

Rocky Mountain Outdoors

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

March – April 2019

Jack's Jaunts

The extraordinary travels of a drop of water

Article & photos by Jack Olson

Drop---drip---drop. We're on top of the Continental Divide in Colorado. I love the Continental Divide. My mind capitalizes it. For one thing, it's high. You can see for miles and miles. In winter in Colorado it collects oodles of snow. Oodles.

There's a snowbank. It's feeling the warmth of the sun. The snow gives up one little drop of water. Just one. It plops on

the tundra. Plop. It joins a few other drops. Water can move only one direction. Downhill.

Soon several drops form a rill, then a rivulet. It's not long before the rivulet has a name, Straight Creek. You could step across it, but

not for long. Other rivulets join in and Straight Creek widens. Recreationists have heard about this metamorphosis and soon hikers walk along to admire the stream and the wildflowers which are nourished by it.

Straight Creek, and it clearly has a notable name now, is babbling. You can hear it from the trail. It doesn't seep, it doesn't creep. This is a full-throated babble. A hiker might try to jump it but will most likely end up with wet blue jeans.

The creek picks up speed and size as it rushes unhindered downhill. But framing its plunge wildflowers compete for space along the banks. Other flowers admire the scene from high on the hillsides and ridges. By the time Straight Creek reaches a mile from the Divide it is an out-and-out torrent.



Straight Creek weaves through parry primroses.

And then it makes a sudden turn and tumbles downhill gouging a canyon for several miles until it makes an abrupt stop and takes a rest in Dillon Reservoir. Here our drop has an opportunity to visit Kathy and Wayne Turner at their home.

Its rest over, our drop plops into the Gold Medal fishing waters of the Blue River and starts its first, and only, path north. It has one more rest in a reservoir but hears a thrilling rumble in the hills ahead. This is no ordinary joining of creeks. This is the Biggie itself—the Colorado River. From now on it's no nonsense as the Mighty Colorado tears through valleys and then starts its awesome and unrelenting journey west and south.

Our little drop can barely catch its breath as the Colorado slashes through the layered rock of Glenwood Canyon. There's a chance to slow down flowing through the Palisade peach orchards and Grand Junction. (Many people are not aware that until 1921 the Colorado was called the Grand River, hence many place names called 'grand'.)

The Colorado gently flows through Rattlesnake Canyon and into Utah. Our little drop has quite an experience ahead:

Canyonlands National Park, Lake Powell, Grand Canyon, Lake Mead, Mexico and the Pacific Ocean. And it all started in that snowbank atop the Continental Divide.



Rafters enjoy floating along the Mighty Colorado as it wanders through Glenwood Canyon.



The Colorado River flowing along Canyonlands National Park, Utah

**RMOWP Conference 2019 ~ Mon-Thu, Sep 9-12
Estes Park, Colorado ~ TENTATIVE Schedule**

Meetings, workshops, and meals take place in the
800 Moraine Avenue Event Center at Trout Haven Resorts
Except as Noted

Monday, September 9

- 9am-2pm Pre-Conference Writing Workshop (\$):
*“The Glint of Light on Broken Glass:
Building Imagery in Your Writing”* with
Mary Taylor Young
- 2:30pm Board of Directors Meeting (open to all
members)
- 6:00pm Registration, Opening Reception, Happy
Hour and Light Buffet (included in
registration fee)
- 7:30pm Presentation of Contest Submissions

Tuesday, September 10

- 8:30am Welcome, Handouts & Announcements –
President Kent Taylor & Friends
- 9:00am *Shooting Rocky Mountain National Park –
A photography workshop*
- 10:00am *Finding a Narrative Theme – A writing
workshop with Mary Taylor Young*
- 11:30am Lunch (\$) & a presentation, *Rocky Moun-
tain National Park, the First 100 Years”*
- 1:30pm *Guided Tours of Rocky Mountain National
Park (\$): Choice of High Elevation Tour
with Sunset Views or Not-Quite-So-High
Elevation Tour to see Elk and Lakes, both
with Rocky Mountain Conservancy*

Wednesday, September 11

- 8:30am General Membership Meeting
- 9:00am *Program TBA*
- 10:00am Break
- 10:15am *Writing Workshop TBA*
- 12:00pm Lunch (\$)
- 1:00pm *Photography Workshop TBA*
- 2:00pm Free Time to explore area attractions or
head back into the National Park to See
Elk (sunset 7:17pm). Dinner on your own

Thursday, September 12

- 5:30am or ? Sunrise Photo Shoot (sunrise 6:41am)
- 9:00am *Anne Sullivan Writers Forum*
- 11:00am *Photo Critique*
- 12:00pm Lunch (\$)
- 12:45pm *Showcase of Selected Members Photog-
raphy*
- 1:45pm Break
- 2:00-5:00pm Auction
- 6:30-9:30pm Banquet (\$) and Awards Ceremony

This handsome fellow wants
to meet you, so please come to
RMOWP’s conference next
September in Estes Park.



