

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

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Getting the words right

By Bert Gildart

Know when and when not to use the words which and that? How about when to use active voice, passive voice, tone, phrases and the more microscopic editorial functions described by such words as *pleonasm* and *tautology*? (*see author's note .)

About 25 years ago the editor of *Travel & Leisure* drove (active voice) home the importance of good grammar just after I'd submitted one of my first major travel pieces. My first draft was taken (passive voice, which adds unneeded words) by my editor who made some general suggestions and then said that I needed to learn the difference between which and that. Then she said that I'd need to do a bit of a rewrite—"to get your words right".

Though I'm still not sure I always know when to use which or that, her comments planted (active) a real fire beneath my seat and, today, perfecting my use of the English language is something I still work at (Or should it be: *at which I work?*). I do so by analyzing good writing but equally as much through the use of self-help books. If you struggle occasionally, here are two suggestions for must-have tutorials.

At the top of my list is Theodore Cheney's very comprehensive book, *Getting the Words Right*. I liked his work not only because of the familiar ring, but because I learned right up front that I'm not the only person that (or should it be who?) has to write and then rewrite in order to make my words the best I can possibly make them. At a much, much higher level, Ernest Hemingway once revealed that he often struggled with his words. In conversation with the *Paris Review*, "Papa" indicated he had rewritten the ending to *Farewell To Arms* 39 times. When asked to elaborate Hemingway responded saying that he wanted to "Get the words right".

Though we as outdoor writers may not be trying to write the great American novel, Hemingway's words should inspire us to write, rewrite and then rewrite some more.

Cheney's 215-page book helps with the process, for it presents as much of a blueprint as possible for self-evaluation. In the book he details how to better (He says you can sometimes split infinitives.) make major cuts, and then how to refine and condense and consolidate even further (or is it farther? Once, I didn't know there was a difference.). He does so through both explanation and example, devoting sections to the study of pleonasm, which concerns itself with one of my favorite peeves, removing excess words. For instance, rather than saying (my example): "At this point in time the war in Iraq is over; Baghdad has been (passive) secured," couldn't we just say: "The war in Iraq is now over. Baghdad ... "

Cheney also provides a discussion of commonly confused words, to which I'd like to add the words *prostate* and *prostrate*. Remember it is the pros-tate that renders some (but not all) of us pros-trate.

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Getting the words right cont'd

Other commonly confused words include effect, affect; bad, badly; bring, take; disinterested, uninterested; then, than (my nemesis), etc.

Though Cheney's book is out of print, used copies (when I checked) are available at Amazon.com, and I'd suggest you buy one. As a supplement, you should also purchase *The Elements of Style*, by Strunk and White, also available new and used from Amazon. It's (the book, of course) a classic!

And, finally, for those of you who are interested, you'll learn from both books more about the difference between such sentences as: The fly rod that is broken is in the garage (tells, of course, which one) and: The fly rod, which is broken, is in the garage (adds a fact about the only fly rod in question). As outdoor writers, we should be just as good at grammar as we are at swinging a shotgun or accurately placing a Royal Coachman. Bottom line, if you want to sell more stories, you'll improve your work—and your odds—by getting the words right.

(* Author's note, If you run this through a Microsoft spelling/grammar check you'll be cautioned about sentence fragments and other grammatical inaccuracies.)

Bert Gildart is a full-time writer photographer and his work has appeared hundreds of times in books, magazines and newspapers, which include Field & Stream, Smithsonian, Travel/Holiday and Travel & Leisure. Bert makes is home in Bigfork, MT with wife, Janie.



Conference Update

Colorado Springs Offers Plenty for 2007 Conference

Organizers of the 2007 RMOWP conference, which takes place June 6 -10 in Colorado Springs, Colorado, have a problem: How in the world are we going to fit all the fantastic field trips, tours, workshops, and other programs into a four or five day conference?

Plans are underway for a variety of workshops and other craft improvement programs, such as "How to Self-Publish Your Book and Actually Make Money!" There will also be workshops on photography - perhaps a continuation of the popular 2006 conference programs on making the switch from film to digital - plus photo and writing critiques and field trips, including the ever-popular sunrise photo shoot.

The Colorado Springs area is famous for its magnificent scenic beauty, historic sites, and outdoor recreation opportunities, and in fact offers so much for outdoor writers and photographers that we're having a difficult time choosing what to do and what to leave for another time.

Of course we'll go to the Garden of the Gods, preferably early in the day when the sun brings to life the park's huge natural rock statues, and another top attraction here that we don't want to miss is 14,110-foot Pikes Peak,

which offers fantastic panoramic views. Called "unconquerable" by its namesake Zebulon Pike in 1806, Pikes Peak can now be ascended by highway or a scenic Cog Railway.



Manitou & Pikes Peak Railway at the summit.

-Photos by Jack Olson

A trip to the United States Air Force Academy, with its stunning Cadet Chapel, will offer good photo opportunities, and another possible field trip is to the United States Olympic Complex, where thousands of athletes train for Olympic competition. We might also take in Cave of the Winds, an underground cavern complete with classic stalagmites, stalactites, crystal flowers, and limestone canopies; and photogenic Seven Falls, with seven separate waterfalls cascading over 180 feet down a granite cliff.



