

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

THE NEWSLETTER OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOOR WRITERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS

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As the Taos Conference Fades into History...

Another conference has come and gone, and this year's event in Taos, New Mexico offered several firsts, the most significant being RMOWP's first all-day writing workshop, "Paint Your Prose with Pizzazz," presented by RMOWP member and award-winning nature writer Mary Taylor Young. Offered as a pre-conference program, the workshop had eleven participants who delved into the art of creating text that readers can't put down, learning to use all their senses to examine the world around them and make it come alive in their writing.

Ms. Taylor Young also led two shorter workshops during the conference, including a fascinating and somewhat scary look at how new technologies are changing the world of publishing, and what we as outdoor writers and photographers need to learn to avoid being left in the dust of yesterday.



© Jack Olson

Writing Critique moderator Kenita Gibbins flanked by participants Maryann Gaug (left) and Richard Holmes

the writing critique, this year moderated by Kenita Gibbins; and the photo critique, with tips from Jack Olson and Fred Lord.

Taos is a well-known art colony, so naturally we had to visit an art museum, the Harwood, which has an excellent collection works by the area's early twentieth-century artists. Of course, every Taos visitor has to see the San Francisco de Asis Church in

Ranchos de Taos, made famous in Ansel Adams' photography and Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings. When we arrived at



© John Catsis

RMOWPers rafting on the Rio Grande

the historic church it was part-way through its annual re-mudding, which provided an opportunity for some unusual photos.

A ranger with the Bureau of Land Management led a hike to a viewpoint above the Rio Grande, with a



© Jack Olson

The two youngest attendees: Katee Harrington & Adison Phillips



© Don Laine

Auctioneer Jim Baker helping to raise funds for the scholarship program

detour to show us some ancient petroglyphs. That evening concluded with a picnic supper along the river. There was also a half-day raft trip, shows of photos of what we can expect at future conferences, and a somewhat boisterous auction, in which auctioneers Jim Baker and John Catsis helped RMOWP members part with more than \$1,500 for our scholarship fund.



© Barb Laine

Examining paintings by founders of the Taos Art Colony at the Harwood Museum with education curator Lucy Perera

see more conference photos on page 3



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President's Column

Camera of the Year

Al Perry

2012 is barely half over and already my vote for dslr camera of the year is the Nikon d800. With its class-leading resolution, low noise, high dynamic range, long list of features and value, this camera is a bargain at \$3,000. No other camera maker has anything in the pipeline that will overtake the Nikon d800 this year.

With 36 megapixels on a full frame sensor, it is the highest resolution in a 35 mm format camera and rivals some medium format cameras' image quality. What is most surprising is even with its high-density pixels, noise is very well controlled. Some shooters value the multiplier effect of cropped sensor cameras, but with the d800, there is plenty of resolution to crop the image in camera or in post processing and still make a large print.



Nikon's d800 is a significant upgrade to its highly successful 12 megapixel d700 full frame camera, but it also has features found on Nikon's new flagship professional camera, D4. The d800 is best suited for landscape, portrait, and low light shooting. To take advantage of d800's superior sensor, high quality lenses are a must.

If you are a Nikon user and decide to purchase a d800, please have a little sympathy for us Canon users who are handicapped with inferior equipment.

CALENDAR

June 26 - 30, 2012 ~ RMOWP Photography
Workshop in Rocky Mountain National Park

September 4 - 6, 2012 ~ OWAA conference in
Fairbanks, Alaska

May 15 - 19, 2013 ~ RMOWP conference
Colorado National Monument, Fruita, Colorado

More conference Photos —

Painting our prose with Pizzazz!

Mary Taylor Young kicked off the Sunday writing workshop with a PowerPoint presentation, but quickly took us all outside where we practiced our observation skills by imagining we were a camera lens. Soon we were all bending our minds to really experience an object in order to describe it.



Mary Taylor Young observes as Richard Holmes becomes a camera lens.

© Jack Olson



Mary Taylor Young urges workshop participants to become sponges for sensory information.

© Jack Olson



Betsy Youngblood studying intently.

© Don Laine

The annual mudding of the San Francisco de Asis Church in Ranchos de Taos



© Don Laine

The workers are all volunteers, local parishioners and some from miles away, and they still mix the mud and straw as has been done for hundreds of years (left).

But they don't scorn modern help to get the mud up to where they need it (below).



© Barb Laine



© Jack Olson

Tuesday afternoon saw RMOWPers following ranger Randy Roch up La Vista Verde Trail in search of elusive petroglyphs in the Orilla Verde Recreation Area of the BLM.

