

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOORS

THE NEWSLETTER OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTDOOR WRITERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS

MARCH - APRIL 2014

Jack's Jaunts

Up Where the Air is Thin

Article & photos by Jack Olson

Timberline. The most thrilling word in my severely challenged vocabulary. I didn't even have a clue about this word until I moved to Colorado in 1965. I come from Illinois. We grew corn. We had flat. Timber was what we called woods.

Then I drove my old car out of the Midwest and settled in a Rocky Mountain state. A friend invited me to go on a backpack with him and some of his buddies.

Gasp. Our elevation reached some twenty times higher above sea level than the Land of Lincoln. Worse than that, backpacking was uphill. With weight. What is this? Oh my, I only saw the receding backs of my friends. Huff and puff was all I could utter.

But time, effort, and perseverance swamped surrender and soon I welcomed the next climb to timberline. The travel editor of the Denver Post once asked readers to submit their favorite place in the



Lupine on Shrine Ridge, Mount of the Holy Cross in background

world. My response, published by the way, was to be above timberline in Colorado in July.

Tall trees loom above as you trudge up the trail, and then somehow they've grown shorter. Meadows sparkle with every color of the palette. Streams, which you first cross by bridges, and then a run and a jump, are now barely a trickle. Finally, oh, finally, trees are replaced by—sky.

Timberline, itself, is explorable. There are times when you want

to just loll around for hours right here, even munch lunch. Trees hang on for dear life, searching for a foothold in meager soil and whipped by roaring winds. This is a magical land with bristlecone pines appearing like grotesque dancers.

Slowly continue your walk upwards and you enter a wonderland of tundra. Tundra joins timberline as my two favorite words. Grass,

but not like you find in the city. Tundra is to city grass as green chile is to cream of wheat.

Take time. If ever you are going to take time. Breathe. Feel your breath. Look. See forever.

The tiniest wildflowers begin appearing just as snow melts off in May and early June.

Sprinkles of pink, blue, yellow, and ivory add color to what has been a brown landscape.

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Alpine Sunflowers on the Continental Divide at Loveland Pass



Parry primrose on tiny stream below Shrine Ridge

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Jaunts...

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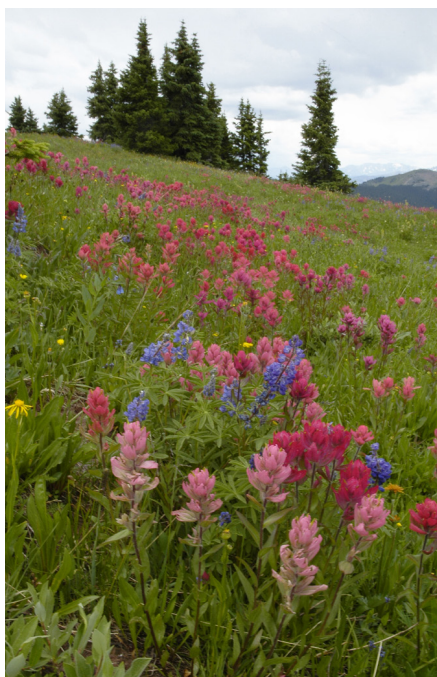
But then, in late June and climaxing in July there's an explosion of vibrant color. Alpine forget-me-nots are so blindingly blue you can hardly believe such a hue could exist.

Long days and warm sun encourage the largest alpine blossoms. Sky blue sky pilots tower maybe six inches above the now green tundra. Parry primroses, their toes in water, define magenta without access to a dictionary. But for me, and it's strictly personal, the wildflower I've waited all year to greet is the alpine sunflower, or old-man-of-the mountain as some call it. More yellow than plain old yellow could ever



Arctic gentians, the last wildflower to blossom in the tundra

hope to be. In places there are fields of them, and I know where they are, where they're looking right at you if you walk west



Wildflowers at timberline on Shrine Ridge

toward them in the early morning. This is pure joy.

Climb, or drive, to where the air is thin, to the height of our natural world. That area awaits us in the Rocky Mountains.



Alpine forget-me-nots in Rocky Mountain National Park



Sky pilots in tundra on the Continental Divide



Sunset from 12,000 feet in Rocky Mountain National Park

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The Exchange of Ideas

Article and photo by Al Perry

One of the benefits of belonging to an organization such as RMOWP is the exchange of ideas. Over the years, I have come to appreciate concepts introduced and reinforced by RMOWP members.

1.) The rule of thirds is a principle that some of us keep forgetting. Tom Ulrich had to repeat this concept a number of times before I put the rule of thirds into practice without giving it a second thought. However, a possible exception to this rule might be: You should always follow the rule of thirds unless the photo looks better otherwise.

