don't do that.

However, something to be sure to do is take enough water and to drink it. You're in the hot desert here. There are water stations along major trails into the canyon and you should fill up your water bottles each time. The Park Service urges hikers not to hike from the rim to the bottom and back in one day. I won't tell you who might have once happily accomplished that from the South Rim. For shame. But the Park Service knows best.

Partly because of its higher elevation and partly because the road to the North Rim runs through the dense Kaibab National Forest, its park facilities are closed from mid-October to mid-May.

For more information go to: [www.nps.gov/grca](http://www.nps.gov/grca). For maps of the North Rim, click on Plan Your Visit, and scroll down to North Rim Guide. This offers much valuable information, including roads and trails.



The Supai Tunnel, a good turn-around point along the North Kaibab Trail

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[www.rmowp.org](http://www.rmowp.org)

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## Digital Photography Workflow

Article & photo by Al Perry

One of the most frequently asked questions in digital photography relates to workflow. There are probably as many workflows in digital photography as shooting styles. I have a disciplined approach starting with raw image capture and finishing with secure backup of selected images. Because quality counts, I never shoot jpegs.

I use memory cards that hold one full day's shooting: 32, 64 or 128gb of data. I frequently hear people say they don't want "all their eggs in one basket," so they write to several small memory cards. While this approach has merit, it is not one I practice. I fear losing memory cards in the field when removing and storing cards in my pocket or camera case. Therefore, I minimize swapping cards in the field, believing the safest place for my images is within the camera.

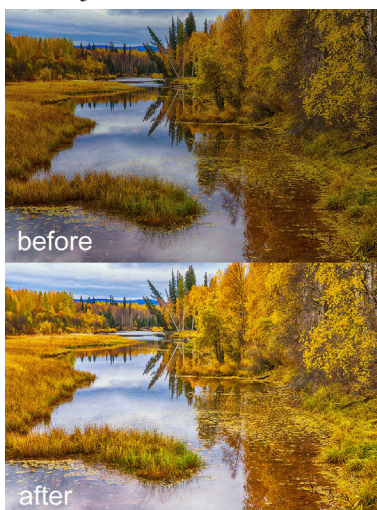
After each day's shoot, I usually download files to my laptop via a memory card reader, review images in Adobe Bridge and then backup files to an external hard drive before formatting the memory cards in the camera. While downloading, I charge batteries and check cameras for sensor dust. I always start a new day with fully charged batteries and clean sensors.

If it is not too late at night, I sort through my images and label those for further consideration with one star. Additional evaluation occurs in my office with a large, high resolution, color calibrated monitor, where a few one star images are awarded two stars. At this point I check focus, and may make changes to brightness, contrast and white balance. I rarely adjust my images beyond Adobe Bridge.

You may notice I haven't mentioned Lightroom or other digital photography software. If someone points out significant advantages of Lightroom over Bridge/Photoshop, I may give it another try. I use Bridge to label my images, remove dust spots, adjust brightness and contrast, crop, sharpen, size, select color space and convert to tiff or jpeg file formats. 95% of the images I upload to Facebook and my online photo gallery have not been processed within Photoshop. If I were more skilled in Photoshop, I might use it more often. Keep in mind: all adjustments within Adobe Bridge are nondestructive, i.e. the underlying original raw file has not been changed so you can undo any and all adjustments.

So there you have it --- my workflow in the field and the digital lab. I focus on capturing, screening, and backing up images the same day.

Fall Color in Alaska  
(before and after adjustments  
in Adobe Bridge)



## America's National Parks Offer Free Admission Days

Heading to the national parks but don't have an America the Beautiful or Golden Eagle Pass? Just pick the right date, and admission to the 401 parks administered by the National Park Service is free!

National Park Service officials have announced that there will be **nine free admission days in 2014**: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 20; Presidents Day weekend, February 15 to 17; National Park Week's opening weekend, April 19 and 20; the National Park Service's 98th birthday, August 25; National Public Lands Day, September 27; and

Veterans Day, November 11.

On these fee-free days you won't have to pay to get into the parks, but the usual fees will be collected for camping, special tours, and the like.



Rainbow ~ Rocky Mountain National Park  
© Don Jackson (Photo Workshop 2012)

## Buck Announces New Knives for 2014

A new year brings new knives, as well as a special commemorative version of an old favorite, for Buck Knives, a longtime corporate friend of RMOWP. Buck's classic **110 Folding Hunter** has been transformed in celebration of its 50th anniversary. All the popular features remain, but the commemorative version features an anniversary medallion on the handle and custom blade stamp denoting 50 years, and comes with a genuine leather sheath.



110 Folding Hunter

Other knives in the 2014 line-up include additions and redesigns to the hunting, camping and hiking, fishing, survival/tactical, and everyday categories. Among these are the new **726 Mini SpitFire**, a durable two-position clip knife for everyday carry that weighs just 2.1 ounces.