Also, a trip to see the fossil deposits and petrified trees at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument is planned, and an excursion to the historic mining town of Victor would provide good photo and story ideas.

Conference organizers Don Laine (505-758-8922; laine@newmex.com), Jack Olson (303-777-8998; jackolson1@aol.com), and Cecilia Travis (303-885-8467; catravis@bigfoot.com) welcome your suggestions for programs and excursions. Conference details will be appearing in this newsletter and at www.rmowp.org as they become available, and we plan a special mailing to members in early February.

In the meantime, additional information on Colorado Springs can be obtained from the Colorado Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau at 800-888-4748 or 719-635-7506; www.coloradosprings-travel.com.



Florissant: Visitors photograph a giant sequoia stump at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, Colorado.

-Photos by Jack Olson

Outdoor Writers' Reference Manual Published

The Outdoor Writers Association of America (OWAA) has announced the publication of its revised *Outdoor Reference Manual*. The book, which is designed for professional writers who specialize in outdoor subjects, provides writing and style guidance about outdoor-related terminology that is not generally found in mainstream writers' guides.

"This book will help even the most knowledgeable outdoor expert because it spans so many areas of outdoor endeavor," said OWAA President Jim Low. "Whether you need to know the plural of 'crappie'; the proper style for '.30-06'; or what a sailor means when he refers to a 'cuddy cabin,' the *Outdoor Reference Manual* will come to your rescue."

The book can be purchased via the organization's Web site, www.owaa.org, at \$12 for OWAA members and \$15 for non-members.

Wild Turkey Federation Has Job Opening

The National Wild Turkey Federation, a sponsoring member of RMOWP, has announced that it is seeking applicants for the position of advertising manager to work in its sales and marketing department at its South Carolina headquarters.

The individual hired for this goal-oriented position will be responsible for all print advertising for five publications, and will manage the exhibit hall at the national convention, according to a recent press release. Some overnight travel and/or weekend and evening work will be required.

Applicants with bachelor's degrees are preferred, and applicants should also have three to five years of sales experience, very strong communication, organizational and telephone skills, the ability to "up sell" current clients, and be capable of handling revenue pressure.

Also required of applicants are strong computer skills and experience with Filemaker Pro, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, Outlook, e-mail and the Internet. Those interested should send cover letters, resumes and/or applications to the National Wild Turkey Federation, Human Resources, P.O. Box 530, Edgefield, SC 29824. Information on the non-profit group is also available at its website, www.nwtf.org.

Peterson's New Field Guide A Winner

By John Catsis

If you've never heard the name of Fiona A. Reid, you need to. As one of North America's leading wildlife artists she's in the same class as James Audubon. Compulsive. And as a mammalogy associate at the Royal Ontario Museum, Reid has produced perhaps the best field guide on North American mammals yet.

Houghton Mifflin recently published the fourth edition of *Mammals of North America*, one of the Peterson Field Guides. This \$20 paperback rocks with nearly 600 pages of both illustrations and photographs of our mammal friends, plus maps showing where they live.

The book is in two sections. The first is a quickie guide that shows all the similar critters grouped together. That way, by comparing the illustrations you can determine, for example, if you are seeing a Uinta or Colorado chipmunk. They sure do look alike, but Reid artfully shows us the subtle differences.

The rest of the book describes each creature and its current range.

Make room in your backpack for this guidebook, and get those legs in shape, because it'll add nearly two pounds to your load. But it'll be worth it.

Winter Trails Day

Attention, all you fair-weather outdoor writers and photographers - it's time to break out the parkas and insulated gloves and go out and play in the snow.

Saturday, January 6, is the 12th annual Winter Trails Day, with free cross country skiing and snowshoeing, free equipment rentals, and free lessons at numerous locations across the United States and Canada.

Organized by SnowSports Industries America, the American Hiking Society, and the Cross Country Ski Areas Association, Winter Trails Day is aimed at adults and children who are new to snow sports, with special activities at more than 100 venues. These include Keystone Resort Nordic Center and Echo Lake, both in Colorado; Enchanted Forest Cross Country Ski Area in New Mexico; Flagstaff Nordic Center in Arizona; the community of Jackson Hole in Wyoming; and Mount Washington in British Columbia.

For a complete schedule, including times and alternate dates, check the Winter Trails Day website, www.wintertrails.org.

Jack's Jaunts

Katy is not just another pretty face

By Jack Olson

While in Missouri recently, trying to get good pictures of colored trees, Sue and I lucked onto the Katy Trail. As we drove down the highway, we noticed signs pointing to the Katy Trail State Park at Clinton, Winsor, and Sedalia. On our way to Columbia, we noticed signs again at Booneville and Rocheport. At Rocheport, we went to see about the Katy Trail.