© Don Laine



Maryann Gaug querying BLM ranger Randy Roch about some detail.



© Don Laine

Katee Harrington photographs a petroglyph.



© Jack Olson

Blooming cholla along La Vista Verde Trail

Jack's Jaunts Wildlife Close to Home

Article & photos by Jack Olson



Eared grebe, an uncommon park visitor.

Over the past couple of decades, *Jaunts* has taken you all over the West, and most recently to Florida, but this time we'll toddle just about a mile from home. Sometimes circumstances, or choice, will lure you to a nearby city park. That has

been the case with me, returning over and over in the past couple of years to Washington Park, one of Denver's oldest and most popular parks.

The City of Denver created Washington Park in 1899.



Peaceful float on Smith Lake

Denver Parks and Recreation recently restored a 1913 boat-house as well as a bathhouse across the north lake, now housing Volun-

teers for Outdoor Colorado. This lake, named Smith Lake, was a swimming lake until the 1950s. A walking path, about a half mile in length, circles the lake. Lily Pond nestles nearby in trees and reeds.

Now, a significant number of RMOWP members know their birds. I'm not among them. So when I ventured by Lily Pond late last summer, I came upon a confusing and unexplained scene. Maybe ten or twelve ducks in a clustered group swirled in a circle with their heads in the water. What in the world was going on? I know, probably half of you have jumped ahead of me, but hang in.

Some of my good friends in Denver are birders and set me straight. These ducks were Northern Shovelers. They circle around in a group, in shallow water, to sweep up their food: insects, crustaceans, and other organic matter.



Northern shovellers shovel away

They cooperate. Is that cool or what?

The shovelers pretty much have Lily Pond to themselves, since it's small. They are quiet. But they shift over to the north lake in winter, where open water holds on and they can keep on shoveling. The north lake is not quiet. Would any body of water which is

home to a few hundred Canada geese even approach quiet?

In addition to the Canada geese and the wintering shovelers, the big lake contains mallards, gulls, common mergansers, egrets, herons, American coots, and who knows how many I haven't learned yet. But my other favorite is the squawking cormorants, which inhabit the park in the warm months. They perch on branches of trees that surround the lake, drying their expansive wingspread. While on the hunt, they swoop a couple of feet above the lake, often slapping feet and wings upon the water: slap, slap, slap, raising small spouts of water.

Spring and early summer herald perhaps the most heart-warming scene of all, the emergence of ducklings and goslings. You just can't help but whisper "Awww!" when these little fuzzballs appear, following mother. One day I encountered the parents, waddling from the woods and leading their tiny goslings to the edge of the water, obviously for the first time.

The goslings didn't know what to do, but for sure they weren't going into that frightful place. The mother and father jumped in and swam around, trying to set an example, then got out.



Mama leading her goslings through City Ditch

Eventually, one courageous gosling ventured to dip in a foot, oops, back out, then in, then plop, and began cautiously paddling. Soon, two more plops and the kiddies made their parents honk. You had to be there.

At the south end of the park, walkers stride and waterfowl skim at larger Grasmere Lake, but until a couple of months ago I had confined my walks to the north. That was before a good friend gushed that she had seen a brood of seventeen goslings at the south lake. I haven't gone north since.

I'm accepting reservations for next spring at the south lake. That brood of seventeen excited me no end, but it was only the beginning. One day the timing was accidental, but perfect. A brood of forty goslings, accompanied by seven geese, paraded across a field, plunged into



Goslings eat — what goslings eat

City Ditch, leapt out of the ditch and crossed the walking path into the lake. They meandered in the water near the shore for a few minutes until the



Follow me and don't forget to goose step.

adults interrupted. Escorted back to the land the goslings huddled in quivering groups and napped, like Daily Vacation Bible School without the chocolate milk. Ten minutes are up and let's cross the path, dump into the ditch, scramble up the steep embankment, and stride up the field with a sense of accomplishment. Babysitting for goslings.

So if you have a little time, visit your nearby park. Visit it often enough to get a feeling for the rhythms of the setting, and the wildlife within it.

joined during the Taos conference. David attended with his wife Virginia (an artist, writer and photographer who joined in February) and their beautiful service dog Roxanne. Welcome, and we hope to see all of you at next year's conference.

2013 Conference Heads to Western Colorado

Photos by Jack Olson



Photographic subjects abound on Rim Rock Drive in Colorado National Monument.