Buck has redesigned its **183 Alpha Crosslock** to offer more control in wet, slippery conditions, and the spear point blade and saw blade with integrated gut hook, create an effective multi-function hunting knife. An addition to its popular Clearwater Series is the **021 Clearwater Bait Knife**, weighing just 3.7 ounces. The 5-inch double-sided blade features backside serrations for heavy duty cutting, which helps save the fine-edged blade for efficient slicing and clean cuts. Its total length is 10.5 inches.

In its knives for everyday use category, Buck introduces the new lightweight **316 Talus**, a reliable and durable knife with a partially serrated 420HC steel blade and a suggested retail price of only \$35; and has redesigned the **290 Rush** to include colored anodized handles. For more information about Buck knives, see [www.buckknives.com](http://www.buckknives.com).

## Writing Like a Texas Winter



by Virginia Parker Staat

*"Look at everything as though you were seeing it for the first time  
or last time. Then your time on earth will be filled with glory."*

-- Betty Smith, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*

As I write this, it is early December. Vibrant fall colors have arrived in South Texas. Sweet gum trees, bathed in red, shimmer and tremble in the chill of a north wind. Cloaked in deep rust, bald cypress sway, their feathery foliage dancing across sidewalks. Oak and sycamore revel in a myriad of yellows, golds, and oranges. It is a glorious autumn day, indeed. It feels as if a day like this whispers secrets about the coming winter.

There is something incredibly special about observing nature this time of year. The whole earth seems to entice eyes and ears, nose and fingertips. As writers, it offers us the opportunity to immerse ourselves in a familiar landscape and discover something new. In the words of Thoreau, "The question is not what you look at, but what you see."

Several years ago I attended a lecture and book signing for a treatise on using mythological archetypes in storytelling. The author had moved to South Texas from Illinois a few years earlier. Well known for his skill at observing archetypes in everyday life, I was surprised when he lamented that South Texas lacked four seasons.

It was not the first time that I had heard that my corner of Texas is void of four distinct seasons. I admit that the statement rankles me. Does one really need four feet of snow to know for certain that winter has arrived?

The falls and winters of South Texas are simply more subtle than much of our country. Some years, like this one, are filled with bold autumn colors and winters with heavy frosts... occasionally even snow. Our most mild winters, however, can always be discerned by the direction of winds, the sight of hundreds of slender wings beating against a crisp blue sky, and the sounds of honking geese falling on wanting ears.

Perhaps it simply takes more effort than most care to muster to recognize the four seasons of South Texas. It requires observation skills, utilizing all five senses to detect what some may call only nuances. Pity the soul who dismisses how snow geese look like snow drifts when they glean nearby fields... or how swirling milkweed seeds dispersing in the wind look exactly like a freshly shaken snow globe... or how ice crystals in the upper atmosphere radiate halos around the moon, hearkening a coming storm while their incredible beauty verifies without question the existence of a benevolent Creator.

It occurred to me that writing like a Texas winter may best describe how writers can add vibrancy to their work. Observation is a powerful tool for a writer. When we relay those more subtle responses to our world, we add a profound layer of reality and drama to our work. We intuitively know keen observation when we hear or read it... look no further than singer/songwriter James Taylor's line, "Lord knows when the cold wind blows, it'll turn your head around" or John Muir's, "How glorious a greeting the sun gives the mountains!"

This kind of writing requires the best of us, compelling us to take in each experience, weigh it against each of our senses, and then distill it into words. It is an intimate process, demanding that we unveil a portion of ourselves. Done well, it triggers our readers' senses, connecting their experiences with our words and allowing them to see nature with fresh eyes.

I admit that this kind of writing does not come easy for me. While some writers can simply recollect their observations, I often must experience them again and again for myself. As a small example, years ago I was writing a story about two women caught in a thunderstorm while backpacking. I was excited to learn that thunderstorms were in our Texas forecast that very afternoon. When thunder began to rumble, I grabbed pen and paper and sat cross-legged on our deck, soaking in the smell of the rain, listening to the pitch of the thunder, feeling the chill of each raindrop and where the rivulets of water streamed down the back of my neck between my shoulder blades.

In the midst of my experiential musings, our then college-bound son arrived home earlier than expected. He strode toward me, stopped short, and asked, "Mom, what are you doing?"

"I'm writing a piece about getting caught in a rainstorm, and I'm trying to get it right," I answered.

He looked at me for a full ten seconds, rain beading on his jacket and the brim of his cap. He then turned heel and announced, "I'm going inside."

He has never spoken of the incident. Perhaps he felt that it would be an embarrassment to us both, as if he had caught me sitting, trousers puddled at my feet, in an outhouse with the door wide open.

Writing like a Texas winter means truly observing and experiencing the world around us. It means adding a sense of wonder to the norm. It means adding weather to weatherless stories. It means adding tastes and smells to our writing and allowing our characters to eat, drink, and laugh. It means including the sounds of birds or wind or thunder. It means describing the distinct difference between feeling the first snowflake fall on our eyelashes or the wet kiss of a toddler.

As winter surrounds each of us in its own particular way this season, may you know that winter has come by more than the proverbial four feet of snow at your door. May you keenly observe something fresh about winter today, and may you and your writing be the richer for it.