2.) Jack Olson has reinforced the concept of anchoring the image with a good foreground element. He has shown us great examples of how this concept improves photos. With wide angle compositions, a good foreground element provides depth and dynamics to the image.

3.) Occasionally people ask me what it takes to capture a good image. I often respond by saying: "It helps to spend time in the field." The more persistent and patient the photographer, the more likely opportunities will arise to create better photos.

Here is a story to illustrate point 3 above. While in Alaska a few years ago, a group of photographers spent several hours observing a large pack of wolves about a mile away playing and sleeping. The wolves were too far away to photograph so we spent time waiting and hoping the wolves would come our way. Sunset was approaching and all the photographers packed up and left except for my friend and me. I wanted every opportunity before dark to photograph the wolves because wolves often begin to travel and hunt at sunset. A little later, just as my friend finished packing his gear, the alpha female appeared at about 200 yards and trotted directly towards me as I photographed her every step. Here is the last photo of the wolf that day.



Last photo of the day -- Alpha Female Wolf, Alaska

I suppose "spending time in the field" works well with life itself. When I worked for companies (including my own), I came to believe success is enhanced by being the first in the office and the last to leave. I was most productive before and after the normal working hours when I had time to think, plan and organize. The extra time invested during my career resulted in quicker promotions, improved earnings, higher savings and early retirement.

Time to Get Psyched for Glacier National Park!

by Maryann Gaug

My house and camper van are buried in snow and although the sun is shining brightly, it's below zero out there. Time to think about our July conference in glorious Glacier National Park! Hmmm... Glaciers sound cold! Think warm July days.

Part of the fun of traveling is the anticipation. Here are some ideas to get your travel, photography, and writing juices going.

The Glacier National Park website contains two eHikes and two eTours. One of the eHikes is Trail of the Cedars and Avalanche Lake. I've been on the Trail of the Cedars, which meanders through, well, a cedar/hemlock forest, more typical of the Pacific Northwest. Half of this nature loop trail is a boardwalk passing tall western red cedar, black cottonwood, and copious ferns. The other half of the loop is paved, following tumbling Avalanche Creek.

To watch this eHike (or either of the eTours), you'll need a computer with Flash Player and QuickTime, and either Explorer, Firefox, Safari, or Chrome web browser. Enjoy your eHike!

To get started:

- In your web browser, type in www.nps.gov/glac.
- On Glacier's home page, click on Photos & Multimedia in the left column.
- Then click on Virtual Tour.
- In the white box, click on eHikes.
- Take a minute to read over the instructions and experiment with the screen shot at the bottom of the page.
- Then click on Trail of the Cedars & Avalanche Lake Power Hike. A short musical segment plays.
- When the Introduction screen appears, make sure to read the text box, then click on the arrow in the black bar. You need to get to the third screen to start eHiking.
- On the third screen, click on the red dot on the map. You're hiking!
- On each screen, you may see various icons. Click on the ranger hat to hear audio, the bird for a bird's-eye view, the movie camera for a video, earphones for natural sounds, the "i" symbol for information, and the rectangle (TV) for a 360° panorama.

When you're finished with the first red dot, click on the next red dot on the map for the Avalanche Lake Trail. If nothing else, you might enjoy the combination of our crafts into an interesting show.

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Glacier...

...cont. from page 3

The eTours include Building the Going-to-the-Sun Road and Land of Many Stories (history). Access them as above by clicking on eTours instead of eHikes.

You can also download podcasts to your cell phone (click on Multimedia Presentations then on Videos). One is Going-to-the-Sun Road points of interest so you can have a tour guide on your phone!

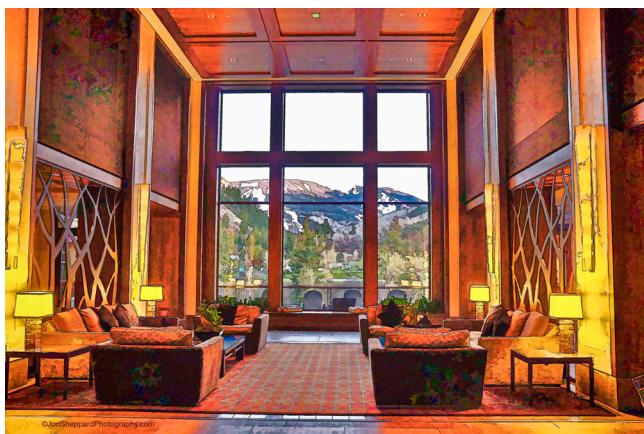
A few other tidbits:

For those of you with large vehicles, the Going-to-the-Sun Road has size restrictions. "Vehicles, and vehicle combinations, longer than 21 feet (including bumpers) or wider than 8 feet (including mirrors), are prohibited between Avalanche Campground and the Rising Sun picnic area parking. Vehicle and vehicle combinations over 10 feet in height may have difficulty driving west from Logan Pass to the Loop, due to rock overhangs." Copied from the website.