*“Glowing Elk” in Rocky Mountain
National Park © Rick Lesquier
Honorable Mention, Image from
Last Conference, 2009 RMOWP
Photo Contest*

2019 RMOWP Conference Registration

Watch your mailbox for the Conference
Registration Form — we expect to final-
ize it in the next few weeks.

It will also be available on our website:

www.rmowp.org



*Early morning in Estes Park, November 2018. If we could just get
above the buildings, sunrise photos would be a snap! © Don Laine*

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Writer's Corner

Predictive Murder

by Virginia Parker Staat

"Some things are so unexpected that no one is prepared for them." ~ Leo Rosten, *Rome Wasn't Burned in a Day*

After the death of her archaic computer, my 90-year-old mother recently purchased a new one. She is still adjusting. As an example, she always closes her emails to me with "Love you, Mother."

In her last email, she wrote, "The computer thinks it is cute to add Nature to my Mother. I DON'T." I nearly fell off the stool in laughter. Welcome, my dear mother, to the world of the infamous autocorrect.

Autocorrect, also known as predictive text, is a technology meant to facilitate typing by suggesting words the user may wish to insert. These predictions are based on the context of words in the message coupled with the first letters typed of the next word.

How does it work? Alan Henry from lifelhacker.com explains, "In its most basic form, keyboard prediction uses text that you enter over time to build a custom, local 'dictionary' of words and phrases that you've typed repeatedly. It then 'scores' those words by the probability you'll use or need them again."

I admit the theory of predictive text is a good one. The truth, however, is that it often murders our words. The end result can range from hilarious to downright embarrassing. In my own texts, I've seen *mothballs* replace the word *mother*, *consultation* for *consolation*, and *hiney* for *honey*... and those are the mild ones. How many times have each of us had to apologize for our autocorrect? If we are not vigilant in our editing, we can cause all sorts of relationships issues.

The Internet is replete with examples of texts and emails "gone bad." Most are so vulgar that I won't repeat them here. I assure you none were intended to be offensive. It makes me wonder if programmers played a joke on us all and gave autocorrect a dirty mind.

And then there's the issue of autocorrect spelling, including its myriad of problems, ranging from nuances to downright dangers. As a small example, it took me much too long to realize that my phone's keyboard was set for UK English rather than U.S. spelling. No matter how hard I tried, realization was always spelled *realisation*. Theater was *theatre*, defense was *defence*, and behavior was *behaviour*. It was probably my own fault. I prefer using the British *ou* and some of the *re* spellings over the sometimes more crass-looking U.S. versions. Because of it, the autocorrect feature on my phone may have assumed I'm British rather than Texan.

The spelling issue goes even deeper, however. In addition to its social improprieties, autocorrect is also wreaking havoc in our educational institutions. Rebecca Greenfield writes, "Today in studies that claim the Internet is ruining our lives, [the BBC](http://theBBC.com) informs us that auto-correct and spell-checkers have turned us into a bunch of illiterate idiots." She cites a twenty-year study supporting her notion, "The use of the wrong word jumped three spots to become the most common error in students' papers; misspelling, which didn't even place in the top twenty in 1988, jumped to number five."

None of us wants to use the wrong word in our work, so what's a writer to do? First, there are ways to make your autocorrect smarter. You can actually edit your device's autocorrect dictionary and add or delete words. Personally, I think it would be wise to begin deleting certain anatomical parts and curse words.

You can also use the text expansion feature to set a short string of characters for phrases you often use (and autocorrect persistently gets wrong). As an example, if you type *let me know what you think* several times a day, you can set the text expansion feature on your device with an acronym so that whenever you type *lmkwyt*, it fills in the complete sentence. I must warn you, however, that the text expansion acronym can be used against you. A new Internet prank is to set up a friend's device so that every time he or she types a word like *sorry*, some lengthy Star Trek dialog appears instead.

Is it all bad news? In a word: Yes. James Gleick writes, "One more thing to worry about: the better Autocorrect gets, the more we will come to rely on it. It's happening already. People who yesterday unlearned arithmetic will soon forget how to spell. One by one we are outsourcing our mental functions to the global prosthetic brain. I can live with that. We do it with memory, we do it with navigation, so what the he'll, let's do it with spelling."

My solution? I'm going to simply turn the darned feature off.



Sprague Lake in Rocky Mountain National Park © Jack Olson

Beyond the High Meadows

Text and photos by Richard Holmes

I felt it coming on the evening before, an unexplained restlessness. A familiar stirring. I realized then what it was. I needed an altitude fix—by hiking. I had to climb something.