Member News

RMOWP member **Tom Ulrich** won several prestigious awards in the Excellence in Craft contests held by the Outdoor Writers Association of America (OWAA). Ulrich, long-time judge of the photography section of RMOWP's annual contest, won first place in both the scenic and fauna photography categories, as well as third place in those same two categories. Organized in 1927, OWAA is the oldest and largest associations of professional outdoor communicators in the United States. For information, see www.owaa.org.

The Evansville (Indiana) *Sunday Courier Press* announced that a photo by RMOWP president **Al Perry** won first place in its 2012 Vacation Picture Contest.



© Al Perry

The photo, shown above, was taken in northeastern Pennsylvania during rain and drizzle. According to Al, "The steady rain filled the creek with run-off and caused the autumn leaves to fall in the stream and on the rocks."

Congratulations to both Tom and Al.

David Staat is RMOWP's newest member, having

The 2013 RMOWP conference is planned for **May 15 to 19 in Fruita, Colorado**, just west of Grand Junction. Fruita is practically adjacent to **Colorado National Monument** (www.nps.gov/colm), an especially scenic place that is currently being touted for national park status. Conference headquarters will be the Fruita La Quinta Inn, which is giving us lodging rates of \$79 per night for one or two people. Watch future newsletters and www.rmowp.org for details as they develop.



Art on the Corner and sidewalk cafe in downtown Grand Junction.

Taking Care of Business

Barb Laine

We managed to squeeze a few official matters in between workshops, field trips, and eating during the 2012 conference.

Election results were announced at the General Membership Meeting: new board members are Kent

Taylor and Terry Guthrie, new secretary is Diane McKinley, and continuing treasurer is Barb Laine. Thanks go out to retiring board members Sherry Zurey and



© Don Laine

Past President Jim Baker announces the election results at the General Membership Meeting

Clare Gutierrez and secretary Kathy Turner.

The board meeting took place on Wednesday, with seven board members in attendance, just constituting a quorum. Board meetings are always open to all RMOWP members, several of whom came, with reports and input.

Financially, RMOWP is sound. The bank balance after paying conference expenses and this year's scholarship is \$10,378.43.

Kenita Gibbins and Diane McKinley volunteered to call the 16 members who have not yet renewed, and a new directory is planned by the end of July.

The mentor program is off to a good start, with several people offering their expertise to fellow members during the conference. Information about how to connect with these and other members will be in future newsletters.

Some great suggestions for injecting the website with "pizzazz" (to borrow from Mary Taylor Young's writing workshop) were made and we hope will be implemented soon. You might receive a request for photos or writing material to add to the splash.

A \$2000 scholarship has been awarded.

Conferences – next year is set for near Grand Junction, Colorado in mid-May, and other future locations discussed include Glacier National Park in Montana and the Kanab, Utah area. The conference committee is looking at these locations but welcomes input from all of you. Send your ideas to info@rmowp.org.

CONTEST RESULTS will be
in the next newsletter.

2012 Scholarship Winner

Congratulations to Monica Craig, the St. Petersburg, Florida student who is the recipient of RMOWP's 2012 scholarship of \$2,000. Scholarship chairman Mike Hammond said that Ms. Craig is receiving the award because of her love and devotion to the great outdoors as well as her writing and photography skills.

Hammond said that although the number of scholarship applicants was down somewhat this year the quality of applicants was at the highest level ever, with the top applicants all expressing their unselfish desire to communicate to others the need to keep the outdoor world front and center, not removed from our everyday way of life.

Ms. Craig had been selected for the scholarship last year but was disqualified on the grounds she would not be a full time college student at that time, according to Hammond, and applied again for the 2012 award, which he said was a statement to her character and drive.

She will be attending Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida, and told us, "I plan to major in Environmental Science and minor in Coastal Management, which will allow me to pursue a career in conservation ecology. I plan to work in a field that will allow me to teach the public about the importance of preserving natural places, such as parks and preserves, in an effort to save the wildlife that call these places home while simultaneously working to save the wildlife from harmful human interaction."

Ms. Craig said that while attending Eckerd she plans to continue volunteering at Fort De Soto Park, where she works alongside an incredible team of park rangers to protect wildlife such as shorebirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals from harmful human interaction. She was recently recognized for her outstanding work at Fort De Soto Park by Park Ranger James Wilson, according to Hammond, who said that Mr. Wilson stated that someday Ms. Craig might very well hold the title of Park Ranger at Fort De Soto.



Monica Craig preparing to mark a sea turtle nest at Fort De Soto Park. (photo courtesy Monica Craig.)