For those of us who like camping in park campgrounds, you can make reservations for Fish Creek Campground, 4 miles from the west entrance. As of early February, people had already reserved quite a few sites.



Photo Art by Jon Sheppard



Bear & Son Announces New Knife Catalog

Bear & Son Cutlery, a corporate friend of RMOWP, has announced that its 2014 catalog is now available.



Bear & Son is known for its top-quality made-in-America knives. The company manufactures a wide range of knives from huge Bowies to its popular folding pocket knives, covering almost every knife need. You can browse the catalog online or request a hard copy at the Bear & Son website, www.bearandsoncutlery.com.

Hope this isn't news to anyone:

RMOWP's 2014 conference

takes place July 23-27

in West Glacier, MT,

with forays into

Glacier National Park.

See rmowp.org for details.

Jack Wendleton Seeks Photos of His Sore Head

During a hike on a rocky trail at the RMOWP conference in Fruita, Colorado last year, member Jack Wendleton tripped, fell, and landed on his head, resulting in a black eye and the need for stitches.

Jack is now asking that anyone who has photos of his mangled face send him copies. He tells us that he would like to have the photos because "it would be fun to compare 'father/son' injury images."

It seems that Jack and Pat's son Marc ran the Disney Marathon, which he does every year, took a fall and had a gash requiring nine stitches above his right eye, as well as a black eye. He took his fall at mile four of the 26 mile run, got first aid, and then completed his run, Jack says, adding that if nothing else his son is the most determined of runners.

Jack's contact information is in your RMOWP membership directory, or send images to info@rmowp.org and we'll forward them to Jack.

When Creativity Goes Flat



Article and photo by Virginia Parker Staat

"Writer's block doesn't exist... lack of imagination does." ~ Cyrese Covelli

Last month a first-grade friend of mine in Colorado sent me her version of Flat Stanley. For those of you who don't know Flat Stanley, he is a children's book character who was squashed by a bulletin board and lived to tell the tale. When he wanted to go on a trip, his parents folded him up, stuffed him in an envelope, and mailed him to California. Jeff Brown was the creative genius behind Flat Stanley. In the words of today's culture, the experiment went viral.

Because it is a perfect language arts activity for children, unsuspecting friends and relatives across the globe now receive a Flat Stanley replica or similar flat visitor in the mail. The recipient's mission is to take photos with the flat visitor in a variety of places, write adventures, and send the information back to the child.

Our flat visitor arrived in the form of a life-size replica of my small friend. We have named her Flat Missy.

I am happy to announce that my creativity has now gone flat. I wake up at night softly giggling at prospective new ideas. So far Flat Missy has flown like a kite, gone to the beach, ridden a tractor, played a guitar, become a nature detective, and played Monopoly with our Golden Retriever, Roxanne.

The most fun was taking her to Space Center Houston. With Rocket Park now behind a gated entrance, we were uncertain if we would be allowed on the grounds without a tour. A gruff-looking guard met us at the gate. I stumbled with my plea for entrance, finally blurt-ing, "Have you ever heard of Flat Stanley?"

The guard's face melted into a beautiful smile. She simply said, "Flat Stanley is welcome here."

We are still laughing.

Writer's block is a curse that most writers deal with from time to time. We stare at blank computer screens, munch on junk food, and become obsessed with capturing illusive dust bunnies from under the bed. In my humble opinion, the best visual of our angst is Billy Crystal in the opening scenes of his movie *Throw Momma from the Train*.

What is a writer to do when surrounded by nothing but humdrum ideas? Tried and true measures include finding soul-searching exercises on the Internet,

taking a bath, or listening to music. Inspirational books by the hundreds have been written, including personal favorites such as Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird* and Madeleine L'Engle's *Walking on Water*.

For me, however, the best thing to kick start my imagination is to simply change my attitude and focus. Hiking always works. Whether high or low ground, it allows me to reconnect with that child-like awe of something extraordinary in nature. Painting works (walls... not canvas). With busy hands, my mind can freely wander. And lately, looking at the world through the eyes of a first grader has certainly changed my perspective. As a result, Flat Missy and I have been having ridiculous adventures all over South Texas. I am loving it.