So I set off this morning for the mountains and the trail to King Lake, my first sustained hike of the season. The air is clear, the sky is blue, but my mind is cloudy, perhaps from too much lower altitude inactivity. Within the first mile I begin to feel resuscitated, the clarity of my mind approaching that of the sky. A beautiful day. But aren't they all beautiful at the higher altitudes?

A profusion of flowers greets me upon reaching the high meadows. Acres and acres of blue and pink and red and yellow—subtle hues vibrant in the morning light. The various greens from surrounding foliage are intense, almost blinding.



Colorado wildflowers

More miles of hiking westward through fir and ponderosa forest, always upwards. I burst out into the open again—more wildflowers, a view across the valley, a distant hawk soaring, the trickling sound of a small stream.

Nearing timberline the trail steepens, and after a final surge past an unnamed tarn, then over a rise, I am upon King Lake—serene, quiet, welcoming. I stand facing across the lake as a chill breeze descends from the Continental Divide, a couple hundred feet above. Large patches of snow still cover the steep slope into the lake. I look up at the treeless ridge, and as I scan the horizon I seem to feel energy flowing into me, moving me, lifting me, carrying me to greater heights than where I am standing. I think I am receiving my fulfillment, my altitude need. I throw my arms into the air, like antennas, and absorb it all.

Stepping over to the lee side of a rock, I remove my pack and sit down, looking back toward the direction from which I had come. The eastern prairie is visible far in the distance. Leaning against the pack I leisurely consume my sack lunch, my eyes traversing my surroundings.

It's restful up here. Most of me wants to remain, to sit and absorb the views, the rocks, the tranquility of the present. But a part of me wants to leave, to head back down—a destination had been reached.

This always happens. The romanticist part of me clinging to every wondrous moment—the realist part of me

glancing toward the sky, surveying the threatening clouds, restless to hit the trail, to get out before the dim rumble of thunder comes close. The realist usually wins.

But not without a battle. The tarn I had passed draws my attention. I wander down to stand in the snowmelt feeding the small pond, and observe the flowers growing between rocks. Across the tarn a dipper dives under the surface—the expanding ripples glancing back from the water's edge. In some willows a small yellow bird catches my eye. A tiny warbler? Still battling the realist I study it for later identification.



Columbine

Reluctantly I head on down, pausing occasionally to examine something along the trail, the romanticist still expressing his presence. Eventually, as the afternoon clouds and general fatigue move in, a desire to reach the car dominates whatever romanticism is left, and the feet obey the new master.

I know the trip is over when I unlock the car and sink into the front seat. But somewhere up there, beyond the high meadows, is a serene lake, a beautiful tarn, and a tiny warbler.

Factoring in the Impact of Altitude

- while attending the 2019 conference in Estes Park.

by Peter Kummerfeldt

A number of you have expressed concerns regarding the impact of the altitude when you travel to Estes Park later this year. The town sits at 7500 feet above sea level and should you wish to explore Rocky Mountain National Park you could find yourself on Trail Ridge Road crossing the Rocky Mountain divide at over 12,000 feet. The air gets a lot "thinner" up there! Not to worry – you can still attend the conference and have an enjoyable time if you attend to a couple of suggestions from those of us that live here.

For example, the first thing you should do, especially if you have had problems at higher altitudes in the past, is get a thorough medical check-up with particular attention to your heart and lung function. Tell your doctor where you are going and what you hope to do while you're there. The doctor will not be able to determine your susceptibility to altitude sickness (more correctly called Acute Mountain Sickness or AMS for short) but will be able to evaluate your general state of health and recommend steps for you to take to ensure your medical well-being while you are attending the conference. Talk to the doctor about any drugs that could be prescribed that would make your tran-

sition to Estes Park easier – Diamox is a commonly prescribed medication.

Plan on spending a couple of nights in Denver or other lower altitude location before ascending to Estes Park. This is especially important for those of you who are flying to Colorado. ***If you travel too high, too quickly and are too active when you get there you will probably become altitude sick!*** On the other hand, if you give your body a chance to acclimate by slowing your ascent you may not feel ill at all.

Before we go any further let me answer the question “**What causes altitude illness?**” As you climb higher the barometric pressure decreases, which results in you having to move a lot more air through your lungs to get the oxygen your body needs to function properly. You have to breathe harder. You become hypoxic. Over time, usually within 48 hours, your body adjusts to this new environment and the symptoms you have been experiencing go away. Anyone can be affected by altitude illness – even those who have traveled to higher altitudes in the past and have not experienced any difficulties! Age, gender, physical fitness do not make a difference.