The Katy Trail State Park is built on the roadbed of the former Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad. It is 225 miles long and it runs from Clinton in western Missouri to St. Charles (Near St. Louis) on the eastern side of the state. The trail between Booneville and St. Charles is designated as an official segment of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

It seems that every town along the trail, and there are many, has signs, mile markers, a parking lot, and a toilet.

I walked the trail for a short distance at Rocheport. This was a Saturday and the parking lot was full of cars. I counted license plates from five states. There were people and bicycles everywhere. I talked to a man from Kansas City who was just getting ready to ride and one from Little Rock, Arkansas, that had ridden west of Rocheport on Friday and was ridding east to Jefferson City that day.

The trail is made of white chat and is approximately 15 - 20 ft. wide. The section that I walked seemed flat because it was along the bank of the Missouri River. Since the roadbed was made for locomotive travel, the map is marked for greater than 2% or 5% incline. At about any time as I walked, I could reach out and touch the white limestone bluff with its red vines and berries. I could easily throw a rock into the Missouri River on the other side. The trees in the valleys and steep hillsides were red and yellow with large dark trunks and limbs often shading the trail. I took pictures of berries that I could not identify. I watched the dredge boats on the river.

*Only those who will
risk going too far can
possibly find out how
far one can go."*

T.S. Eliot

I observed the geese and turkey vultures setting on sandbars and flying up the river. I saw people racing up the river with their fishing boat motor wide open and others floating down watching jugs in the water.

I was impressed with how many families were on the trail, some walking, some bicycling. There was a dad, a mom, and two kids, about 8 or 10 years old and then a little one on a pull cart behind dad's bicycle. I saw two men eighty or eighty five years old, riding side by side, talking up a storm and enjoying the scenery. I saw two bicycle frames welded side by side with a bench seat and two elderly people pedaling while their caretaker rode on a bench behind.

As we traveled on east, checking the river bluffs for colorful trees, the river bottom increased in size to possibly a mile wide. The Katy Trail stayed always to the north of the river bottom above flood plains and usually hidden by trees. In some small towns, the trail would cross the highway. If there was a railroad bridge across a creek, then the chat trail crossed the bridge. At Rocheport, there was a short tunnel and the trail went right on through.

By now, I think you know that I like the Katy Trail. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources manages the Katy State Park.

If you are interested in history, biology, geography, bicycling, running, walking, or losing weight, I think the Katy Trail is the place for you. It is a wonderful pleasant place and I'm proud of the State of Missouri for getting involved. The address is Missouri Department of Natural Resources, in care of Missouri River District, 320 First Street, Booneville, MO. 65233. The web address is www.katytrailstatepark.com.

Making it happen

Because of a generous donation by the late Edward D. "Ted" Jones, the Department of Natural Resources was able to secure the right of way and Mr. Jones paid for the construction of the trail. In 1991 the Union Pacific Railroad donated the 33 miles of right of way between Sedalia and Clinton. Most of that part of the trail, from Calhoun trailhead to the Sedalia State Fairgrounds is approved for horses as well as bikers and hikers.

The Department intends to finish the final 13 miles of the trail from St. Charles to Matchem, Missouri.



Directory Updates

Welcome...

New Members

Gunderson, LeRoy – 1148 Shine Lane, Harker Heights, TX 76548; phone: 254-698-4599; work phone: 254-288-0870; e-mail: lgunderson@hotmail.com; mentor: yes; spouse: Cheryl; status: Individual.

Skills: Photographer, Web Designer/Developer, Internet/Webmaster, Video.

Interests: My primary interests are photography and videography. My focus is almost entirely nature oriented. Presently I shoot for stock photography and stock footage.

Minor, Rachel – 740 N. Sheridan, Loveland, CO 80537; phone: 970-669-1869; e-mail: m5@lamar.colostate.edu; mentor: no; status: Student; sponsor: Rebecca Minor.

Skills: Photographer.

Credits: Photography exhibits: Stanley Hotel, Estes Park, Colorado; State Capitol Building, Denver, Colorado.

Wiebe, Jim – 2008 Third Ave., Canmore, AB (Canada) T1W 2J8; phone: 403-678-3507; e-mail: jwphoto@telus.net; spouse: Michelle; status: Individual.

Skills: Photographer, Writer.

Interests: Writer / photographer team with wife, Michelle. Specialize in magazine story photographic packages, usually on an outdoor theme.

Wiebe, Michelle – 2008 Third Ave., Canmore, AB (Canada) T1W 2J8; phone: 403-678-3507; e-mail: jwphoto@telus.net; spouse: Jim; status: Individual.

Skills: Photographer, Writer.

Interests: Writer / photographer team with husband, Jim. Specialize in magazine story photographic packages, usually on an outdoor theme.

Directory Updates

Ennis, Carolyn – zip code: 78504

Stone, Robert – winter address: PO Box 3068, Shell Beach, CA 93448

Tassett, Cindy – 1761 George Washington Way, #353, Richland, WA 99354 (mail will be forwarded from); e-mail (primary): cindyassett@hotmail.com

Taylor, Robert – zip code: 04103

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