Albert Einstein once said, "Creativity is contagious. Pass it on." My little flat project is no exception. It has turned into something amazingly grand. It has spiked the imagination of more than just myself, spreading like wildfire. Husband David has

become a willing puppeteer, rigging a fishing pole and line that is attached to our flat visitor so that he can stand out of camera range. Friends and family phone with suggestions.

Most of all, my young friend is delighted. Her grandmother calls regularly to share the latest news. She has told me that the child rushes home from school just to see Flat Missy's next online adventure, squealing with delight at her escapades. After one post, she even begged that her mother take her to their downtown aquarium just so she could learn more about sea turtles. I can't help myself... the happier my young friend is, the more my imagination soars.

If your creativity is a bit flat (pun intended), may I suggest rejuvenating your imagination by doing something radically different. Get out of the chair, out of the house, and out of your comfort zone. (You can even go flat with your own Flat Stanley. There's an app for your phone at www.flatstanley.com!) I can guarantee that it will spark an ember of creativity and put thoughts of writer's block far behind you. I also guarantee some fun in the process.

What are you waiting for?



Flat Missy with Roxanne on a hiking trail. Want to see and read more about Roxanne's adventures with Flat Missy? Visit her blog: roxannedogblog.blogspot.com.

Rio Grande del Norte National Monument Celebrates First Anniversary

Those who attended the 2012 RMOWP conference in Taos, New Mexico will remember the picnic along the Rio Grande and the hike with Bureau of Land Management Ranger Randy Roch. Some conference attendees also took time out to fish the Rio Grande. That area along the river was then called the Orilla Verde Recreation Area. But that was then and this is now.

On March 25, 2013, President Barak Obama signed a Presidential Proclamation designating the Río Grande del Norte National Monument, which includes the Río Grande Wild and Scenic River and what is now called the Río Grande Gorge Recreation Area. The monument, which covers over 240,000 acres in north-central New Mexico, is being managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

BLM officials tell us that this special area has renowned trout fishing, abundant wildlife including Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, and world-class whitewater rafting. It's also visually arresting - the gorge is up to 800 feet deep and a mile wide in places. Hiking trails offer access to favorite fishing sites, prehistoric rock art, and stunning views.

There are two visitor centers - the Río Grande Gorge Visitor Center in Pilar (south of Taos) is open year-round; the Wild Rivers Visitor Center (north of Questa) is open May through September.

From mid-April through September, the BLM will offer guided hikes with local experts, BLM resource staff, and BLM rangers. A schedule of events will be posted on the monument's website: www.blm.gov/nm/riograndedelnorte.



Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River
(photo courtesy of BLM)

The Río Grande del Norte is New Mexico's newest and largest national monument, and the BLM invites members of Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers & Photographers to enjoy the opportunities that are available. For more information or to arrange tours for writer/photographer pros, contact the BLM's Taos Field Office at 575-758-8851.

Book Review

Rocky Mountain National Park, The First 100 Years

by Jack Olson

RMOWP member Mary Taylor Young's latest book, *Rocky Mountain National Park, The First 100 Years*, has just been published, and I highly recommend it to our members. This book will inform, educate, and entertain any reader. I suppose I have been to the park hundreds of times, but I still found something new to me on almost every page.

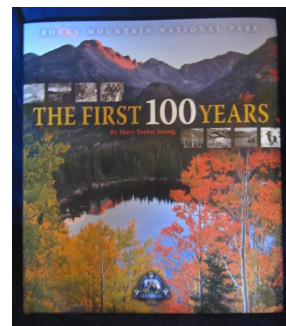
Mary was selected as the park's Artist-in-Residence in 2012 and spent two weeks researching and writing in the historic William Allen White cabin, located in Moraine Park in the national park.

Her book begins with the building of the rocks which would become the park some 1.5 billion years ago and ends at the present day, with projections into the future. But as important as rocks are in a place called Rocky Mountain National Park, this book is especially involved with the people who have lived there, and work and play there. The first people in what is now the park were Paleo-Indians, coming down from the last Ice Age about 11,000 years ago. Years passed and there were Utes, Arapaho, then explorers and settlers, and finally proponents of a national park. Mary has stories of individual rangers, scientists, artists, colorful characters.

The book is full of beautiful and fascinating photographs. There are colorful images of iconic Rocky Mountain National Park scenes, but also a wonderful selection of historic black and white photography. She even has four pages covering the devastating flood in September 2013. Mary's book concludes with concerns for the future.

Mary Taylor Young is a judge for writing submissions for the annual RMOWP contest. She also presented writing programs at the 2007 conference and inaugurated a full day writing workshop at the 2012 conference in Taos.

Mary's book will be a valuable and welcome addition to the home library of everyone who loves the Rocky Mountains.



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subject: E-mail NL
Thanks!