How do I know if I’m altitude ill? If you have a headache and are experiencing any of the following you are altitude ill:

- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Lightheadedness
- Fatigue and weakness
- Lack of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Difficulty sleeping

A headache is the key. Headaches can be caused by many things, however if you are higher than where you normally live, have a headache and are experiencing any of the other symptoms listed above, you are altitude ill until a doctor tells you otherwise!

So if I’m altitude ill what should I do about it? In dire cases the only real solution is to descend to lower altitudes. If you have transitioned to Estes Park slowly and find that, after a couple of days there, you are still not feeling better it may be time to go down to Denver for a night or two until you are feeling better. If you’ve been up on Trail Ridge Road all day photographing sheep, dropping down to Estes may be enough to cure your ills. For mild cases descending is not usually necessary. Take things easy for a day or two; increase the quantity of fluids (not alcohol) you’re drinking and take a mild analgesic to ease the headache until your symptoms subside. If you are not getting better, descend and seek medical attention. Remaining at higher altitudes when you are ill can progress to more se-

vere, life-threatening forms of altitude illness.

Don’t let the unlikely possibility of altitude illness, or any other misfortune, discourage you from joining the rest of us at the conference this year. Over four million tourists visited the area in 2018 and returned home without a serious mishap.

Member News

New Member

Cathy Jennings of Carterville, Illinois, joined RMOWP’s ranks in February. Cathy is a photographer who loves everything in nature and the outdoors, with a particular appreciation for amphibians and reptiles. Welcome, Cathy!

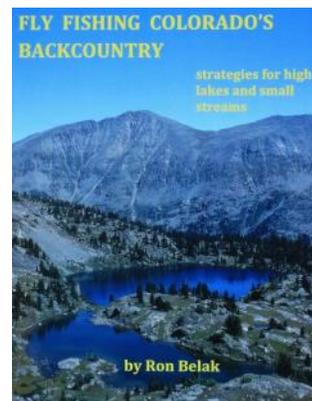
New Fly Fishing Book

Ron Belak, RMOWP member from Evergreen, Colorado, has announced the recent publication of his book, *Fly Fishing Colorado’s Backcountry*. The book is a collection of articles that originally appeared in *Colorado Outdoors* magazine, the official publication of Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Ron tells us that all the essays in this how-to book were updated in 2018. Although aimed primarily at backcountry anglers in Colorado, he says that over half the essays are relevant to fly fishing for trout anywhere.

With 190 pages in an 8 1/2 by 11-inch format, the soft cover book includes almost 450 color photos. Subjects range from fly-fishing techniques and equipment, tips on researching and preparing to fish the Colorado backcountry, seasonal strategies, fly-tying, and dry-fly fishing.

A freelance writer and photographer for the past 25 years, Ron tells us that he has fished about 400 high-mountain lakes and small reservoirs in Colorado over the past 40 years, plus waters in Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon, Alaska, Canada, and Argentina. He has published about 70 articles in *Colorado Outdoors*, and his writing and photography has also appeared in *Fly Fisherman* and *American Angler* magazines. He is a frequent presenter at chapter meetings of Trout Unlimited, other fly-fishing groups, and the Fly Fishing Show held annually in Denver.

Fly Fishing Colorado’s Backcountry was published by BookBaby in December, 2018, and can be purchased through Ron’s website, www.ronbelak.com.



2019 RMOWP Calendar

May 30 ~ Scholarship application deadline

June 10 ~ Contest submission deadline

June 16-19 ~ Photo Workshop in Rocky Mountain National Park

September 9-12 ~ Annual Conference — Estes Park, Colorado, and Rocky Mountain National Park

See www.rmowp.org for details.

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Let us know: info@rmowp.org

Subject: E-mail RMO

Thanks!



*"Sandstone Ridge" in Zion National Park © Al Perry
Honorable Mention, Image from Last Conference
2010 RMOWP Photo Contest*

National Parks Offer Fee-Free Days

Who says nothing in life is free?

The National Park Service has announced its free admission dates for 2019. These include Saturday, April 20, the first day of National Park Week; Sunday, August 25, the anniversary of the National Park Service; Saturday, September 28, National Public Lands Day; and Monday, November 11, Veterans Day.

In addition to National Parks, the park service will also waive entrance fees on those dates for national monuments, national historical parks, national recreation areas, national battlefields, and national seashores under its jurisdiction that charge admission fees.

Of those park service properties that charge entrance fees, rates range from \$5 to \$35. The National Park Service said that in 2018, 33 million people visited National Park Service properties, spending \$18.2 billion.

Dues reminder

RMOWP treasurer Maryann Gaug warns us that March 31 is the deadline for 2019 membership renewal.

First notices went out in January.

Follow-ups in February.

A phone call is next.

Remember:

Non-renewing members will be dropped April 1.

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